

JUDIT POLGAR

From GM to Top Ten



Polgar Judit
😊

Teaches Chess

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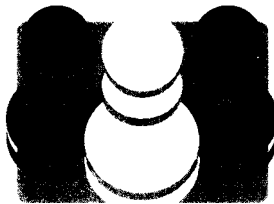
Judit Polgar Teaches Chess 2

From GM to Top Ten

by

Judit Polgar

with invaluable help from Mihail Marin



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Judit Polgar Teaches Chess 2 — From GM to Top Ten

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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

Preface

In explaining the birth of this book, much of what I wrote in the first volume is of course still relevant. I started flirting with the idea of publishing a collection of my best games a long time ago.

For years, I was aware that the moment when I could fulfil my dream was far away. As a professional player, I spent most of my time and energy playing in tournaments and training, so each time the idea of my book popped up, I had to say to myself “Later, later...”

By coincidence, several publishers approached me during this period. Although I was not prepared to embark on any definite project yet, I could feel that the whole idea was, little by little, starting to take shape.

The critical moment

The 2009 World Cup proved to be a decisive moment in the birth of my books. In the third round I played Boris Gelfand, a very strong opponent who eventually went on to win the event. I lost the first match game with Black, and during my preparations for the second one, I found myself with no clue about how to break down his favourite Petroff Defence.

I decided to improvise with the Bishop’s Opening, and in the early middlegame started a sacrificial attack in the best spirit of the King’s Gambit, my favourite opening as a kid. This turned out to be Gelfand’s only defeat in a classical game in the whole tournament. I eventually lost the playoff, but this did not spoil the magic: it felt like for a moment the Judit from 1988, who many (including myself) had forgotten, had come back to deliver her trademark brilliances.

With this nostalgic feeling, I decided that the time had finally come to write my book, in which the little girl from the past would play an important role. On the way back home, while waiting to embark at Moscow airport, I made it “official” by sharing my thoughts with my husband Gusztav. He was delighted with the idea and I appreciate very much his enthusiasm, support and encouragement ever since.

Preliminary details

There were a few technical details to be worked out before starting to work. Most of my best games have been published worldwide, in countless magazines and even in a few books about my chess career written by other authors. Therefore, I aimed for a different approach than *just* “Judit’s selected games”.

After much hesitation, I chose to structure the material as a manual rather than an autobiography. This way, it would be instructive for young players or amateurs aspiring to progress, but also offer a guideline to their parents or trainers. True, there would be a wealth of autobiographical stories, but they would pop up without respecting a chronological order.

Without any false modesty, I can say that I played entertainingly and quite well from an early age, and it soon became clear that one book would not be enough to cover my whole career.

To make this rather unusual project come true, I needed a publisher who would allow me the freedom of action I needed. I decided to work with Quality Chess after I met their Creative Director, Jacob Aagaard.

I was captivated by Jacob's enthusiasm, optimism and his acceptance of making the book the way I wanted it. We soon reached an agreement and he offered his invaluable feedback during the complex writing process.

Since I had no experience as a book writer, I also needed the help of a close collaborator. Even before the project had taken shape, I had shared my ideas with my old friend Bob (Mihail Marin). I have known Bob since 1990, when he stayed with my family in Budapest on several occasions. We were playing chess, training and having lots of fun. Many years later we worked together regularly and he even accompanied me as a second to a few tournaments.

I knew that Bob has lots of knowledge and broad experience in many areas of chess. He is a successful writer and has created many good books. But even more importantly, I appreciate his love and enthusiasm for chess.

Bob gladly joined my project and he has been a great adviser and helper throughout. In addition, working as a pair proved joyful and entertaining.



Novi Sad 1990: (l. to r.) My Mother, Pal Benko, Susan, Marin, Hazai, Me!, Morvay & Sofia

Sources of information

Some of the games in this volume have not been published before. Some of them were played against my coaches or sparring partners for training purposes. I have input them all from my dusty archive of scoresheets.

From my early years as a chess player, my coaches taught me to regularly write down the time taken both by my opponent and myself. This was meant to provide the coaches with information about my way of thinking, my possible superficiality at critical moments or, on the contrary, my hesitations.

This information also proved useful for this book. In my comments, I have frequently referred to the situation on the clock, in order to draw interesting conclusions of a psychological nature. And, as a curiosity, I would add that I have not given up the habit of writing down the time even today...

The old scoresheets helped me to spot a few input mistakes in the official databases.

I also drew a wealth of information from my old opening notes and game annotations. Luckily, my whole archive has survived several changes of apartments over the years!

It was refreshing to learn that some of my original analysis stands up to severe computer scrutiny even today.

The structure

The first volume covered the period from my early years until 1991, when at the age of 15 years, 4 months and 28 days, I broke Fischer's record by roughly one month and became the youngest ever grandmaster.

This second volume covers the period from my first tournament as a grandmaster in 1992 until 2000.

In the beginning of this period I had to prove I was worthy of the title of grandmaster. At the end of this period, in 2000, I had a series of fantastic successes, with tournament wins in Buenos Aires, Malmo, Bali, second place in Merida, and an excellent individual result at the Istanbul Olympiad. It was also the year I got married, which I still consider an excellent move!

There is a hidden logic behind the order of the chapters. The division of my career into three periods, corresponding to the three planned volumes, is to a certain extent arbitrary. Of course I did not become a completely different player by stepping over the chronological border between the first and second volumes. As suggested by its title, the first chapter keeps the tightest connection with the previous period. As we advance through the book, I have aimed to illustrate new and ever more complex threads of my style, as it developed after 1992.

As a novelty, compared to the first volume, there are three solving chapters spread throughout the book. As you might suspect, the exercises are grouped in increasing order of difficulty.

The first volume ended with a *Tournament Diary*. You will find more than one diary in this book, all of them grouped in the 10th chapter.

The last chapter is dedicated to the games I treasure most. Although they could have fitted in some of the thematic chapters, I prefer to have them grouped under the title *My Memorable Games*.

A nostalgic journey to the past

One of the most rewarding aspects of my work on this book was the possibility of revisiting the past. Although I have changed a lot as a person since then, I am glad that I did not lose any of my love for chess or my pleasure in playing beautiful games.

Many times people have asked me about the reasons for my early successes.

Talent and ambition must have played a significant part, but my family environment was the most important factor. Both my parents were teachers by profession and by inclination. My sisters and I are grateful to them not only because they dedicated their lives to our success, but even more so because they raised us with a positive set of values.

I was fortunate to be the youngest of three sisters, so my parents already had a lot of experience when they started bringing me up as a chess player.

Moreover, growing up around my elder sisters Susan and Sofia was very stimulating and they offered their help whenever I needed it. No words are rich enough to describe my feelings towards Susan and Sofia. And I am happy that after all these years we are still very close friends, despite the huge geographical distances between us.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks to:

All my trainers, coaches and sparring partners.

The organizers, sponsors, opponents and arbiters, without whom chess life could not exist.

My enemies, who stimulated me to improve myself.

I would like to thank my husband, Gusztav, who stepped into the picture in 1998 and offered me his support in the final period covered by this volume.

Last but not least, thanks to my chess fans. I hope you will enjoy this book.

Judit Polgar

Budapest, October 2013



Chapter 1

Reminiscences from my Childhood



Aruba 1992, where Smyslov called me “Tal in a skirt”

Front row: Susan, my mom Klara, Pia Cramling, Maya Chiburdanidze,
Alisa Galliamova and Ketevan Arakhamia

Back row: Sofia, Lev Polugaevsky, Judit, Vassily Smyslov, Efim Geller,
Boris Ivkov, Oscar Panno, Pal Benko, Wolfgang Uhlmann and Bent Larsen

The culminating sporting moment of the first volume was my win against Tolnai, which made me a grandmaster. This opened access to a higher level of tournaments, but did not automatically make me a better player. What really changed was that people finally started taking me seriously. My opponents prepared more carefully and also had a different mental approach. For some of them it was important to realize that losing to me was not such a disgrace, which took some of the psychological pressure off their shoulders.

Feeling free of the urge to gain grandmaster norms, I set higher goals for myself, such as reaching the top 50, or 30, in the men's list.

On the other hand, I was aware there was not a strict correlation between the evolution of my objective strength and my immediate rating. On January 1st 1989, I reached the top of the women's list (and shared 55th to 58th place in the men's list) with 2555, but my rating would have been 2600 if the 1988 Olympiad had been included in it. At the start of 1992, the first year covered in this volume, I was rated 2550, five points below the top 100 list, due to the rating inflation initiated after 1990. And yet I definitely played better than three years earlier!

This brings us to an even more important aspect of my aspirations after gaining the grandmaster title: the continuation of my overall chess improvement. At my new level, I could achieve that only by changing some things in my preparation methods.

First of all, I had to fix some significant holes in my opening preparation and improve my whole approach to it. After 1991, the Ruy Lopez took the place of the King's Gambit and my main weapon against 1.d4 became the King's Indian, rather than the Benko Gambit. Actually, the restructuring of my repertoire had started earlier, in 1989, but this is a rather time-consuming process. Besides, I never abandoned the thought that it was rather late to start moving in this direction, which may have induced certain limitations in my later progress.

After 1991, I still used to play a lot of training games and solve exercises, but opening preparation took at least 50-60% of my time and energy.

The computer had already started to provoke important changes in a chess player's life. It certainly made my travelling easier. Previously I used to carry with me about 15 kilograms of hand luggage, containing my chess notes. In order to keep the weight within bearable limits, I was extremely selective when writing down lines and ideas. The computer 'notebook' not only was much lighter, but also allowed me to input whatever idea I had, by offering practically unlimited storage space.

In many other aspects, though, I remained the same player as before. I never gave up the search for beauty in chess, which sometimes even became too high a priority! I did not lose my interest in playing for the public and in trying out original ideas, many of them as a result of my over-the-board inspiration. And I always grabbed my chance to play my trademark g2-g4 and ...g7-g5 moves! Although my innate optimism continued to produce good results, punishments (or rather lessons) became more frequent than before.

This chapter is intended as a connection between the periods covered in the first and the second volume, focusing on some threads which persisted from my childhood all the way through my years as a more experienced player.

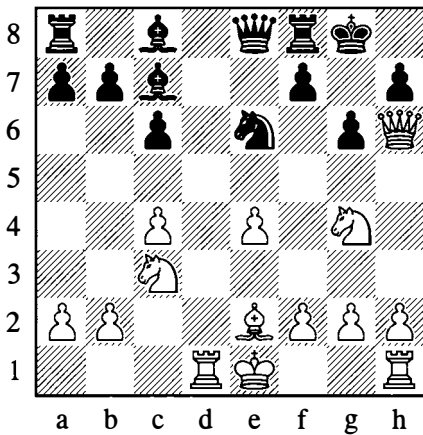
In the first example, I relied on a pattern I had used in the previous period, without examining the position in depth. My optimism paid off, but objectively it was not entirely justified.

Wolfgang Uhlmann – Judit Polgar

Veterans vs. Women, Aruba 1992

This special event was called “Tumba Chess Tournament 1992” (Tumba is the name of a local dance), and was the first of a series of ‘veterans versus women’ matches organized by Joop van Oosterom.

It made a great impression on me to play against such legendary players as Smyslov, Geller, Larsen, Polugaevsky, Uhlmann, Ivkov and Panno.



White is a pawn up and seems to have some attacking chances, making use of the absence of the bishop from g7, but Black also has her trumps.

I spotted some similarities with my game against Chernin from the first volume, such as my two active bishops and the presence of the white king in the centre. I also thought that time was an important factor in the fight for the initiative. In the King’s Indian, I loved to give up material for the initiative, or an attack, or just to get control over important squares.

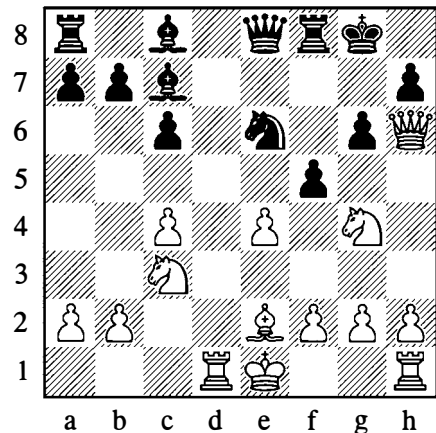
I was surprised to find out from my scoresheet that I had spent much more time than Uhlmann so far: 51 minutes compared to his 28!

17...f5?

In my game against Chernin, the pawn sacrifice implied by the break ...f7-f5 was quite promising, but here giving up a second pawn is unsound. There were several subjective factors inducing me to play this way.

After 11 rounds, I had won only two games, against Geller in Round 4 and Polugaevsky in Round 7. Before the last round, nothing could be saved in the general match situation (the veterans were leading by a big margin) but I desperately wanted to win one more game to secure the best result among the women. I hoped that by complicating the position I would pull Uhlmann into one of his famous time scrambles!

Objectively, the more restrained 17...f6! should have been preferred. Black parries the immediate threats and maintains good control of the dark squares. White must be careful his queen does not get in trouble in view of the enduring threat of ...g4.



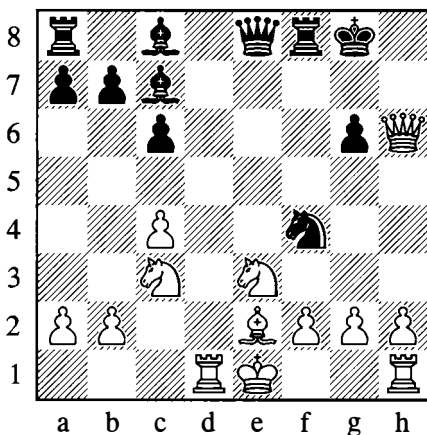
18.exf5 ♖f4

I took ten more minutes to make sure I wanted to sacrifice the second pawn.

19.fxg6 hxg6 20.♘e3

A good defensive move: the e3-knight helps White consolidate and keeps his position together. As the subsequent analysis suggests,

White should retain an advantage with best play. Black's main problem is that the g6-pawn needs permanent defence, which sometimes restricts my active possibilities. However, under the circumstances of practical play, my experiment will eventually be justified.



20...Rf7

With the idea of chasing the queen with ...Rf7 and preventing castling in view of the looming disaster on h2.

20...Qe5!? was an important alternative, achieving the same aims (preparing to chase the queen with ...Qg7 and preventing castling in view of ...Qxc3). Moreover, this move seems to restore the needed harmony in Black's camp and may have been objectively better than my move, although the character of the position would have remained the same.

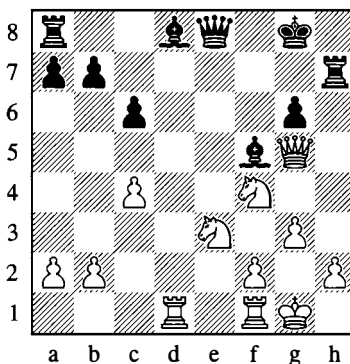
21.Qg5?

Uhlmann spent 40 minutes on this move. White threatens to castle without weakening his position in any way. Still, the voluntary queen retreat will prove to be merely a loss of time.

There were several alternatives deserving investigation, which made the task of choosing quite difficult for White. In some of the lines, accurate calculation is needed; if White does not

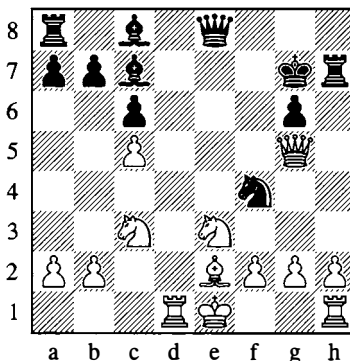
find some crucial move, he may prematurely reject the whole line as unsatisfactory.

One of the first moves to come to mind is 21.g3. White's desire to get rid of the knight's pressure as soon as possible is natural, but Black has sufficient resources: 21...Rf7 22.Qg5 Qxe2 23.Qxe2 Qh3 Making White work a bit before getting castled. 24.Qf4 Qf5 25.0-0 Qd8 As a result of the necessary Qe2-f4, the queen is trapped.



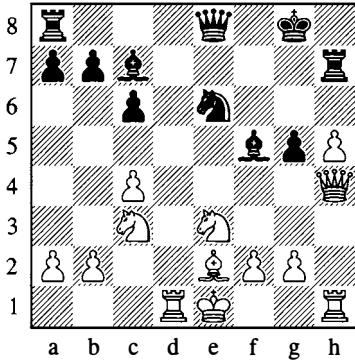
26.Rxd8 Qxd8 White has two pawns for the exchange and the position is roughly equal.

21.c5!? is an interesting multi-purpose move, threatening Qc4 and creating the possibility of a positional exchange sacrifice with Rxd6. If 21...Rf7 22.Qg5 Qg7, aiming to tighten the net around the queen,

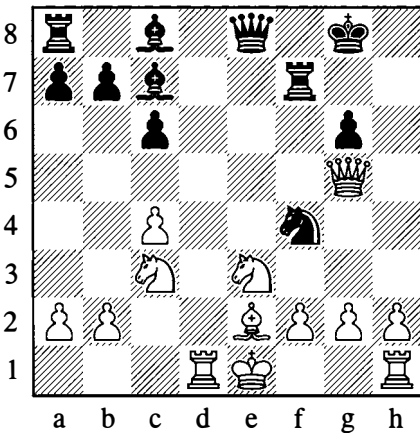


then 23.Rd6! would spoil Black's coordination.

This could be one of the situations in which the best defence was a counterattack: 21.h4 The following is just an interesting possible continuation in which accurate calculation is essential for correct evaluation: 21...♙f5 22.h5 ♜h7 23.♚g5 ♘e6 24.♚h4 g5



It would be easy to discard this line when pondering over the 21st move, as the white queen seems to be trapped. However, the next not-very-obvious move changes everything: 25.♘e4!! gxf4 26.♘f6† ♜h8 27.♘xe8 ♜xe8 28.♘xf5 ♘f4 29.♘e3 ♙b6 30.♙f3 White has simplified the position and keeps his material advantage.



21...♙f5

I spent ten minutes on this developing move, which over-defends the g6-pawn in order to create the threat of ...♘e6.

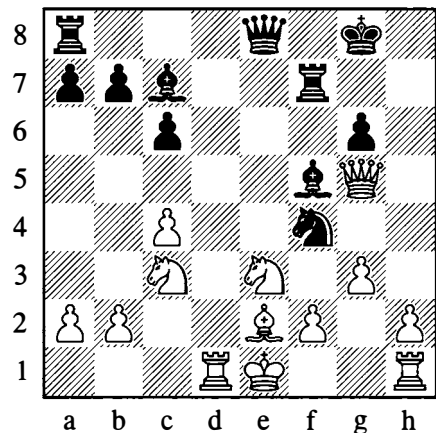
Now White cannot castle: 22.0-0? would lose to 22...♘e6 23.♚h4 ♜h7. This must have been rather frustrating for Uhlmann: I kept playing useful moves and his king was still in the centre. This may explain why he sank into another deep think for 32 minutes.

22.g3?

With the queen on g5, this is the worst way of attacking the knight.

Better late than never, they say, and this applies to this situation: 22.c5! clears not only the c4-square, but also the whole fourth rank for the queen. I could play 22...♘e6 23.♚h4 ♘f4 when White is tied up and Black has excellent compensation. Maybe the logical result would be a draw by repetition starting with 24.♚g5.

It may seem surprising that Uhlmann made two consecutive mistakes, despite having thought for more than an hour altogether. Probably there are some psychological reasons for that. 21...♙f5 may have come as an unpleasant surprise for him and this is the kind of situation when one is tempted to start thinking: "Why did I not choose something else on the previous move?" This usually results in losing time, energy and focus.



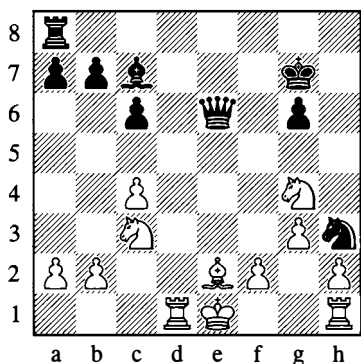
22...♘h3

Causing White to lose more time.

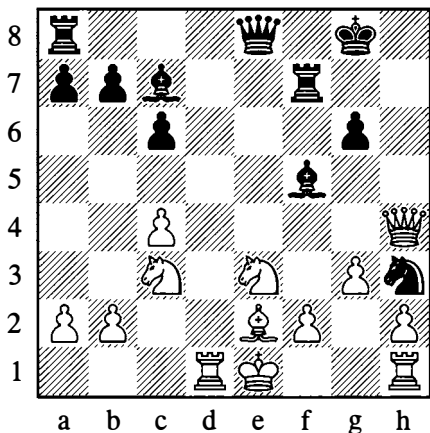
23. ♖h4?!

Probably overlooking my small combination.

Psychologically, it would have been hard to play 23. ♖h6, which looks like an implicit acceptance of having wasted two tempos. Objectively, it would have offered better chances to survive. During the game, I calculated: 23... ♜h7 (23... ♜xf2 24. ♜xf2 ♙b6 does not work out so well now, because the e3-knight is defended. White could fight on with 25. c5 ♙xc5 26. ♙c4.) 24. ♜xf5 ♜xh6 25. ♜xh6† ♜g7 26. ♜g4 ♜e6



White is fine from a material point of view, but I thought I would be better in view of the plan of ... ♙b6 and ... ♜e8. Still, White is stable enough to stay out of trouble with precise play.

**23... ♜xf2!?**

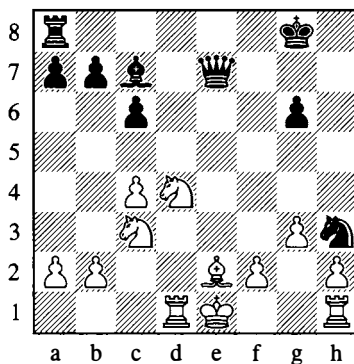
Played almost without hesitation, in accordance with my eternal search for beauty.

23... ♜h7 24. ♜d4 ♜d7

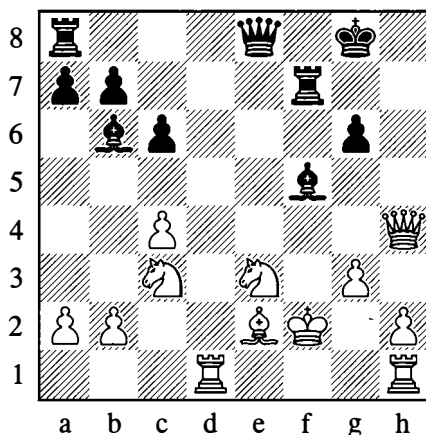
This was a worthy alternative. White would have to sacrifice the queen under less favourable circumstances than in the line above.

25. ♜xf5

I am not sure whether either of us saw the line 25. ♖h4 ♙d8 26. ♖h6 ♙g5 trapping the queen, since I barely spent two minutes on the knight sacrifice.

25... ♜xd4 26. ♜xd4 ♜e7

The white knight is less stable on d4 than it was on g4 in the similar position from the line above. This small detail tilts the balance in Black's favour.

24. ♜xf2 ♙b6!

After having done its job on the h2-b8 diagonal, the bishop moves to the neighbouring diagonal! Needless to say, neither of these forms of activity is typical for the King's Indian!

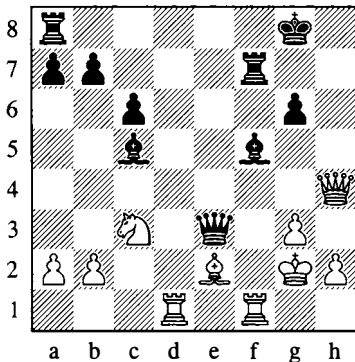
Uhlmann was already in time trouble; I felt that with his king surrounded by dangers, he would have little chance of surviving.

25.♔e1?!

By moving the king back to the centre, White practically gives up the fight.

Uhlmann must have thought that 25.♔g2 loses to 25...♖h7 followed by 26...♕h3 and not seen any alternative.

In fact, White can put up some resistance with 25.c5!. We are familiar with this move already. In some lines, it allows the strong zwischenzug ♗c4† as an answer to ...♖h7. 25...♕xc5 26.♖hf1! Aiming for a reasonable way of completing development. 26...♝xe3† 27.♔g2



Black does not have a forced win, but after 27...b5!, taking the c4-square away from the bishop and renewing the threat of ...♖h7, I would be much better.

25...♕xc5

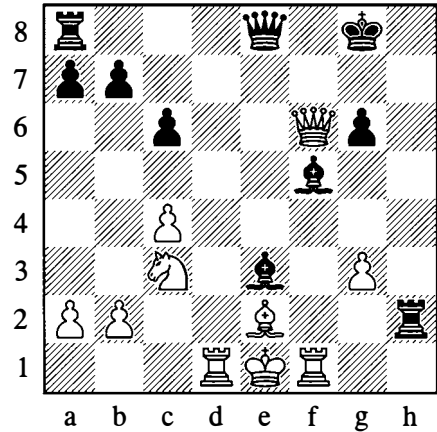
25...♝xe3 would be just as good.

26.♖f1 ♖h7 27.♝f6

At this point, White had only three minutes

left to reach move 40. There was no increment in those days.

27...♖xh2



28.c5?!

At several points in the game and in the analysis lines, c4-c5 worked out quite well for White, but now it is too late for it! Instead, another unexpected pawn advance might have offered some practical chances to survive:

28.g4!?

The idea is to weaken the defence of the g6-pawn, allowing some counterplay.

28...♕xg4 29.♖d6! ♕h3!

This is the best move, but not a natural human one!

One would first analyse: 29...♕xe2 30.♘xe2 ♕g5 31.♝xg6† ♔h8! This is easy to overlook; the bishop is taboo because of mate on e2. 32.♝d3 White is worse, but he can hope.

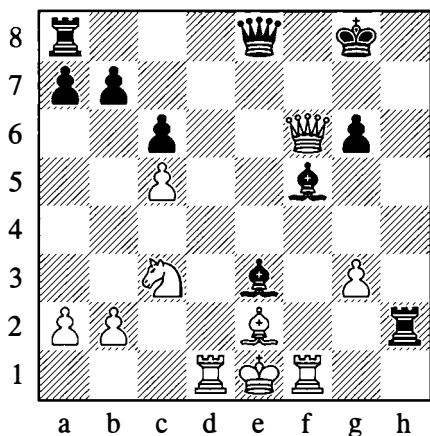
30.♝h4!

Another unnatural move, but the only one which does not lose on the spot! The main idea is to pin the h3-bishop.

30...♖xe2† 31.♘xe2 ♕xf1 32.♔xf1 ♕c5

Black should win with accurate play.

What we should retain from this analysis is that the game is not really won until our opponent signs the scoresheet below the zero...



28...♙h6!

I am almost sure that for Uhlmann this effective retreat came as a complete surprise.

After having travelled on the route g7-f6-d8-c7-b6-e3, the bishop returns to its usual King's Indian location, the long diagonal! The main threat is ...♙g7xc3† followed by mate on e2.

29.♞d6?!

If 29.♞d4 then after 29...♞e7 followed by ...♞e8 it would be all over.

29...♙g7 30.♞xf5

Just some typical time-trouble desperation.

30...♙xf6 31.♞xf6 ♞e3 32.♙d1 ♞e8 33.♞d3 ♞h1† 34.♙c2 ♞c1† 35.♙b3 ♞xc3†

And the game is over.

0-1

Despite the favourable result, the mechanical



We had a great time in Aruba!

application of familiar fighting methods from previous years deserves criticism.

For a change, the next few examples feature a positive form of connection between the two periods. We will see that some of the things I used to be good at as a kid, kept working well in select company!

Chapter 12 of the first volume describes a method which is not really typical for young players: the art of maintaining the initiative by exchanging queens. Below is a game in which I applied the same method against a most powerful opponent.



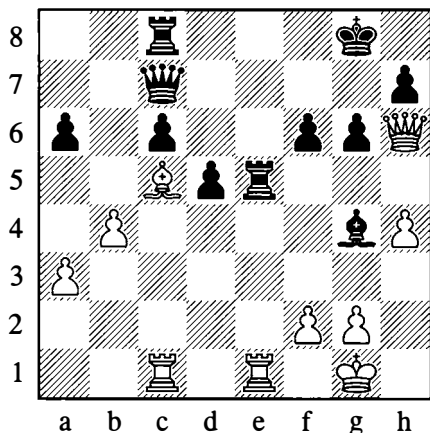
Support from Susan before my game with Korchnoi

Judit Polgar – Viktor Korchnoi

Roquebrune (rapid) 1992

This was the first edition of the Melody Amber tournament, organized by Joop van Oosterom and named after his first daughter. On the second edition, one year later, there was a switch to the format that became a trademark, with one rapid and one blindfold game between each two players. In 1991, we only played normal rapid games.

I first saw Korchnoi, a living legend, at the 1989 OHRA Amsterdam tournament; the reader may remember that the previous volume ends with a chapter dedicated to this, for me, memorable event. Later that year, in November, I played my first game against him. He played his trademark French Defence and the game took an exciting course; eventually it ended in a draw. In 1990 I lost with Black in a King's Indian; Roquebrune 1992 was our third encounter.



The weak dark squares in Black's camp and the opposite-coloured bishops offer White good compensation for the pawn.

Black's last move was 29...♞e8-e5, preparing to take control of the only open file with ...♞ce8 and creating the auxiliary threat of ...♞h5xh4.

There is no way of parrying both threats. 30.♞xe5 is an obvious concession, when either way of recapturing suits Black well. 30...♞xe5 would get control over the e-file, while 30...fxe5 would strengthen the centre.

This means I had to decide which of the threats is more important and take measures against it!

30.♞d4!

I had little doubt the highest priority was to fight for the open file.

30...♞h5

There is no time for second thoughts.

Giving up the e-file without getting anything in exchange would doom Black to a joyless defence: 30...♞xe1† 31.♞xe1 ♞f7 Black has to regroup in order to exchange the active white rook before it is too late, but this will cost him the f6-pawn. 32.♞f4 ♞d7 33.♞d6 ♞e8 34.♞xe8† ♞xe8 35.♞xf6 ♞f8 36.♞d8 White has regained the pawn and has enduring pressure.

31.♞e3 ♞xh4

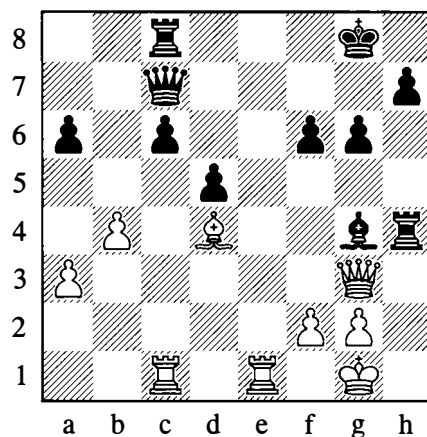
Black has won a second pawn and threatens mate in two. Weakening the kingside with either g2-g3 or f2-f4 is not at all appealing, but I had foreseen a paradoxical solution.

32.♞g3!

In positions with opposite-coloured bishops, the active side is normally supposed to keep the queens on the board, in order to retain attacking chances. From this point of view, it may seem that my last move simplifies Black's defensive task.

There are other positional factors that justify my decision, though. Black's rooks are uncoordinated and the h4-rook will need some time to get back into play. In the absence of his queen, Black will not be able to prevent the invasion of one of my rooks to the seventh rank.

White gets full compensation for the missing pawns, but Black should be able to maintain the balance.



32...♞xg3

The quickest way to activate the errant rook was 32...g5, but this would mean returning both pawns immediately, and leaving White with the more pleasant game: 33.♞xc7 ♞xc7 34.♞xf6 ♞h6 35.♞xg5 Still, the most probable result would be a draw.

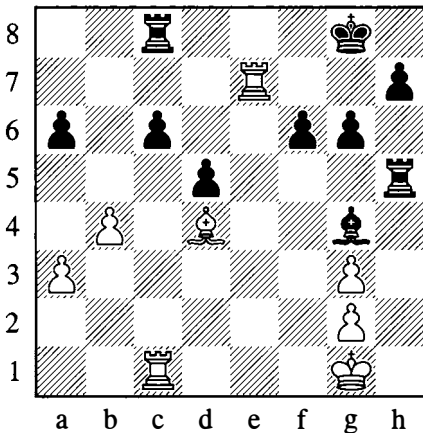
It is most likely that Korchnoi did not even consider this line; his fondness for material has been widely known for decades.

33.fxg3 ♖h5?!

This is the most natural retreat, but 33...♖h6! was the most effective way to start regrouping. Black's plan is ...g6-g5 and ...♖g6, while if 34.♙xf6 ♖f8 35.♙d4 g5 everything is fine. I could more or less force a draw with 36.♞e7 ♖f7 37.♞e8† ♖f8 38.♞e7, but maybe not more than that.

34.♞e7!

I was not at all interested in the f6-pawn. As in most of my games, piece activity and the initiative were my main concerns.

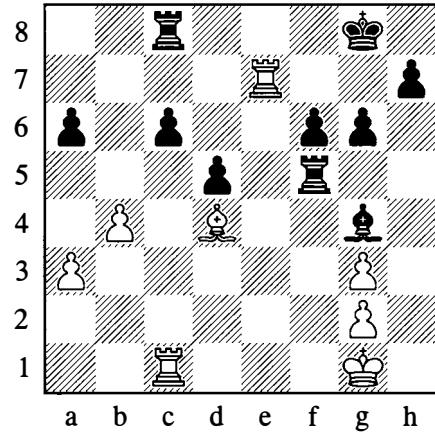


34...♖f5?

Defending the pawn in this way is a curious decision, since the rook does not have any active possibilities on f5. I wonder whether Korchnoi really hoped to keep and convert his extra pawns. I believe in a game with a normal time rate, Korchnoi would have evaluated the situation correctly and taken the right decision, now or even on the previous move.

Even after the previous inaccuracy, it was possible to achieve a reasonable regrouping with 34...♖g5!, planning ...♙g4-f5(-e4) with

pressure against the doubled pawns. If 35.♙xf6 then 35...♖f5 followed by ...♖f7 with equality.



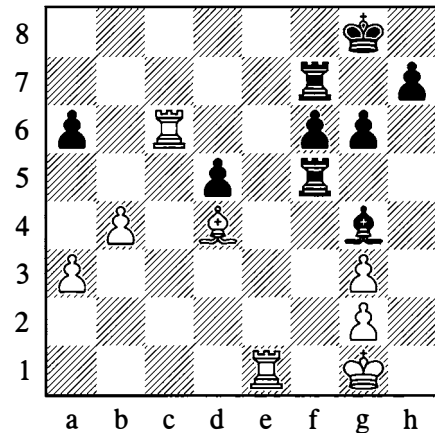
35.♖ce1

With the simple threat of doubling rooks on the seventh rank.

35...♖f8

The only defence.

36.♞c7 ♖f7 37.♞xc6



White will soon get the second pawn back, while keeping the advantage intact. I eventually won, but the rest of the game is less instructive as I committed some typical rapid-chess inaccuracies.

...1-0



Analysing with Korchnoi was always fascinating

It is interesting that such a strong and experienced player did not sense the changes induced in the course of the game by 30.♙d4. Possibly, it was only after 35.♞ce1 that he felt he might be worse, but by then it was too late.

We will now move on to another theme of the first volume – trapping the queen. In the first example, the trap was part of my home preparation.

Judit Polgar – Sergey Volkov

European Team Championship, Batumi 1999

I played this tournament under somewhat difficult circumstances. It was chilly and the general conditions were far from optimal. Towards the end of the tournament I caught a bad cold, but nevertheless played all nine

games without a day off.

Our team stayed in a hotel situated on a hill, and there were buses taking us to the playing hall every day. In those years I used to focus on the games some time before their actual start, but in Batumi I had some problems maintaining concentration during the sometimes scary journey on those curvy roads.

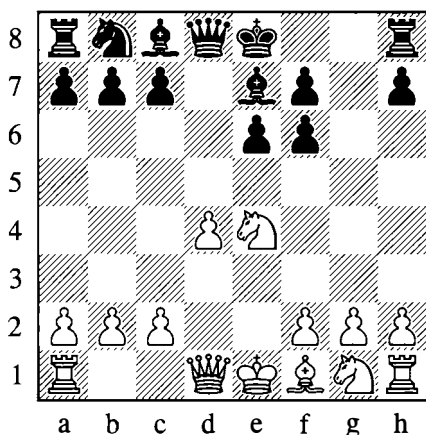
Despite losing the last game against Aleksandrov, I scored quite well, 6½/9, which proved enough for the silver medal on Board 2. Our team was strong and we won the silver medals after missing the gold by a hair.

Preparing against Volkov was relatively easy, as he almost always plays the French Defence.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙g5 dxe4

My opponent's main weapon, although he also plays 4...♙e7 and 4...♙b4.

5. ♖xe4 ♙e7 6. ♙xf6 gxf6



An interesting alternative to the natural 6... ♙xf6.

After the game move, Black usually aims for a hedgehog-type position, based on ...b6, ...♙b7, ...♙d7, ...c6, ...♗c7, ...0–0–0 and ...h5, controlling the whole fifth rank with his pawn 'spines'. His flexible structure and the bishop pair offers him chances for counterplay in the long run.

White enjoys more space and the possibility of free development with, for instance, ♖f3, ♙d3 (or ♙c4), ♗d2 (or ♗e2), and now either 0–0–0 with ♗he1, or 0–0 followed by ♗fe1 and ♗ad1. White should make this choice depending on Black's own plan.

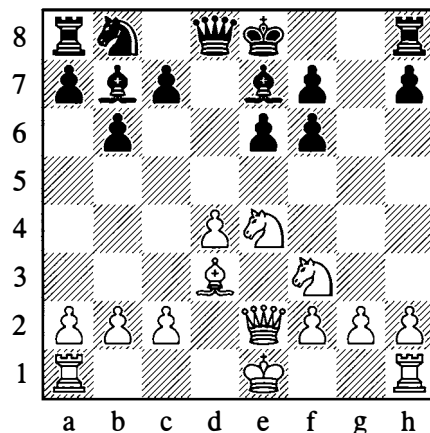
7. ♖f3 b6 8. ♙d3

8. ♙b5† is the other popular continuation, more or less forcing 8...c6. Still, if Black is heading for the aforementioned regrouping, the check on b5 would simply be a waste of time.

8... ♙b7 9. ♗e2

My main plan was to castle long and prepare d4-d5 one way or another. Exchanging bishops with ♙d3-a6 would be an important part of the plan, weakening Black's control over the light squares.

9. ♗d2 is another possibility, aiming for some activity on the dark squares with a later ♗f4.



9... ♗d5

According to the classical precepts, it is a bit early to develop the queen, especially on such an advanced position.

The following is a game in which I faced the usual set-up:

9...c6 10. 0–0 ♗c7

Quite clever: Black delays the development of the knight in order to prevent ♙a6.

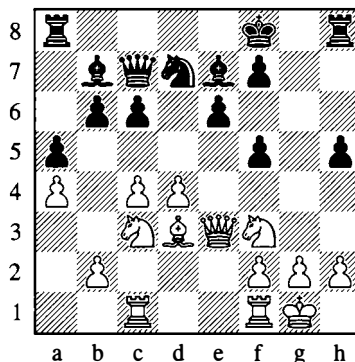
11. c4 ♖d7

Now is a good moment for this.

12. a4

Aiming to inhibit Black from castling long.

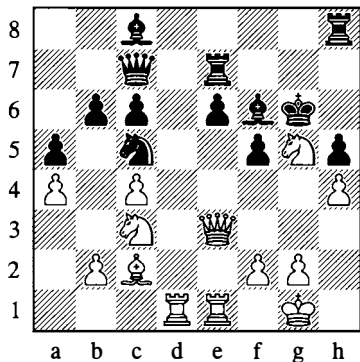
12...a5 13. ♖acl f5 14. ♖c3 ♙f8 15. ♗e3 h5



16. d5

The programmed breakthrough, weakening the light squares in Black's camp. The insertion of a2-a4 and ...a7-a5 would favour me after ...c6xd5.

16...♖c5 17.dxe6 fxe6 18.♗d4 ♜f7 19.♞fe1
♙c8 20.♙e2 ♙d7 21.♗f3 ♙f6 22.♗g5† ♜g6
23.h4 ♞ae8 24.♞cd1 ♙c8 25.♙d3 ♞e7 26.♙c2



Black has regrouped thoroughly and would have a good position if his king was not so exposed. The next move is a blunder.

26...e5?

After a more cautious move such as 26...♜g7 there would be no decisive continuation of the attack.

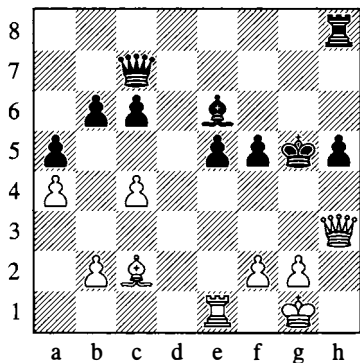
27.♗ce4!

Exchanging Black's best piece, his knight, and preparing ♞d6.

27...♗xe4

If 27...fxe4 then 28.♗xe4 ♗xe4 29.♞xe4† ♜f7 30.♞g6† wins.

28.♗xe4 ♙xh4 29.♞h3 ♙g5 30.♞d6† ♞e6
31.♞xe6† ♙xe6 32.♗xg5 ♜xg5



33.f4†!

After a few moves on the light squares, there follows a blow on a dark square.

33...♜h6 34.♙xf5 ♙xc4 35.♞xe5 ♙f7 36.♞h4
♞d8 37.♞e7 ♜g7 38.♙e6

Black resigned in Judit Polgar – Oscar De la Riva Aguado, San Sebastian 1991.

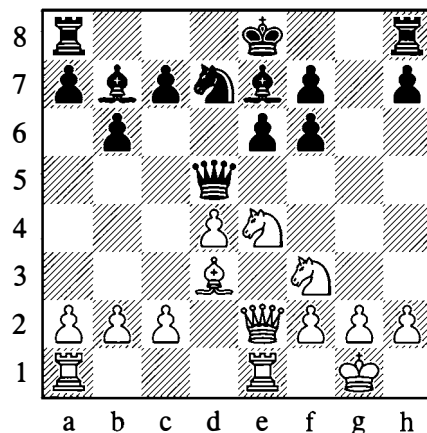
I knew Volkov had played 9...♞d5 in July 1999, a few months before our game, and so I prepared thoroughly against it. As the game continued, I could not believe my eyes when we actually followed my morning analysis step by step!

10.0-0

Castling long is out of the question, since the a2-pawn would be hanging.

Volkov's previous game went 10.c4 ♞a5† 11.♗c3 ♙b4 and Black won in 22 (!) moves in Klovans – Volkov, Biel 1999. The key fact was that in this game the queen felt comfortable and there could be no talk about punishing Black for breaking the principles of development.

10...♗d7 11.♞fe1



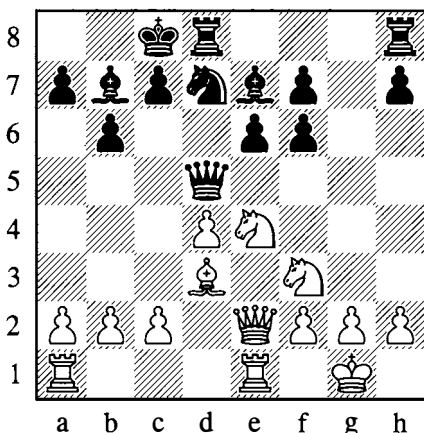
11...0-0-0

Black's play looks consistent, but defining the king's position so soon is not without

drawbacks. However, it is not easy to suggest a flexible alternative.

In principle, 11...♖h5 would offer some warranty against safety problems for the queen. At the same time, it would weaken the queenside defence. 12.♙a6! Black cannot avoid the bishop exchange for long: 12...♙c6 13.♘g3 ♗g4 14.♙b5 And if 14...♙xf3 then 15.gxf3 ♗f4 16.d5 with dangerous threats on the light squares.

Sometimes, the knight transfer to g6 is a good idea, but here it does not work properly: 11...♘f8 12.♘c3! and the break d4-d5 will arrive before Black is prepared for it.



12.a4!

Up to this point, each of us had spent less than ten minutes, meaning we both felt comfortable with our position.

My last move was a logical novelty. After Black has chosen the residence for his king, I should aim to open the a-file as soon as possible. There was also a hidden idea behind this move, but more about this later.

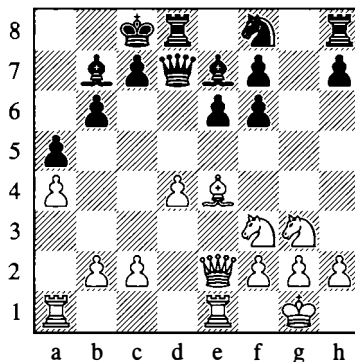
12.c4 only forces the queen to move to a safer square: 12...♗h5 13.♘g3 ♗g4 14.c5 ♙xf3 with complicated play, Bologan – Tukmakov, Biel 1995.

12...f5?

More or less the decisive mistake, and coming right after my novelty! My opponent was mainly concerned about the safety of his king and failed to notice that his queen would be in lethal danger after obstructing the fifth rank.

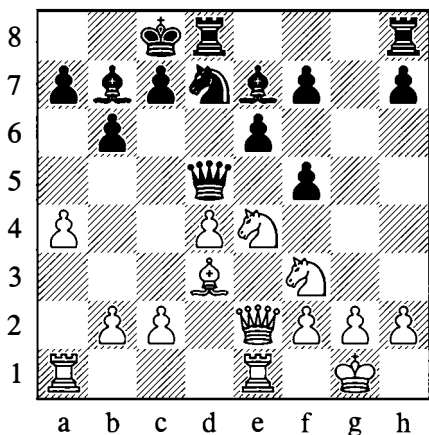
Still, there was no easy way out of trouble.

The apparently solid 12...a5 would take the a5-square away from the queen. In some cases, the slow attack with c2-c3 and b2-b4 would be dangerous. I intended to play 13.♘g3! with several tactical ideas based on the exposed position of the queen. A possible continuation is: 13...♘f8 14.♙e4 ♗d7



I would probably have played 15.c3 followed by b2-b4, but 15.d5! also seems to be strong. 15...exd5 16.♙f5 ♘e6 17.♘d4 ♖b8 18.♙xe6 fxe6 19.♗xe6 With my knights jumping onto the weak squares, I could count on an advantage.

12...♗h8 is a logical developing move, pinning the g-pawn in order to prevent ♘e4-c3 as an answer to ...f6-f5. It would not prevent my basic plan, though: 13.a5 (13.♘g3, restricting the queen, is also possible.) 13...f5 14.c4 ♗c6 15.d5! The thematic break arrives in a tactical form. 15...exd5 16.♘d4 Continuing to win time by attacking the queen. 16...♗g6 17.♘g3 With a very strong initiative on the light squares.



13. ♖c3!

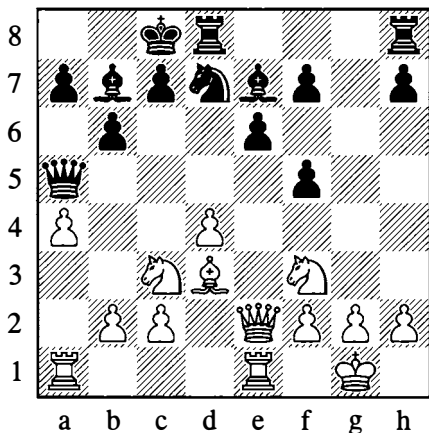
This kind of move is easy to overlook. Strategically, it is unappealing, since it blocks the c-pawn, but tactically it starts weaving the net around the enemy queen.

13... ♙a5

The principled move, blocking the a-pawn. Curiously enough, the engines are oblivious in this position, failing to foresee the danger!

If 13... ♙c6 then 14. ♖b5 ♙d6 15. ♖a6 with an unstoppable attack.

Or if 13... ♙d6 I would have a pleasant choice between 14. ♖xf5 and 14. ♖a6 followed by a4-a5.



14. ♖b5

Still following my analysis. I remember that I avoided playing fast, partly because I could not believe how effective my preparation had been and partly because I did not want to raise my opponent's suspicions – which I managed quite well, since he continued to play rather quickly.

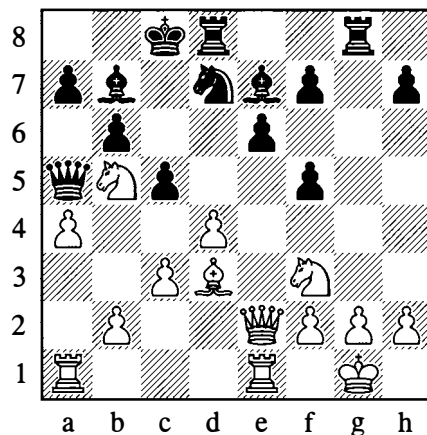
My plan is quite simple: c2-c3 followed by b2-b4 or ♖f3-d2-c4/b3.

14... ♖hg8

Played after only five minutes.

15. c3 c5

Defending against b2-b4.



16. g3!

Preparing to transfer the f3-knight to the queenside. It was only now that my opponent understood that something serious was happening, but it was too late for him to change anything.

16... a6 17. ♖d2 axb5

If 17... ♖d5 18. ♖c4 the queen is doomed anyway.

18. axb5 ♙xa1 19. ♖xa1

And after some irrelevant moves, my opponent resigned.

This game supports the point of view expressed in Volume 1 that the plan of trapping the queen can be very unexpected; it is remarkable that here it happened right after the opening!

We can also feel the danger connected with having a limited repertoire with Black, a symptom I also suffered from in, for instance, some of my games in Chapter 15 of the previous volume. For once, this time I was on the lucky side!

In the next game, the net cast around my opponent's queen sufficed only for a draw by repetition. Still, it was an excellent result, since I was playing with Black against a former World Champion... And this time, I found the idea over the board!

Anatoly Karpov – Judit Polgar

Dortmund 1997

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 dxc4

After the final conclusion drawn from the previous game, here is a good place to say that with the passing years, I tried to widen my repertoire with Black as much as possible. I played the Ragozin and the Vienna on a few occasions, later I tested the Benoni, but eventually the Queen's Indian became my main opening.

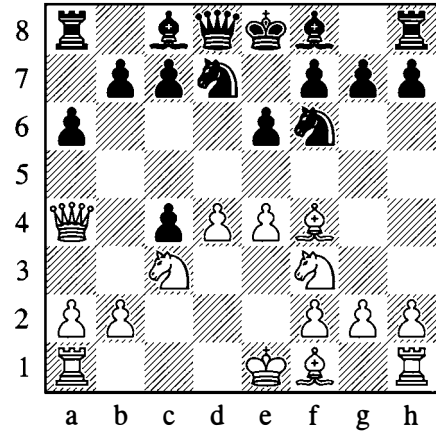
5.♙a4†

In the second half of his career, Karpov frequently regained the c4-pawn using his queen (against the Semi-Slav he played 5.♙b3 a lot). While avoiding forced variations, this exposes the queen rather early and neglects development.

5...♘bd7 6.e4 a6

Anatoly spent 29 minutes on his next move which came as a novelty for me.

7.♙f4



Aiming for maximum flexibility; with his active developing move, White keeps the a6-pawn and d7-knight pinned.

After 20 minutes, I came up with a well-calculated idea.

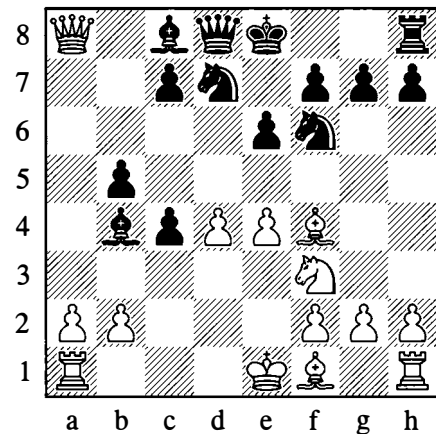
7...b5!

Implying an exchange sacrifice.

8.♘xb5

8.♙c2 would be pointless because after 8...♙b7 Black would simply be a pawn up. Therefore, Karpov picked up the gauntlet after only three minutes.

8...axb5 9.♙xa8 ♙b4†!



An important move, depriving the queen of the a5-square with gain of time. Karpov now sank into deep thought for half an hour.

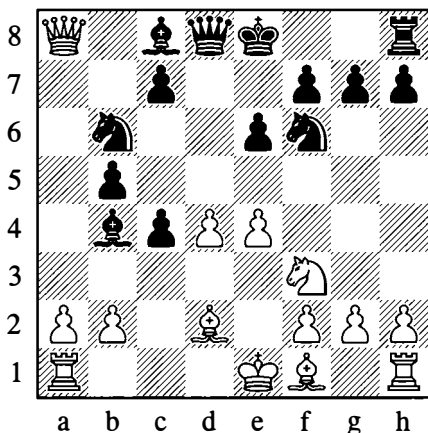
10.♙d2

The safest continuation.

If 10.♙d2, I could set up the same mechanism as in the game with 10...e5! (removing the pressure against the c7-pawn) 11.dxe5 ♘b6. Additionally, I could consider 10...0-0 with a lead in development for the sacrificed exchange.

10.♙e2 would be pushing things too far. At the very least I could play 10...e5; playing with the king in the centre looks a bit scary for White.

10...♘b6



Now that the bishop is no longer attacking the c7-pawn, there is no need for the intermediate ...e6-e5.

11.♞c6†

If 11.♞a7 (or 11.♞b8) 11...♙xd2† White would have to give up one of his central pawns. For instance: 12.♙xd2 ♞xd4 13.♞xc7 0-0 possibly followed by ...♙a4, with a strong initiative.

11...♙d7 12.♞b7 ♙c8 13.♞c6† ♙d7

White cannot avoid the repetition.

½-½

The game lasted one and a half hours, so when I left the playing hall some people were surprised to find out it ended in a draw after just 13 moves!

Although it was one of my shortest draws ever, I was happy about the idea I found over the board.

As mentioned in the introduction, I have always treasured beauty in chess. In the following example, I chose not only the most spectacular of the available wins, but also one which is strongly reminiscent of a well-masked combination from the first volume.

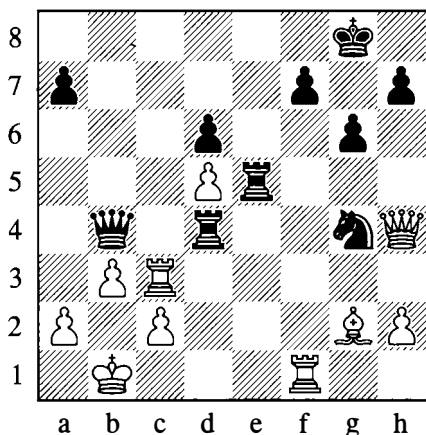
Judit Polgar – Jose Luis Fernandez Garcia

Dos Hermanas 1993

I have excellent memories of this tournament. I finished second with 6½ out of 9, one point behind Karpov. The decisive game took place in the penultimate round; by winning it, Karpov ensured his victory in the tournament.

I was at least as content about the creative aspect of my play as about my result. It is more than a mere coincidence that we have three more spectacular wins from this tournament in the book: the first round game with Magem, third round game with Khalifman and fifth round game with Rivas! In other words, I would say that I was in a highly “tricky” mood in Dos Hermanas!

For over a decade, Jose Luis Fernandez was a leading Spanish player. He played in six Olympiads and later became captain of the national team.

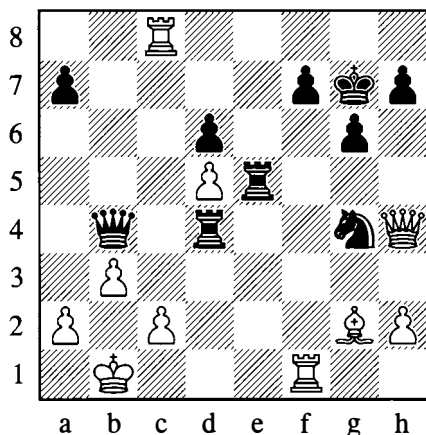


Optically, Black has a very active position, with his pieces dominating the centre.

At a superficial glance, my pieces may impress less, but they display deadly effective cooperation against the poorly-defended black king.

34.♞c8† ♔g7

I saw that I had two similar mating combinations, but I could not resist choosing the more spectacular one, involving a queen sacrifice.

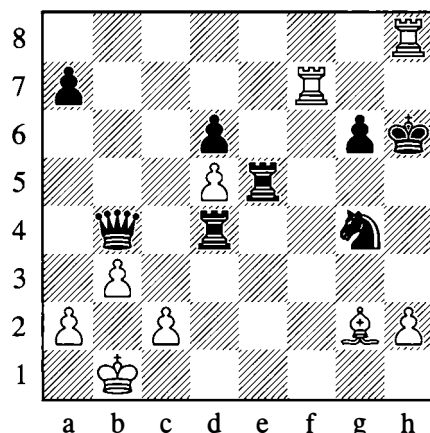


35.♞xf7†

The attentive reader may remember the similar combination from my game in the first volume against Lars Bo Hansen (page 50).

The other line goes: 35.♞xf7† ♔xf7 36.♞xh7† ♔f6 37.♞f8† ♔g5 38.h4 mate.

35...♔xh7 36.♞xf7† ♔h6 37.♞h8†



In view of 37...♔g5 38.h4 mate, Black resigned.

It is always a good feeling to deliver mate with an innocent-looking pawn...

The last game of this chapter features the strongest link with the previous volume, with just one exception: the roles were reversed!

Alexei Shirov – Judit Polgar

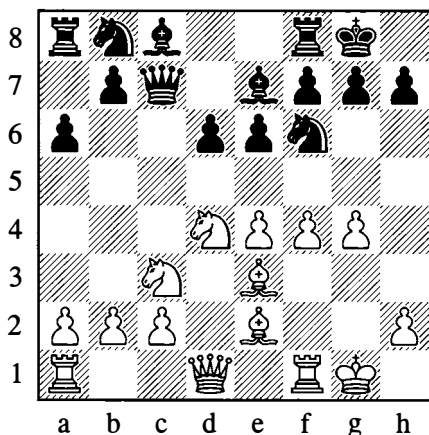
Tilburg Fontys 1996

1.e4

In the late 1980s and early 90s, the young Shirov emerged into the high-class arena as an aggressive 1.d4 player. This is how he opened our two previous games, but little by little 1.e4 became an important part of his repertoire.

1...c5 2.♟f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♟xd4 ♟f6 5.♟c3 a6 6.♟e2 e6 7.0-0 ♟e7 8.f4 0-0 9.♟e3 ♞c7 10.g4!

Quite a surprise! The reader may recall from the first volume that I was successful with this rare move in my OHRA 1989 first-round game against Hans Ree.



From the opposite side of the board, things looked less rosy to me. As a general rule, I did not feel comfortable when I was attacked in such a brutal way and in most cases I would have gladly sat in White's chair.

I do not know whether Shirov used this move as a psychological trick, but I am sure that it suited his style in general. In his 1.d4 games he also used to advance his pawns at an early stage. In the Nimzo-Indian he used to play 4.f3 with the idea of e2-e4, while in the Grünfeld he many times gave up the right to castle for the sake of starting an attack with h2-h4-h5.

10...♖e8

Still following my old games with White. If it is not possible to improve on Black's play in this game, then it may mean that 10...♖e8 delays queenside development too much.

10...♞c6 and 10...d5 are important alternatives. To me, the latter seems the most typical reaction: an attack on the wing is answered with a break in the centre.

11.f5!

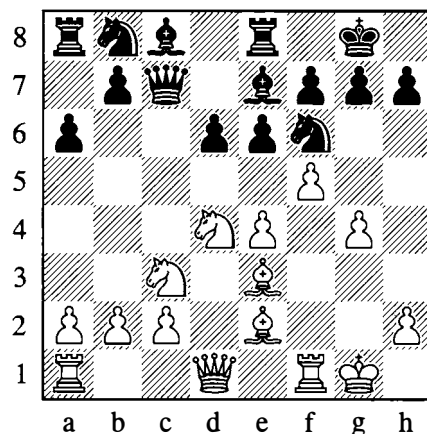
A new move, slightly changing the usual move order.

My initial idea was 11.g5 ♞fd7 12.♙h5 g6 13.♙g4 and now Ree carelessly played

13...♞c6? allowing 14.♞xe6 with a decisive attack, Polgar – Ree, Amsterdam 1989.

In Aruba 1991, Polugaevsky improved against me with 13...♙f8, but in a later game Shirov defeated Anand with the (also new) move 14.f5.

The curious thing is that Shirov not only shuffled the thematic moves f4-f5 and g4-g5 with respect to his older game. As we will soon see, he will also play my attacking moves ♙h5 and ♞xe6 in reversed order!



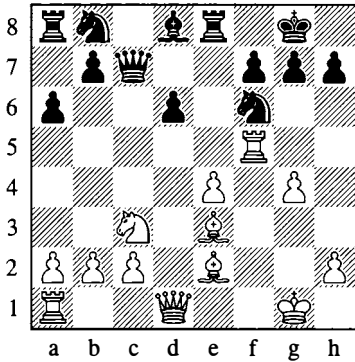
11...♙f8?

My 25 minutes of thought suggest I understood the problems posed by the novelty, but the move I chose was too passive. It was time to react in the centre.

True, 11...d5? would be strongly met with 12.g5 ♞xe4 13.fxe6 fxe6 14.♙d3 when White is much better developed and will most likely regain the pawn on e4. With the e8-rook hanging, the e4-knight cannot move away, for instance 14...♞xc3? 15.♙xh7! winning.

The best defence would have been 11...exf5!?. This looks rather ugly because it weakens the d5-square and spoils the central structure. On the positive side, it puts the e8-rook to work, thus justifying the previous move. 12.♞xf5

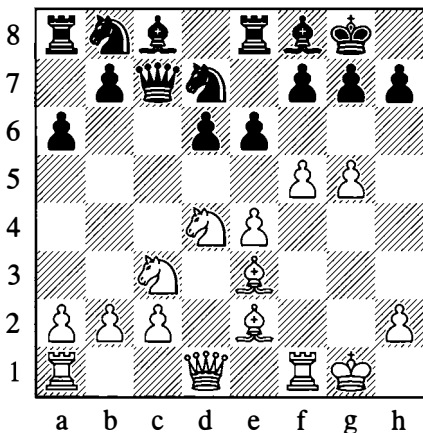
(If 12.exf5 d5 followed by a bishop move, possibly to c5, Black would get counterplay along the e-file.) 12...♙xf5 13.♞xf5 ♔d8!



Black clears the e-file, setting up pressure against the e4-pawn. It is important to keep the f6-knight well defended in order to avoid the demolishing exchange sacrifice ♞xf6.

White is better developed, but I would say... a little bit too much so! While the g4-pawn may serve well for attacking purposes, its advance has also opened the king's position, offering Black chances for counterplay.

12.g5 ♖fd7



13.♖xe6!

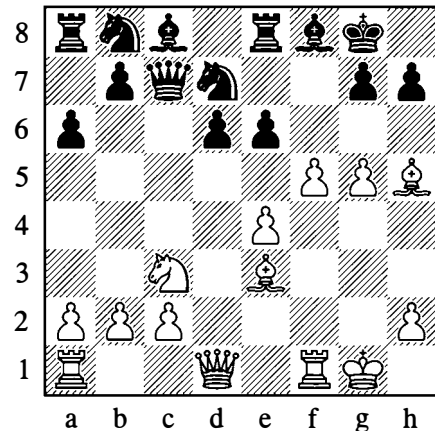
I did not expect this move at all. The curious thing is that if I had been White, the sacrifice would have seemed very natural to me.

When I was young, I frequently failed to imagine what my opponent was thinking, to look at the position from his point of view. This ability is very useful for stopping the most dangerous threats before it is too late.

I believe that Shirov had prepared the whole line at home, since he sacrificed the knight without thinking.

During the game I somehow thought that we would transpose to the aforementioned Shirov – Anand game with 13.fxe6 fxe6 14.♙h5 g6 15.♙g4 ♖e5 with normal play for Black.

13...fxe6 14.♙h5!



This simple attack against the rook is quite effective given my lagging development. I finally understood that I had fallen into some deep home preparation and for the next move I spent an unusual (for me) amount of time: 45 minutes.

14...g6

The same way of defending the h5-e8 diagonal as in my game against Ree, but under worse circumstances.

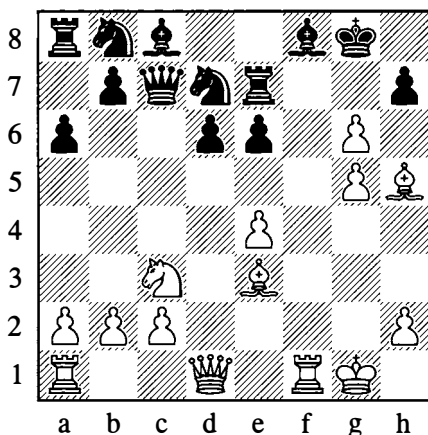
Allowing fxe6 with the threat of ♙f7+ would not be much fun either. For instance: 14...♞d8 15.fxe6 ♖e5 16.♙f7+! An important

intermediate check, weakening the defence of the f8-bishop. 16...♖h8 17.♙xe8 ♖xe8 18.♘d5 With the decisive threat of ♘c7, winning material.

Or if 14...♗e7 then 15.fxg6 ♘b6 16.♗f3 ♗d8 17.♙xb6 ♖xb6† 18.♗f2! as pointed out by Shirov. The last move parries the check while clearing the f1-square for the reserve rook and 18...♗d8 19.♗af1 is curtains.

15.fxg6 ♗e7

Practically forced. Instead 15...hxg6 only speeds up the attack: 16.♙xg6 ♗e7 17.♗h5+—



16.♘d5!

This knight jump was also part of the scenario of my game with Ree, except now it involves a sacrifice! Its main idea is to clear a path for the white queen.

16...exd5 17.♗xd5† ♖h8 18.gxh7!

Threatening mate in one.

18...♗xh7

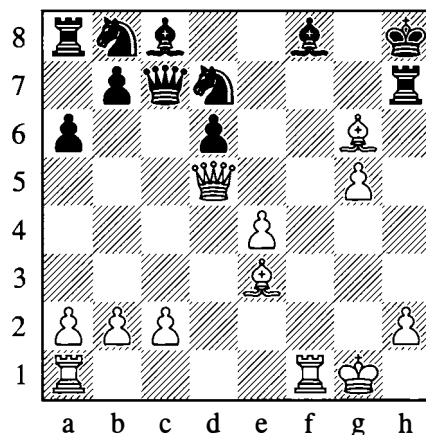
If 18...♖xh7 there are several wins, but the simplest is 19.g6† ♖h8 20.♙g4 with the threat of 21.♗h5† ♖g8 22.♙e6†! ♗xe6 23.♗h7 mate.

Or if 18...♗g7 then 19.♙d4 pinning the rook and renewing the threat of ♗g8 mate.

My main problem is that my queenside looks like an overfull wardrobe; most of my pieces are congested there.

19.♙g6

This is interesting, but 19.g6! was a simpler win.

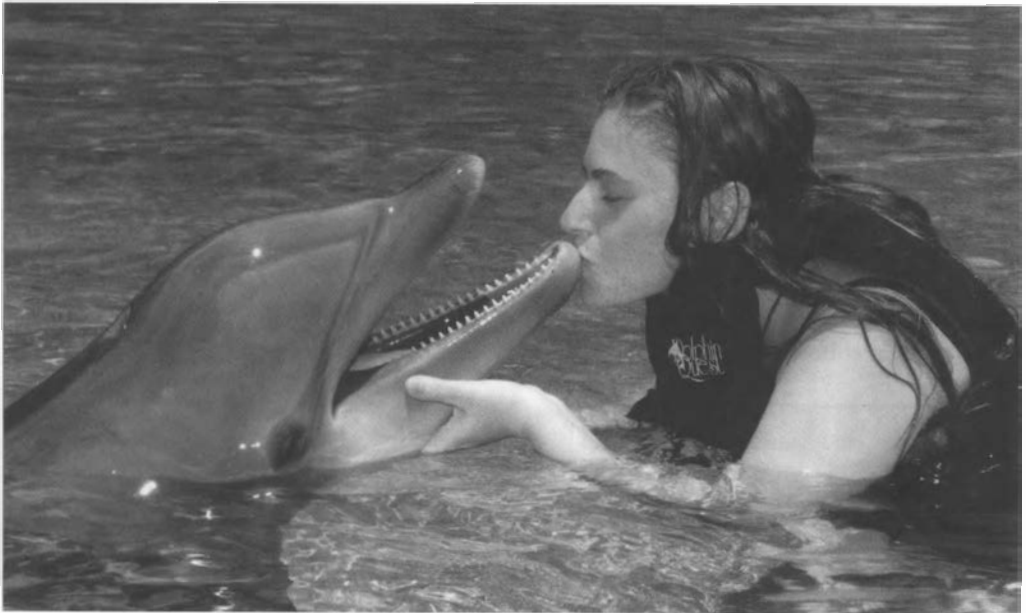


After the game move, I kept fighting for a while, but without any success:

19...♙g7 20.♙xh7 ♗d8 21.♙f5 ♘e5 22.♗d1 ♙xf5 23.exf5 ♗e8 24.g6 ♘g4 25.♙d4 ♗e4 26.f6 ♘c6 27.fxg7† ♖g8 28.♗f8† ♗xf8 29.gxf8=♗† ♖xf8 30.♗f1†
1–0

Chapter 2

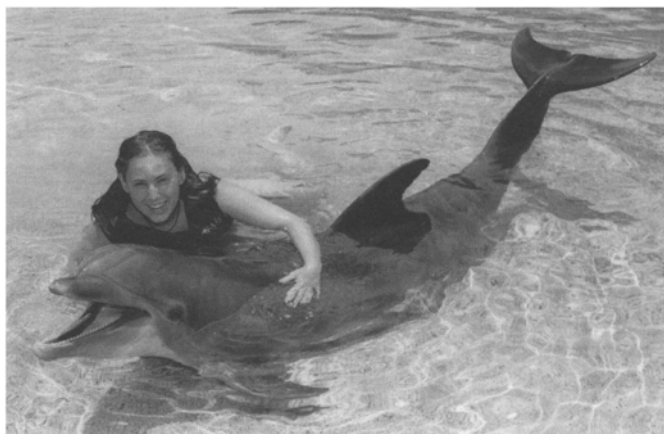
Solving 1



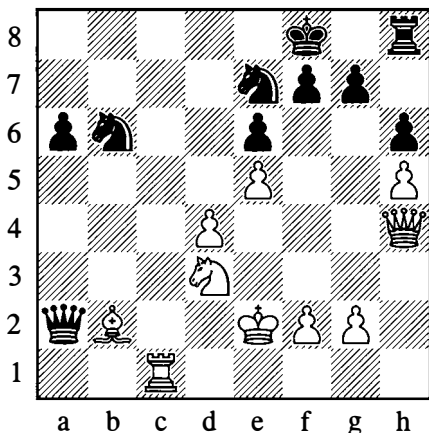
*From the US Open in Kona 1998 – One of my most
memorable experiences: swimming with dolphins*

This chapter complements the previous one. Most of the positions offered for solving are simple and they bear a tight connection with the period covered in the first volume, when many people considered that my main strength was being tricky.

I have divided the positions into four categories. We will have a group of combinations based on mating nets followed by another one in which the main theme is the hanging position of the enemy pieces. In the third group the solution is based on the combined vulnerability of the pieces and king. Finally, we have a group of endings.

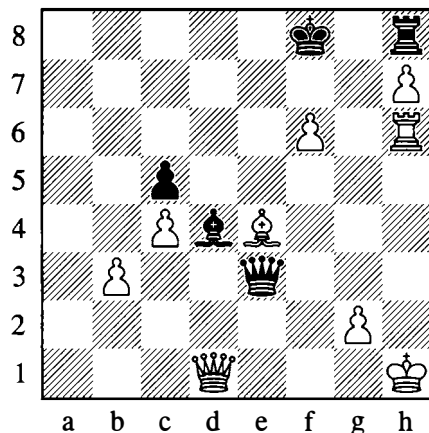


1. Polgar – Bareev, Moscow 1996

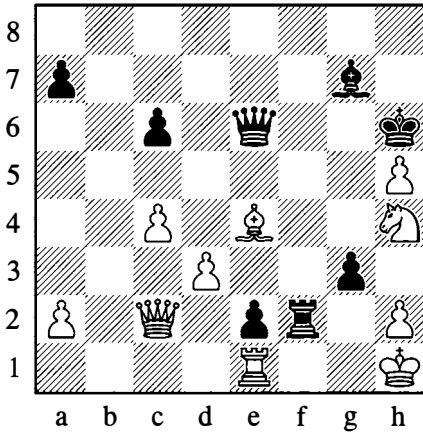


Strategically, Black's position is perfect, but his undeveloped kingside is a problem. Would it be advisable to occupy the dream d5-square at once with one of the knights? Is there any hidden danger in the air for the black king?

2. Adams – Polgar, Frankfurt 1998

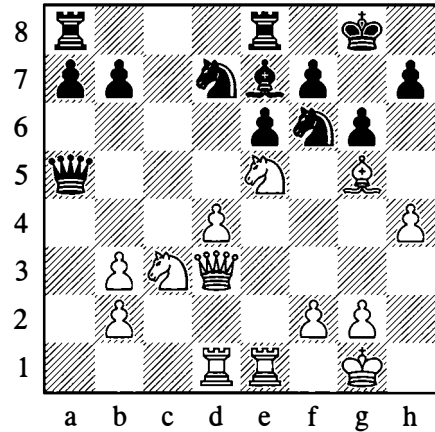


White has four extra pawns but his pieces are hanging. When heading for this position he thought that **47.♖h4** would solve the problem. Was he right?

3. Mestel – Polgar, Oviedo 1993

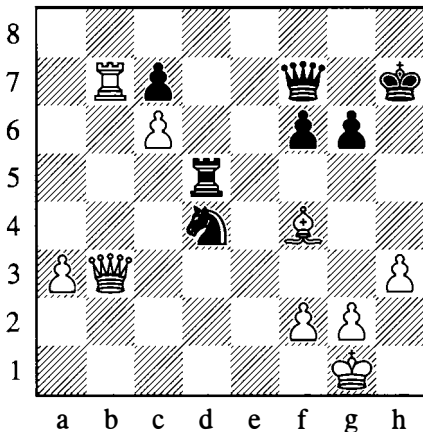
White has a decisive material advantage and it feels as though more than one way leads to Rome. I do not know whether my opponent, who was short of time, failed to notice my threat or simply thought that there could be nothing to fear when delivering a check.

Evaluate **35. ♖f5+**.

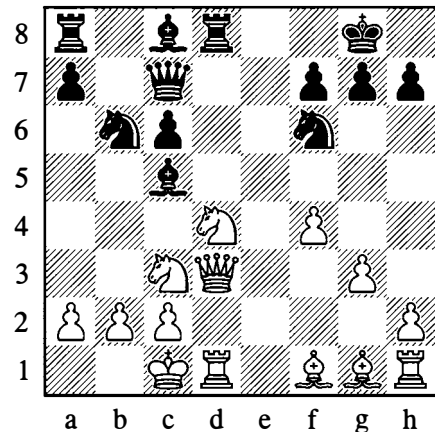
5. Polgar – Thinnssen, Kona 1998

I liked my active position and against a developing move such as 20... ♖ad8 I planned to increase the pressure with 21. ♖f3.

Instead Black played **20... ♜b6?** which offers unexpected tactical opportunities. Can you spot them?

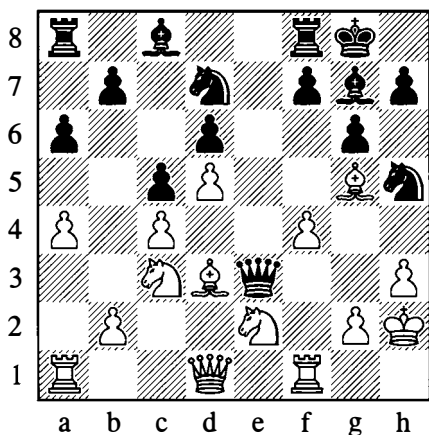
4. Morozevich – Polgar, Frankfurt 1998

With the knight controlling so many key squares, the white queen has to choose her square carefully. My opponent played: **43. ♜c4** counting on the absence of immediate forks. Your answer?

6. Polgar – Rivas Pastor, Dos Hermanas 1993

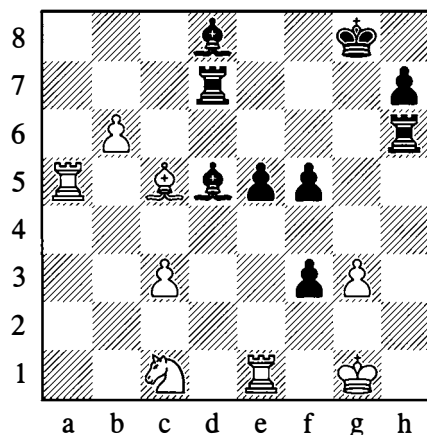
Black confidently played his last move (14... ♖d8) after just one minute. Do you think the knight can escape the pin?

7. Suba – Polgar, Debrecen 1992



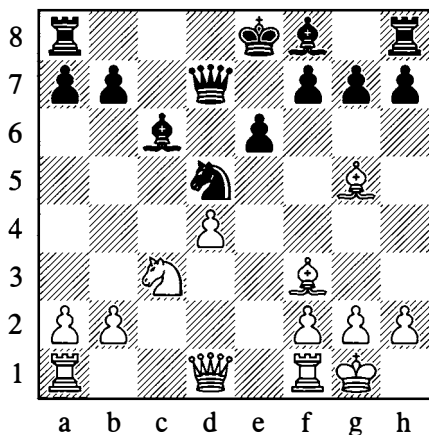
With my development incomplete, my recent queen incursion to e3 may look like premature activity. Can you find the tactical detail I had in mind?

9. Polugaevsky – Polgar, Roquebrune 1992



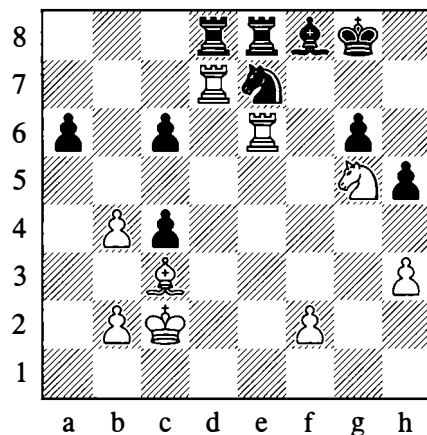
Black is obviously winning, but there is a clear-cut way to finish off the game, which is especially important in blitz games.

8. Polgar – Kramnik, Paris 1992

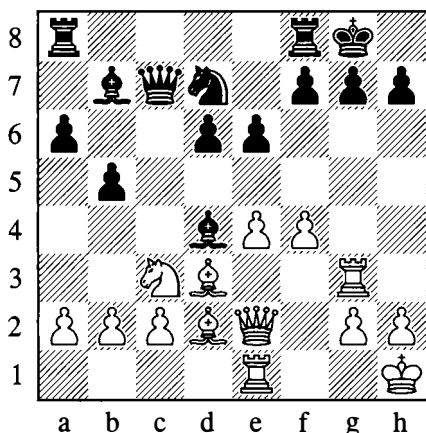


Black has a stable blockade on d5 and my piece activity would not be so threatening were it not for the black king's continued presence in the centre. I met 13...♔e7 with 14.♕xd5, aiming to provoke some complications before the king can castle. Which bishop should Black capture?

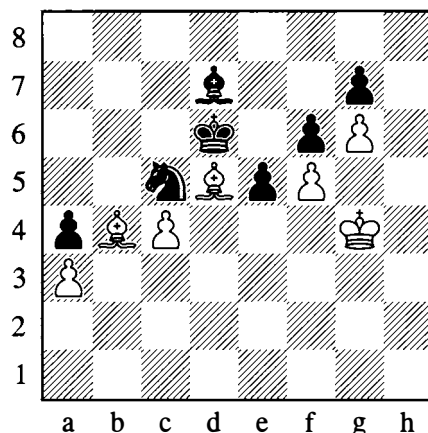
10. Polgar – Karpov, Monaco 1996



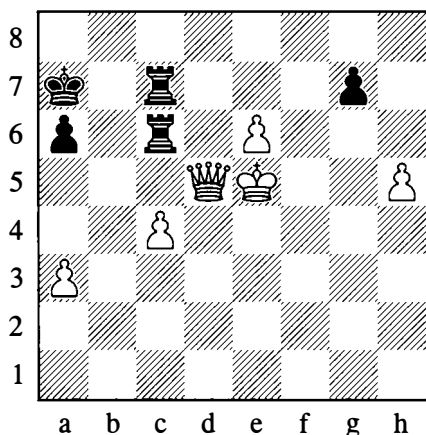
Black's extra pawn is worthless and the overwhelming activity of my pieces suggests that the time has come to look for a forced win. To give a small hint, I would say that Black's last move (38...♖ad8) facilitates the combination...

11. Polgar – Ivanchuk, Moscow 1996

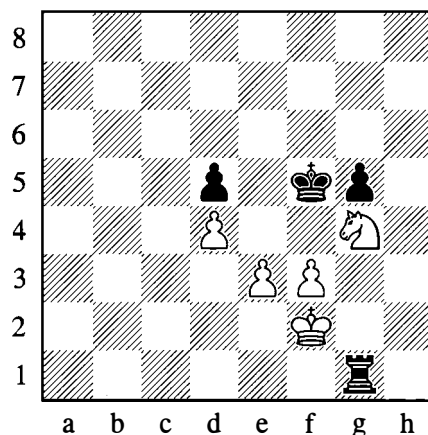
White's pieces are mainly targeting the enemy kingside. However, a space advantage usually allows both wings to be kept under observation at the same time. White's combination in this case relies on dynamic factors all over the board.

13. Polgar – Gulko, Moscow (ol) 1994

White has the bishop pair and a huge space advantage on the kingside. Still, Black's fortress looks hard to break. How should he have answered my somewhat mysterious retreat 57. Qd2 ?

12. Polgar – Nikolic, Monaco 1996

White has a material advantage in the endgame and overwhelming territorial superiority. How can I convert this into a win?

14. Nielsen – Polgar, Las Vegas 1999

The position is drawn; despite my extra exchange, I cannot break White's fortress. Therefore, I chose the most elegant way to force a draw. Can you find it?

Solutions

1 Judit Polgar – Evgeny Bareev

Moscow “Kremlin stars” (rapid) 1996

This was a knockout rapid tournament. It was my first visit to the Kremlin, but in 2002 I returned for the ‘Russia versus The Rest of the World’ match and obtained my only ever win over Kasparov!

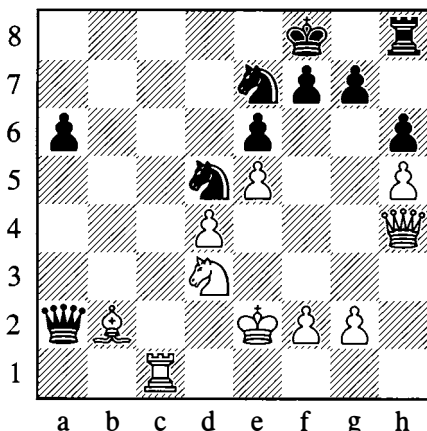
Prior to my mini-match against Bareev, I had won all my games against him, and so I played confidently. I qualified for the next round and won again, this time against Ivanchuk. A fragment from this match can also be found in this chapter.

Since 27...♖ed5 allows mate in one, Bareev moved the other knight without thinking:

27...♖bd5??

Actually, I was hoping for this when I played the innocent-looking 27.♖h4.

In fact, Black’s position is difficult. For instance, 27...♖c4 does not threaten anything, since the tactical trick from the game keeps the knight pinned. I planned 28.d5 exd5 29.e6 with a strong attack, for instance 29...f6 30.♖g3 threatening ♖b8♯.



28.♖c8♯!

Oops! If 28...♖xc8 29.♖d8 mate.
1–0

2 Michael Adams – Judit Polgar

Frankfurt (rapid) 1998

This was the first occasion when my future husband joined me at a chess tournament! For both of us, it was a bit strange to feel that everybody’s eyes were following us. We understood, though, that this was normal to a certain extent, as the chess community had been waiting for such a moment for a long time!

Later, it became normal for my husband to accompany me to tournaments, offering me his strong moral support.

When Adams played 47.♖h4 I was down to two minutes, so I was happy to grab my tactical chance:

47...♖xc4!

The queen is taboo because of 48...♖xh7♯ with mate in two.

48.♖h3 ♖xh7

And I won.
...0–1

3 Jonathan Mestel – Judit Polgar

Oviedo (rapid) 1993

This was a 13-round Swiss tournament, in which my sisters also took part. I scored 10½ points and tied for first with Vaisser. The first prize was a white Opel Corsa, which for obvious reasons could not be divided, so we had to play a sudden-death playoff game. I had White and needed to win, which I succeeded

in doing despite having a bad position out of the opening.

35.♖f5† is a gross blunder. My opponent probably thought that I had nothing better than 35...♞xf5, regaining part of the material, but not enough to save the game.

With a bit of calculation he would have found 35.♞d2† ♕xh5 36.♙f3†! winning even more material, since 36...♕xh4 37.♞f4† leads to mate in one.

The simple 35.♞xe2 would also have parried the threats.

35...♞xf5!

I gladly gave up the queen to gain the decisive tempo, since the rook is necessary to close the mating net.

36.♙xf5 ♞xh2†

If 37.♕g1 ♙d4 mate.

0–1

4 Alexander Morozevich – Judit Polgar

Frankfurt (rapid) 1998

Morozevich's move is a big blunder. He probably thought there was no double attack available, but overlooked a slightly more subtle tactical nuance.

Instead, 43.♞e3 would be just perfect.

43...♙f3†!

Clearing the d-file with gain of time. Unfortunately for White, he cannot escape the back rank with the king, since the h2-square is controlled by the knight.

44.gxf3 ♖d1† 45.♞f1 ♞xf1† 46.♕xf1 ♞c4†

The second double attack, putting the dot on the i.

47.♕g2 ♞xf4 48.a4 ♕h6

0–1

5 Judit Polgar – James Thinnssen

US Open, Kona 1998

This tournament was a success for me: I scored 8 out of 9, just enough to become the US Open champion! But best of all was swimming with the dolphins at the Kona Hilton Hotel, a thrilling experience!

Black's last move exposes his pieces to an unexpected double attack. Simplifying with 20...♙xe5 would have been safer.

21.♙xd7 ♙xd7 22.♙xe7 ♞xe7 23.♙d5!

Curiously, my opponent was taken completely by surprise when the knight landed on this square. White wins an exchange.

1–0

6 Judit Polgar – Manuel Rivas Pastor

Dos Hermanas 1993

15.♙db5!

This tricky piece of geometry causes Black decisive material losses. 13 minutes were enough to convince Rivas that further resistance would be useless.

The forcing line goes 15...♞xd3 16.♙xc7 ♞xd1† 17.♙xd1. For just an instant, material is even again, but now Black loses at least an exchange. 17...♙xg1 18.♙xa8+–

1–0

7 Mihai Suba – Judit Polgar

Debrecen (rapid) 1992

During the European Team Championship in Debrecen 1992 (in which I did not take part) I played a blitz match against Ljubojevic. The main idea was to try out the new 'Fischer clock' which was used in the Fischer – Spassky return match in 1992.

The original idea was to have a blitz match of first to five wins on the 23rd of November, and continue with a combined rapid/blitz four-game match on the next day. The rate of play was 3 minutes + 3 seconds for the blitz, and 15 minutes plus 15 seconds for the rapid.

I lost the first and third games but immediately levelled the score each time. In the fourth game I was quite lucky, which irritated Ljubojevic, who played nervously for the rest of the games; I won 5-2.

On the next day he refused to continue and was replaced by Suba, who happened to be rested by his team that afternoon. I won both rapid games and drew the blitz match 1-1.

The whole experience was useful, as shortly after Debrecen I faced Spassky in a match using the 'Fischer clock'.

In the diagram position, White has more space and is well developed, but his coordination is far from perfect. This allowed me to gain an advantage with:

14...♗e5!

White has to give up either the bishop pair with 15.fxe5, with disastrous consequences on the dark squares, or the c4-pawn with 15.♙c2. Suba chose the latter, but gained no compensation and eventually lost.

...0-1

8 Judit Polgar – Vladimir Kramnik

Paris training game (rapid) 1992

Kramnik played:

14...♙g5?

which is a blunder. He must have discarded 14...♙xd5 15.♙xe7 ♗xe7 on general grounds, but a closer look reveals that Black enjoys enough stability to get his king out of the centre: 16.♗g4 (or 16.♗e1 ♗hd8 17.♗e5 ♗f8=) 16...h5 17.♗g5† ♗f8 18.♗ac1 ♗h6

This slightly unusual way of developing allows Black to maintain approximate equality.

15.♙xe6!

An unexpected tactical twist, based on a hidden aspect of the king's vulnerability.

15...fxe6 16.♗h5† ♗f7 17.♗xg5

I won a pawn without any shadow of compensation for Black. However, in the middlegame I did not play my best and the game ended in a draw.

...½-½

9 Lev Polugaevsky – Judit Polgar

Roquebrune (blitz) 1992

During the first Roquebrune rapid tournament, a blitz contest was also organized. Up to the age of 12 or 13, this definitely was my favourite form of playing chess, and in 1992 I still enjoyed it a lot! Actually, that has not changed today...

44...♗h1†!

Now and one move later, the exposed position of the e1-rook comes as an essential complement to the mating net.

45.♗f2

If 45.♗xh1 f2† promotes the pawn.

45...♗h2† 46.♗e3

Strictly speaking, this loses most quickly of all the options, since it allows mate in two, but Polu obviously wanted to avoid the fork ...f3-f2† after either 46.♗g1 or 46.♗f1 ♙c4† 47.♗g1.

46...♙g5† 47.♗d3 ♗d2#

A slightly surprising mate in the centre of the board.

10 Judit Polgar – Anatoly Karpov

Monaco (rapid) 1996

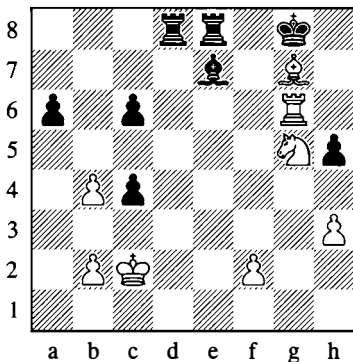
39.♟dxe7!

Removing the defender of the g6-pawn. There are two possible lines, each of them with a different character.

39...♞xe7

Allowing me to win material, based on the exposed position of the d8-rook.

Alternatively, 39...♙xe7 would lead to mate: 40.♞xg6† ♔f8 41.♙g7† ♔g8



Can you see the forced mate? The pattern is quite nice! 42.♙h6† ♔h8 43.♟f7† ♔h7 44.♞g7#

40.♞xg6† ♙g7 41.♙xg7

And I won eventually, since 41...♞xg7 42.♞xg7† ♔xg7 43.♟e6† wins the rook. ...1–0

11 Judit Polgar – Vassily Ivanchuk

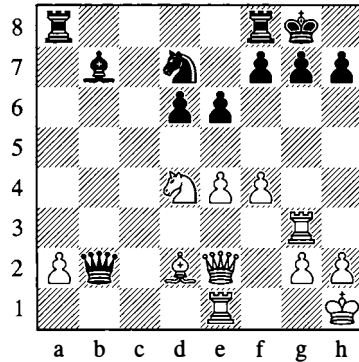
Moscow “Kremlin stars” (rapid) 1996

17.♙xb5!

It looks as if I chose to deliver the tactical blow as far as possible from the kingside!

17...♟c5

The main variation of the combination goes: 17...axb5 18.♟xb5 ♞xc2 (The text is the only attempt to maintain material equality, as 18...♞c5 19.♟xd4 ♞xd4 20.♙c3 wins.) 19.♟xd4 ♞xb2



Black has restored material equality, but his queen is exposed on the long diagonal. 20.♟xe6! Clearing the diagonal with gain of time. 20...fxe6 21.♙c3 ♞xe2 22.♞xg7† ♔h8 23.♞xd7† e5 24.♞xe2 ♞xf4 25.h3 All the central pawns will disappear, and I will be left with two extra pawns, which should suffice for a win.

18.♙d3

The game went on with an extra pawn for me, and I eventually won.

...1–0

12 Judit Polgar – Predrag Nikolic

Monaco (blindfold) 1996

This was the fifth edition of the Monaco event, this time played with the unusual system of two parallel round-robin tournaments: a rapid (25 minutes + 10 seconds) and a blindfold (25 minutes + 20 seconds). Each day, one had to play the two different games against the same opponent.

We played the blindfold games sitting in front of a screen with an empty chess board on it. We could make our moves either by

mouse-clicking or by typing on the keyboard the initial and final squares of every move.

To me, playing blindfold games was quite natural. Ever since I started to play chess, blindfold games and analysis were a constant part of my preparation. Therefore, the shorter the time control, the better it suited me.

47. ♖xc6!

As is so often the case, the most effective winning method is liquidating to an elementary ending (a pawn ending this time).

47.. ♜xc6 48.e7 ♜c8 49.♔e6 ♔b7 50.♔f7 ♜c7 51.♔f8
1-0

13 Judit Polgar – Boris Gulko

Moscow Olympiad 1994

This was my first participation at the Olympiad as a member of the “men’s” team. I was only 18, but had the highest rating in the team, so I played on the top board.

My opponent had only three minutes left to reach move 60 and failed to notice the threat created by my last move.

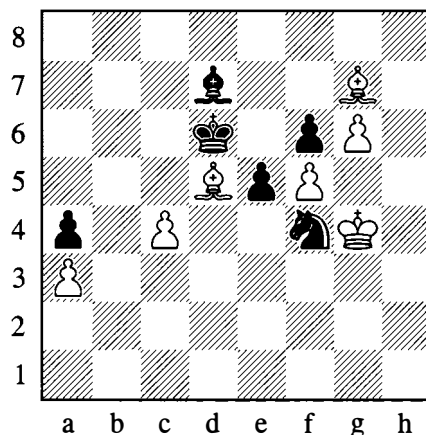
57... ♖d3?

He should have hurried to defend the base of his pawn chain with 57... ♔e7. True, after 58. ♖h6 ♔f8 59. ♖e3 Boris would have had to give up the blockade on c5, but after 59... ♖b3 60.c5 ♖a5 he would have set up an even more stable blockade on c6. In this case, Black’s position would have remained quite safe.

58. ♖h6 ♖f4

Played with one minute left on the clock.

59. ♖xg7



59... ♖xd5?

The decisive mistake, but an excusable one, since 60.cxd5 ♔xd5 61. ♖xf6 ♔e4 with a draw seems pretty much forced.

59... ♔e7! would have left me with a complicated technical task. Black will regain the pawn with ... ♖xg6, but having opened a kingside file would offer me additional ideas compared to the position after 56 moves.

60. ♖f8†!

Gulko saw this zwischenzug, but the next one came as a surprise to him. His attention was probably focused on the kingside.

60... ♖e7

If now 61.g7? ♖xf5† followed by 62... ♖h7, but...

61.c5†!

Forcing the king to leave the knight undefended. If 61... ♔c6 then 62. ♖xe7 ♖e8 63. ♖xf6 wins.

1-0



Analysing with Boris Gulko after the game

14 Peter Heine Nielsen – Judit Polgar

KO World Championship, Las Vegas 1999

I had won my first game with White, so in this game a draw was enough to progress to Round 3.

56...♞xg4!?

It was typical of me that even in a drawn position I still preferred a pretty, study-like continuation.

57.fxg4†

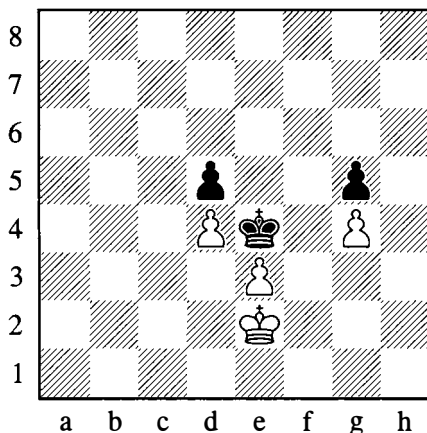
He probably expected 57...♞xg4 58.e4 dxe4 59.♞e3 ♞f5 60.d5 with a draw anyway, but that would have spoiled the beauty of my idea.

57...♞e4

Forcing him to stalemate me:

58.♞e2

1/2–1/2





Chapter 3

Dynamic Pawn Play



Relaxing with Bent Larsen and Susan after my game with Spassky (page 44). Larsen was a great story teller.

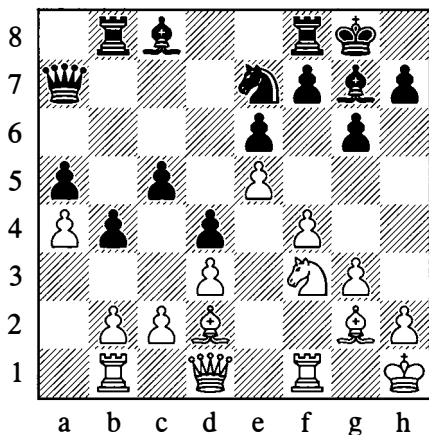
After 1992 my pawns had less reason to complain than in the period covered by the first volume. Experience had taught me (sometimes painfully) a lot about the committal character of pawn moves and my strategic understanding had improved.

Fortunately, I did not lose any of my ability to use my pawns for dynamic purposes. Much of what I wrote in Chapter 7 of the first volume remains valid in the new period, but the fragments and games below are more complex and were played against stronger opponents.

We will start with two examples in which well-timed pawn sacrifices opened lines for my pieces, while also shaking my opponent's stability.

Boris Spassky – Judit Polgar

Veterans vs. Women, Monte Carlo 1994



The veteran team was awesome on this occasion: Smyslov, Spassky, Portisch, Larsen, Hort and Ivkov. From the world's strongest veterans only Korchnoi was missing, since he felt too young and full of ambition to be called a veteran.

The ladies team consisted of my sister Susan, Chiburdanidze, Ioseliani, Arakhamia, Xie Jun and me. We managed to win a tight match, 37-35.

For me, this was the fourth tournament in a row after being away from home for a month and a half, my personal record at that time. This meant I had to pack and unpack in four different hotels, which I did not really mind since I enjoyed travelling. However, I remember that in Monaco I had less patience for playing chess...

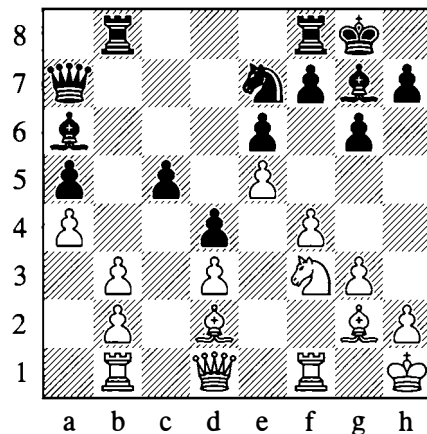
Black has a good game since the h1-a8 diagonal is open, making the white king vulnerable, and the d5-square is available to the knight. In order to consolidate, White would need to play b2-b3 followed by the knight transfer to c4, but he will get no time for this.

18...b3!

Crossing White's long-term plans and opening lines for my pieces.

19.cxb3 ♖a6

With the d2-bishop in the way of the knight, White is not in time to defend his weak b3- and d3-pawns with ♖f3-d2(-c4).



20.♞c2

If 20.♞xa5 ♜d5 White could prevent the crushing ...♜e3 only by giving up material, for instance 21.♞d2 ♞xd3.

20...♞b6 21.♞fc1 ♞fc8 22.♜e1

Defending the weak d3-pawn before I attack it with ...♖xb3; the knight stands badly on e1, though.

22...♘d5

Since White cannot improve his position in any way, I decided to regroup in the best way possible, before retrieving the b3-pawn. In such cases, the threat is stronger than its execution.

23.♙e4 ♙f8 24.♖d1 ♙e7 25.♘c2

With the obvious intention of reaching the c4-square somehow. I thought 25...♖xb3 would be good enough, but wanted to take full advantage of the fact that the defence of the d3-pawn has been weakened.

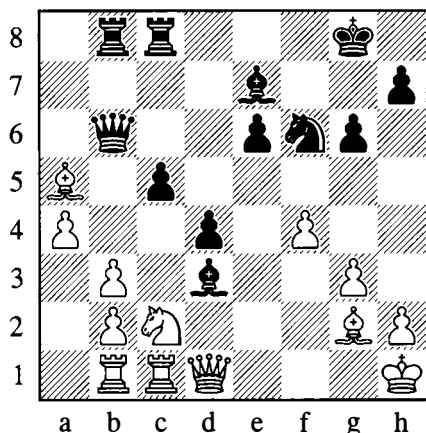
25...f5!? 26.exf6 ♘xf6 27.♙g2

In view of the weakness of the long diagonal, White cannot allow the exchange of his bishop for the black knight.

27...♙xd3

White's position collapses.

28.♙xa5

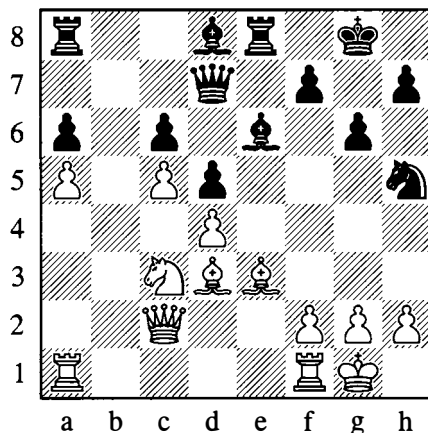


I played 28...♖a6 and eventually won, but this was the right time to take the b3-pawn: 28...♖xb3!, with crushing domination.

In the previous example, the sacrifice was carried out directly: the pawn advanced to a defended square. The next fragment features an indirect sacrifice: a pawn is left undefended in order to achieve a certain positional goal.

Judit Polgar – Paul van der Sterren

Wijk aan Zee 1998



White has more space, but the blocked character of the position offers Black hopes to hold his own. There are no pawn breaks available, but I found a way to enliven the position by sacrificing a pawn to create a passer.

I had spent one hour and five minutes up to this moment. It took me only 13 more minutes to finish the game, which shows that after the next move I finally started feeling in my element.

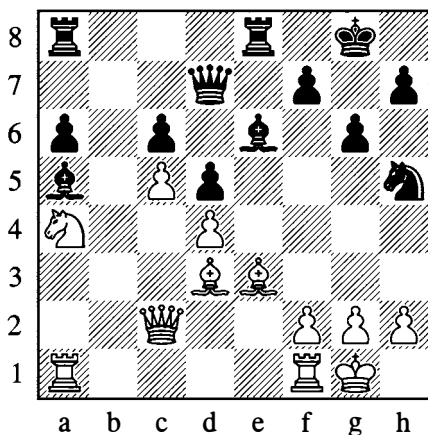
19.♘a4!

I felt that occupying the b6-square was more important than material. I also considered 19.♖fb1!? followed by ♖b6, sacrificing an exchange with similar ideas.

19...♙xa5

Since the knight will land on b6 anyway, Black has to look for at least some material compensation.

If 19...♖a7 20.♟b6 ♔c7 21.♞fe1 I could combine the pressure against the a6-pawn with play on the e-file. Black's poor coordination and lack of space will prevent him from holding the position.



20.♟b6 ♔c7 21.♞cxb6

In addition to the strong passed pawn, I gained the half-open a- and c-files for my rooks. To Black's list of problems, we can add that his knight is far from the main theatre of operations.

21...♞f5?

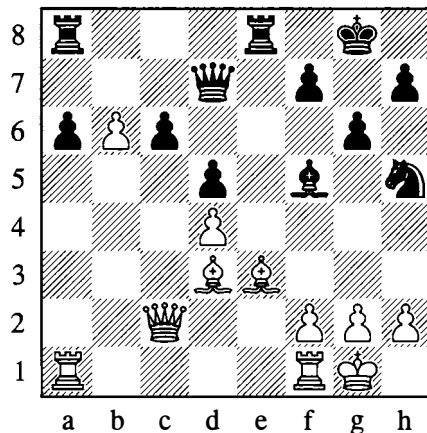
Confronted with unexpected problems, my opponent goes wrong immediately, allowing me to regain the pawn with a big advantage.

For such situations involving sudden structural modifications, I recommend taking a fresh look at the position. If possible, it is useful to take a short walk to look at the other games before putting serious thought into your next decision.

In this case, Black should have looked for a regrouping involving the knight's participation in the queenside defence.

The best (and probably only) way to achieve that was 21...♞b7, gaining a tempo by attacking the pawn. 22.♞c5 ♟g7 23.♞a5 ♟c8 followed by ...♟e6. Black's position certainly

looks bad, but most of his pieces are defending the wing where I am supposed to break through. Black is playing for survival and not for beauty!



22.♞c5 ♟g7 23.♞a5 ♟c8!

The result of a maximalist approach.

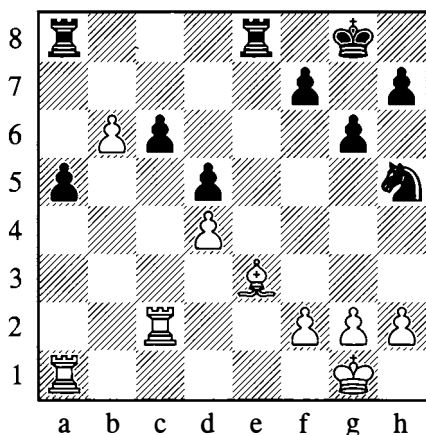
23.♞xc6!± was good enough for a clear advantage, but I was looking for a way of transposing into a won ending without giving my opponent any chances. In long tournaments this approach usually saves energy for the decisive rounds.

I refrained from 23.♞xf5 gxf5 because the weakness of the f5-pawn is not so obvious. Moreover, it controls some space, which will become relevant in a line below.

23...♞xc2 24.♞xc2 a5

Desperately looking for some counterplay based on his passed pawn.

If 24...♞e6 25.g4 ♟g7 26.♟f4 the threat of b6-b7 would force Black to abandon the c6-pawn with 26...♞e7 anyway. Obviously, 25.g4 would not be possible with a black pawn on f5.



25. Rxc6 Bxb8

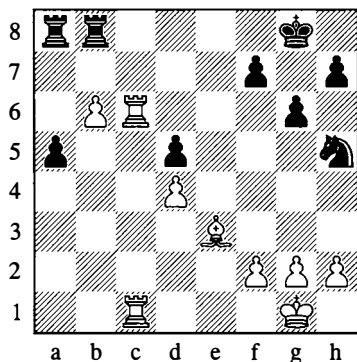
A curious moment. I had the distinct feeling my position was winning, requiring just a few more accurate moves to wrap things up. I spent six minutes on a very logical move which in fact lets a big part of my advantage slip away.

26. Qh6?!

Not as good as it looks. In the absence of queens, Black could have easily sidestepped the back-rank problems.

It is not entirely clear yet which diagonal would offer the best attacking possibilities to my bishop, so I should have remained flexible and activated my queen's rook with:

26. Rac1!



26...f5

Preventing g2-g4 and clearing some vital space for the king.

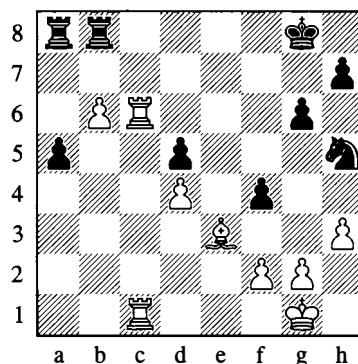
If 26...a4 then 27. g4 Qg7 28. Qh6 followed by b6-b7 wins material on account of the back-rank weakness.

Black cannot evacuate the back rank with 26...Qg7 in view of 27. g4 Qf6 28. Qf4 attacking the rook and threatening Qe5.

27. h3

Renewing the threat of g2-g4, thus gaining a tempo while clearing the h2-square for the king.

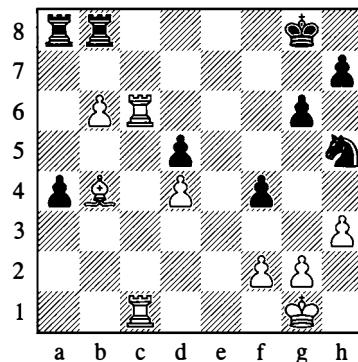
27...f4



28. Qd2

Since Black has prevented Qe3-h6, the bishop switches to the opposite wing. The immediate threat is 29. Qxa5! Bxa5 30. Bc8+ Bxc8 31. Bxc8+ followed by 32. b7. In this line, we notice the usefulness of h2-h3.

28...a4 29. Qb4



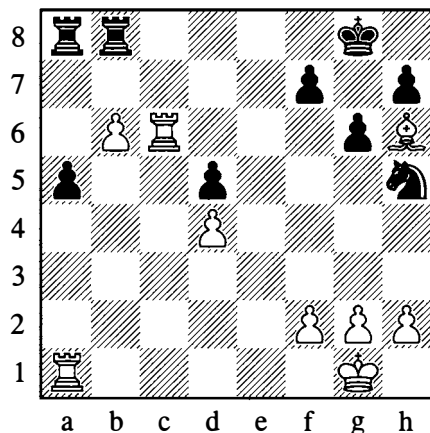
Black is helpless against the threat 30. Qd6 Bb7 31. Bc8+ Bxc8 32. Bxc8+ Qf7 33. Bc7+ Bxc7 34. bxc7 and the pawn promotes.

29...a3 30.♙xa3

A familiar pattern.

30...♞xa3 31.♞c8† ♞xc8 32.♞xc8† ♔f7 33.b7

With decisive material gains.

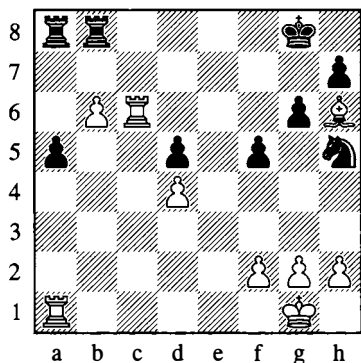


26...♘g7?

Paul had only ten minutes left to reach move 40 and spent two of them on this rather docile move. He might have already given up hope of saving the game.

26...a4 would transpose to a winning line given above: 27.g4 ♘g7 28.♞ac1

Instead Black could put up resistance with 26...f5! freeing the king and stabilizing the knight on h5.



Even with the loss of one tempo, the manoeuvre 27.♙d2! would be best. (If 27.h3

f4! the bishop would not re-enter the game so easily.) 27...a4 28.♙b4 ♘g7 Black is in a better situation than in the similar line starting with 26.♞ac1. White has not only lost a tempo with the bishop, but also has not yet cleared a second-rank square for the king. Black can try to defend with ...♞b7 and ...♘e8, although after ♙b4-c5 White's advantage is obvious.

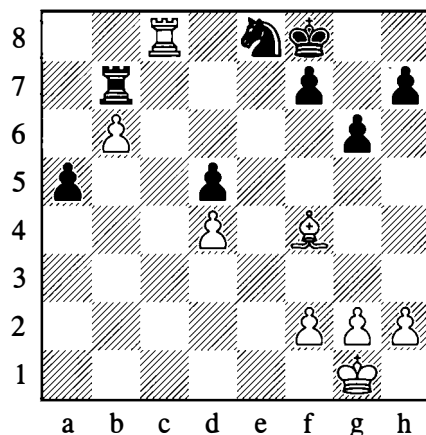
27.♞ac1

Clearly everything has gone according to my plan. My strong passed pawn and Black's back-rank problems give me a decisive advantage.

27...♘e8 28.♙f4!

An important move, forcing the rook to either weaken the back-rank defence or leave the b7-square undefended.

28...♞b7 29.♞c8 ♞xc8 30.♞xc8 ♔f8



31.♙d6†

The bishop, a true hero of my army over the last few moves, delivers the decisive blow.

31...♔g7 32.♞xe8 ♞xb6

When initiating the forcing sequence, I spotted this double threat, but also the way out of it:

33.♙f8† ♔f6 34.g3

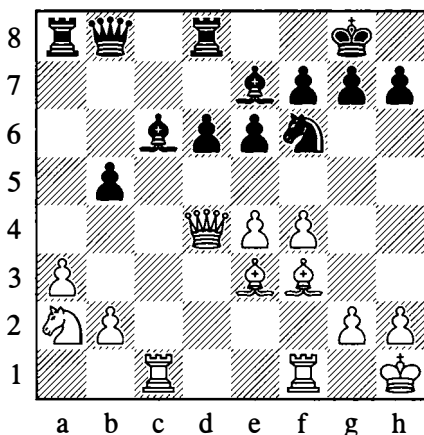
1-0

The next fragment does not involve any pawn sacrifices, but the combination of two thematic central breaks gave me a pleasant aesthetical feeling.

Nigel Short – Judit Polgar

New York PCA (rapid) 1994

In a knockout event this was the first game of my mini-match against Nigel. I will analyse Game 2 on page 228.



White's last move was $\text{d}c3\text{-a}2$, attacking my bishop and planning $\text{d}b4$. There was nothing wrong with $17...\text{w}b7$, attacking the e4-pawn, but since White has weakened his central control for just an instant, I looked for dynamic counterplay, a typical motif in the Sicilian. Black usually aims for either $...e6\text{-e}5$ or $...d6\text{-d}5$, but only on very rare (and fortunate!) occasions is able to carry out both pawn breaks consecutively!

17...e5!

The attacked queen has a limited choice since it has to keep the e4-pawn defended. The temporary weakening of the d5-square is not relevant after the white knight's retreat from the centre.

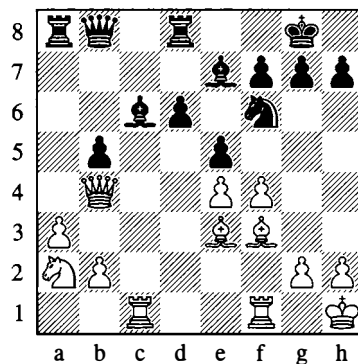
18. $\text{w}b3\text{?!}$

A typical rapid game "optically safe" move.

The only way to keep approximate equality was:

18. $\text{w}b4\text{!}$

Of course, one needs more time than is available in a rapid game to understand that placing the queen under the permanent threat of $...a8\text{-a}4$ is not dangerous. As we will see, the queen is safer here than on d3, and pinning the d6-pawn is also important.



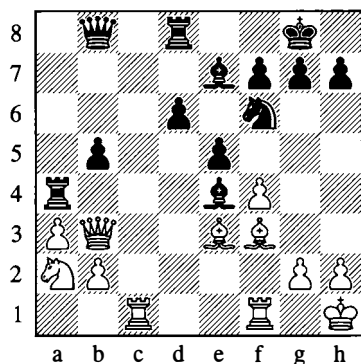
18...a4

Executing the main threat at once.

If $18...\text{exf}4$ $19.\text{g}xf4$ $\text{w}b7$, with strong pressure against the e4-pawn, then White has the surgical solution: $20.\text{f}xc6$ $\text{w}xc6$ $21.\text{e}5$ $\text{d}d5$ $22.\text{w}b3$ $\text{dxe}5$ $23.\text{d}c3$ $\text{exf}4$ $24.\text{d}xd5$ $\text{w}e6$ $25.\text{d}xe7\text{+}$ $\text{w}xe7$ $26.\text{g}xa8$ $\text{f}xa8$ $27.\text{w}xb5$ regaining the material with a complicated and fairly balanced position.

Setting up the long diagonal battery does not offer a palpable advantage either: $18...\text{w}b7$ $19.\text{f}xc6$ $\text{w}xc6$ $20.\text{fxe}5$ Now is when the pin is relevant. $20...\text{d}d7$ $21.\text{e}6\text{!}$ The pawn clears the path for its colleague, in order to activate the bishop. $21...\text{d}e5$ $22.\text{exf}7\text{+}$ gives White too much play on the light squares, so instead $21...\text{fxe}6$ $22.\text{e}5$ is more or less forced. With the e7-bishop hanging $22...\text{d}5$ is impossible, so White regains the exchange with balanced play.

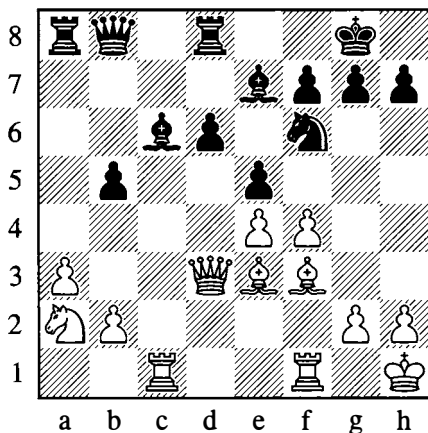
19. $\text{w}b3$ $\text{g}xe4$



Black has won a pawn, but White can finally complete the knight manoeuvre:

20.♖b4 ♕xf3 21.♞xf3

The threat of ♖b4-c6 will regain the pawn, with a complicated fight.



18...d5

Seizing the moment – one of my favourite motifs!

Nigel probably overlooked this strong zwischenzug, relying on the fact that I would need to spend a tempo on defending my bishop.

19.♞xc6

19.exd5 ♕xd5 would offer me a strong initiative in the centre. We can see that the white queen feels less comfortable than it would on b4.

19...dxe4 20.♞e2 exf3 21.♞xf3 e4

Only a few moves earlier, this square was occupied by a white pawn, securing a space advantage. Now the roles have reversed...

22.♞e2 ♞d3

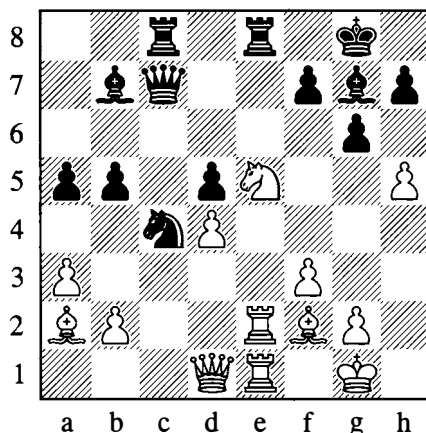
With such a strong outpost, Black's advantage is indisputable. I eventually won a slow squeezing game.

So far, our main discourse has referred to favourable structural modifications, but the time has come for a switch. In the next example, I sacrificed a pawn to increase the dynamic potential of my pieces, without any structural implications.

Judit Polgar – Sergey Tiviakov

Madrid 1994

This fifth-round game was a continuation of my excellent start: three out of three including the win over Shirov, page 182, and a fourth-round draw.



White's position is more active; I have some kingside pressure, but something seems to be missing to take over the initiative.

My old scoresheet provides some interesting information. Up to this point I had spent one hour and 24 minutes, compared to Sergey's

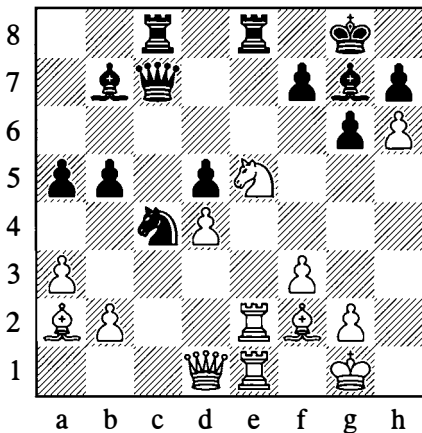
one hour and 46 minutes. My relative slowness (compared to my normal pace) in the first part of the game is explained in my personal notes after the game: “I played the 2.c3 Sicilian for the first time in my life. Had played many times against it, but I considered it time for me to be on the white side and win :)” What made things even more interesting is that Tiviakov is a 2.c3 Sicilian expert with White himself! It is very exciting to fight your opponent with his own weapons!

I invested ten minutes on the next move and then needed less than ten minutes to finish the game! Quite an uneven distribution of time!

31.h6!

The key move. By sacrificing this modest pawn, I provoke a lack of harmony in Black's camp. I remember how excited I became after discovering the richness of dynamic ideas available.

Tiviakov answered after five minutes; he had several continuations to choose from and probably applied the method of elimination. If this is true, his criterion of selection was not the best.



31...♙xh6!

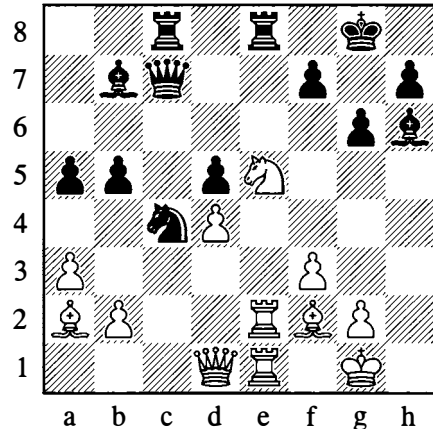
Kindly entering the main line of my combination.

31...♙xe5? is something that experienced

players would not even consider. After 32.dxe5+ the control over the dark squares offers White an overwhelming strategic advantage, while the vulnerability of the king will inevitably lead to a decisive attack.

31...♙h8? and 31...♙f6? would lose on the spot due to back-rank problems: 32.♖xc4 ♜xe2 33.♝xe2 bxc4 34.♞e8† ♜xe8 35.♞xe8 mate.

Sergey probably discarded 31...♙f8 on general grounds. The bishop is passive, the h6-pawn still alive and the f6-square vulnerable. And yet, this was the only way to stay alive. I planned 32.♖g4 ♜xe2 33.♞xe2± with strong pressure.



32.♖g4!

The core of my idea. I will not only exchange the dark-squared bishop but also cause Black to lose time with the following king “manoeuvre”.

32...♜xe2 33.♖xh6† ♔g7

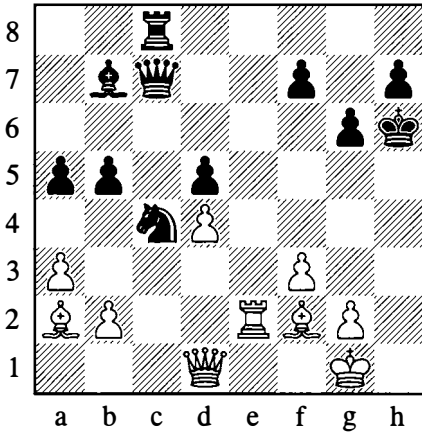
I guess Tiviakov stopped his calculation here, thinking that on any capture on e2 he would answer 34...♔xh6 with no great shakes in sight. In fact, things are a bit more concrete than that.

34.♞xe2!

Not just “any” capture, but one with a clear idea.



34...♔xh6



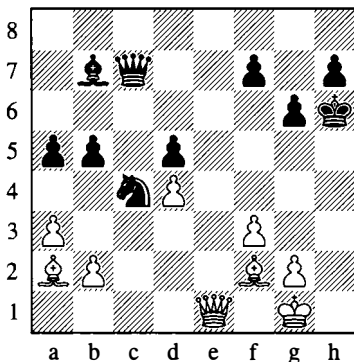
35.♞e1!

The key move, reaching the optimal piece coordination. The queen supports the action of the bishop and rook, creating the threats of ♞e7 and ♔g3. Staying in contact with the c1-square is also important, as will soon be revealed.

It was precisely when I discovered the last move that I became so enthusiastic about 31.h6! which also explains why I played the whole sequence at lightning speed.

35...♔g7

Black has to lose a vital tempo to return the king to relative safety, in order to avoid tactical surprises. For instance, if 35...♞d6 36.♞e7 ♞c7 37.♞xc7 ♞xc7



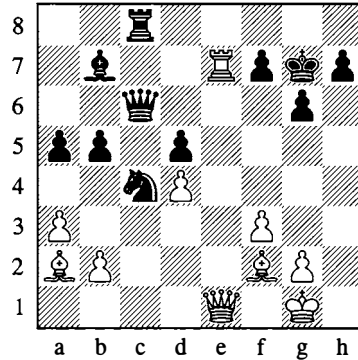
There could follow the unexpected 38.♞c1†! ♔g7 39.b3 winning a piece!

36.♞e7

Occupying the seventh rank with gain of time is almost always an important achievement.

36...♞b6

36...♞c6 would not make a big difference.



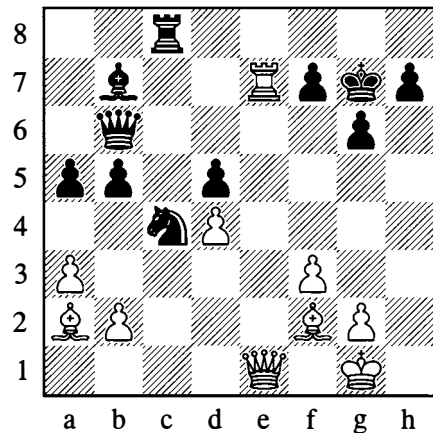
White's attack on the dark squares develops easily and naturally:

37.♞xc4 dxc4 38.♞e5† ♔g8 39.♞e3 ♞d5

If 39...f6 40.♞h2! h5 41.♞g3 the kingside weaknesses are decisive.

40.♞f6

Inevitably followed by ♞h6. Black's major pieces are paralysed, defending the back rank and the f7-pawn, respectively.

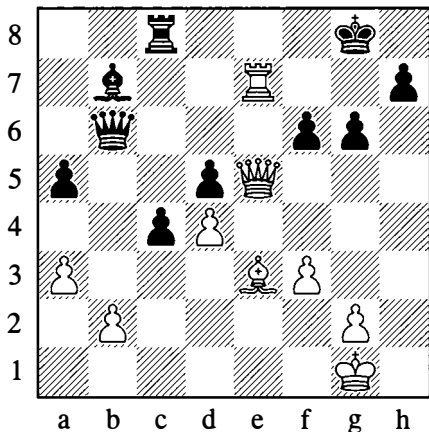


37. ♖xc4

My only seemingly passive piece exchanges the only defender of the e5-square. The invasion on the dark squares is ready to start!

37...bxc4 38. ♖e5† ♕g8 39. ♖e3

Threatening ♖h6.

39...f6**40. ♖f4**

Threatening ♖h6.

40...♕f8

Or if 40...g5 41. ♖h2 followed by mate.

41. ♖xh7 ♕e8 42. ♖h6

Mate is inevitable, so Black resigned. In my old notes I found a more detailed version: "After 42. ♖h6 he became completely red in the face, resigned and ran away."

After this win, I felt that nobody could stop me from winning the tournament.



My mother was very happy with her birthday present – me winning the tournament!

The next day was a day off and I spent it with my mom and my friend Rosa de las Nieves. Rosa was a photographer working for *Jaque*; she was present at all my Spanish tournaments and became a big fan of mine. Here is a picture she took on that enjoyable free day:



We conclude this chapter with two complete games which have something in common – at the critical moment, when pawn tension had built up in a certain area of the board, I decided to maintain my dynamism and activity at the cost of one or even two pawns, rather than give up the tension and play a slightly inferior position.

Vladimir Akopian – Judit Polgar

Merida 2000

This was a double round-robin tournament with only four players, Shirov and Gilberto Hernandez being the other two participants.

This time it was my father who accompanied me. He also enjoyed travelling and was especially interested in visiting Mexico.

I achieved just a normal result (two wins and one loss – to Shirov), but this win against Akopian gave me so much pleasure that during and after the game I kept telling myself that I would for sure include it in my book if I ever was to write one! Even though this happened quite a few years ago, I am happy to keep my inner promise and revisit the pleasant memories surrounding the game.

I had first met Vladimir Akopian while he was playing at the Spring Festival in Budapest. He visited us a few times and we even had some training sessions together around 1993.

He was regarded as a young and talented player; over the years he became an Olympiad gold medallist with the Armenian team and worked as a coach in several countries. All his life he was more of a strong practical player than a theoretician, the same as me...

I will always think of him as a very nice person.

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.a3

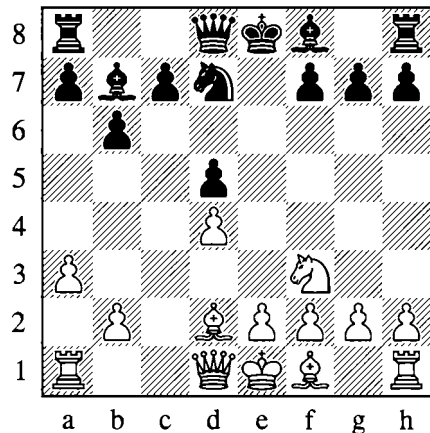
I had started to play the Queen's Indian one year earlier and so was not experienced with it.

This was my first experience against the a2-a3 system and a very pleasant one at that!

4...♙b7 5.♘c3 d5 6.cxd5 ♘xd5 7.♙d2 ♘d7

When preparing for the game together with my second and regular trainer Lev Psakhis, we mainly considered the solid lines that did not have a forcing character and masses of variations. Our guess was good enough, since the game followed our preparation up to move 16!

8.♘xd5 exd5



9.g3

A popular way to develop against Black's hanging pawns; the bishop could go to either g2 or h3.

9...♙d6

Taking the e5-square under control in order to be able to play ...♙e7 followed by ...♘f6(-e4) without allowing ♘f3-e5 on the way.

10.♙g5

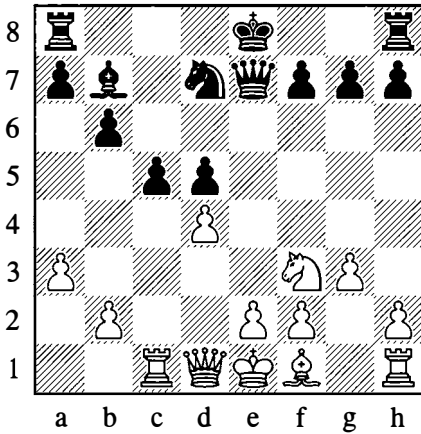
Directly trying to cross my plans.

10...♙e7!

The tempos lost by each bishop before the exchange compensate for each other. Instead 10...♘f6 would allow 11.♘e5, while 10...f6

would not only weaken the light squares but also deprive the knight of the f6-square.

11. ♖xe7 ♜xe7 12. ♞c1 c5



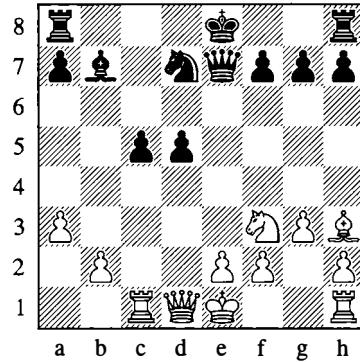
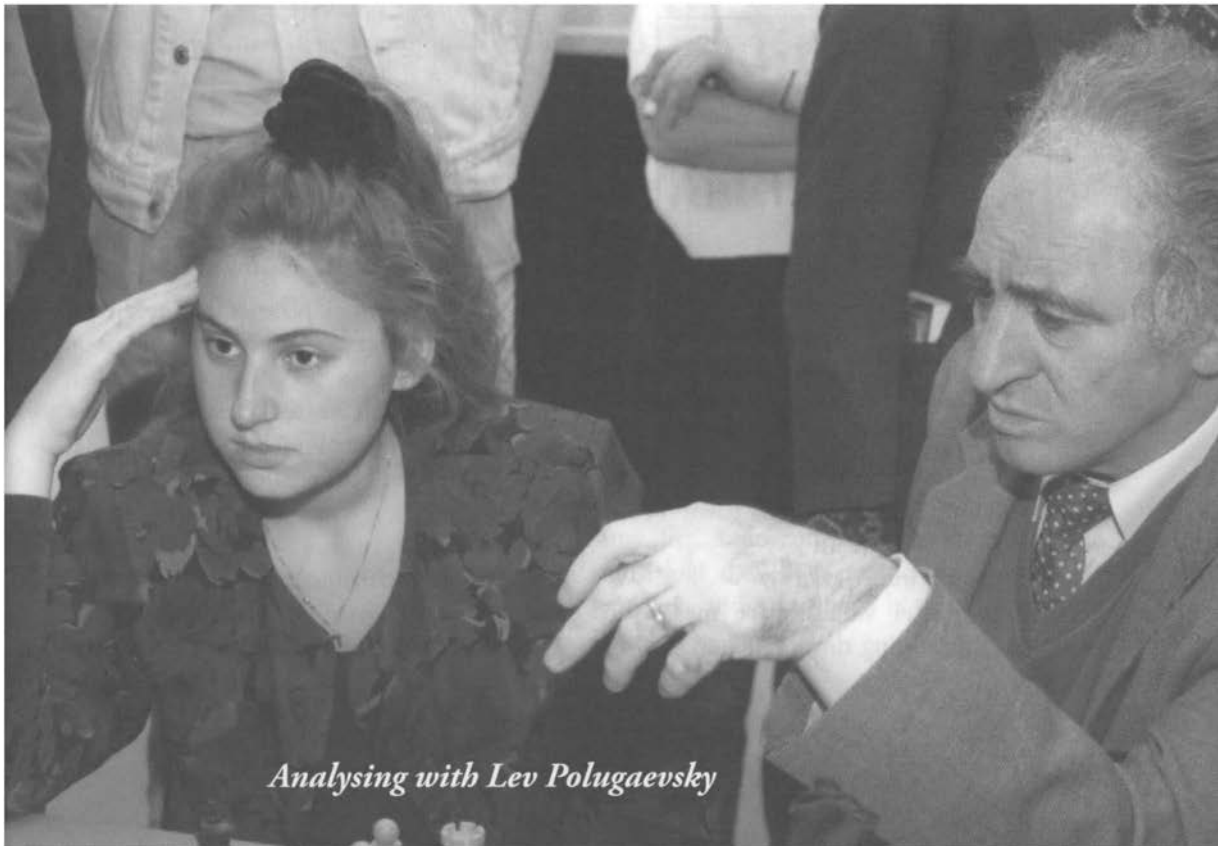
Finally adopting the hanging pawns structure.

13. ♗h3

I believe this novelty was part of Vladimir's preparation, as he played really fast up to this point.

Previously, another top Armenian player developed the bishop only after the intermediate exchange in the centre:

13. dxc5 bxc5 14. ♗h3



This has the drawback of clearing the b6-square too soon, allowing:

14...♖b6

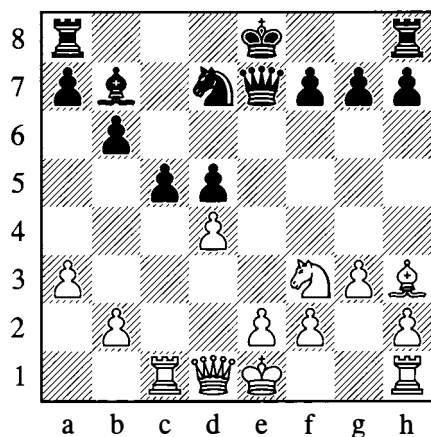
Lputian – Komarov, Reggio Emilia 1998, continued:

15.♟c2 ♕c8 16.♙g2 ♙a6

Followed by ...♞c8 with complicated play.

Here I stopped for 16 minutes to double-check our analysis, although I was enthusiastic about our findings and impatient to put it on the board.

As a result of my long think, Vladimir might have thought I came up with the idea over the board. It is interesting to speculate how the psychological situation would have changed if I had continued blitzing. He would have understood that I had already checked everything in detail, which could have had various consequences. He could either have become nervous or checked every move more carefully, or possibly both at the same time.

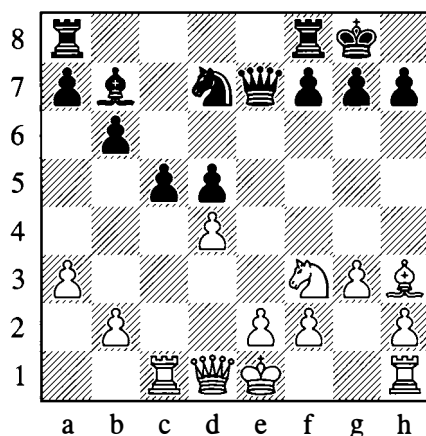


13...0-0!

This was our idea, to give up a pawn for the sake of rapid development.

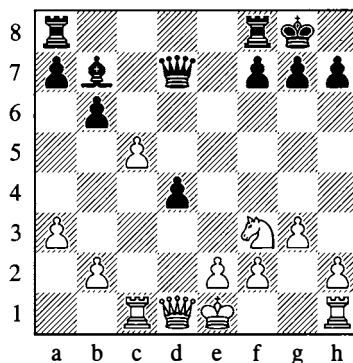
13...♖f6? runs into 14.♟a4†.

13...c4?! 14.♟a4 would place me in an unpleasant pin, facing threats such as ♖e5 or ♞c3-e3.



14.dxc5

I do not know whether Vladimir intended this as a psychological trap, inviting me to keep material equality in an inferior static position with 14...♖xc5 or if he feared that with the different move order 14.♙xd7 ♟xd7 15.dxc5 I could deviate with 15...d4!?



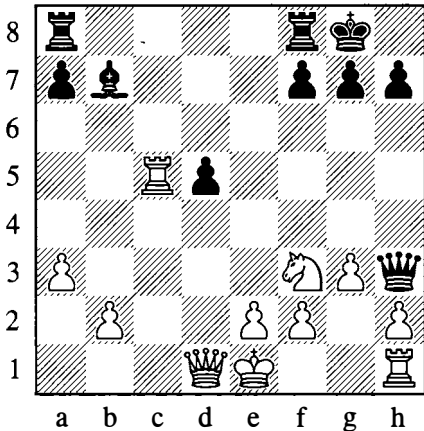
To tell the truth, I planned to meet both move orders in the same way.

At the same time, White had to pick up the gauntlet if he wanted to prove anything. If 14.0-0 ♖f6 Black has comfortable play.

14...bxc5

14...d4? is impossible because of 15.c6.

15.♙xd7 ♟xd7 16.♞xc5 ♟h3



We stopped our analysis here, considering that Black has enough compensation. White cannot castle and the d5-pawn is not easy to block, making ...d5-d4 a permanent threat: ♖f3-d4 allows ...♗g2, while the queen is the piece least suited for blocking purposes.

Actually, the position remains very concrete and its fate is likely to be decided by just one tempo. In modern times, there is a strong temptation to continue the analysis for at least a few more moves. Speaking for myself, if I consider that I have a great position and the engine more or less agrees with me, I prefer to save time and energy by stopping the line there.

17.♗d3

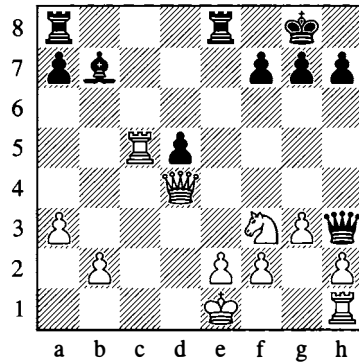
Just one of many reasonable continuations.

My old notes included an interesting piece of information: “After the game, Akopian said he had analysed 17.♗c7 about five years earlier, but thought that Black was OK after 17...♗ab8 followed by ...♗a8, ...♗fe8, with ...d5-d4 in the air.”

17.♗d4!?

Temporarily blocking the pawn and threatening ♗d4-h4, but it fails to:

17...♗fe8!



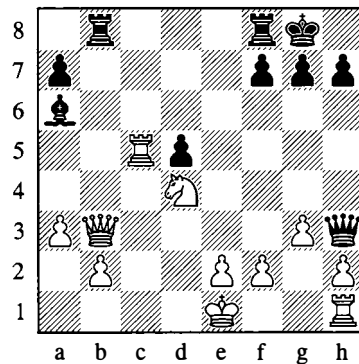
Apart from the obvious threats ...♗e8-e4 and ...♗a6, there is the better-masked one: 18...♗g2 19.♗g1 ♗xf3!

This forces White to give up his plan based on ♗h4.

18.♗f4 d4

With a strong initiative.

Or if 17.♗b3 ♗ab8 White does not get much from 18.♖d4 (hoping for 18...♗g2? 19.♗f3!) because of 18...♗a6.

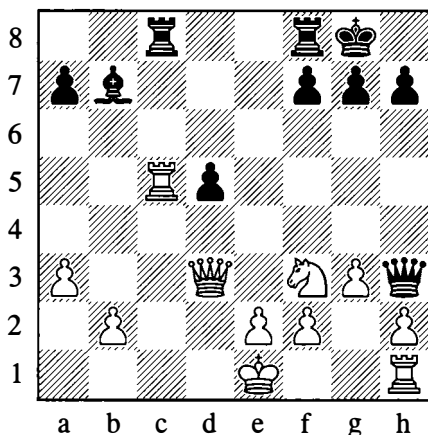


The b2-pawn needs defence, preventing the desired activation of the queen.

17...♗ac8

I spent only 11 minutes on this move (my first independent one), finding it the most logical. White's most active piece is his c5-rook, and I exchange it while continuing my development.

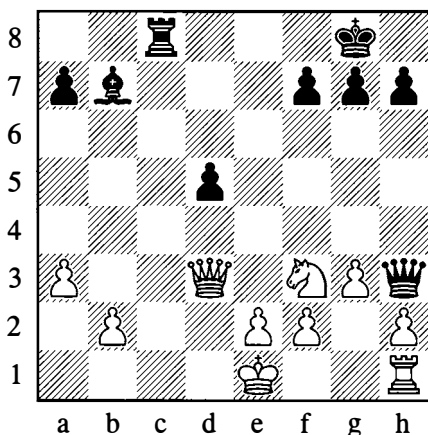
Akopian seems to have been surprised, since he now took 26 minutes before answering. In his original analysis he might have been influenced by the preconception that the player with a material disadvantage should not exchange pieces.



18. Bxc8

I planned to meet 18.b4!? with 18...d4 followed by ...Bfd8, with strong pressure. The pawn is taboo since 19.Bxd4? Bxf3 20.exf3 Bg2 21.Bf1 Bxc5 followed by ...Be8† wins material.

18... Bxc8



19. Bb5?

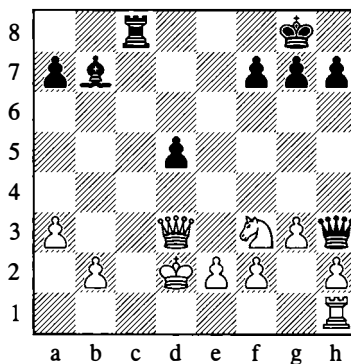
White wastes his time moving a developed (and well-placed) piece, when he should have

been concerned with improving the position of his king and rook.

It is curious that Akopian played his last move after only one minute, although he still had 37 minutes to reach move 40. He must have overlooked something simple, since after my reply he spent no fewer than 26 minutes.

White should have aimed at a global regrouping with:

19. Qd2!

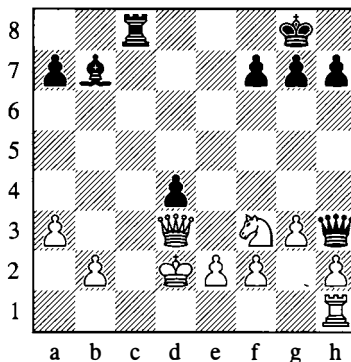


It would be a mistake to retrieve the pawn with 19...Bg2 20.Bg1 Bxf2 since after 21.Bd4 Bxd4† 22.Qxd4 White suddenly has a promising ending, with a strong knight, a centralized king and a dangerous queenside majority.

I was planning to develop my initiative with the thematic:

19...d4!

Finally activating my bishop.



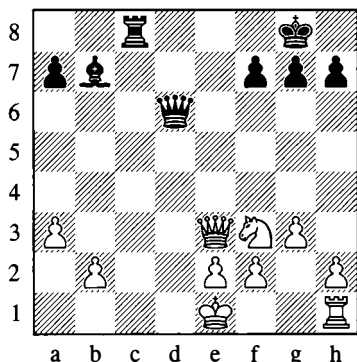
For White it would also be important to follow his main plan without letting himself be distracted by grabbing material.

The greedy

20. ♖xd4?

would be practically losing, although the following manoeuvre would not be easy to find:

20... ♖h6† 21. ♖e3 ♖d6† 22. ♔e1



After the king returned to e1, it is important to keep in mind that White cannot castle anymore! For a related situation, see my game against Orev from Volume I.

22... ♖d7!!

A splendid retreat, putting an eye on h3 and threatening 23... ♔xf3 with the possible continuations 24. ♖xf3 ♖c1 mate and 24. exf3 ♖e8.

23. ♔f1

If 23. ♖d2 Black needs to find the accurate move 23... ♖b5! preventing ♔f1 in view of ... ♔xf3.

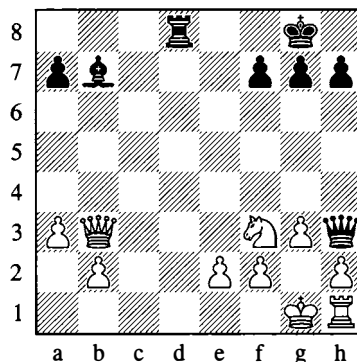
23... ♖e8 24. ♖b3

Defending against ... ♖d1†, but the queen strikes from the other side.

24... ♖h3† 25. ♔g1

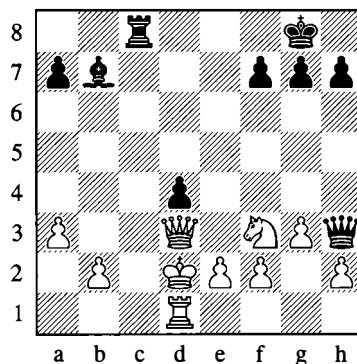
White has two extra pawns, but also an imprisoned rook.

25... ♖d8



A picturesque position; White is paralysed and helpless against the slow threat of ...g7-g4 (possibly prepared with ...h7-h6).

Instead of 20. ♖xd4, 20. ♖d1! is much better. (The rook cannot go one step further, as 20. ♖c1 loses to 20... ♖h6†, but after 20. ♖d1 White has at least completed his development and is ready to return the pawn in order to avoid the worst.)

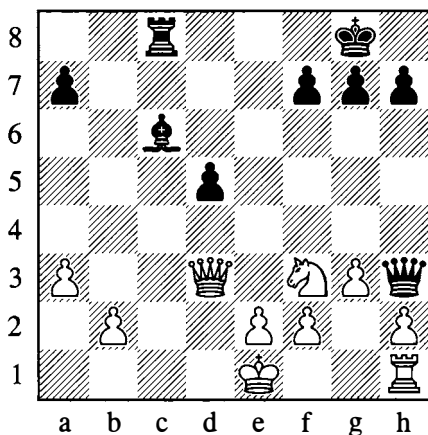


20... ♖h6† 21. ♔e1 ♔xf3 22. ♖xf3 ♖xh2 The position remains interesting, but the chances are balanced and material is level.

19... ♔c6!

Forcing the queen to return to its previous square, as against other moves 20...d4 would be crushing.

20. ♖d3



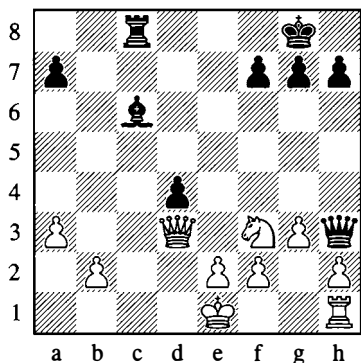
20...d4!

I played this after ten minutes and felt very happy about it. Of course, I did not have the slightest intention of offering a repetition of moves. I liked my position a lot and Akopian had only ten minutes left.

Strangely enough, the advance of the d-pawn, which would win after virtually any other queen retreat, would be a serious mistake here.

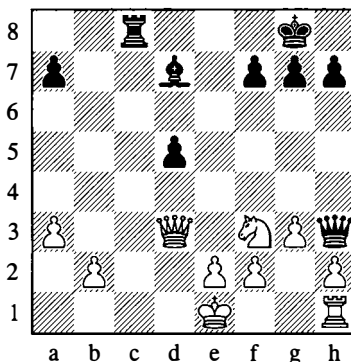
Before examining this issue in more detail, I want to confess that I like such small details in *everything* and it helped me in chess, too. Or did it happen the other way around? I have studied chess since I was very young, which over the years led me to dedicate special attention to details, which maybe later proved useful in life?! This sounds like the eternal question: what was first, the egg or the chicken?

Anyway, 20...d4? would allow White to take over the initiative.



21.♘g5 ♖h5 22.♗f5 Suddenly, White is just one step away from castling. The pin along the fifth rank does not bother him: 22...♞e8 23.0-0 Amusingly, 23...h6 leaves the h7-square undefended, allowing 24.♗h7†, while 23...f6 is met by 24.♗c5, attacking the bishop and threatening a devastating check on c4.

My idea of activating the bishop while clearing the c-file was correct, but concretely 20...♙d7! would have been a more effective way of achieving that. The bishop could be very useful on the h3-c8 diagonal and on d7 in general.



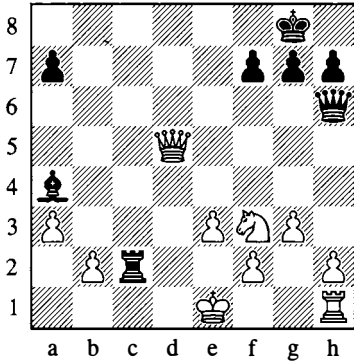
White would no longer have the saving resource from the game: 21.♗xd5 ♞c1† 22.♙d2 And now I could take the rook with 22...♞xh1 since there is no back-rank mate. Access to d8 is denied and 23.♗a8† is parried with 23...♙c8.

Or if 21.♗e3 as in the game, I could play 21...d4! 22.♘xd4 ♗g2 23.♞f1 ♙h3. Unexpectedly, the rook is trapped.

21.♗e3?!

This time, spending only one minute on this move is excusable, since he had not many left anyway.

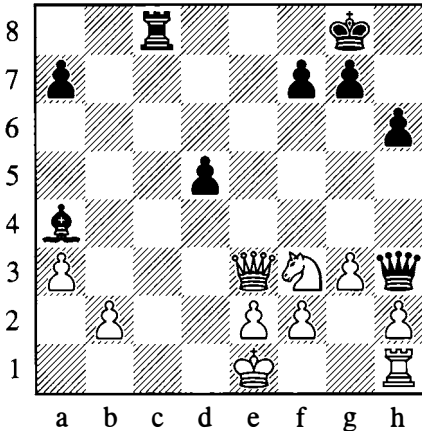
But 21.♗xd5 would have saved the day: 21...♞c1† 22.♙d2 ♗h6† 23.e3 ♞c2† 24.♙e1



Being two pawns down and facing a back-rank mate, I would have had to force a perpetual with 24...♖c1†.

21...h6!

This kind of ‘small’ move can be very unpleasant to face in time trouble. White is deprived of some of his main ideas for counterplay, such as ♖f3-g5 or play based on the back-rank weakness, but he faces no obvious threat. He enjoys a false sense of having freedom of choice, which can result in an immediate mistake.

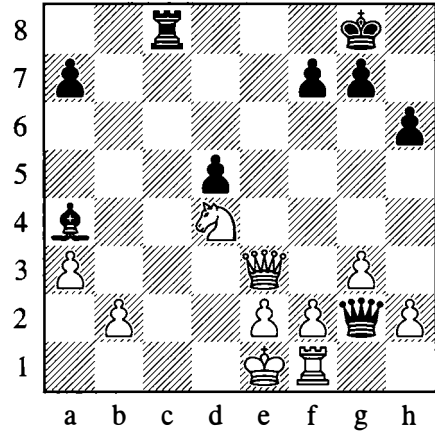


22.♘d4?

Played without thinking. It looks logical to occupy this central square and defend the c2-square. If allowed to play ♖e1-d2, he will be absolutely fine.

22.♞g1, defending the g2-square, would have kept White in the game.

22...♞g2 23.♞f1



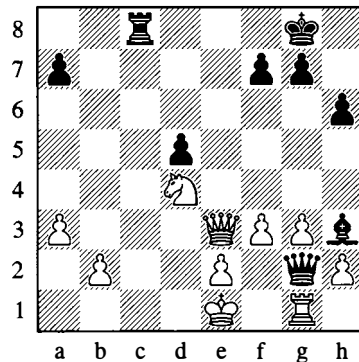
23...♙d7!

A familiar idea: Black threatens ...♙h3. The move came as a complete shock for Vladimir, while I could hardly contain my excitement.

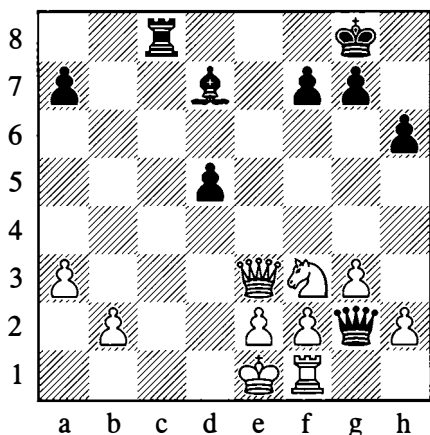
24.♘f3

For the second time in the game (the first being ♖d3-b5-d3) White is forced to answer a bishop move with a piece retreat to its previous location. White could now meet ...♙h3 with ♞g1.

According to Vladimir, when playing 22.♘d4 he was relying on 24.f3 ♙h3 25.♞g1.



He overlooked the trick 25...♞c1†! winning the d4-knight. Ironically, this is the piece that is supposed to ensure White's stability...



24...d4!

The advance of the d-pawn has been in the air for quite a while. It now deflects either the queen or the knight from their optimal defensive positions.

25.♞f4

The other way to keep the c1-square defended would not save him either:

25.♞d2 ♞e8 26.♞f4 d3 27.e4 ♠b5

Threatening ...♞xf1†!

28.♠d2 ♞c8

White cannot defend against the numerous threats.

25...g5

Proving the usefulness of my earlier 'small' move.

26.♠xg5

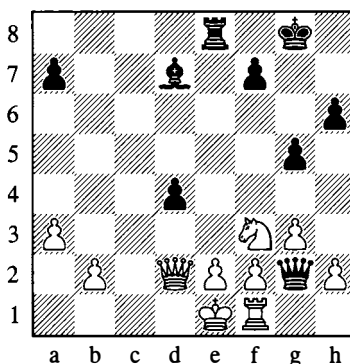
Hoping for a miraculous save by perpetual.

26.♞d2

Against this I planned:

26...♞e8

Threatening ...♞xf3.



27.♞d3 ♠g4 28.♠g1

White's defence has become absolutely chaotic...

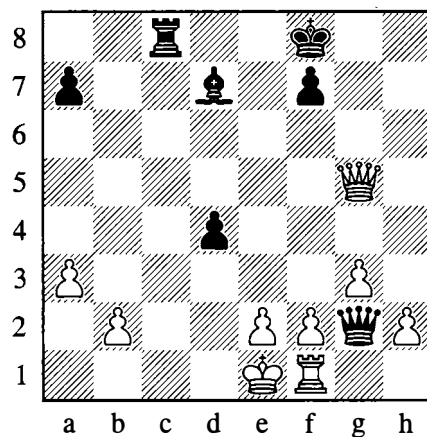
28...♞c8

The last switch from one open file to another, and the decisive one.

29.♞d2 d3!

White has run out of satisfactory defences.

26...hxg5 27.♞xg5† ♠f8



28.♞h6† ♠e8 29.f3

If 29.♞h8† ♠e7 30.♞h4† f6 31.♞h7† ♠d6 there are no checks left. White can try 32.♞h6 but 32...♠h3 wins the rook, while the king can escape to a8.

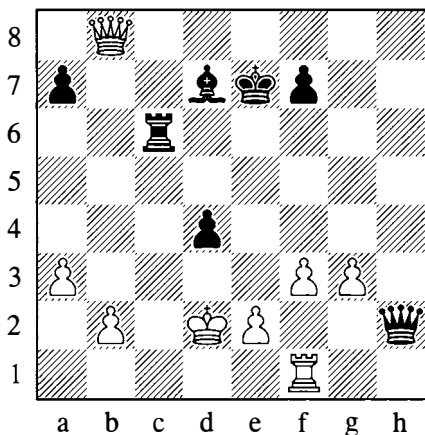
29...♞c6

This wins, but 29...♠h3! was not bad at all...

30. ♖f4 ♜xh2

In such situations there are many good moves. You just have to choose one at a time and win eventually.

31. ♜b8† ♔e7 32. ♔d2



32... ♜c2†

A small simplifying tactic.

33. ♔xc2 ♜xe2† 34. ♔b3 ♜xf1 35. ♜b4† ♔e6

White resigned with two minutes left on his clock. There are no more checks available.

In the next game the critical area with pawn tension was on the queenside. However, the impact of my pawn sacrifices affects practically the whole board.



Linares 1997 – Talking with Anand before the closing ceremony

Jeroen Piket – Judit Polgar

Linares 1997

This was my second time in Linares, ‘the tournament of the year’, as it used to be called. On its 14th edition it gathered twelve of the best players in the world, including Garry Kasparov.

Lev Psakhis accompanied me as my second, and I managed to play some very good games. However, my progress through the tournament was rather uneven. I started strongly with 4½ out of 6, with wins in the odd rounds against Nikolic, Ivanchuk (in only 19 moves!) and Dreev. But then I lost three games in a row, to Kramnik, Anand and Kasparov! You can imagine what a relief it was to make a draw in the tenth round...

There is a saying that all’s well that ends well, and I was very proud of my win in the 11th and final round, which we are going to examine now. I found an interesting pawn sacrifice in the opening and played the whole game creatively and well.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5

I had played many games against Jeroen, but this was the first time I had tried the Grünfeld.

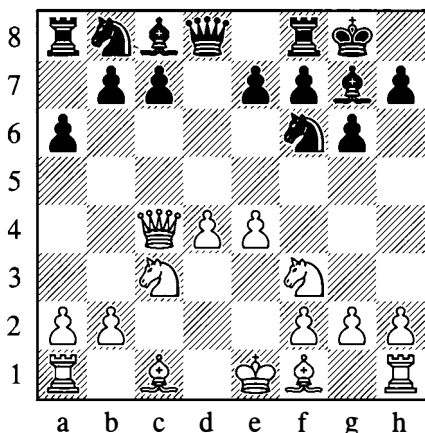
4.♘f3 ♙g7 5.♞b3

According to my notes in 1997: “This line is very fashionable nowadays and also Piket’s main weapon against the Grünfeld.”

5...dxc4 6.♞xc4 0–0 7.e4 a6



Linares 1997 – A friendly chat with Lev Psakhis and Garry Kasparov



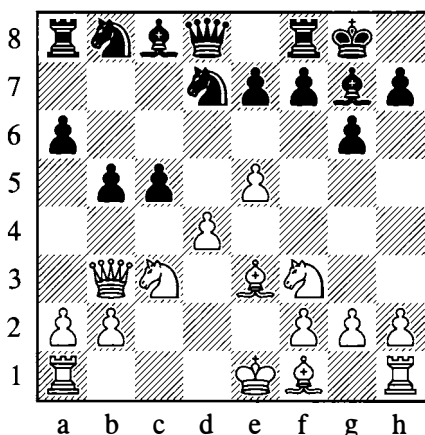
One of many possible moves; 7...♙g4 and 7...♘a6 are the most popular.

8.e5 b5 9.♙b3 ♘fd7 10.♙e3

10.h4 and 10.e6 are also possible.

10...c5

10...♘b6 used to be more common. The game move became popular after Karpov – Kamsky, Elista (9) 1996.



11.e6 c4 12.exf7 ♖xf7 13.♙d1

This is a very sharp line. Black is active, having gained lots of space, but this can also turn into a problem, as the pawns have left many undefended squares behind. There is the permanent threat of ♘f3-g5 followed by h4-h5, which gives Black some reference points

when deciding the order in which the natural ...♘b6 and ...♙b7 will be played.

13...♘b6

Black takes the d5-square under control and over-protects the c4-pawn in order to create the permanent threat of ...b5-b4. At the same time, clearing the c8-h3 diagonal defends e6 and prepares ...♙c8-g4.

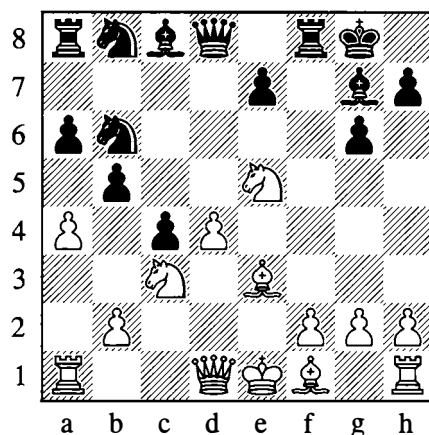
All this sounds logical, but the position after 13...♙b7 14.♘g5 remains very complicated, which makes me wonder why it has been played only a few times.

14.♘e5

The knight immediately invades the space offered by the previous move.

14...♖f8 15.a4

Jeroen had only spent 22 minutes up to this point, giving the impression that he had analysed the variation at home. I thought for 20 minutes before playing the next move, which involves a promising pawn sacrifice.

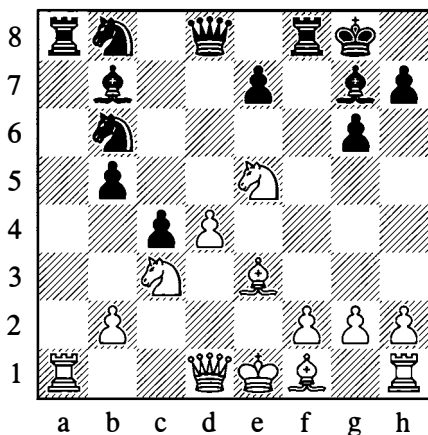


15...♙b7!?

This proved to be a novelty. I felt that time and the initiative were more important than keeping material equality.

The aforementioned Karpov – Kamsky game went 15...b4 16.a5 eventually leading to White's advantage.

16.axb5 axb5



17.♞xa8

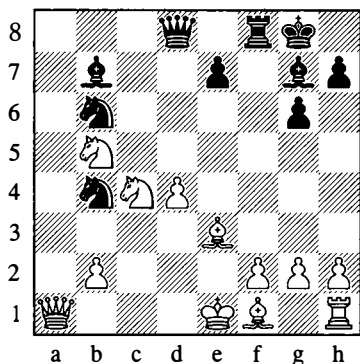
It is interesting that Piket spent only a minute on this move.

The alternative was taking the pawn at once:

17.♞xb5

I intended to play:

17...♞xa1 18.♞xa1 ♞c6 19.♞xc4 ♞b4



Taking advantage of the queen's unfavourable placement. If:

20.♞d1 ♞e4

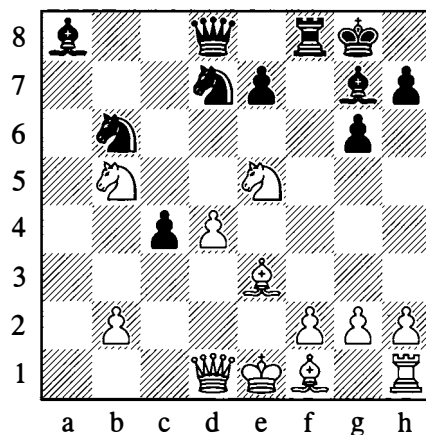
With a strong initiative for the sacrificed pawns.

17...♞xa8 18.♞xb5

White has won a pawn and a second one is on the way, but his kingside development has been delayed. My queen's bishop enjoys a wonderful diagonal and I have the d5-square for my knight.

18...♞d7!

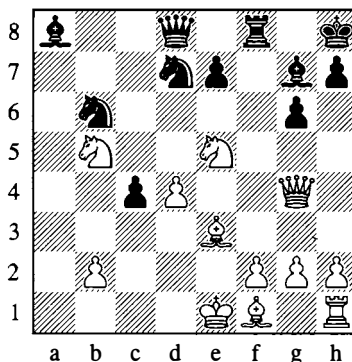
Just as on move 15, I do not make any effort to defend the c4-pawn, giving higher priority to piece activity and development. Piket now took 15 minutes before answering.



19.♞xc4

The second white knight has been distracted from the control of the central squares.

White could try to maintain the tension with 19.♞g4, indirectly defending e5 in view of ♞e6†. Just as in the game, the prophylactic 19...♞h8! would renew the threat on e5, offering strong compensation.



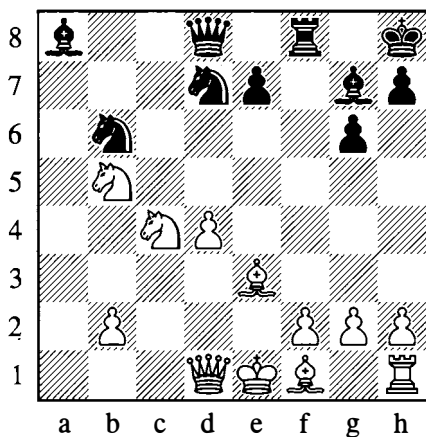
If 20. ♖xd7 ♜xd7 21. ♙xc4 ♜f6 22. ♗h3, the queen has to defend the g2-pawn, but now the queenside is left without sufficient defence. 22... ♗a5† 23. ♜c3 ♗b4 White loses his b2-pawn and faces problems finding a good moment to castle, since his minor pieces are hanging.

19... ♖h8!

I spent 14 minutes on this fantastic move. Black is two pawns down but can afford to spend a tempo on prophylaxis! With the a2-g8 diagonal weakened, the king clearly stands best in the corner.

This kind of abstract thinking was not at all typical for my style, but there are also some specific details involved. The last move creates the obvious threat of 20... ♜xc4 21. ♙xc4 (without a check!) 21... ♙xg2, but also a better-masked one, which will be executed in the game.

To my opponent, it must have come as a shock, since he thought for 44 minutes and replied with a weak move.

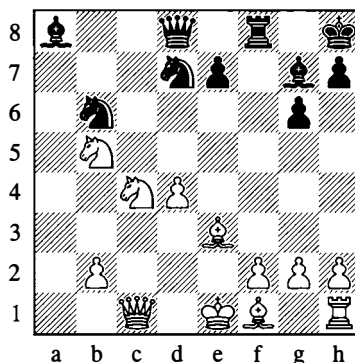


20.h4?

Piket probably took my king's position in the corner as an open invitation to attack with h4-h5, but failed to realize that he was not sufficiently developed for such a radical action. As the game goes, the h4-pawn will turn into a chronic weakness.

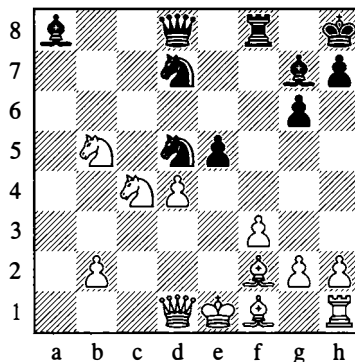
Consolidating the c4-knight with 20. b3 would weaken the c3-square, offering Black a strong initiative after 20... ♜d5 followed by ... ♗b8 and ... e5.

20. ♗c1 is more subtle. White creates two main threats, ♙e3-h6 and ♜xb6 followed by ♗c7, both aimed at neutralizing my initiative.

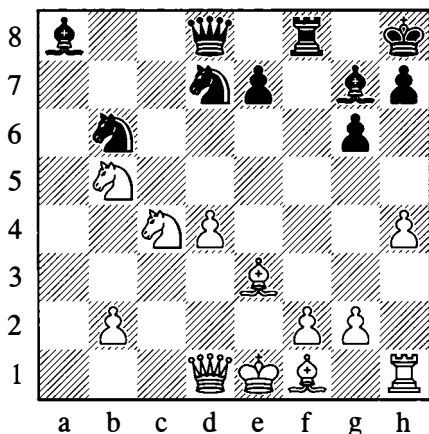


Since there is now no danger of a queen exchange along the d-file, I could consider blowing up the centre with 20... e5, but 20... ♜d5 would also be good, planning to meet 21. ♙h6?! with 21... ♙xh6 22. ♗xh6 ♜f4. White's kingside is under pressure and with the queen cut off from the action after the last move, White's queenside will soon be in some trouble.

Karpov's suggestion during the post mortem was 20. f3 and this is probably best. White defends the long diagonal to allow the bishop to develop. Black's most energetic reaction would be: 20... ♜d5 21. ♙f2 e5



The centre opens up and White is still two tempos away from getting castled. Black certainly has compensation and my subjective perception is that the position is fun to play with Black and rather scary from White's point of view.

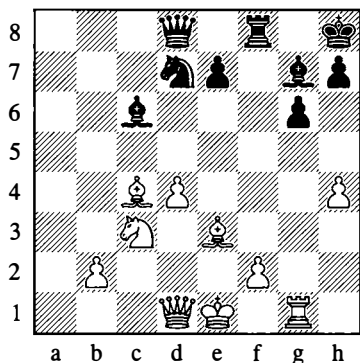


20...Qxg2

This is the second threat created by 19...Qh8. With the king on g8 it would not work because after 20...Qxg2 ...Qxc4 White would win a piece with Qd5+.

I spent ten minutes choosing the most effective way to regain one of the pawns. I liked the game continuation because of the knights' activity against multiple weaknesses.

But objectively 20...Qxc4 would have been even stronger, due to a detail I missed: 21. Qxc4 Qxg2 22. Bg1 Qc6 23. Qc3

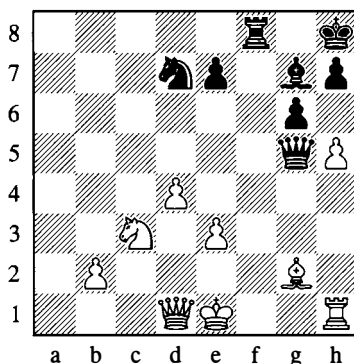


Had I noticed 23...Qb8! with the double threat of ...Qxb2 and ...Qh2, I might have preferred this line.

21. Qxc4 Qxc4 22.0-0

White must have been so happy to get castled: better late than never!

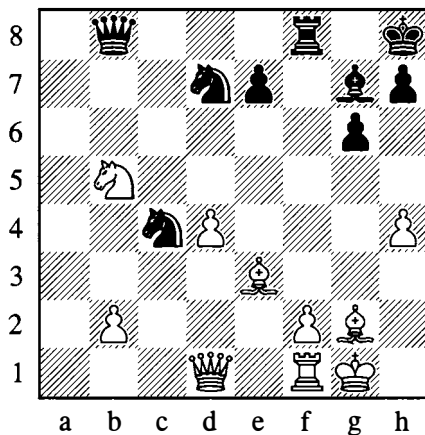
The consistent 22.h5 would weaken White's control of the g5-square, allowing an unexpected forcing manoeuvre: 22...Qxe3 23.fxe3 Qa5+ 24.Qc3 Qg5!



White cannot defend his weak dark squares.

22...Qb8

The same queen manoeuvre I had overlooked in the line above starting with 20...Qxc4. Remarkably, in the game, too, the control over the h2-square could have become relevant.

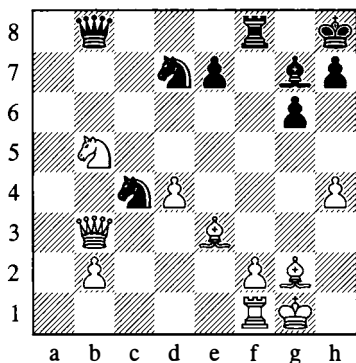


23. ♖c3

This looks like a tacit draw offer; I could take on e3, f1 and b2 with perfect equality.

23. ♜b3?!

This over-ambitious move, aiming to keep the extra pawn, would leave the kingside poorly defended.

**23... ♖xe3**

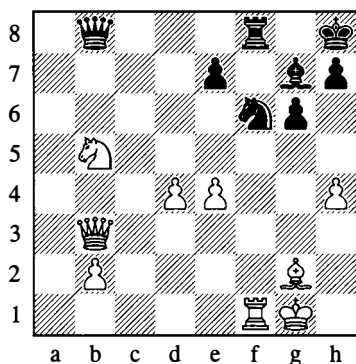
This strengthens the white centre, but weakening White's kingside dark squares is more relevant.

24. fxe3 ♖f6

Threatening ... ♖g4, which would not be possible with the queen on d1.

25. e4

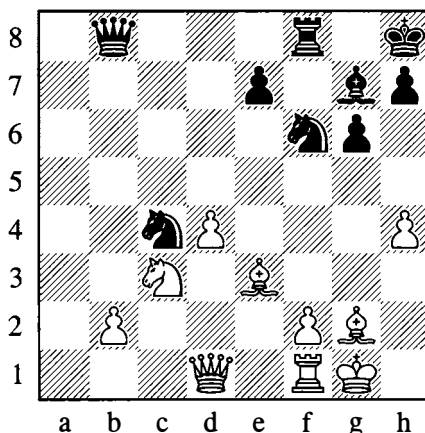
The only defence, aiming to meet ... ♖g4 with e4-e5, but weakening the d4-square.

**25... e5!**

With fantastic play on the dark squares.

23... ♖f6

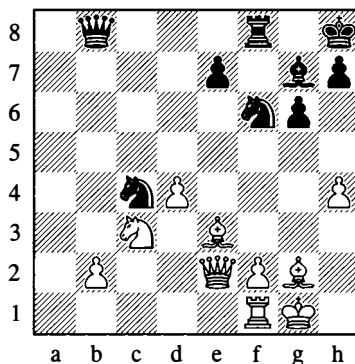
Playing for more than just a draw. Having so many squares for the knights is inspiring, while the missing pawn does not make itself felt. My plan was to get the knights to h5 and f5 and then most of White's pawns would be in danger.

**24. ♖c1**

Piket did not feel like living with the permanent possibility of an exchange on e3, followed by an invasion on the dark squares.

24. ♜e2

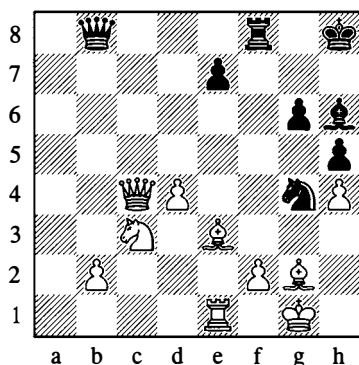
This only *looks* more active.



Apart from 24... ♖xe3 25. fxe3 ♖h6 or 25... e5, I could try the spectacular: 24... h5!?

Meeting the threat of ♖xc4 with a stronger one: ...♗g4 followed by ...♞h2. White should not allow his curiosity lead him to test it out with:

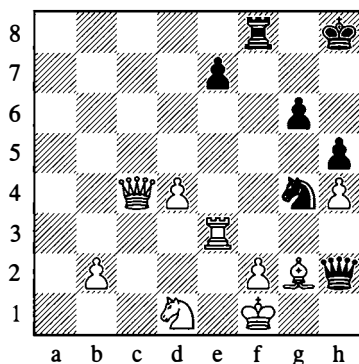
25. ♞xc4? ♗g4 26. ♞e1 ♔h6!



Exchanging the main defender of the f2-square.

27. ♗d1 ♞h2† 28. ♖f1 ♔xe3 29. ♞xe3

Everything seems to be defended, but the placement of the king and queen costs White dearly.



29... ♞xf2†! 30. ♖e1

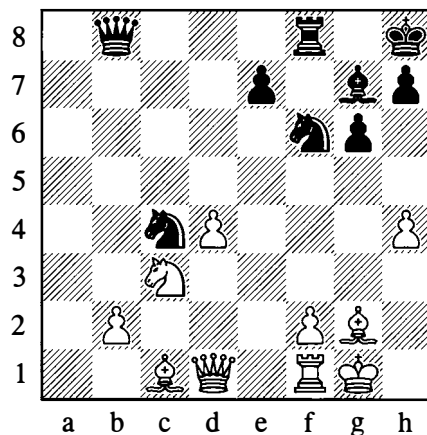
30. ♗xf2 ♗xe3† wins the queen.

30... ♗xe3 31. ♞c8† ♖g7 32. ♖xf2 ♗xg2

Black will soon have two passed pawns and a continuing attack.

24...h5 also has merits of a static nature. It blocks the h4-pawn, transforming it into a chronic weakness. If White defends against ...♗g4 with 25. ♔f3 or 25. ♔h3, after 25... ♗xe3

the h4-pawn would be doomed in the long run.



24... ♗d6

There was nothing to be done on the queenside anymore, so the knight is heading for f5. Instead 24... ♗xb2? would lose a piece to 25. ♞e2.

25.d5

Piket had only six minutes left to reach move 40. With so many weaknesses in his position and no clear plan available, making decisions is very hard. His last move gains some space, removes the pawn from a vulnerable square and clears the fourth rank for the queen.

25... ♗f5 26. ♞a4

Defending the h4-pawn.

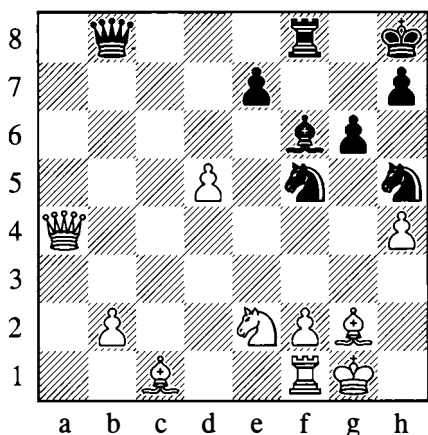
26... ♗h5 27. ♗e2

Covering the d4-square against invasion, but leaving the b2-pawn en prise.

27... ♔f6

The h4-pawn looked tastier to me. After removing it, I could think of a kingside invasion.

There was nothing wrong with 27... ♔xb2, but in the game I will take this pawn under more favourable circumstances.



28. ♖g5 ♜xb2

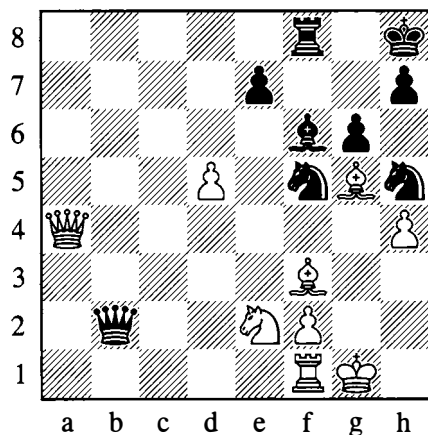
I am more active than after 27...♙xb2 from the comment above. The queen penetrates deep into White's position, strengthening the control of the long diagonal and preparing to continue the invasion with ...♜b8-b4.

The next phase of the game is marred by mutual inaccuracies. We both can invoke the same excuse: my opponent's time trouble!

29. ♙f3?

This should have lost quickly.

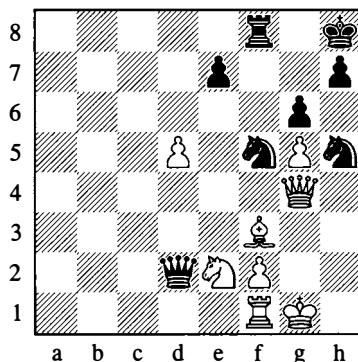
It would have made some sense to exchange one of my active knights with 29.♘f4, although strategically White would be badly off.



29...♘hg7?!

I played this too quickly, after just three minutes.

I assume that I refrained from 29...♙xg5! because after 30.hxg5 ♜d2 31.♜g4 I considered White could resist the pressure.



I probably overlooked the strong 31...♜b8! followed by ...♜b4. It is interesting that after the decision on move 20, this was the second time when I failed to notice a strong move on the b8-square! In this case I was probably fixed on the idea that my rook has to stay on the f-file.

30. ♜e4

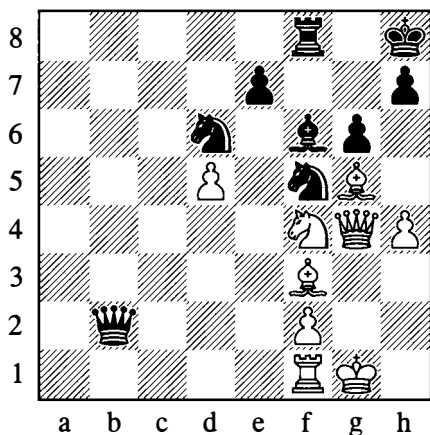
This helps me to gain time; 30.♜g4 would have been somewhat better.

30...♘d6 31. ♜g4 ♘gf5

Both my knights occupy excellent squares. There is no need to block the h4-pawn anymore, since h4-h5 would lead to the decisive opening of the g-file with ...g6xh5. If necessary, I could block it with a well-timed ...h7-h5, though. The main threat remains ...♜b8-b4.

32. ♘f4

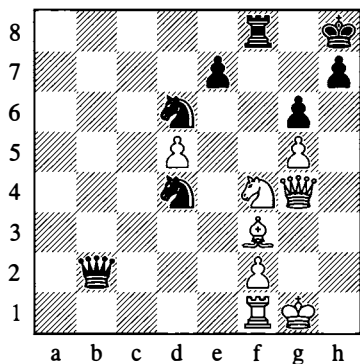
The last chance. The knight threatens to occupy the advanced e6-square. This would not create concrete threats, but would somewhat restrict my active possibilities.



32...d4?

Too much jumping around with my knights; I overestimated the strength of the threat of ...d5.

Once again, I missed the possibility of a well-timed exchange on g5. We can say that my mistakes in this game came in pairs! 32...d4xg5! 33.hxg5 d4 would leave White badly tied up.



The knight is pinned and the bishop has to defend the e2-square in order to avoid ...xf4. Black will win the g5-pawn soon, starting with ...f5.

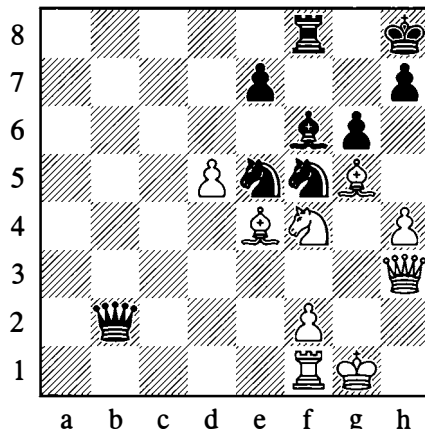
33.f4?!

Piket trusts in the seriousness of my intentions and removes the bishop from the knight's way.

In fact, after 33.d4e6! d5 34.f4 there are no tactical tricks available for Black. I would have had to restart building up my initiative with 34...c8.

33...d5 34.f4

Not a great square for the queen, but the h4-pawn needs defence.



34...d4

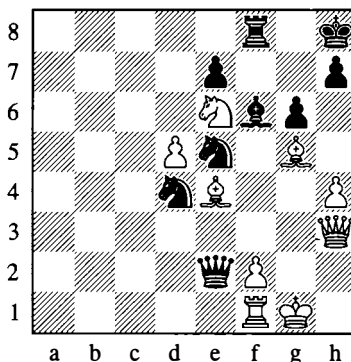
After my knight has reached this square, d4-e6 would just lead to an exchange at best, while failing to solve White's problems.

35.f4

Played with only two minutes left.

35.d6

Now 35...dxe6 36.fxe6 f4 is strong; but I planned the intermediate move: 35...f2!?



The greedy

36.♖xf8?

would offer me a decisive attack:

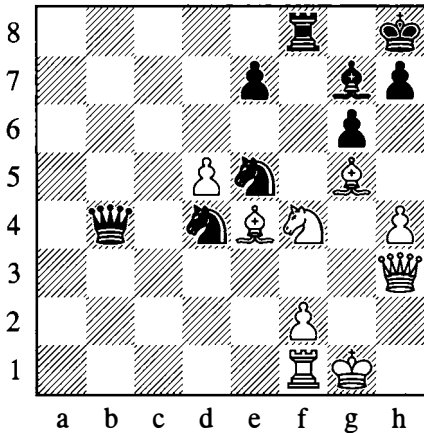
36...♗xe4 37.♕xf6† exf6 38.♝a1 ♖ef3†
39.♙h1 ♖xh4† 40.f3 ♖dxf3

White has no adequate defence against ...♖g5† winning the queen or mating on g2. If 41.♗f1 the discovered check would arrive symmetrically with 41...♖d2†.

35...♕g7 36.♕g5

If it does not improve White's structure with h4xg5, the exchange of bishops favours Black strategically, increasing White's problems with defending his weak pawns and squares. For instance: 36.♕xg7† ♙xg7 37.♖e6† ♖xe6 38.♗xe6 ♗d4 39.♕g2 ♝f7 threatening ...♖g4.

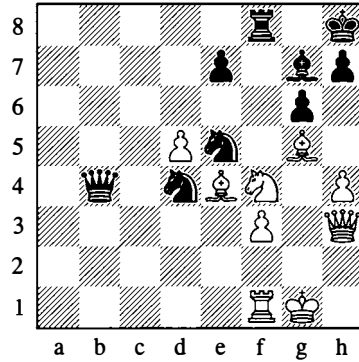
36...♗b4



Finally, one of my major pieces lands on the fourth rank. White's position is dangerously loose. The immediate threat is 37...♖e2† 38.♖xe2 ♗xe4 threatening the killing ...♖f3†, but also the modest ...♗xd5.

37.♗e3?

Missing the only chance to fight on: 37.f3! The move certainly looks ugly, as it restricts the white queen's activity and weakens the dark squares even more, but it is not easy to refute.

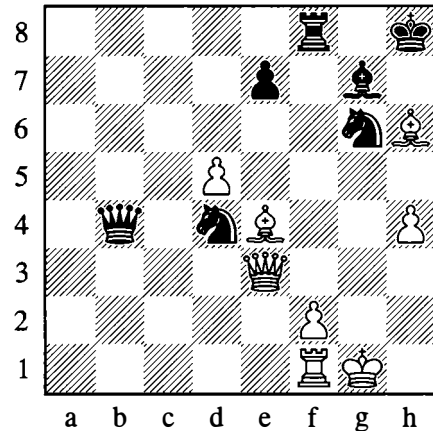


It is interesting that after 37...h6 (the same move as in the game) 38.♖xg6† ♖xg6 39.♕xg6 the queen proves useful on the h-file, preventing ...hxg5 in view of hxg5† followed by mate.

37...h6!

But now the bishop is lost and so is the game.

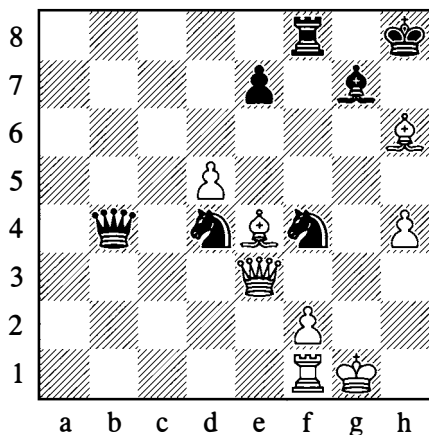
38.♖xg6† ♖xg6 39.♕xh6



39...♖f4

Tactical fireworks were always my cup of tea, but sometimes I overdo it! The knight is taboo because of ...♖d4-e2†, but by jumping forward it leaves my king somewhat exposed.

39...♖f5 would have won much more easily.

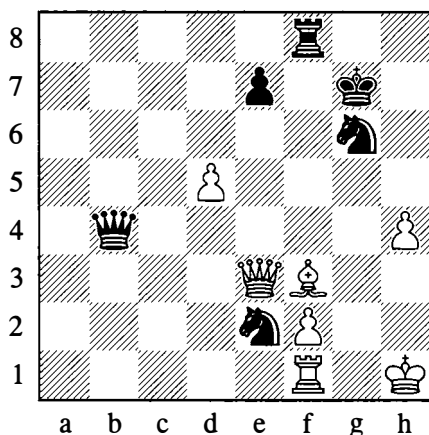


40. ♖xg7 ♜xg7 41. ♜h1

Hoping for counterplay along the g-file.

41... ♜de2! 42. ♖f3 ♜g6!

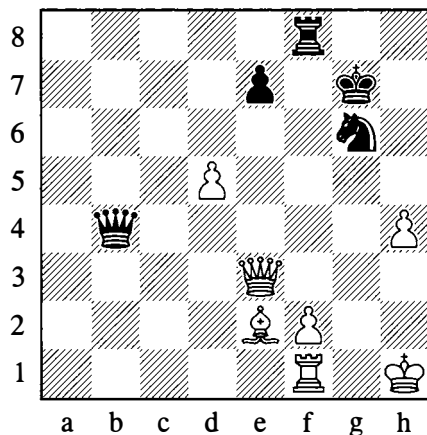
An elegant retreat, restoring harmony before the final attack.



43. ♖xe2

43. ♖xe2 was no better: 43... ♖xh4† 44. ♜g1 ♜f4 45. ♖e4 (45. ♖e5† ♜h6 would only help me by clearing the g-file) 45... ♜h8 and wins.

Or if 43. ♖e4 ♜g3†! forcing open the f-file with decisive material gains: 44. fxg3 ♖xe4+—



43... ♖xh4† 44. ♜g1 ♜h8 45. ♖c3† ♜f7 46. ♖f3† ♜f4

White's checks are over and mate is inevitable.

47. ♖a1 clears the f1-square but does not solve the back-rank problems: 47... ♖h2† 48. ♜f1 ♖h1† 49. ♖xh1 ♜xh1 mate.

0-1



With legendary soccer star Puskas

Chapter 4

Positional Sacrifices



In 2000 I married Dr Gusztav Font

During the first part of my career, as described in the first volume, I was rather famous for giving up material for tactical purposes, but somehow the idea of positional sacrifices did not fit well with my general way of thinking.

Later, after the age of, say, 15, I started to study Larsen's and Petrosian's games and little by little I started liking the idea of positional sacrifices, although they never really became routine like the tactical ones. Even now, I feel I need to work a lot in this direction.

I always knew that the exponents of the old Soviet School were good at positional sacrifices based on general considerations. For many of the Soviet players, sacrificing an exchange "for nothing concrete" was as natural as me sacrificing a few pieces in order to deliver mate!

Of the players I met frequently, Karpov and Kramnik produced a series of positional sacrifices which amazed me. I am proud that they are both present in this chapter, with me sitting in the chair of the sacrificing player!

Positional exchange sacrifices

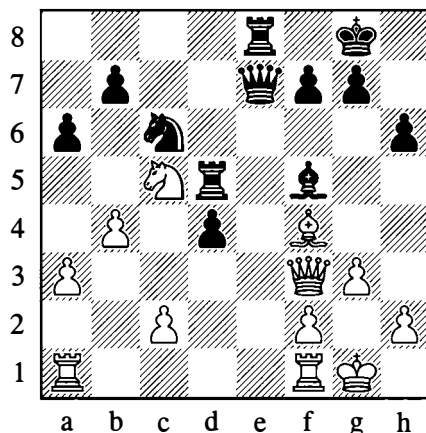
The two games examined in this section have something in common: I willingly exchanged one of my rooks for my opponent's most effective piece: a knight! In the first of them, I also gained a pawn in the process, reducing the amount of sacrificed material to the minimum.

Vidmantas Malisauskas – Judit Polgar

Biel Interzonal 1993

This was my first participation in an Interzonal, after having qualified from the Budapest Zonal – please refer to the comments to my game against Ftacnik, page 181.

The game was played in the eighth round when I still had chances and dreams of qualifying for the Candidates matches.



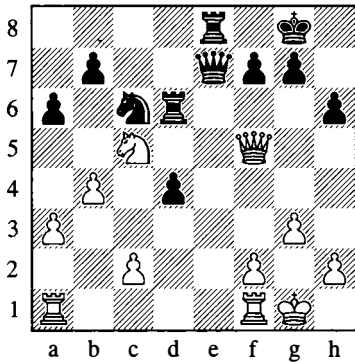
White had played the opening modestly and I managed to accumulate some positional advantages. My development is better, the d4-pawn secures a space advantage, and the presence of opposite-coloured bishops combined with White's weakened king position offers me attacking chances.

At the moment, I have some concrete problems, though. White's last move, 23.♖f3, aims to compensate for the aspects above by the combined hyper-activity of part of his army. The piece that annoyed me most was his knight, so I needed only two minutes to take my decision:

23...♞xc5!?

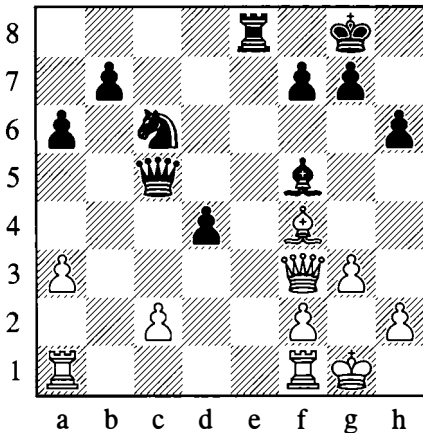
I was too happy with this exchange sacrifice to have second thoughts. Even now I find it an excellent practical decision, allowing me to maintain stability and all the positional pluses.

I do not remember my train of thought, but assume that I discarded 23...♞dd8 on account of 24.♙d6 ♞xd6 25.♚xf5, getting rid of the danger posed by the opposite-coloured bishops.



In fact, 25...d3, clearing the d4-square for the knight, would offer me a strong initiative, but the position would have become very concrete, with everything hanging by just one tempo. On the contrary, in the game things were rather one-sided.

24.bxc5 ♖xc5



If we consider that the c2-pawn is doomed, we can hardly call my previous move a sacrifice.

25.♖ab1?!

The counterplay generated by this move is too slow. White should have exchanged one rook in order to ease his defence. True, after 25.♖f1 ♖xe1† 26.♖xe1 ♗xc2 I would retain my positional advantage at virtually no risk.

25...♗e4?!

Slightly inaccurate, but I could not resist putting my bishop on the most promising diagonal. If allowed, I would play ...d4-d3 next, threatening a devastating knight jump to d4 (or, if ♗f4-e3, to e5).

26.♗g4

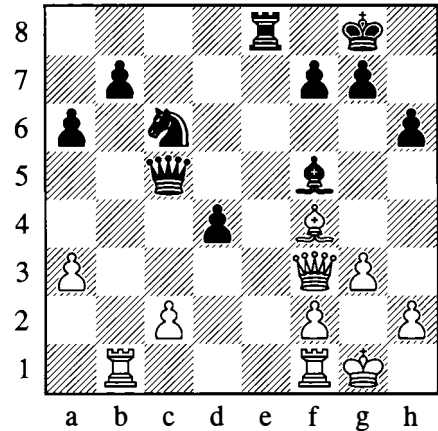
The only move, gaining a tempo on account of the threat of ♗xh6.

26...♗f5

I prove flexible enough to admit my mistake.

27.♗f3?!

White does not use the offered chance. He could have restricted my activity with: 27.♗h5!?



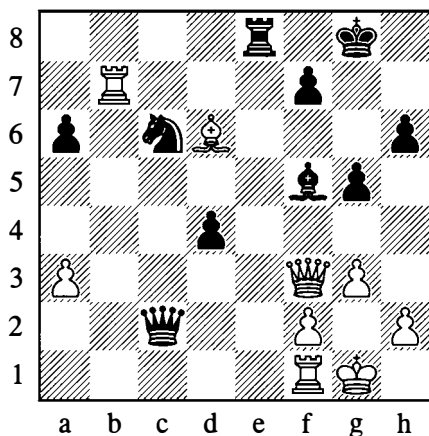
27...g5!

Finally choosing the right path; strongly restricted by my pawns, the white bishop has problems finding a favourable diagonal.

28.♗d6

The best practical chance. If 28.♗d2? then 28...g4 29.♗f4 ♖e5 followed by ...♖f3† wins.

28...♗xc2 29.♖xb7

**29...♖e6**

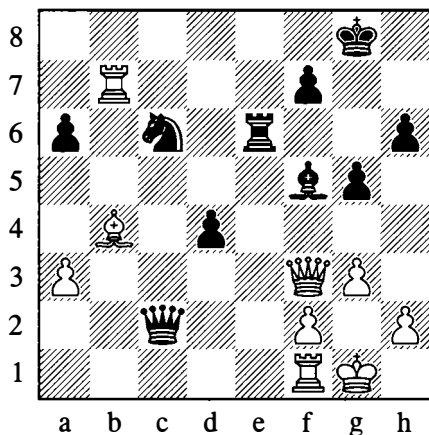
Continuing to question the bishop's lack of stability, as if asking it to make up its mind regarding which diagonal it prefers.

At this point, my opponent seems to have understood that he faced a crucial decision, as he invested eight of his remaining eleven minutes on searching for a solution.

30.♙b4?

He failed to find the right idea though!

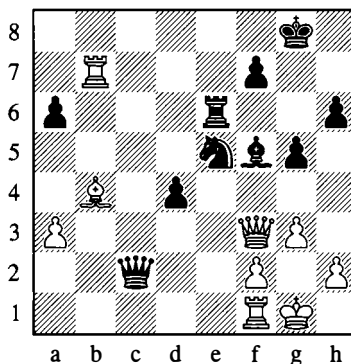
White needed his bishop on the h2-b8 diagonal, for which purpose he had to play the zwischenzug: 30.g4! ♙g6 31.♙g3 True, after 31...♗c3 I would still be happy to play with Black.



In the game I played: 30...a5 And eventually won.

The most precise continuation would have been:

30...♖e5!



With a devastating attack on the light squares:

31.♗d1

Or if 31.♗g2 ♗d3 32.f3 g4 33.fxg4 ♙e4 followed by ...♖f3† soon.

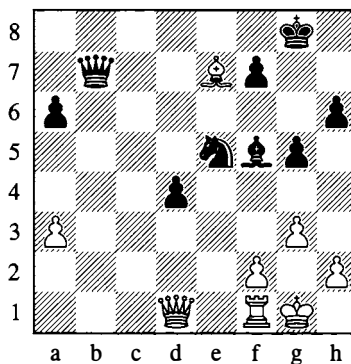
31...♗c8!

Gaining a decisive tempo for the attack.

32.♗e7

Or 32.♗a7 ♙h3 33.♗e1 ♗c6 with mate in sight.

32...♗xe7 33.♙xe7 ♗b7



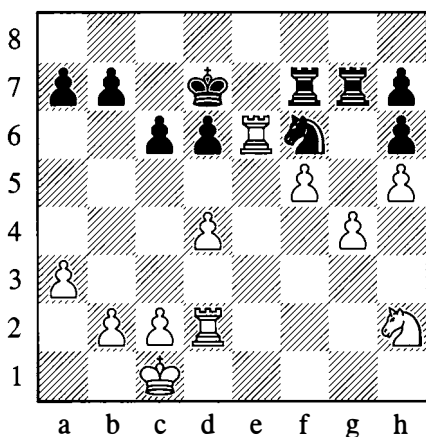
Attacking the bishop and creating decisive threats (...♖f3†, ...♙h3) around the king.

Soon after this game I got a bad cold, but four rounds later I managed to deliver another elegant and effective exchange sacrifice.

Judit Polgar – Dibyendu Barua

Biel Interzonal 1993

This was the 12th and penultimate round. I remember that during the game I still had some fever, but tournament rules are strict, so no matter what shape you are in, the clock starts ticking at the scheduled time. The only way out is to sit at the board and play as if nothing is wrong...



I have an extra pawn and a considerable space advantage. Breaking through is not so simple though. Black has regrouped well and has a stable blockade. Moreover, my kingside pawns are under serious pressure.

As in the previous example, I felt that Black's best piece is the knight, and so I decided to give up a rook to eliminate it. In order to be effective though, the sacrifice required some preparation.

26.d5!

A common pattern in the previous chapter: an unblocked pawn has a tendency to advance, even at the risk of its own life.

26...c5?!

My opponent must have thought that nothing had changed strategically after these pawn moves: White still does not seem to have a key to open Black's fortress. Had he spotted my hidden idea, he might have looked for an alternative.

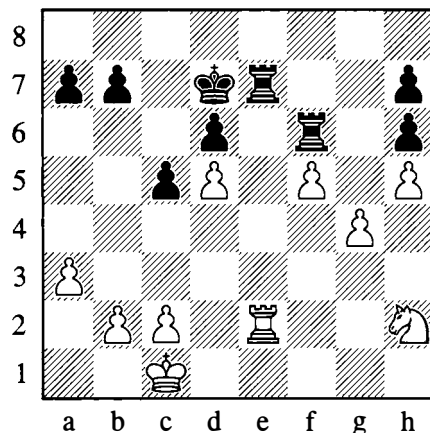
True, 26...dxd5? 27.c4 clears the d-file with decisive effect.

26...cxd5 might have been a better try. I planned to consolidate with 27.♖d4 followed by ♔c1-d2-e3. The position would require some technical precision, but should be winning.

27.♖xf6!

Despite the computer's scepticism, this is the clearest winning plan, not allowing Black any chance to escape. The usefulness of my d5-pawn will be revealed after just a few moves.

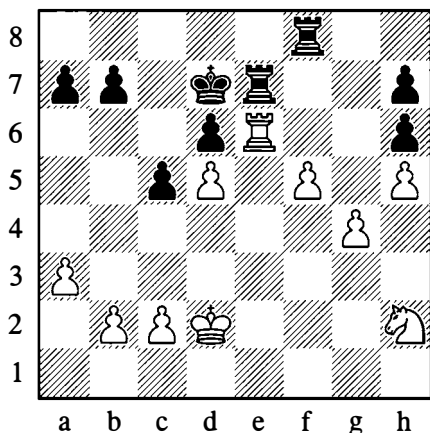
27...♗xf6 28.♖e2 ♖e7



29.♖e6!

Caging the enemy pieces in a relatively narrow area and dooming Black to absolute passivity. Without the support of the d-pawn, this would have been impossible.

29...♗f8 30.♔d2



Bringing in one of the strongest attacking pieces in the endgame – the king! My plan was to play ♔d2-e3-f4, freeing the knight to transfer to e4. After completing this regrouping, it would not take long before Black's position collapsed.

30...Rxe6

My opponent must have understood the long-term danger. By exchanging my rook, he probably hoped to create at least some feeble counterplay with his central majority.

31.dxe6†

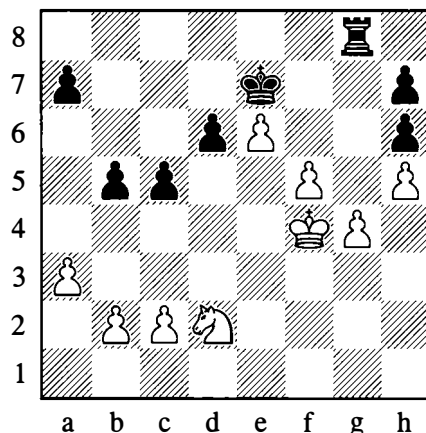
This is of course the right way to recapture. I create two passed pawns and keep the f-file closed. Besides, Black always has to deal with the possibility of my knight transferring to the d5-square.

31...♙e7 32.♙e3 ♙f6 33.♙f4

As we can see, the rook exchange has not altered my general plan. The next step is to activate the knight.

33...b5 34.♞f3 ♞g8 35.♞d2 ♙e7

35...d5 36.♞f3 would shorten the winning path by a few moves. In the game, Black played ...d6-d5 slightly later.



36.♞f1!

This is the first move that deviates from the initial plan of regrouping. The knight is heading for d5. Had Black refrained from ...Rxe6 in the previous phase, I would have forced the exchange with ♞d2-e4, followed by similar knight manoeuvres as in the game.

If 36.♞e4 b4!? the knight's access to d5 would have been delayed.

36...d5

Preventing the invasion through d5, but allowing an equally dangerous one through e5.

37.♞d2

This continues the instructive dance of the knight, which gradually clears a path between the enemy pawns. However, there was an even faster win available: 37.♙e5! ♞xg4 38.f6† ♙e8 39.♞d6 followed by a decisive knight activation.

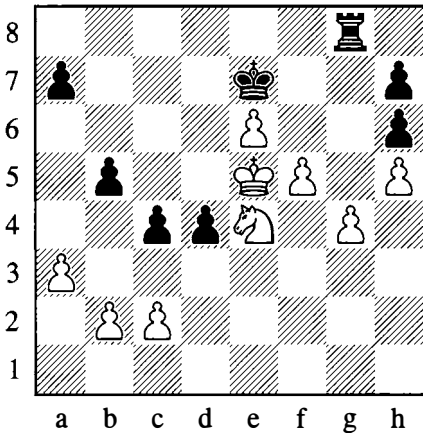
37...♙d6 38.♞f3

Threatening 39.♞e5 and if 39...d4 40.♞f7† ♙d5 41.♞xh6 with quite an array of passed pawns.

38...d4

Hoping to get some counterplay with ...c4 and ...d3, but making the e4-square available.

39.♖d2! c4 40.♖e4† ♕e7 41.♖e5



Finally, my king and knight are on optimal squares. Facing the prospect of being crushed by my pawns, Barua resigned. This win made me feel better and the cold almost vanished as if by a miracle...

In the last round I was paired with my countryman Lajos Portisch. For either of us, a win would have offered qualifying chances, depending on the other results. We played a fighting King's Indian which eventually ended in a draw, keeping us both outside the happy circle of qualifiers...

Positional knight sacrifices on d5

The subtitle of this section may sound a bit restrictive; what about if we add "against Karpov"? Indeed, coincidence meant that in a relatively short period of time I carried out two such sacrifices against the FIDE World Champion.

Though as the reader will find out, the first one was involuntary!

Ever since the Amsterdam 1989 tournament (please refer to the last chapter of the first volume), Holland has been one of my favourite countries.

In 1997 a new tournament began in Hoozeveen. The fascinating Glass Museum donated chess sets, which were used in the tournament. As you would expect, given the source, the pieces were made out of glass.

The initial fears regarding the players' ability to play serious games with glass pieces immediately proved unjustified. Chess professionals can play with any kind of pieces... or even without them, as happens in blindfold tournaments.

Nevertheless, this novel situation required acting tactfully. I was playing in Dortmund when the Hoozeveen tournament director Jeroen van den Berg visited me. When handing me an official invitation, he also explained the unusual tournament circumstances and showed me a set of glass pieces, so that I knew what to expect.

This was the first time I met Jeroen, whom I perceived as a very positive and kind person. Over the years we became good friends. For years, he has been the director of the Wijk aan Zee chess festival.

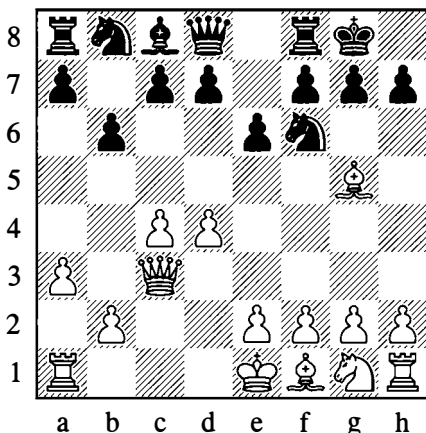
The glass pieces are not the only unusual element of the Hoozeveen tournament. The system used to invite the four players to fight in this double round-robin event is also quite original. The desired year by year selection had a World Champion (not necessarily the reigning one), the top-rated Dutch player, the world's top-rated woman player and the latest World Junior Champion. This system suited me well enough, as for many years I had a guaranteed tournament invitation.

In such a short event, every game is very important. Having lost my first round game against Timman, I found myself in a dangerous tournament situation: in the second round I had Black against Karpov! I went to the game with just two thoughts: play solidly and avoid losing. I accomplished the latter, but I am not so sure about the solidity of my play...

Anatoly Karpov – Judit Polgar

Hoogeveen 1999

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♚c2 0-0
5.a3 ♙xc3† 6.♚xc3 b6 7.♙g5

**7...♙a6**

This move enjoyed some popularity at the time, and I had worked on it with Lev, making it my main weapon.

The natural 7...♙b7 is the most common continuation.

8.e3

Played after seven minutes.

8...d6

I felt comfortable in this line and was glad Karpov had chosen it. Imagine: he could have chosen the Catalan, an opening he used to play frequently and knew inside out.

9.b4

Karpov used eight more minutes on this new move.

Nowadays, the main line goes 9.♙d3 ♘bd7 10.♘e2 c5 11.♚c2 followed by ♘e2-c3. Quite a logical developing sequence.

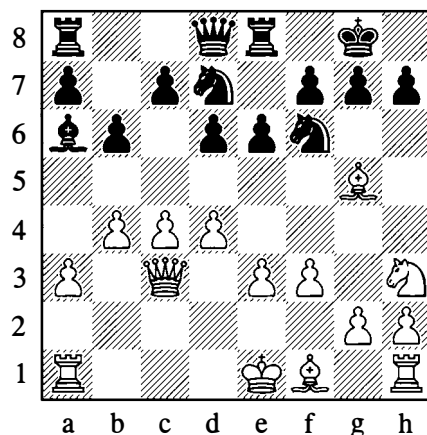
Karpov's novelty failed to impress in this game, and never became popular afterwards.

9...♘bd7 10.f3

A very ambitious approach. White prepares massive space-gaining, involving ♘h3-f2 and e3-e4, but severely delays his development. My feeling after the game was that White should not have time for everything he wants to do before Black's counterplay bursts out.

10...♙e8!

An important "mysterious" move. At first sight, it may seem that Black is preparing some tactics based on a pin along the e-file. This is only partly true; the main, and rather well-masked, idea is to remove the rook from the f8-a3 diagonal, for reasons that will be revealed later.

11.♘h3

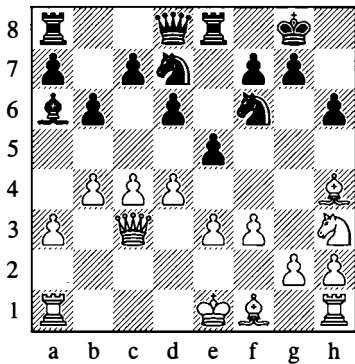
Until now, I did not find any reason to hurry with ...h7-h6. While adding something to Black's flexibility, this move would help the bishop to retreat to a more stable square in the future, usually f2. After ♘g1-h3, this implies a conflict between the white pieces. It took me 17 minutes to evaluate these nuances.

11...h6 12.♙h4 ♙c8

While not bad, this second mysterious move makes things unnecessarily complicated. I played it almost without thinking, aiming to make Karpov face all my potential threats (...c7-c5, ...d6-d5 and ...e6-e5) and relying on my lead in development. Besides, the rook defends the c7-pawn, making ...d6-e4 and ...d5 real threats.

In fact, everything was prepared for the straightforward:

12...e5!



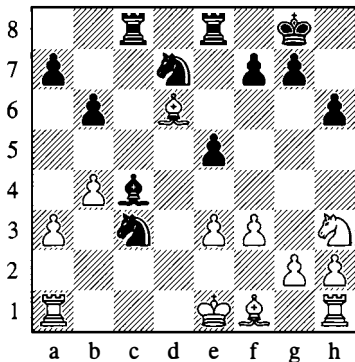
The usefulness of 10...Re8 and 11...h6 is revealed after the forcing sequence:

13.d5! dxd5!

With the bishop on g5, this would not have worked.

14.gxd8 dxc3 15.gxc7 Rac8 16.gxd6

My king's rook is not hanging, which allows: 16...gxc4

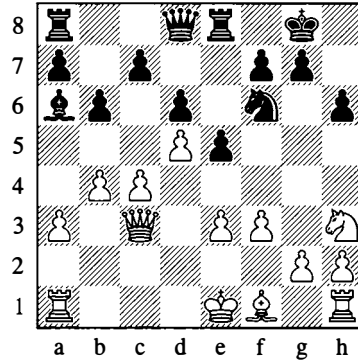


More important than the lead in development and control over the weakened light squares is that Black has the concrete threat of trapping the bishop with ...Re6 or ...Rc6. White is virtually lost.

Safer for White is:

13.gxf6 dxf6 14.d5

But this still offers Black comfortable play.



I could play:

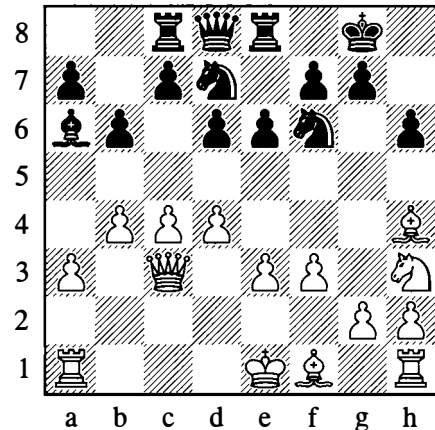
14...Wd7 15.gxe2

15.a4 g7b7 renews the threat of ...c7-c6 and creates a new one, ...a7-a5 freezing the queenside.

15...c6 16.dxc6 Wxc6

With an initiative. Note that 17.b5? does not work on account of 17...gxb5.

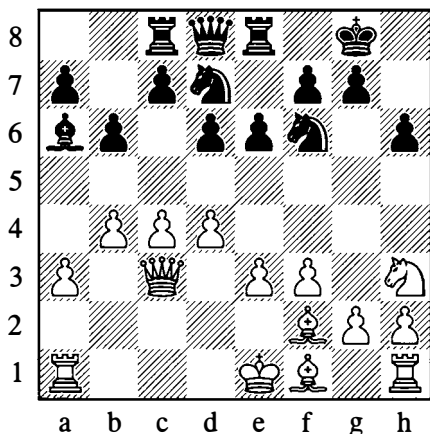
Before executing this plan, it would also be possible to insert 14...e4 15.f4.



13. ♖f2

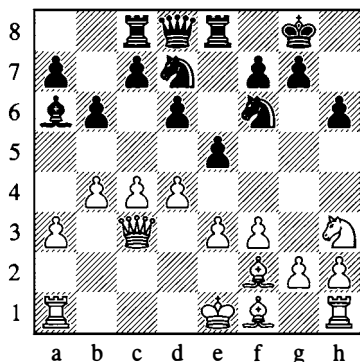
Karpov probably felt something had gone wrong, since he spent 23 minutes on this solid regrouping move.

Since the h3-knight is now unhappy, 13. ♖b2 comes to mind as a serious alternative, pursuing the same purpose of preventing the f6-knight jumps, while maintaining his overall harmony.

**13...d5**

Having many tempting moves to choose from makes one's life difficult.

My last move is fine, but once again the attack on the dark squares would have been quite promising:

13...e5!**14.d5**

Trying to stabilize the position. If 14. ♖e2 d5! the double break in the centre leaves White struggling. Please see my game against Short from the previous chapter, page 49.

14...c6!

A very effective break with the white queen on c3.

15.dxc6 ♖xc6 16. ♖b3

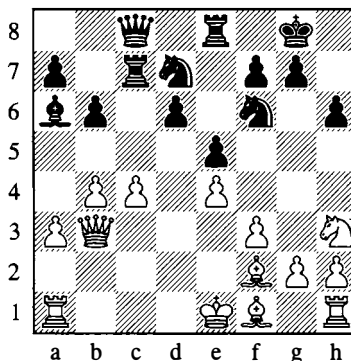
Threatening b4-b5.

16...♞c7

Since White is seriously underdeveloped, he has problems defending his c4-pawn.

17.e4

Taking measures against ...d6-d5.

17...♞c8

White has to give up the c5-square with 18.b5, which leaves him with a strategically inferior position.

If 18. ♖c1? then 18...d5 19.exd5 e4! and Black has a powerful attack.

14.b5

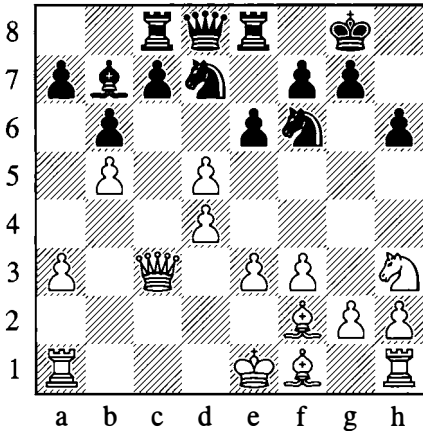
This and White's next move are virtually forced. Due to his underdevelopment, White has to release the central tension as soon as possible.

14...♞b7 15.cxd5

Believe it or not, I did not consider this move!

For some reason I was busy dreaming about the over-optimistic and space-gaining 15.c5?

which would rebound after 15...bxc5 16.dxc5 c6 and White's position crumbles.



15...♖xd5

Caught by surprise and slightly unhappy, I spent 17 minutes on this move.

15...exd5?! was not the kind of move I would consider, since I wanted to maintain the possibility of breaking with ...e6-e5.

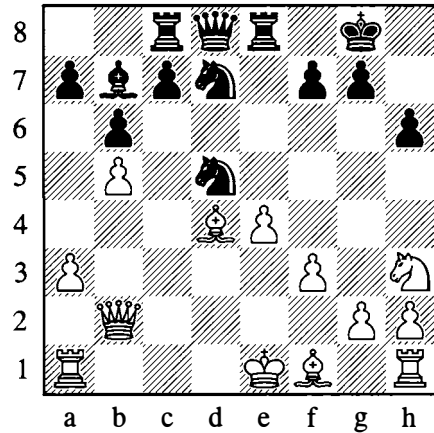
My main alternative was 15...e5, but I eventually understood that it would transpose to the game after 16.e4 ♖xd5!.

16.♙b2 e5 17.e4

White's structure has finally taken on some favourable contours. In order to avoid being pushed back, I need to undertake quick action, before White completes his development.

17...exd4 18.♙xd4

We had been playing rather slowly so far. Karpov had half an hour left to reach move 40. After spending 14 minutes on my next move, I had 43 minutes left.



18...♖c5!

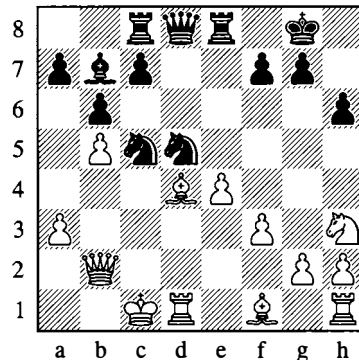
Avoiding a nice trap: if 18...f5? White could ignore the threat and complete his development: 19.♙c4 fxe4 20.0-0 White's bishops are killing.

19.♙xc5

White wants to castle long, but before doing so he must eliminate the knight. This sensible move was played after 11 minutes, but it is not the most challenging.

19.0-0-0?

would lead to trouble.



19...♖a4 20.♙b3 c6!

Defending the a4-knight indirectly in view of ...cxb5†.

21.exd5

Otherwise White would simply be worse,

with his exposed king and underdeveloped kingside.

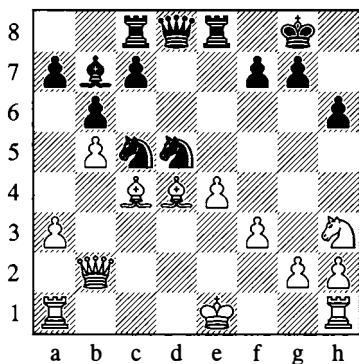
21...cxb5† 22.♖b1 ♕xd5 23.♝xb5

Black's overwhelming activity demands starting a sacrificial attack:

23...♕xf3 24.gxf3 ♘c3†

White's pieces are hanging and his king is vulnerable.

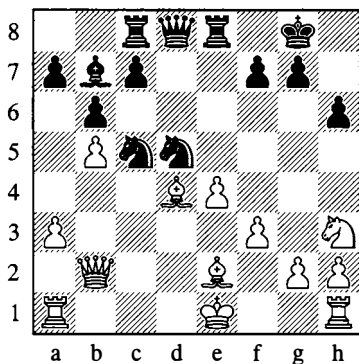
Reacting in the same way as after 18...f5 is not good: 19.♕c4?



19...♘e4! White should probably admit that he had gone wrong and get castled, since 20.fxex4 ♝xe4† offers Black a decisive attack.

The move I was focusing on when playing 18...♘c5 was:

19.♕e2!



If allowed to castle, White would have an indisputable positional advantage, so I

was prepared to sacrifice, although I could hardly figure out the following fascinating variation:

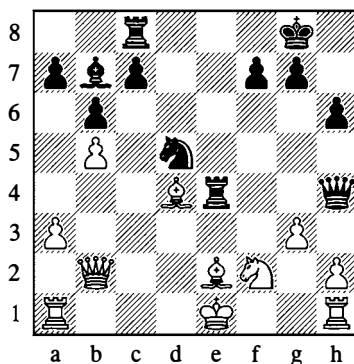
19...♘e4! 20.fxex4 ♝h4† 21.♘f2 ♝xe4

Threatening ...♝ce8.

22.g3

The most challenging defence, forcing me to sacrifice even more material.

If 22.0-0-0 the following forcing line simplifies to a roughly equal ending. 22...♝f4† 23.♖b1 ♝xe2 24.♝xe2 ♝xd4 25.♝xd4 ♘c3† 26.♖b2 ♘xe2 Two pawns and the minor-piece activity compensate for the exchange.



22...♝xe2†! 23.♖e2 ♝e7† 24.♖d3 c5!

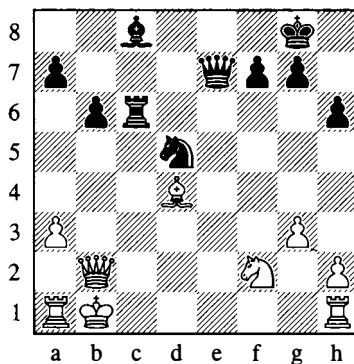
An amazing move when a rook down.

25.bxc6 ♕a6† 26.♖c2 ♝xc6† 27.♖b1

White seems to have reached some safety, but the attack goes on with another surprising move:

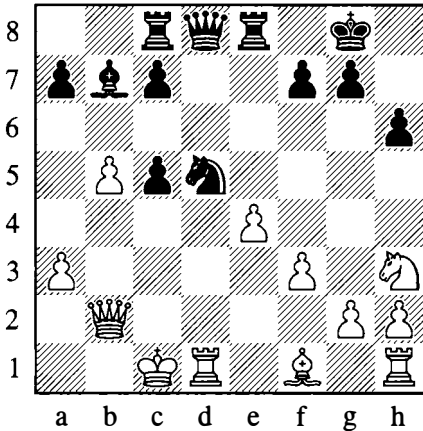
27...♕c8!

Followed by ...♕f5† or ...♕e6.



Objectively, Black should have compensation. In practice, it would be more of a war of nerves. With Black it is not easy to find all the regrouping moves. With White it is easy to get scared by false dangers, and panic...

19...bxc5 20.0-0-0



I must confess that I had completely overlooked this move, which wins my knight. I felt that Karpov was quite happy with his position, but nevertheless I answered after only two minutes, as if nothing had happened.

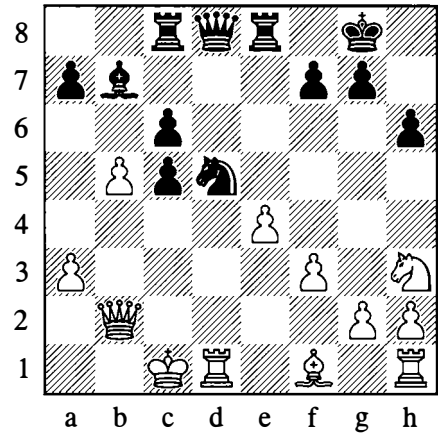
I am wondering now whether some of the best sacrifices were born of such blunders...

20...c6!

The advance of this modest pawn has a surprisingly strong dynamic impact on the position. It activates the c8-rook, prepares the queen incursion to a5 and gives White a choice between letting me have two connected passed pawns or opening the queenside even more.

It was Karpov's turn to be surprised, as he now spent 16 minutes, getting down to only three minutes for the remaining 19 moves. The result was an immediate mistake, which shows the complexity of the position.

The conclusion is that sometimes it is good to blunder into a move such as 20.0-0-0!

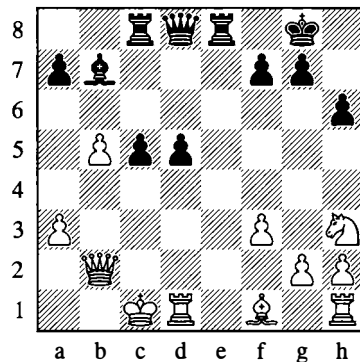


21.bxc6?

Strategically, it makes sense to reduce my pawn influence in the centre, but opening the b-file and activating my bishop could have had unfortunate consequences for the vulnerable white king.

The attempt to consolidate on the d5-square also fails to keep things under control: 21.♙c4 ♜a5 22.exd5 cxd5 23.♙xd5 ♙xd5 24.♞xd5 ♞e3! With a dangerous attack. The h3-knight does not count at all.

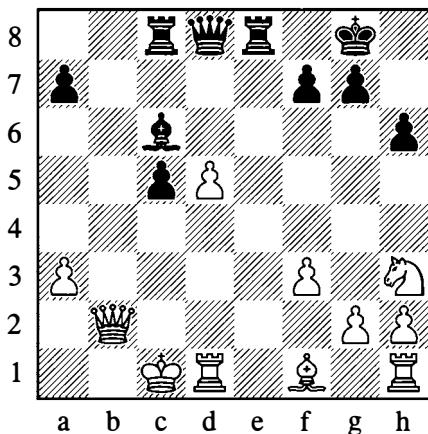
White should have taken the knight at once: 21.exd5 cxd5



True, Black would have fantastic compensation, with a plan based on ...♞a5 followed by ...♞b8 and ...a6, plus the possible advance of the central pawns. Objectively,

White would retain chances to hold approximate equality, but with just three minutes on his clock, his practical task would have been very unpleasant.

21...♙xc6 22.exd5



22...♙a5

I remember how proud I was of this move, in which I invested 15 minutes, but it seems that it is not the only winning way.

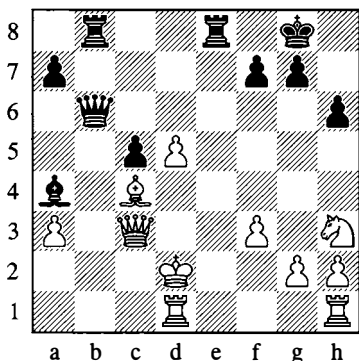
I rejected

22...♙a4!

on account of

23.♙c4 ♖b8 24.♙c3 ♙b6 25.♙d2

fearing that White could more or less consolidate.



In fact, I underestimated the force my attack would have even without queens:

25...♙b2†! 26.♙xb2 ♖xb2† 27.♙c3?

This obvious move allows a forced mate, as does 27.♙d3? ♖be2!.

27.♙c1 avoids mate, but after 27...♖c2†

I would regain the piece, keeping a clear advantage.

27...♖c2† 28.♙d3 ♖ce2 29.♙a6 ♖8e3†

30.♙c4 ♖c2 mate.

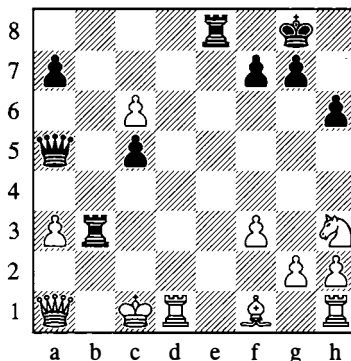
A very nice mating net! In principle, this would have been a more clear-cut continuation than my choice.

23.dxc6 ♖b8 24.c7

White desperately needs to return his material advantage to try to save his skin. The far-advanced pawn is supposed to restrict my attacking potential.

Another similar line is:

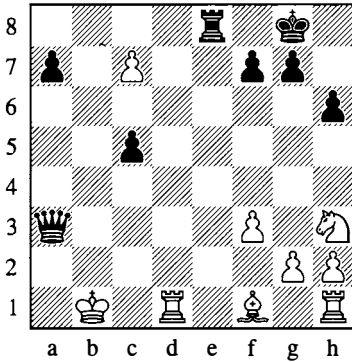
24.♙a1 ♖b3



25.c7!?

There seems to be no time for developing moves: 25.♙d3? c4 26.♙c2 ♖xa3 27.♙d4 ♖a2!! (A fantastic move, clearing the a3-square. Black should not hurry with ...c4-c3, since this would allow ♖he1!) 28.c7 c3 with a decisive attack.

25...♖xa3 26.♙xa3 ♙xa3† 27.♙b1



White has extinguished the first wave of the attack, but...

27...♙a5!

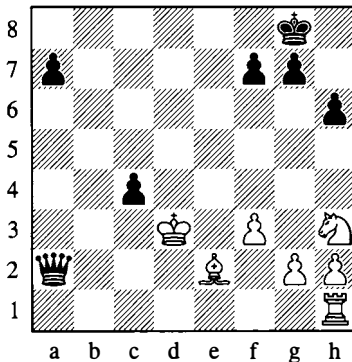
Black eliminates the dangerous pawn, keeping a big advantage despite approximate material equality. The queen is very mobile and the white king too exposed. White's development is hard to complete as the kingside pawns might become vulnerable.

The following is an illustrative line:

28.♖d8 ♜xd8 29.cxd8=♙† ♜xd8 30.♕c2 ♜d5 31.♙e2

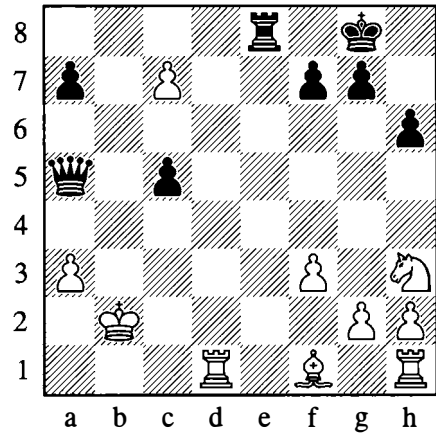
Keeping the second rank defended in order to avoid losing the g2-pawn.

31...♜a2† 32.♕d3 c4†



The c-pawn will cost White dearly.

24...♜xb2 25.♕xb2



The last critical moment in the game. After overlooking that White could castle long, I was unsure of myself and subconsciously I would not have minded a draw. Moreover, I had no training or practical experience at all in positions with this unusual material imbalance. Arithmetically, White has a minimal material advantage, but I did not feel at all at home trying to evaluate the significance of my activity and his lagging development. I believe that now and on the next move I failed to evaluate the importance of the e3-square.

25...♜b6†?

This helps White to remove his king from an exposed square.

25...♜xc7!

This would have ensured a tempo was gained at a later stage. White would have faced very difficult, if not unsolvable, problems:

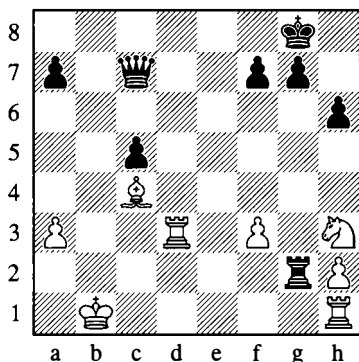
26.♙c4 ♜e3!

Preventing 27.♜he1? in view of 27...♜e5†, winning a rook.

27.♜d3

Or if 27.♙f2 ♜e5† 28.♕a2 ♜c3 with a decisive attack. True, this is easy to spot with the help of computers, but not so simple to evaluate in over-the-board play.

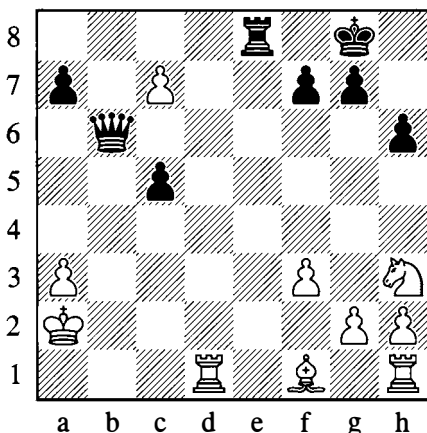
27...♜e2† 28.♕b1 ♜xg2



White's coordination is very poor and his pawns are weak. Black's control of the second rank may lead to a decisive attack.

To improve your understanding of such materially-unbalanced positions, I recommend the following method: play a few training games from the critical position with a friend, switching colours after each game and then check them with a computer!

26.♔a2



26...♖e6†

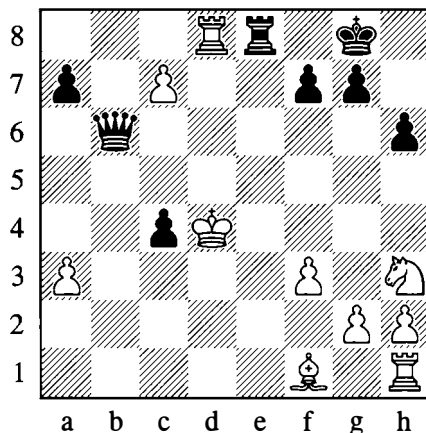
If 26...♖xc7 White could speed up his development with 27.♙b5 without fearing a pin along the b-file since the king has evacuated it already. True, Black's position would remain preferable after 27...♞b8 28.♙c4 ♖e5.

27.♙b2 c4?!

I felt that I was playing with the draw in my pocket, but my last move finally gave up any chances for an advantage.

27...♖e5† followed by ...♖xc7 would have brought me back on the right track.

28.♞d8 ♖b6† 29.♙c3 ♖b3† 30.♙d4 ♖b6†



31.♙c3!

The c4-pawn is taboo in view of ...♖xc7†, winning the d8-rook. Actually, I failed to understand in time that White's last move solves all his problems.

31...♖a5† 32.♙c2!

With only one minute on his clock, Karpov defends perfectly. Instead 32.♙d4? would be a deadly mistake because of: 32...♖e5†!

32...♖a4† 33.♙d2 c3† 34.♙xc3 ♖xa3† 35.♙c2 ♖a2† 36.♙c1 ♖a1† 37.♙c2 ♖a4† 38.♙c1 ♖a3† 39.♙c2

½-½

Well, just a draw, but quite a bloody and exciting one! Despite the abundance of inaccuracies, I find this game really enjoyable and I hope you do too.

This game gave me the boost I needed for the rest of the tournament. I scored three points out of the remaining four rounds and finished joint first with Timman. The first prize included a beautiful glass chess set, which this time went to Timman, as he had beaten me. Over the years, I managed to collect three such sets.



In the next game, my positional sacrifice was intentional and, to some extent surprisingly for me, there was no king hunt involved.

Anatoly Karpov – Judit Polgar

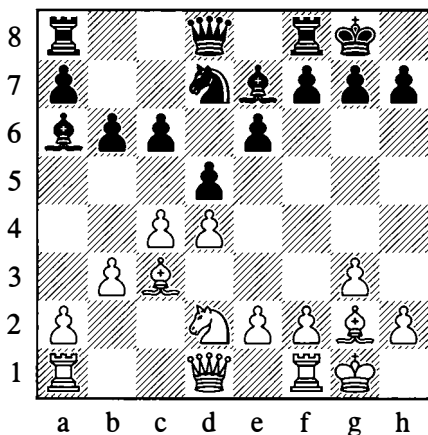
Buenos Aires 2000

This was my first tournament as a married woman. It was played in September and my wedding was the month before. My husband was travelling with me, of course.

I had pleasant memories of Buenos Aires from the events organized by Najdorf. My first participation dated back to 1992. More than an organizer, Don Miguel was the soul of these tournaments, watching the games every day and being interested in the post-mortem analysis.

Unfortunately this was now a Najdorf memorial, as Don Miguel had passed away in 1997. His son-in-law, Victor Zolnicki, took charge of the organization, and was helped by Najdorf's grandson.

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 b6 4.g3 ♕a6
5.b3 ♕b4† 6.♗d2 ♗e7 7.♗g2 c6 8.♗c3 d5
9.♗e5 ♗d7 10.♗xd7 ♗xd7 11.♗d2 0-0
12.0-0



This is a basic Queen's Indian tabiya, in which Black has tried several continuations.

12...♗f6

This is one of the most popular of them. Instead at the 2000 Olympiad, I played 12...♗b8 against Van der Sterren (page 143).

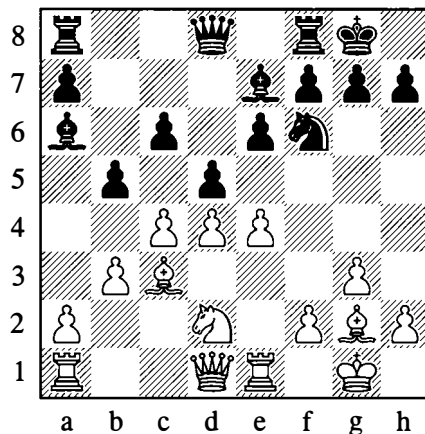
13.e4

White aims to open the centre and increase his space advantage.

13...b5

Counterattacking against White's Achilles heel, the c4-pawn, and setting up complex central and queenside tension.

14.♗e1



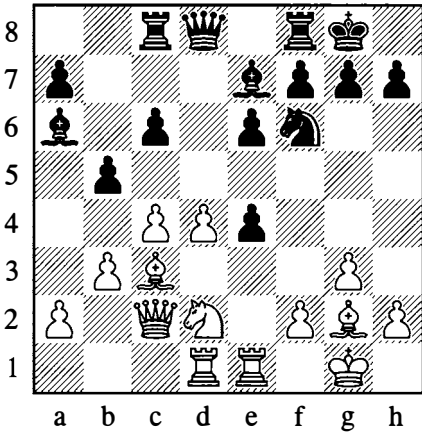
Not only activating the rook, but also preparing ♗g2-f1 to neutralize my a6-bishop.

14...dxc4

Now is a good moment to release the tension, since 15.♗xe4 would leave the c4-square undefended. White needs a few tempos to prepare the capture on e4.

14...dxc4?! 15.bxc4 bxc4 16.♖a4 ♗b5 17.♖c2 leaves White with an advantage in the centre, while the extra pawn will inevitably be lost after a well-timed ♗g2-f1.

15. ♖c2 ♜c8 16. ♜ad1



16... ♘d5

This is not a genuine piece sacrifice, as after 17. cxd5? cxd5 White has no adequate way to get out of the pin. If 18. ♖b2 then 18... b4 traps the bishop anyway.

My last move did not come as a surprise to Karpov, since he had faced it in two previous games against Timman and Adams. In both cases he reacted with 17. ♙xe4, but in the meantime he must have done some homework on this position. In any case, he played his next move quickly.

17. ♙b2

I did not expect this, but answered after only five minutes. To me, there was no question of removing the knight from the centre, making my next move a natural candidate.

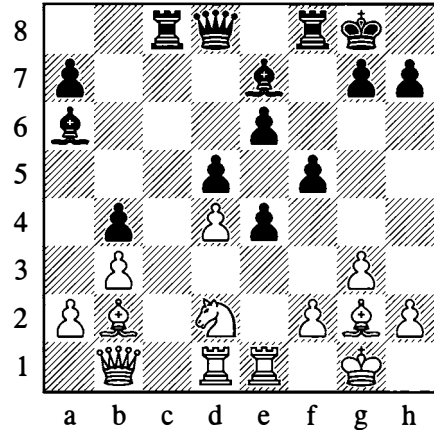
17... ♜f5!

This is a real sacrifice. Since my last move has defended the extra pawn, White cannot reject the sacrifice.

You can imagine how happy I felt to once again sacrifice a knight on d5 against Karpov, one year after the previous game. In my old notes it says Karpov himself had played this with Black in a blitz game against Gelfand, six months earlier. As I did not find the game in

my database, I must have learned this detail from either Karpov or Gelfand.

18. cxd5 cxd5 19. ♖b1 b4



We played these moves quickly. A brief glance at the position suffices to notice my compensation. My pawns secure a space advantage across the whole board, and most of White's pieces are severely restricted.

It often happens that a sacrifice of a minor piece for two pawns offers the opponent the possibility of returning the material under favourable circumstances. In many cases, the player with an extra piece could feel that he is playing with a draw in his pocket.

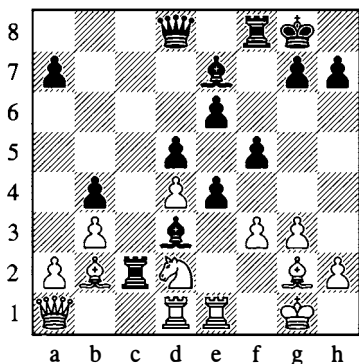
This is not the case here. With my e4-pawn well defended, I did not have to fear a return sacrifice. In order to prepare it, White would need to play f2-f3, but this would weaken his position, giving me additional possibilities.

It is interesting that, even though Karpov has castled short this time, there are certain elements in common with our previous game. As a result of the sacrifice, my queen's rook and bishop became very active, and the strengthening of the centre is similar to what would have happened if Karpov had chosen the correct 21. exd5.

20. ♘f1

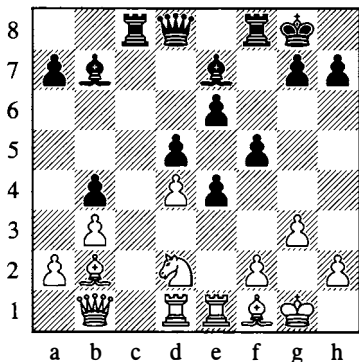
Played after 12 minutes. Clearly, Karpov wanted to improve his knight's location, but since a big part of the rest of his army is also in need of this, he had to choose the right move order.

The premature 20.f3? would offer me overwhelming activity: 20...♔d3 21.♖a1 ♜c2+

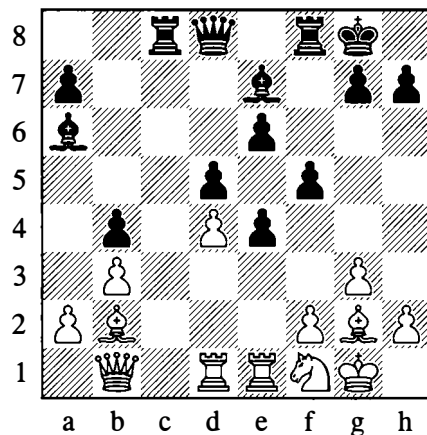


Depending on White's reaction, I could start a kingside attack with ...f5-f4 or besiege the d4-pawn with ...♜b6, ...♔f6 and ...♜xb2.

Since my a6-bishop cuts like a blade, it is a good question why Karpov did not start his regrouping with 20.♔f1. One possible reason is that he feared weakening the kingside light squares, but the main drawback of this move is much deeper. The paradoxical 20...♔b7!? leaves White with an immobile knight and no possibilities for further regrouping.



By over-defending the e4-pawn, Black creates the threat of ...f5-f4, while if f2-f3 or f2-f4, my plan from the game, culminating with ...♜c3, would be very strong.



20...♜b6

I was confident in my position and did not feel the urge to start an immediate attack to prove my compensation. My last move anticipates Karpov's f2-f3, and prepares an elegant strategic operation.

The straightforward 20...f4 was a worthy alternative, though. Black's attack would not be so threatening yet, but it would cross White's plans of regrouping. In order to gain the e3-square for the knight, he would have to weaken his king with the undesirable gxf4.

21.f3

After 17 minutes, Karpov decides to take the bull by the horns and fight back in the centre.

I considered

21.♔e3!?

to be the main line: having said "A", White should not refrain from adding "B".

The obvious reaction is:

21...f4 22.♔g4 ♔d6

White is far from achieving stability, as Black threatens 23...h5 24.♔e5 ♔xe5 25.dxe5 fxe5 attacking the f2-pawn.

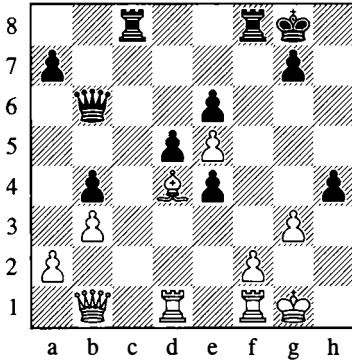
23. ♖f1

An interesting way to defend f2 and get rid of my active bishop at the same time.

23... ♖xf1 24. ♖xf1 h5

Initiating a forcing sequence.

25. ♜e5 ♖xe5 26. dxe5 fxg3 27. hxg3 h4 28. ♖d4



28... ♛d8!

A well-timed queen switch to the kingside. White's weak kingside squares and the remoteness of the white queen offer Black excellent attacking chances, fully compensating for the piece.

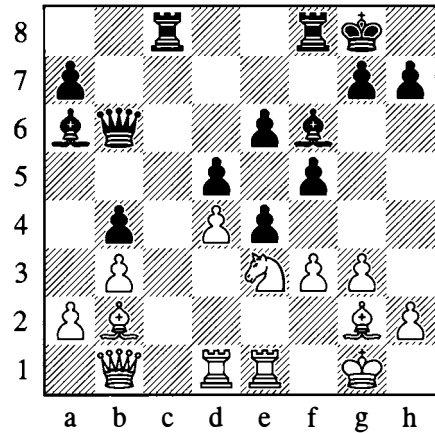
21... ♖f6

It may seem that I am putting pressure on a well-defended square...

22. ♜e3

Played after four minutes. In positions with pawn tension, one has to check on every step whether it makes sense to insert a pawn exchange before making the "main" move.

In this case, 22. fxe4?! fxe4 would open the f-file for my rook and make the c1-h6 diagonal easier to access by the bishop without gaining anything in return.



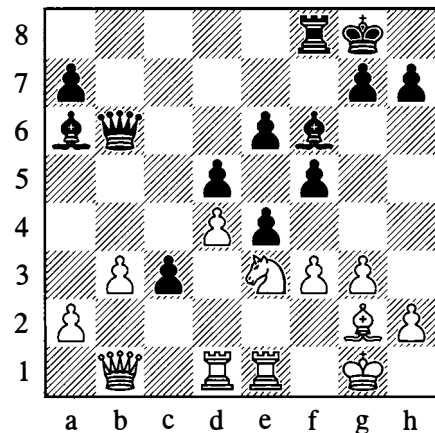
22... ♖c3!

I had planned this new sacrifice in advance, but thought for 13 minutes before actually carrying it out. I wanted to make sure there was not a better form of doing it, and needed to calculate some variations. After all, I will be a whole rook down!

My main idea was that if I managed to remove the d4-pawn, my centre would become mobile and threatening.

Karpov took my rook after three minutes. He could hardly have been surprised by my sacrifice, since it is the most natural move.

23. ♖xc3 bxc3

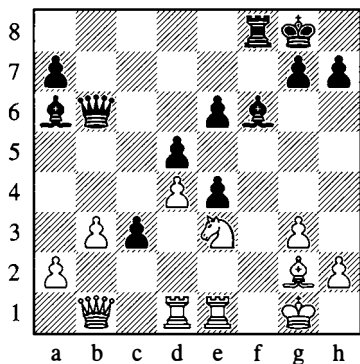


24. ♜c2?

Karpov played this almost without thinking. He was probably relying on what he had calculated before 21.f3. There might also have been a bit of ostentation in his speed, as if trying to show that everything was under control.

Since things have become more concrete, now was a good moment to insert the exchange on e4. In many later lines, Karpov will simply not have the time to play fxe4!

24.fxe4 fxe4



25.♖c2!

The same regrouping as in the game, but offering Black fewer active possibilities.

White could not yet get any advantage out of the cleared h3-e6 diagonal: 25.♙h3 ♙c8! The same as in a line above, the well-timed bishop retreat maintains Black's initiative. 26.♘c2 ♙xd4† 27.♘xd4 e5 With the bishop away from g2, White does not have the thematic resource ♙g2xe4 and will be crushed by Black's pawn avalanche.

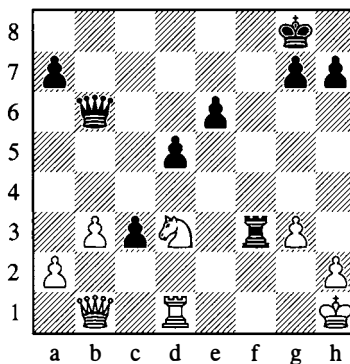
25...♙d3

The line initiated by this move is the only one in which Black can make use of the open file that resulted from the previous exchange. 25...♙xd4†? 26.♘xd4 e5 does not work on account of 27.♙xe4 when Black would have no compensation for the exchange.

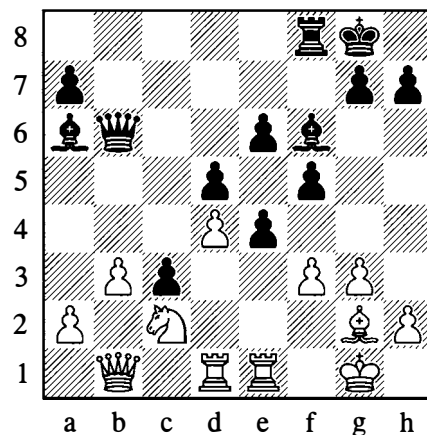
Or if 25...e5, which is similar to the game continuation, 26.♘e3 and now I could not react with 26...exd4? because after 27.♘xd5

the e4-pawn will be lost. 26...♙b7 is better, but White can save the day with 27.♘xd5 ♙xd5 28.♙xe4 when Black's pawns have lost mobility, and ensure enough compensation for maintaining equality but not more.

26.♙f1 ♙xd4† 27.♙h1 ♙f2 28.♙xd3 ♙xe1 29.♘xe1 exd3 30.♘xd3 ♖f3



Black has excellent compensation for the piece, especially because the white king is weak, but a draw looks like the most probable result.



24...e5?!

I remember that at this point I was very optimistic and enthusiastic about my position. Maybe a bit too much so, I would say now, but my feeling that this is a critical position was right. Therefore, I took 31 minutes before answering. Unfortunately, I did not make the right choice, due to a concrete oversight.

My other important candidate was:

24...♙xd4! 25.♘xd4

If 25.♞xd4? e5 26.♚d1, hoping to consolidate on d4, 26...♙d3!! cuts White's army in two with decisive effect.

25...e5

As we know, without the f-pawns White would win with ♙g2xe4.

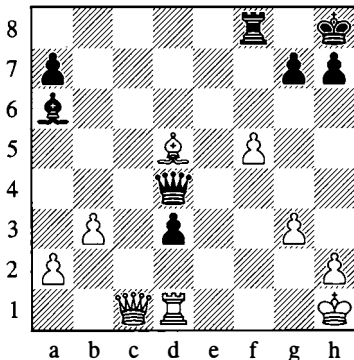
26.fxe4

White's only chance for survival remains the capture on e4 anyway. Under no circumstances should he allow me to keep a compact mass in the centre.

26...exd4 27.exf5

27.♖h1? would keep the extra rook, but after 27...fxe4 my four pawns would be much stronger!

27...d3† 28.♖h1 c2 29.♙xd5† ♖h8 30.♚c1 cxd1=♚ 31.♞xd1 ♚d4

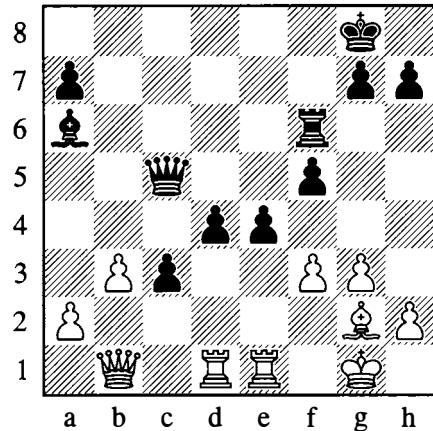


The far-advanced d-pawn offers me a long-term advantage. White's extra pawn is not relevant; in fact the f5-pawn is likely to be lost soon. Still, White could hope to hold a draw after quite a bit of suffering.

25.♙e3 exd4

As we know already, after the insertion of the exchange on e4, this would not have been possible.

26.♙xd5 ♚c5 27.♙xf6† ♞xf6



My pawns look very strong. The immediate threat is ...c3-c2 (with or without the previous ...d4-d3†) and if 28.♞c1? then 28...d3† followed by 29...c2 and 30...d2.

28.b4!

I had overlooked this saving move and its effects! Karpov played it very quickly, and I was shocked when I understood that ♚b3 (with or without a check) would be coming.

28...♚c4

The only move. If 28...♚b6? then 29.♚b3† ♖h8 30.♖h1+— and my pawns have suddenly become immobile and vulnerable. For instance, 30...e3 31.♚d5.

29.♚b3

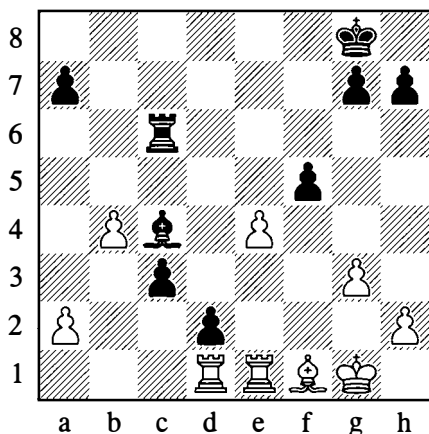
It was my turn to decide whether to insert an exchange on b3 before advancing my d-pawn. After 11 minutes I came to the conclusion that there was not much of a difference and both lines should lead to a draw. My far-advanced pawns will let me win back a rook, but no more than that.

29...d3

Or 29...♚xb3 30.axb3 d3 31.fxe4 d2 32.e5 dxe1=♚† 33.♞xe1 ♞b6 34.♞c1 ♞xb4 35.♞xc3 ♙b7 with a drawn ending.

30. ♖xc4†

Played after 26 minutes. Karpov probably felt the worst was behind him, and tried to find a way to keep some tension in the position.

30... ♙xc4 31. ♙f1 ♖c6 32. fxe4 d2**33. b5**

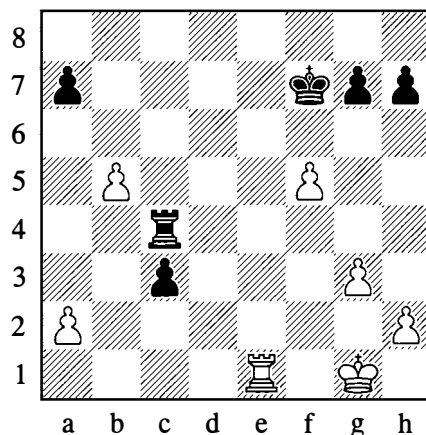
An intermediate move that does not change much. All roads lead to... a draw!

33... ♖c5 34. ♙xc4† ♖xc4 35. exf5

I think that at this point Karpov understood that it would make no sense to spend time and energy on playing on. His last move openly aims for complete simplifications.

If 35. ♖f1 ♖xe4 36. ♙f2 (not 36. a4? ♖e2 followed by ...c2 with complete paralysis for

White) 36... ♙f7 White would sooner or later have to liquidate with ♖xd2 in order to avoid being worse.

35... dxe1=♖† 36. ♖xe1 ♙f7

There is not much play left now. The f5-pawn does not count as an extra pawn.

37. ♖c1 ♙f6 38. ♙f2 ♖a4 39. ♖c2 ♙xf5 40. ♙e3 ♖a5

And finally a draw was agreed on my proposal.

I remember that the post-mortem analysis was no less exciting than the game. Even when he does not win the game, Karpov is very motivated to prove that he had been better all the time.



The tournament ended in complete success for me, as I won with $6\frac{1}{2}$ out of 9, ahead of Short, Karpov, Bologan, Milov and the top Latin American players Milos, Leitao, Flores, Ricardi and Pierrot.



At the prize-giving with Najdorf's daughters Liliana and Mirta

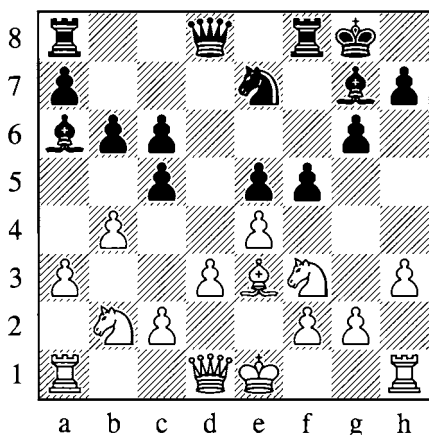


At the opening ceremony with Nigel Short, Anatoly Karpov and the chief organizer Najdorf's son-in-law Victor Solnicki

As a curiosity, I will mention another game in which my knight landed on d5 under attack by a pawn; true, it was not a genuine sacrifice, but aesthetically I find it related to the main examples from this section.

Vladimir Kramnik – Judit Polgar

Monaco (blindfold) 1996



I have an active position, but my knight seems to lack mobility. If I could activate it, my advantage would be beyond any doubt.

12...♘d5!

Just simple tactics. If 13.exd5 then 13...e4! will win back a knight.

In blindfold games anything is possible, and I eventually lost this game, but this certainly had nothing to do with my last move!

Chapter 5

Thunder from a Blue Sky



The participants of the Immopar Trophy 1992

Sitting: Gata Kamsky, Michael Adams, Judit and Viswanathan Anand

Standing: Valery Salov, Jan Timman, Boris Gelfand, Anatoly Karpov, Artur Yusupov, Nigel Short, Lev Polugaevsky, Garry Kasparov, Vladimir Kramnik, Joel Lautier, Alexei Shirov and Evgeny Bareev

My ability to abruptly change the course of a game enjoyed wide coverage in the first volume. We had several chapters dedicated to what many considered to be my predominant feature – tricks.

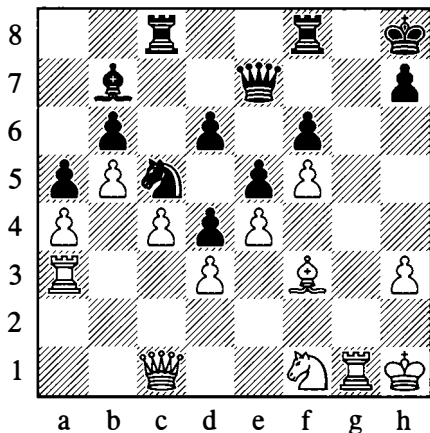
Despite the broadening of my style and the much higher level of my opponents after 1991, I continued to produce thunder from a blue sky with some frequency. The small selection from this chapter shows that such thunder could take a wide range of forms – tactical, static or study-like, for instance. In two cases, the decisive factor was the psychological effect of my unexpected move, but in the others it is more about their objective merits. It is also worth noting that in most cases the surprise was delivered by the weakest fighting unit, the pawn!

In the first example I defeated a Junior World Champion by means of two surprising pawn breaks, making use of the hidden dynamic potential of my position.

Tal Shaked – Judit Polgar

Hooegeveen 1998

Of my numerous participations in the Hooegeveen tournament, this is the most memorable. I had just met Gusztav, my future husband, and I was in love. This helped me win the tournament “just like that”!



I have various strategic pluses: a fantastic blockading knight, chances for an ending against White's bad bishop, better overall coordination.

White's pieces are placed rather chaotically, so his kingside attacking chances are illusory. And yet, the *almost* completely blocked structure seems to prevent me from making progress. This must have been my opponent's reasoning when offering a draw a few moves earlier. Even without considering his time trouble (three minutes to reach move 40!) I had some ideas. This “almost” from the evaluation above is essential.

27...d5!!

The only legal pawn move from the g-file all the way to the left edge! It happens to work out well because of the huge difference between both sides' piece mobilization.

Concretely, my last move will eventually result in opening lines for all of my pieces – an incredible situation. For instance, there is now some indirect pressure on the a3-rook.

28.exd5

The only reasonable answer. White cannot afford to expose his queen to my rook's discovered attacks. At first sight, the achievements of my break are far from obvious. First of all, how am I going to win with my bishop even more restricted than before?

28...e4!

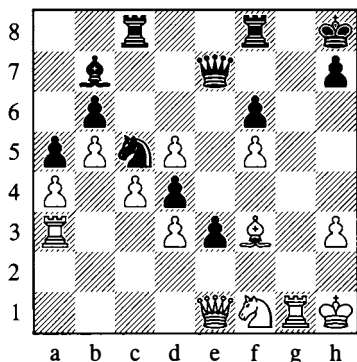
This second break shakes White's structure to its foundations. In time trouble, such successive breaks are very unpleasant and my opponent failed to find the best answer.

29.dxe4?

The decisive mistake.

The only move to keep White in the game was 29.♖e1! pinning my pawn and preventing

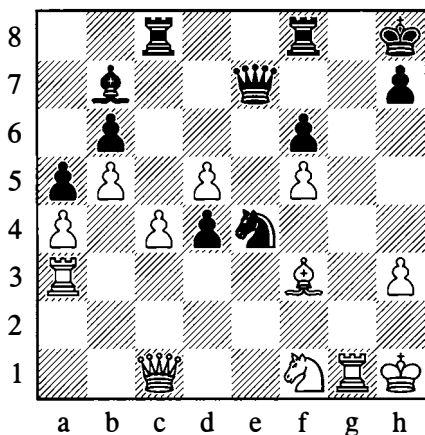
29...♖xd3? in view of 30.♗xd3!. I planned 29...e3 but White could complicate the position with an unexpected piece sacrifice:



30.♖xe3!! dxe3 31.d4 The strength of White's pawns reminds me of some lines of my Buenos Aires game against Karpov, on page 94.

29...♗fe8 may be a better try, but White is still kicking with 30.dxe4 ♖xe4 31.♗d3.

29...♖xe4



The threat of ...♗xd5 makes White's position hopeless.

30.♗h6?

This fails to create any threats and worsens White's coordination even more.

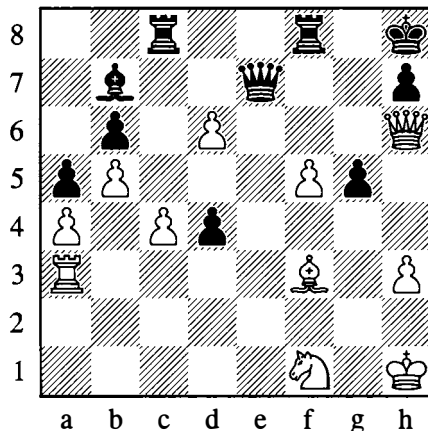
30...♖g5

Covering the g-file in order to make the threat of ...♗xa3 real.

31.♗xg5

Or if 31.♗d3 ♖xf3 32.♗xf3 ♗xc4 followed by ...♗xd5 with a decisive attack.

31...fxg5 32.d6



32...♗e2!?

Not the only winning move, but the prettiest one.

33.♗xb7 ♗xf1† 34.♖h2 ♗xf5

My opponent managed to resign just before his flag fell.

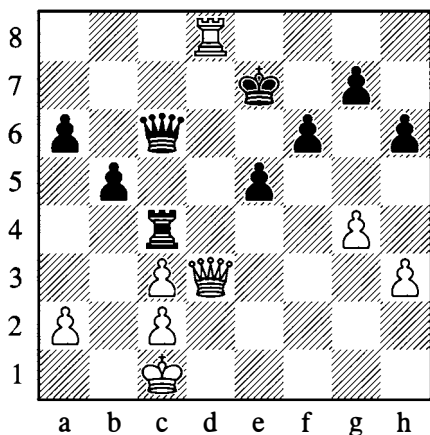
0-1

In positions with major pieces, the main issues are usually centralization and the kings' safety. In the next game, the decisive psychological blow was delivered by a modest advance of a rook pawn, just taking away an essential square from the enemy king.

Judit Polgar – Vassily Ivanchuk

Novgorod 1996

This game was played immediately before the memorable game against Gelfand, on page 322.



The opening had not worked out well for me and I found myself a pawn down with a bad structure. Nevertheless, I managed to find some interesting chances based on the unsure position of the black king.

31. Bg8 Bxc3 32. Qg6!

The hurried 32. Bxg7? would allow simplifications to a hopeless pawn ending with: 32... Qf8! 33. Qh7 Bxc2!

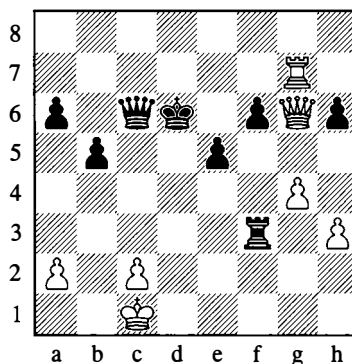
Objectively, things are more than all right for Black after my last move, but Ivanchuk did not expect it, which caused him to react nervously after only two minutes.

32... e4?

The idea of cutting off the white queen's communication with the c2-square is too slow, as things are speeding up now.

Black should have started to evacuate the danger area with the calm:

32... Qd6! 33. Bxg7 Bf3!



Not only defending the f6-pawn, but also preparing a back-rank check.

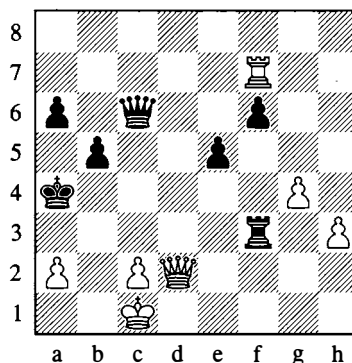
34. Bf7

If 34. Qxh6 then 34... Qd5 with decisive centralization.

34... Qc5!

The king is heading for the safe a-file!

35. Qxh6 Qb4 36. Qd2 Qa4



Material is level, but Black's king is safer and the e5-pawn may become threatening. Black has a clear advantage.

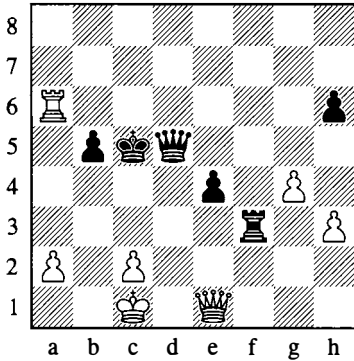
33. Bxg7 Qd6 34. Qxf6 Qd5 35. Qf5

After Black's mistake, only White can play for a win.

35... Qd4

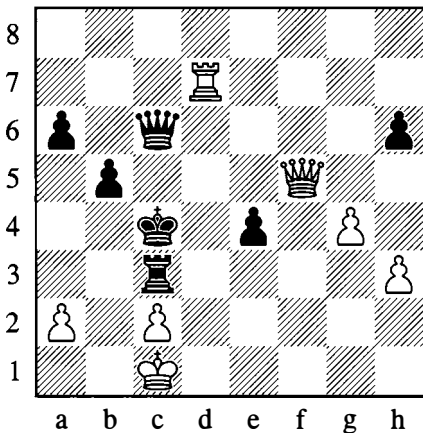
Ivanchuk played this very quickly, probably thinking that my rook will stand worse on d7 than on g7.

He probably rejected 35...♖c4 on account of 36.♙g6, which indeed looks scary, but objectively things are not clear. 36...♗d5 37.♜f1+ ♕b4 38.♞xa6 ♞f3 39.♜e1+ ♕c5



The position is very sharp and both sides have to play very accurately. White is a pawn up and has the somewhat safer king, but the e4-pawn is strong. I would choose to play with White, but a draw would be the most probable result.

36.♞d7+ ♕c4

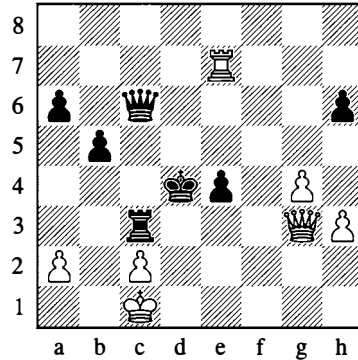


The black king is getting close to the safe area, but I found a surprising idea that radically crosses Black's plans. If 32.♜g6 was just a nasty surprise, the real thunder arrived on the next move.

37.a3!!

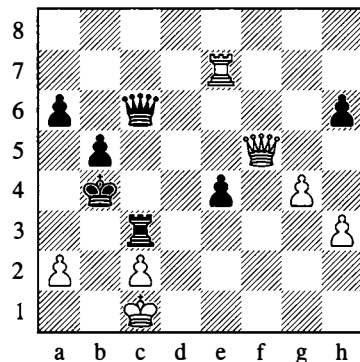
Preventing ...♕b4 and threatening to win the queen with 38.♜f7+ ♞c5 39.♞c7.

I was seduced by the game idea to such an extent that I did not seriously consider 37.♞e7. I thought that 37...♕d4? would lead to a draw by repetition, but computer analysis shows a complicated win: 38.♜e5+ ♕e3 39.♜g3+ ♕d4



40.♜h2!! Removing the queen from the attacked square and preparing a long attacking sequence. For instance: 40...a5 41.g5! The queen needs this square for the attack. 41...hxg5 42.♜e5+ ♕e3 43.♜xg5+ ♕d4 44.♜g7+ ♕e3 45.♜g1+ ♕e2 46.♜g2+ ♕e3 47.♜d2+ ♕f3 48.♞f7+ ♕g3 49.♜f4+ ♕xh3 50.♞h7+ ♕g2 51.♞h2+ ♕g1 52.♜f2 mate.

Black could have defended better with: 37...♕b4!



Continuing the main plan.

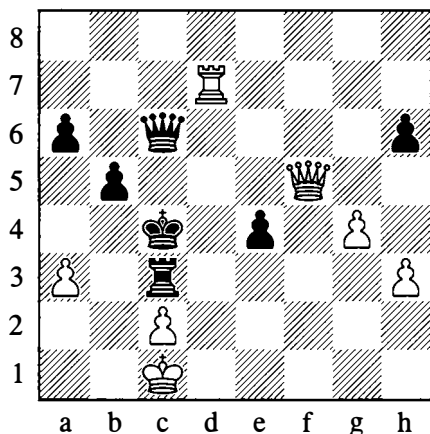
38. ♖xe4†

Or 38. ♖xe4† ♕a5 with an unclear position.

White is a pawn up but the black king is safer.

38... ♖xe4 39. ♖xe4† ♕a3

Black's activity offers him excellent drawing chances.

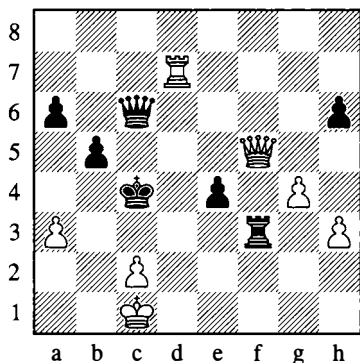


My last move came as a second shock for Ivanchuk, who once again failed to show the required patience for calculating concrete lines. He still had ten minutes to reach move 40, but spent only a couple of them before making the decisive mistake.

37...b4?

37... ♖xa3? would lose material to: 38. ♖f7† ♕b4 39. ♖e7† ♕a4 (if 39... ♖c5 then 40. ♖d4! wins the queen) 40. ♖d4† White wins the rook.

The only saving move was: 37... ♖f3!



I had planned the zwischenzug 38. ♖c7!? based on 38... ♖xc7? 39. ♖xe4† followed by 40. ♖xf3 with a promising queen ending. Black could defend with: 38... ♖xf5 39. ♖xc6† ♕d5 40. ♖xa6 (or if 40. ♖xh6 ♖f3 41. ♖xa6 ♖xh3 42. g5 e3 with the same evaluation) 40... ♖f3 41. ♖xh6 ♖xa3 The e-pawn is strong enough to guarantee a draw.

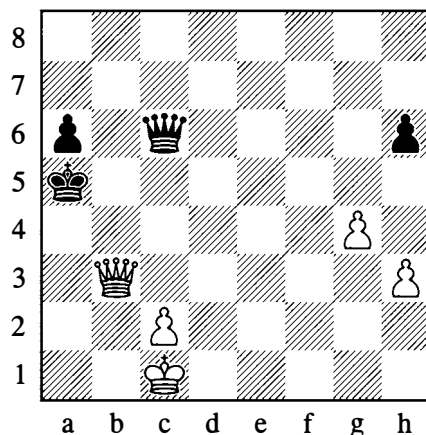
38. ♖f1† ♖d3!?

Chucky must have put his hopes in this spectacular move. Instead 38... ♕c5 39. ♖f8† leads to mate in a few moves.

39. ♖xd3!

Only not 39. cxd3†? ♕b3† 40. ♕d2 ♖xd7 when Black is absolutely fine. 39. ♖f7† would also win, but I found a forcing way to transpose to a won pawn ending.

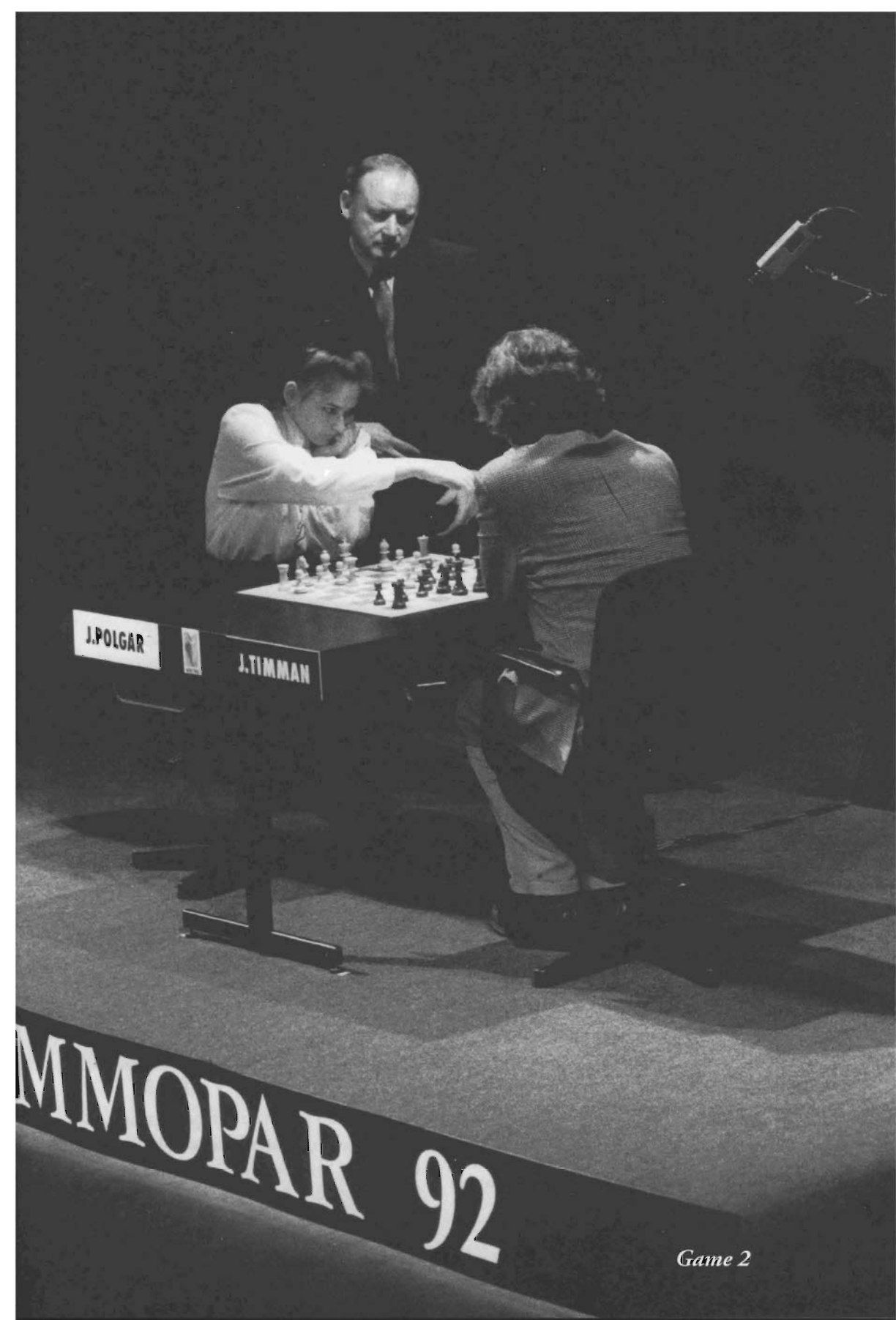
39...exd3 40. ♖xd3† ♕c5 41. axb4† ♕xb4 42. ♖b3† ♕a5



43. c3!

The line 43... ♖c5 (or any other queen move preventing ♖b4 mate) 44. ♖b4† ♖xb4 45. cxb4† ♕xb4 46. h4 ♕c5 47. g5 hxg5 48. h5! g4 49. ♕d2! leaves Black no hope at all. My king is close enough to stop the g-pawn, while my h-pawn will inevitably promote.

1-0



Game 2

In the next game, taking away an essential square from the enemy king will happen in a different way, but the hero will once again be a pawn.

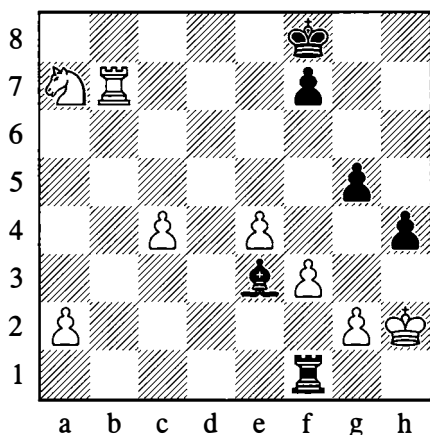
Jan Timman – Judit Polgar

Paris Immopar (rapid) 1992

This was the first time I had been invited to the Paris Immopar Trophy. The main organizer, Dan Antoan Blanc Shapira, and his team did a fantastic job, creating a special atmosphere throughout the event.

We played at the Champs-Elysees theatre, a fantastic location for a chess tournament. The theatre was fully booked. There was only one game on the stage at a time and the spectators could listen to live commentary on their headphones.

I arrived in Paris a few days before the start. I have described my activities during these days in my comments to the game against Kramnik, on page 238. As mentioned there, Polugaevsky helped me to prepare my King's Indian against Timman's Sämisch Variation, which was played in this game.



After a sharp fight, we reached a roughly equal ending. A few moves earlier, Timman

avoided a draw by repetition, but then the play slipped out of his control.

White's passed pawns are not easy to advance, but Timman must have thought that as long as his king has the h3-c8 diagonal as an escape route, the position would remain one-sided. The next move surely came as a shock.

37...g4!

Blocking the king's escape and threatening ...g1† followed by mate or ...f4† with a decisive attack.

38.fxg4

What else?

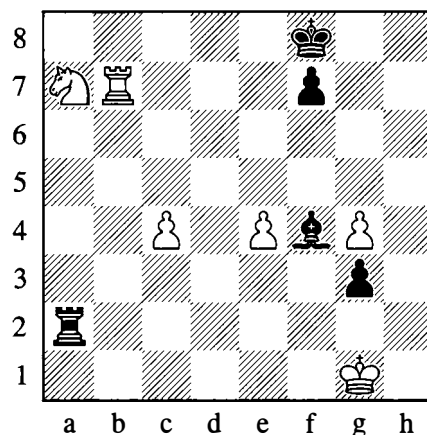
38...f4†!

More accurate than 38...g1† 39.ϕh3 ♕xa7. The threat of ...f1h1 mate wins a piece, but after 40.ϕxh4 White is entitled to hope for a draw, due to his four pawns for the bishop.

39.g3

Timman avoids the thematic continuation 39.ϕh3 f1h1 mate.

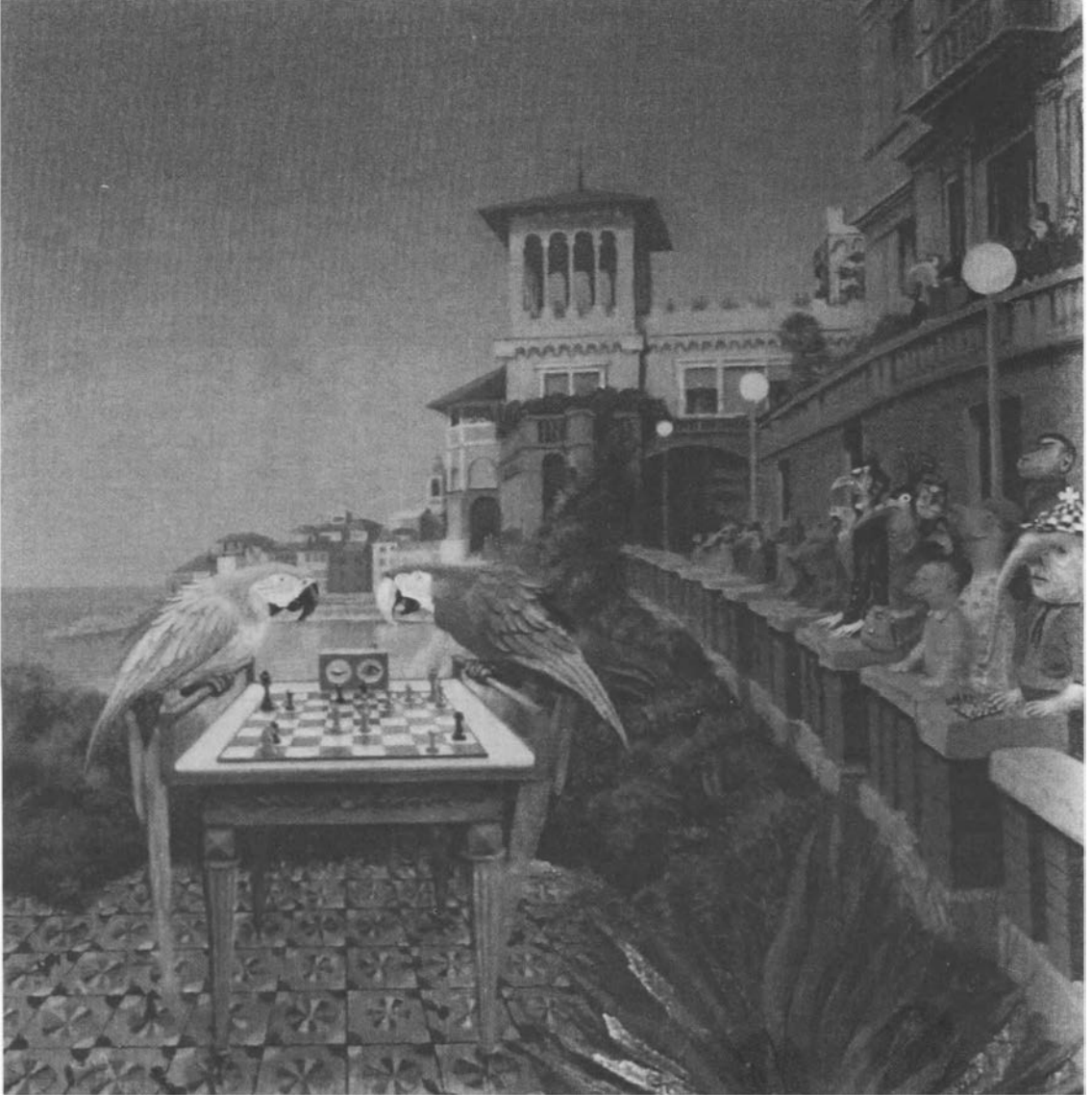
39...hxg3† 40.ϕg2 f2† 41.ϕg1 fxa2



There is no adequate defence against ...e3† followed by ...g2†. Besides, the knight is hanging.

0-1

I remember that during the short break before the second game of our mini-match I was surrounded by a very enthusiastic crowd. I won the second game, too, qualifying for the next phase.



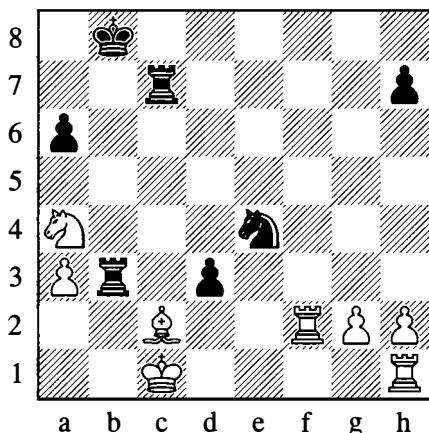
Rupert van der Linden

The position on the board is taken from a few moves earlier in the Timman game

So far, my surprise moves have had an attacking character. In the final example in this chapter we will see two moments with unexpected defences, which were overlooked by the strongest player of those years.

Judit Polgar – Garry Kasparov

Dos Hermanas 1996



This was my second-ever game against Kasparov. Garry outplayed me in the middlegame and now must have expected my resignation. Indeed, my rook has no available squares along the second rank, which makes the sequence ... $\text{Rxc2}\dagger$, Qd1 ... Rb1 mate seem probable in the near future.

When heading for this position, Kasparov surely overlooked my saving idea.

33. $\text{Rf8}\dagger$ Qa7 34. Rf7!!

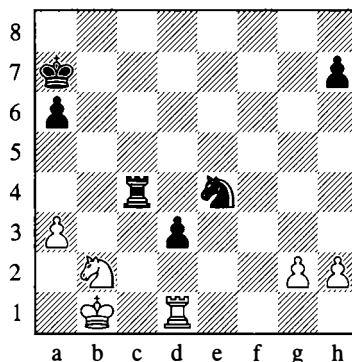
An unexpected combination based on deflection. Since $34...\text{Rxf7?}$ unpins my bishop, allowing me to keep the material advantage with $35.\text{Qxb3}$, Black's answer is forced.

34... Rbb7! 35. Rxc7 Rxc7 36. Rd1 $\text{Rxc2}\dagger$ 37. Qb1

Black retains some initiative but the worst is over for me.

37... Rxc2

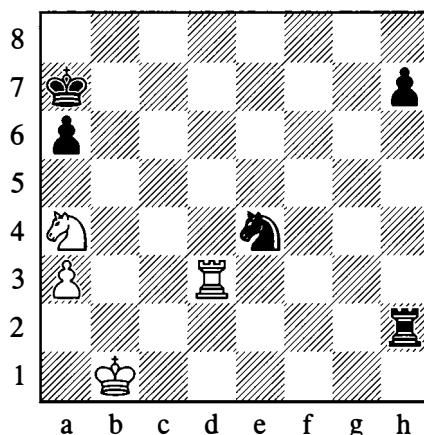
If $37...\text{Rc4}$ $38.\text{Qb2}$ we reach the kind of situation where we would usually say something like: how luckily things have worked out for White.



The d3-pawn will fall with an inevitable draw. $38...\text{Qc3}\dagger$ $39.\text{Qc1}$ And now $39...\text{Qe2}\dagger$ $40.\text{Qb1}$ will soon repeat or $39...\text{Qxd1}\dagger$ leads only to a rook exchange after $40.\text{Qxc4}$.

Or $37...\text{Qd2}\dagger$ $38.\text{Qa1}$ with the same problem for Black – his d3-pawn.

38. Rxd3 Rhx2

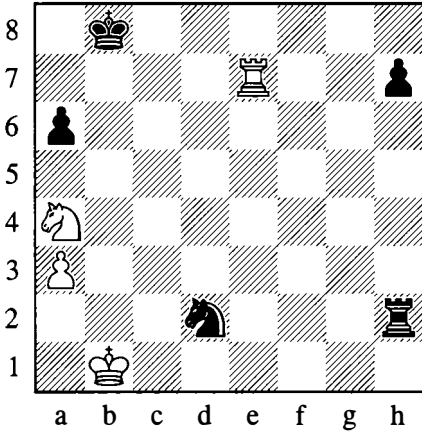


Black has won a pawn, but with so little material on the board I should be able to hold a draw.

39. $\text{Rd7}\dagger$ Qb8 40. Re7

An optimal square for the rook, cutting off the black king on the back rank and keeping the passed pawn under observation.

40...♖d2†

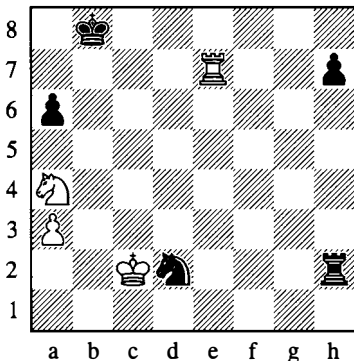


We had reached the time control and now I had to choose between the numerous available squares. In such situations, it is worth taking a short walk (to the bathroom, for instance) before making the 41st move. This would help to take a fresh look at the position and switch away from the blitz-mode of thinking that is typical for the last moves before the control.

For some reason, I failed to do that.

41.♔c1?

Actually, if this had been a blitz game, I would have instinctively activated my king: 41.♔c2



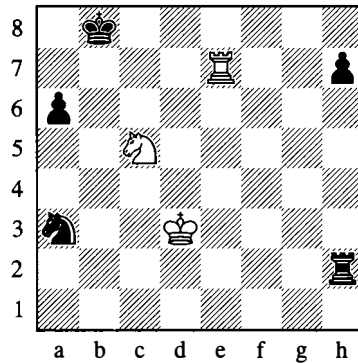
I briefly considered this move, but then thought that I could hold a draw even without giving up the a3-pawn as in the following lines:

41...♖c4† 42.♔d3!

If 42.♔b3? ♖a5† the b4-square would be mined in view of ...♖c6†. This detail would make me lose the a3-pawn under less favourable circumstances than in the main line: 43.♔c3 ♖h3† 44.♔b2 ♖c4†

42.♔c3 is also playable, but I prefer the main line move.

42...♖xa3 43.♖c5



43...a5

If 43...♖h6 44.♖xa6† ♖xa6 45.♖xh7 we would reach the same drawn ending as in the game.

44.♖d7† ♔c8

44...♔c7 45.♖f6† wins the h7-pawn.

45.♖b6† ♔d8 46.♖d7† ♔e8 47.♖d5

White wins the a5-pawn with an obvious draw.

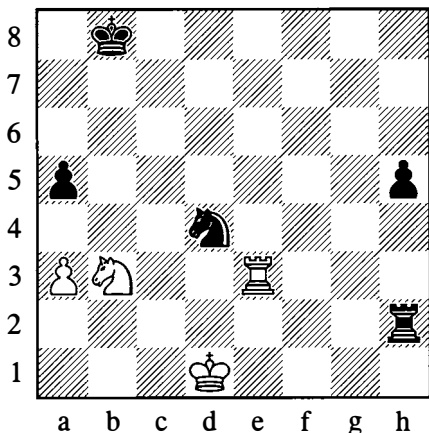
The conclusion is that with a bit of effort in calculation, I would have reached the safety zone much more easily than in the game.

41...♖b3† 42.♔d1 h5

Both kings are cut off on the back ranks, but the advance of the h-pawn becomes threatening. The black knight is optimally placed, preventing my counterplay based on ♖c5.

My next move solves this problem, but frees the black king.

43. $\text{Re}3$ $\text{Nd}4$ 44. $\text{Nc}5$ a5 45. $\text{Nb}3$



Hoping to simplify to a drawn rook ending, but Black can avoid it easily.

45... $\text{Nc}6$!

A strong move, preventing my rook's return to the seventh rank. White retains good drawing chances, but there is no forced liquidation. This means I have to stay focused for a long time, until the right moment for favourable simplifications arrives.

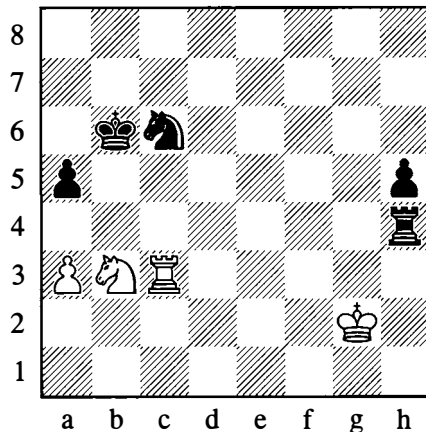
46. $\text{Re}3$ $\text{Nb}7$ 47. $\text{Ke}1$!

As a draft plan, I intended to hold the h-pawn with my king, while my knight was designated to eliminate the a5-pawn.

47... $\text{Nb}6$ 48. Kf1 $\text{Re}h4$!

In view of the threat of $\text{Kg}1$, Black could no longer keep my king cut off. His last move takes the important fourth rank under control.

49. $\text{Kg}2$

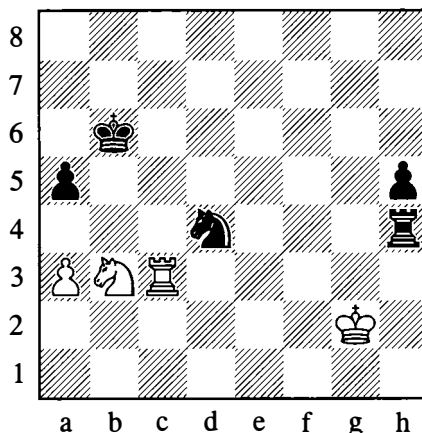


49... $\text{Nd}4$?

The best continuation was 49...a4! followed by 50... $\text{Re}d4$ with a dominating position.

Following the text move, the rook ending after 50. Nxd4 Rxd4 would be lost for me. Black would advance his pawns to my fourth rank and then activate his king using the rook as a shield.

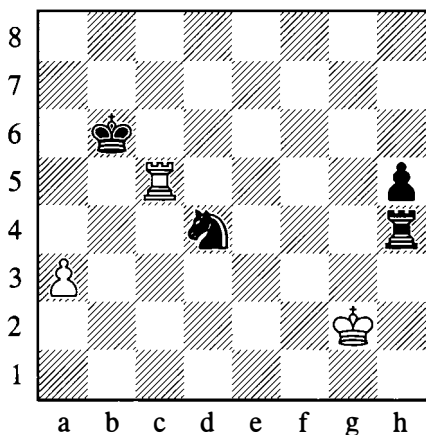
For the second time in the game, Kasparov might have thought the most difficult work had been done, since any knight retreat would leave me passive. And for the second time, thunder from a blue sky woke him up from this illusion...



50. Nxa5 !

This came as a complete shock for Kasparov. He must have thought that with his h-pawn safely defended, giving up the knight for the a-pawn would be pointless.

50...♙xa5 51.♖c5† ♙b6

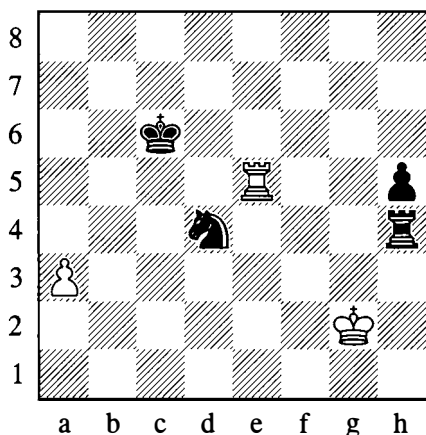


52.♞e5!

This strong move reveals my idea. The rook dominates the knight, preventing it from contributing to the defence of the final pawn. Black has no adequate defence against a perpetual king attack against his rook. Everything works perfectly, like in some of Benko's studies.

52...♙c6

53.♞f5 does not change anything.



53.♙g3 ♞h1 54.♙g2 ♙d6

Under slightly different circumstances, this zwischenzug might be decisive, but in this position the fifth rank is just long enough for my rook.

55.♞a5! ♞h4 56.♙g3 ♞g4† 57.♙h3 ♙e2
58.♞xh5 ♞g3† 59.♙h4 ♞xa3

I should have held this theoretically drawn ending without any major problems. The dangers are far smaller than in the comparable endgame with rook and bishop versus rook. For example, I remember that in Font du Lac I had agreed a draw against Waitzkin without even trying to trick him.

Kasparov might have done the same, had he not come so close to winning at several points in the game. As the game continued, he was probably encouraged by my unsure defence. Unfortunately for me, I committed several inaccuracies, culminating in a fatal error on which Garry capitalized.

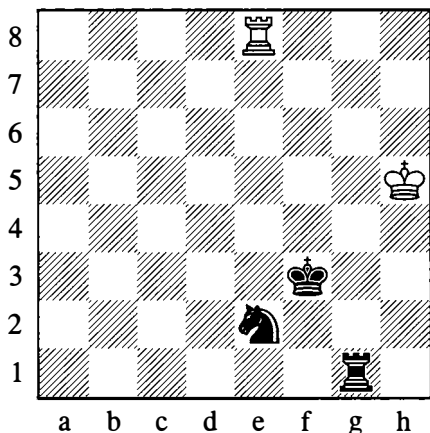
The rest of the game is not so relevant to the theme of this chapter, but I will present it with some brief comments, in order to give the reader some idea of how this endgame should be handled from either side. Black has quite a favourable starting position as my king is on the edge of the board and my rook is placed passively.

The simplest and most systematic defensive system was discovered by Centurini more than a hundred years ago. My rook should permanently stay opposite to my king with respect to the centre of the board. For instance, if the king is cut off on the h-file, the rook should hinder Black's actions from the a-file.

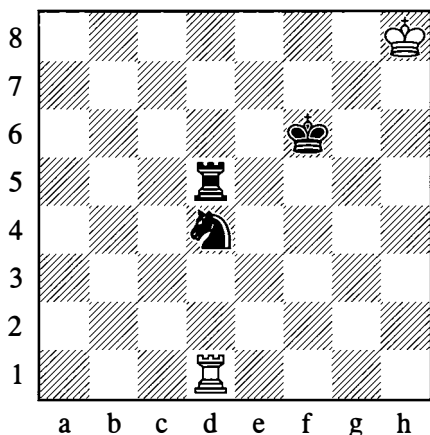
60.♙g4 ♙e6 61.♞b5 ♞g3† 62.♙h4 ♞g1
63.♞g5 ♞f1 64.♞a5 ♙f6 65.♞a8 ♞g1
66.♞f8† ♙e5 67.♞e8† ♙f4 68.♞f8† ♙e4
69.♞e8† ♙f3 70.♙h5

Shortly after the game, Garry mentioned to me the nice tactical possibility 70.♞f8†. This

seems to lead to mate after 70...♖f4, but in fact 71.♞g8! saves the day. The rook is taboo because of stalemate and Garry said that most probably he would soon have offered a draw.



70...♖g3† 71.♕h6 ♖f5† 72.♕h7 ♕f4
73.♞b8 ♞g7† 74.♕h8 ♞d7 75.♞e8 ♕g5
76.♞e6 ♖d4 77.♞e1 ♕f6 78.♞d1 ♞d5



79.♞a1??

79.♞f1†! was essential, and if 79...♖f5 then 80.♕g8.

79...♖e6!

Black is winning now, as already proved by Centurini. After a few hesitations, Garry managed to find the correct winning method discovered by the old analyst.

80.♞a6 ♕f7 81.♞a7† ♕g6 82.♞a8 ♞d7
83.♞b8 ♞c7 84.♕g8 ♞c5 85.♞a8 ♞b5
86.♕h8 ♞b7 87.♞c8 ♖c7 88.♞g8† ♕h6
89.♞g1

89.♞f8 would have been slightly more stubborn, although I'm sure Garry would have found the winning continuation 89...♞b6!.

89...♞b8† 90.♞g8 ♖e8
0-1

Chapter 6

Endgames



Monaco 1994 – Before the game against Smyslov

Despite the general opinion that as a youngster I was mainly a tricky player, the 11th and 12th chapters of the first volume proved that I was quite skilled in simplified positions from a very young age.

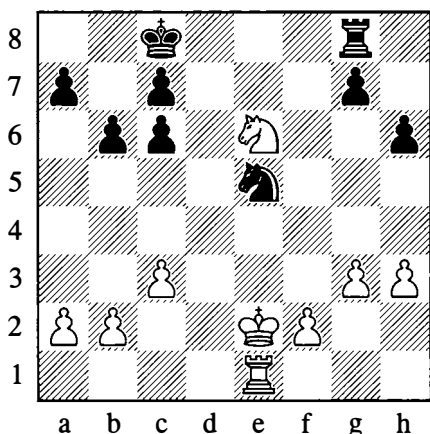
Those chapters touched the issue rather tangentially, being focused on the transition from the middlegame to the endgame. The time has come to have a section dedicated to endgames, especially because I maintained and possibly improved my level of skill in the period covered by the second volume.

The first distinction with respect to the previous period is the level of my opponents. Was my endgame technique good enough to match that of the world's best players?

To try to find an answer, I will start with a game against a former World Champion who used to be considered one of the best ever endgame experts. True, he was no longer a youngster, but we should not forget that at the age of 63 he had become a Candidates finalist.

Judit Polgar – Vassily Smyslov

Veterans vs. Women, Monte Carlo 1994



The Berlin Defence was not at all fashionable in those years, but Smyslov probably thought it would be wise to avoid middlegame complications against a player he had once called "Tal in a skirt".

In the previous phase I had managed to exchange Black's bishop pair and get rid of my potentially weak e5-pawn. In the position above, my kingside majority offers me a slight but permanent advantage.

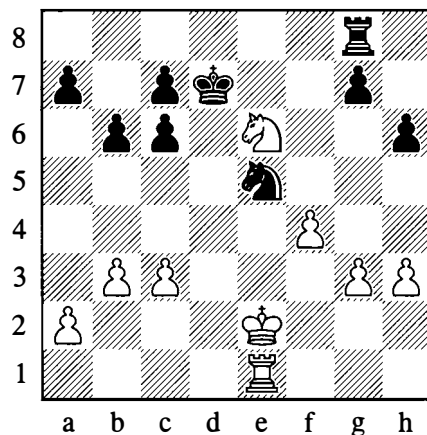
26.f4 ♖d7

This kind of intermediate move can make a difference when it comes to king centralization and activity. My knight is rather irritating for Black, keeping his rook busy with defending the g7-pawn, and contributing to my overall space advantage.

27.b3!?

I found this move very funny and could not resist playing it. Its main idea is to prevent ...♗e5-c4, and there is not really a piece sacrifice involved.

Other intermediate moves such as 27.♖d2 or 27.♖f2 would not work because of knight forks on f3 or d3, while 27.♖e3 would run into 27...♗c4†.



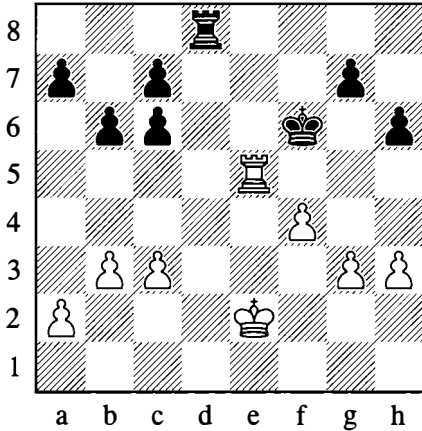
27...♗xe6

It is difficult to suggest anything else, since 27...♞e8? fails to 28.♗xg7 ♞e7 29.♗f5. Black is not in time to deliver a deadly discovered check on f3 or d3 because my knight attacks the rook on every move.

28.♔f2

I win back the knight without spoiling my structure.

28...♞d8 29.♞xe5† ♔f6 30.♔e2±



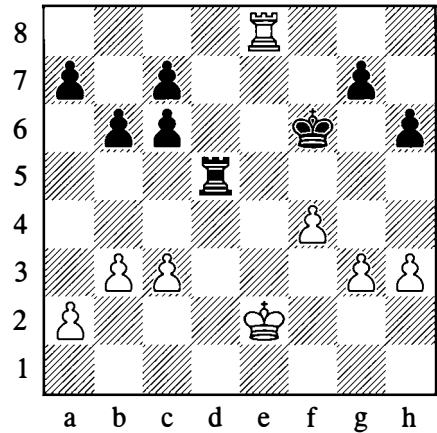
I had two reasons to be happy with this ending. Objectively, it is more pleasant for me, due to the possibility of gaining space with my kingside majority. At the same time, it felt great to play this position against Smyslov, after many years earlier having studied rook endings from the famous book by... Smyslov and Levenfish! Please see my stories from Volume 1.

30...♞d5

Rook activity is essential in such endings. The last move ensures Black has control of the fifth rank, with the possibility of undermining my majority with ...g7-g5 or attacking my queenside pawns with ...♞a5. On the other hand, my rook will be very active on the eighth rank, too, having the c7-pawn as a main target.

If 30...g5, hoping to spoil my structure with ...gxf4, gxf4, I planned 31.g4! keeping the flexibility of my majority: 31...gxf4 32.♞f5† ♔g6 33.♞xf4

31.♞e8

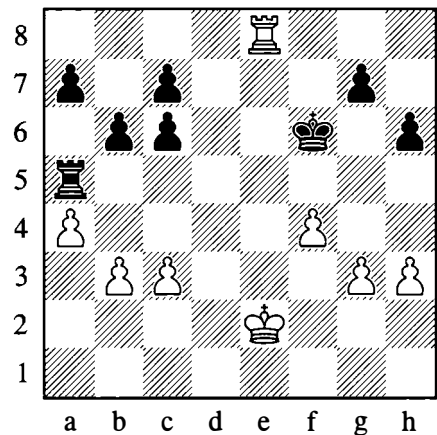


31...♞a5

After nine minutes, Smyslov decided he could draw by exchanging many queenside pawns, overlooking my 33rd move.

Now was a good moment to attack my kingside majority with: 31...g5! Black's activity should be enough for a draw, even though I could try to keep some advantage. 32.♞h8! ♔g6 (32...♔g7 avoids the intermediate exchange on g5, but after 33.♞c8 the king is passive and exposed on g7) 33.fxg5 hxg5 34.♞c8 ♞d7 There is no immediate way for Black to free his position, but White cannot make easy progress either.

32.a4

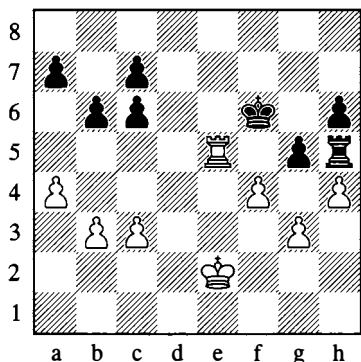


32...b5?

Very careless.

Funnily enough, Black could fall into the same kind of trap on the opposite wing with:

32...♖h5 33.h4 g5? 34.♞e5



Transposing by force to a won pawn ending.

Black could return to the right track with:

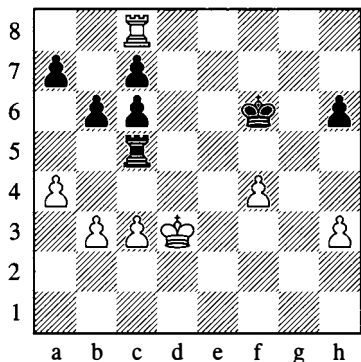
32...♞c5! 33.♜d3

If 33.c4?! the simplifying idea 33...b5 finally works!

33...g5

The best way to create counterplay.

34.♞c8 gxf4 35.gxf4

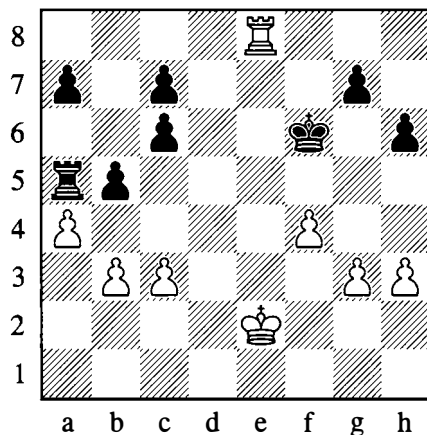


35...♞h5

More active than 35...♞d5† 36.♜e4 ♞d7.

36.♞xc7 ♞xh3† 37.♜d4 h5

White will be a pawn up for a long time, but the h-pawn is strong enough to ensure a draw.

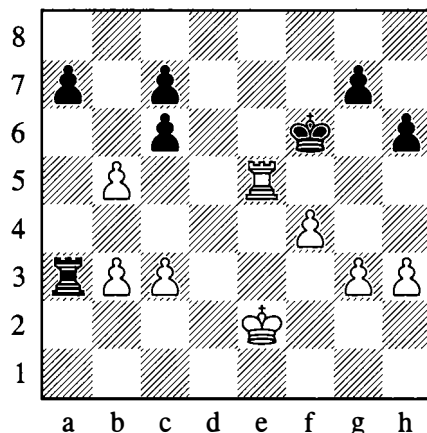


33.♞e5!

Having taken control of the fifth rank a few moves ago, Smyslov overlooked my rook's return to e5. Black is very passive now and the only way to get out of the pin is giving up a pawn.

33...♞a6 34.axb5 ♞a3

Attacking the other queenside pawn does not offer saving chances either: 34...♞a2† 35.♜e3 ♞c2 36.♞c5 cxb5 37.♞c6† ♜e7 38.♞xc7† If 38...♜d6 hoping to force the rook away from the optimal c7-square, I would have the zwischenzug 39.♜d3! followed by ♞xg7.



35.♞c5!

The correct way to continue the queenside attack. As we can see in the comments to the

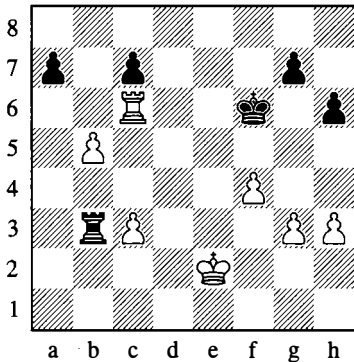
next move, my rook can make good use of the weak squares along the c-file.

Blocking the c-file with 35.bxc6? ♖xb3 could hardly offer White anything concrete.

35...cxb5

A sad necessity.

If 35...♖xb3? 36.♖xc6† the black king has to step back, allowing ♖xc7 with check.



The careless 36...♗f5? 37.♗f3 unexpectedly leads to mate with g3-g4.

36.♖xb5

The position has stabilized and I have an advantage on both wings. On the kingside I have an extra pawn and on the queenside Black's pawns are weaker.

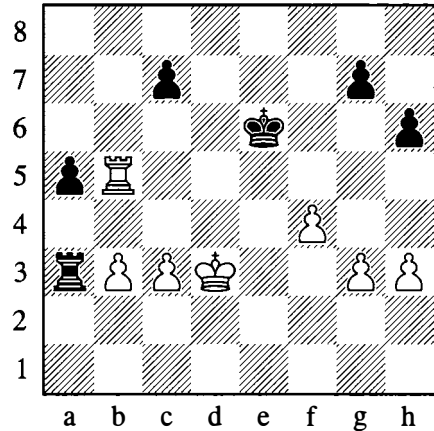
36...a5

Hoping to exchange some queenside pawns, but I will be in time to cross this plan.

37.♗d3 ♗e6

Preparing to defend the c7-pawn with the king.

If 37...a4 38.bxa4 ♖xa4 39.♖c5 ♖a7 40.♖c6† Black would be doomed to passivity on both wings.



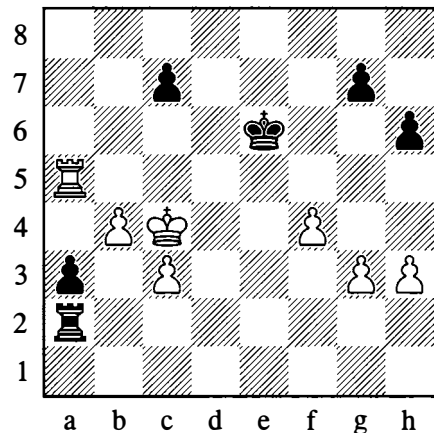
38.♗c4

We can note that having the more active rook may result in the king enjoying greater freedom. The black king cannot cross the fifth rank, while mine can advance as far as needed.

38...a4 39.b4!

Maintaining the queenside tension. The passed pawn is not dangerous since my rook can watch it from behind and my king is very close. At the same time, my majority is threatening, especially as the black king will have a hard job defending both the g7- and c7-pawns.

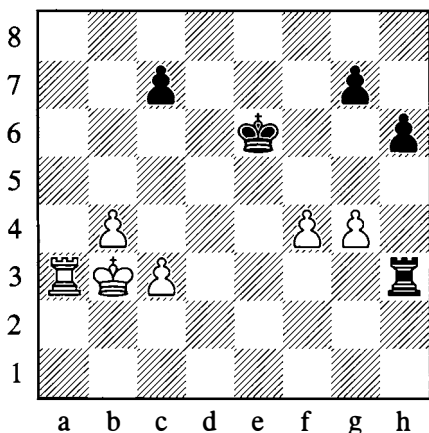
39...♖a2 40.♖a5 a3



41.♔b3

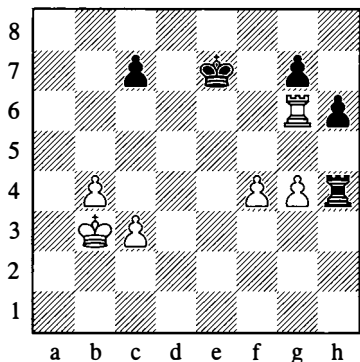
The passed pawn is doomed and Black has to exchange it for one of my kingside pawns. He will not be in time to create effective counterplay, though.

41...♖h2 42.♗xa3 ♜xh3 43.g4

**43...♗e3**

The idea behind this move is not entirely clear, but Black would also not get the desired effect by attacking my pawns:

43...♗h4 44.♗a6† ♕e7 45.♗g6



For a long time, everything seemed to be prepared for Black's pawn break ...g7-g5. Having refrained from it at the right moment, he now faces problems with the weak g6-square.

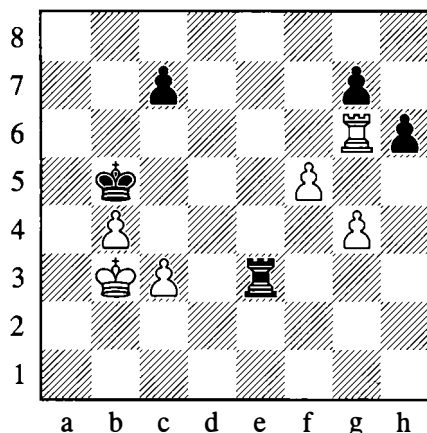
45...♕f7 46.♗c6 ♗xg4 47.♗xc7†

Followed by b4-b5-b6, when my pawns would obviously be faster.

44.f5†

This move is not bad, but it still surprises me. Nowadays I would think 44.♗a6† is more logical.

44...♕d5 45.♗a5† ♕c6 46.♗a6† ♕b5 47.♗g6



It is interesting that certain patterns are available on either wing. I have pointed out the similarity between Smyslov's 32...b5? and the mistaken ...g7-g5 with the black rook on h5. In the comment to Black's 35th move there was a possible mate with g3-g4. We now see the symmetrical pattern: if 47...♗e7? defending the g7-pawn, the unpinned c-pawn delivers mate with 48.c4.

47...c5

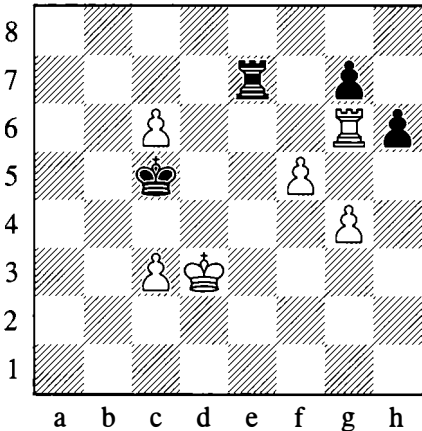
The only way out, but it costs Black another pawn.

48.bxc5 ♗e7 49.c6

The reserve c3-pawn is important for several reasons. It controls some squares, it can shield my king and it prevents Black from transposing to a pawn ending by capturing the more advanced c-pawn.

49...♔c5

My rook occupies an optimal square, defending c6 and attacking g7. This means, however, that it should not move, so I need to activate my king in order to make progress.

50.♕c2 ♖d5 51.♕d3 ♔c5**52.c4**

The second c-pawn enters the scene with decisive effect. Black is in zugzwang and cannot prevent my king's activation.

52...♞a7 53.♔e4 ♕xc4 54.f6 gxf6 55.♞xh6

The f6-pawn will fall and any further resistance is pointless.

1–0

The king's activity – an essential factor in the endgame

After most of the pieces have disappeared from the board, the king can usually step out of his residence and take an active part in the combat. Experts tend to value the king's strength as equivalent to that of a minor piece. So the side who fails to activate his king is playing a piece down!

In the next game, my king will be a true hero, marching across the whole board to help me achieve my goals. Meanwhile, the black king

will be confined to defensive tasks in a rather narrow area. This will make quite a difference, as we will see.

Judit Polgar – Jacek Gdanski

Budapest Zonal 1993

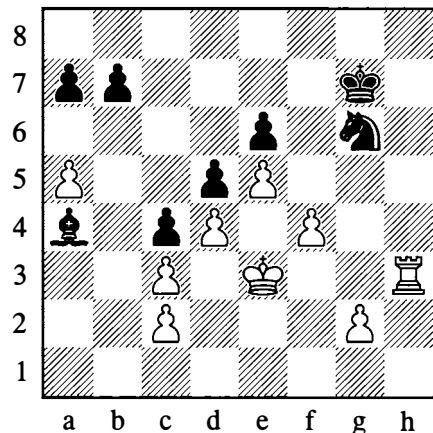
In 1993 I had my first shot at the World Championship cycle, starting with the Budapest Zonal, held at the Beke Hotel. I played in the A-group which was won with the impressive score of 8 out of 11 by Kiril Georgiev.

The playing venue was familiar to me. I had won my first Hungarian Championship in 1991, breaking Fischer's record (see Volume 1) at the same hotel, but in a different playing hall. The last game of my match against Spassky was played in the same hall as the Zonal.

I finished in a group of four players who each scored 6½ points and had to continue the fight for the two remaining qualifying places in a double round-robin playoff held at the Hungarian Chess Federation headquarters.

I won the playoff with 5 out of 6 and qualified for the Interzonal for the first time.

Gdanski was a talented young player from Poland, who later became a regular member of their Olympiad team. In the present day he is no longer a professional player.



You may have guessed the opening: a closed French Winawer. I had a strong attack in the middlegame and confidently simplified to this ending. Calculating everything until the end is obviously impossible, but my feeling was that by playing on both wings I should be able to break Black's fortress.

Black's last move in time trouble was 40...♔a4. It was as good as any other neutral move, but if Gdanski had hoped to regain a pawn he was probably disappointed after my reply.

41.g4!

My favourite g2-g4 move; see my comments to the Shirov game on page 27.

41...♖e7

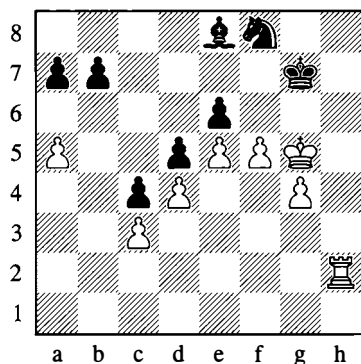
After ten minutes, my opponent decided to refrain from taking my pawn. He probably thought it safer to prevent f4-f5. If:

41...♙xc2 42.♖h2 ♔a4

The bishop cannot defend both wings at the same time, which is typical for so-called bad bishops.

If 42...♙d3? then 43.♖b2 wins.

43.f5 ♖f8 44.♗f4 ♙e8 45.♗g5

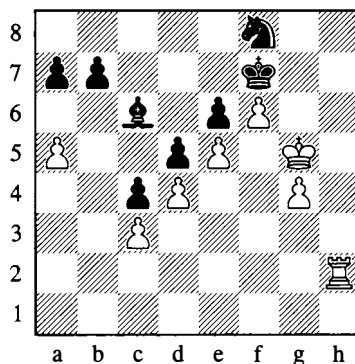


Most likely, Gdanski stopped calculating around this point. My position is indeed promising, but winning it would still require quite a bit of technical effort.

45...♙c6

45...♖h7? would allow a typical simplifying combination: 46.♖xh7 ♗xh7 47.♗f6 and the pawns cannot be stopped.

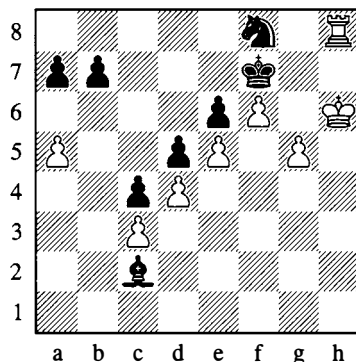
46.f6 ♗f7



47.♖b2

Just as in the game, I should combine threats on both wings.

The straightforward 47.♖h8 ♔a4 48.♗h6 ♙c2 49.g5 would only win if Black had played ...a7-a6 previously. The threat would be 50.g6 ♙xg6 51.♖xf8! with a won pawn ending.



The way it is, 49...b5 50.axb6 axb6 saves the game. I could not carry out the same simplifying operation because the threat of ...b5-b4 would be too strong.

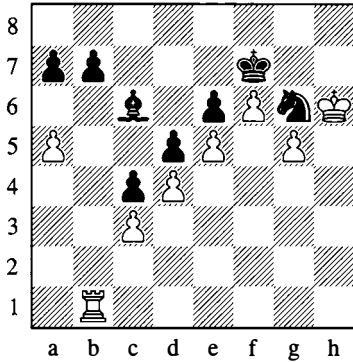
47...♖h7 48.♗h6 ♖f8 49.g5

Black's pieces are tied to the defence of the b7-pawn and g6-square.

49...♖g6

Obviously the only move.

50.♖b1!

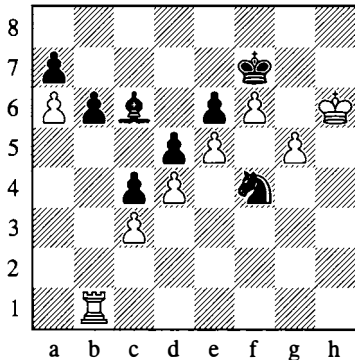


Putting Black in zugzwang.

50...a6

This looks solid, preparing the waiting moves ...♗c6-b5-c6, but... pawns never move backwards! The queenside will remain permanently immobile and the b6-square weak.

The only alternative was: 50...♗f4 51.a6! Before opening the g-file it is useful to clarify matters on the queenside. Since 51...bxa6 allows 52.♖b8, the reply is forced: 51...b6

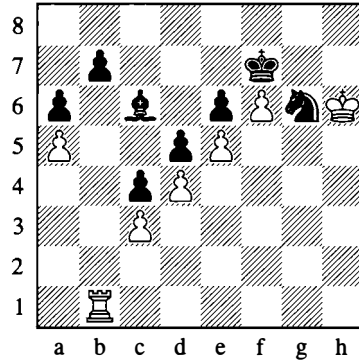


52.g6†! A good moment for this pawn break. 52...♗xg6 53.♖g1 ♗h4 54.♖g7† ♗f8 55.♖xa7 Black can no longer fight against my passed pawns.

51.♖b6!

Forcing the knight to unblock the g-pawn.

51...♗f4 52.g6†! ♗xg6 53.♖b1



Even a tempo down, this manoeuvre is decisive. True, Black can still put up some resistance.

53...♗h4 54.♖g1 ♗f5† 55.♗h7 ♗a4 56.♖g7† ♗f8 57.♖xb7 ♗c2 58.♗h8

The weaknesses along the sixth rank are hard to defend and Black needs to create some threats against my king.

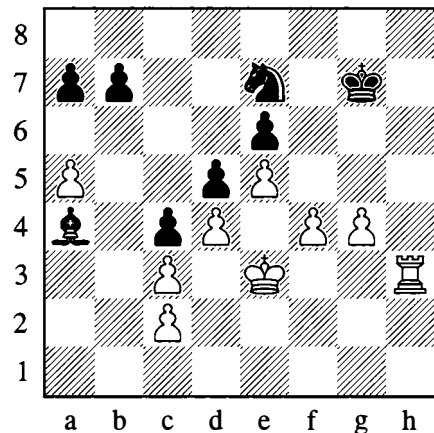
58...♗h4

If 58...♗h6 threatening ...♗f7†, 59.♖b8† ♗f7 60.♖a8 wins.

59.♖a7 ♗g6† 60.♗h7 ♗xe5† 61.♗h6

Black's counterplay has come to a dead end and my pawns will decide the game.

Neither of us saw that much, of course, but once my pawns get into motion, things start looking ugly for Black.

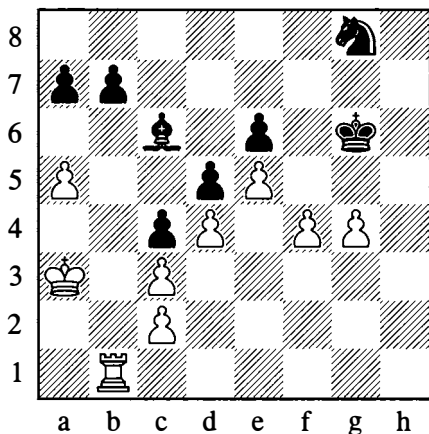


42.♗d2

The start of a glorious king manoeuvre.

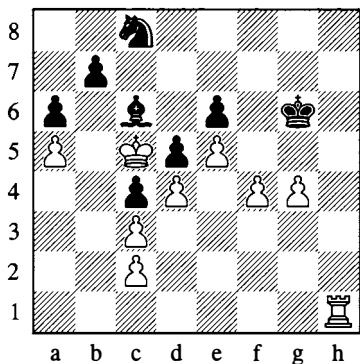
If allowed, it would go to d6. The rook will be useful on the kingside, defending the c2- and g4-pawns if necessary.

42...♔d7 43.♞h5 ♔e8 44.♞h1 ♔d7 45.♞b1
♔c6 46.♖c1 ♖g6 47.♖b2 ♘g8 48.♖a3



48...♘h6

Black could set up a mini queenside fortress without weakening the b-file, but this would give me a free hand on the opposite wing: 48...♘e7 49.♖b4 ♘c8 50.♖c5 Threatening a5-a6. 50...a6 51.♞h1



The king has to stay on g6 in order to prevent f4-f5, which makes my next move inevitable. 51...♔d7 52.♞h8 ♖f7 53.♞h7+ ♖e8 54.g5 followed by the further advance of my g-pawn.

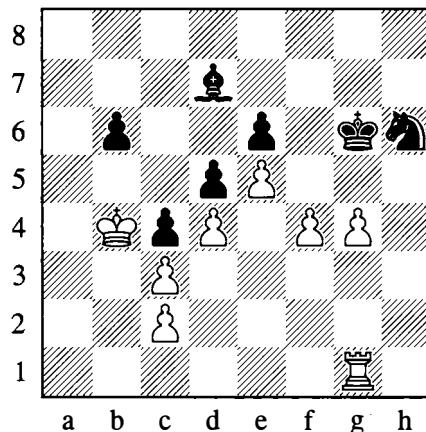
49.♞g1 ♔d7

At this point, Gdanski had only ten minutes left to reach move 60.

50.♖b4 b6

The only way to prevent ♖c5, but once the b-file has been weakened I can readjust my plans.

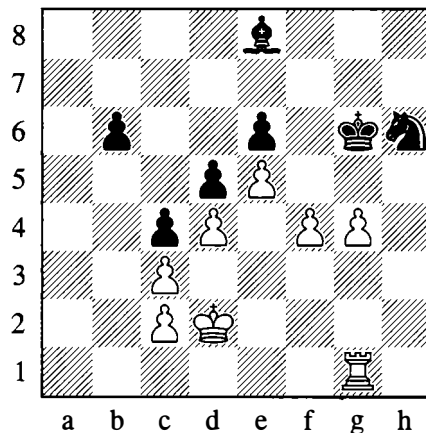
51.axb6 axb6



52.♖a3!

The king is going all the way back to h4, in order to defend the g4-pawn and free the rook for queenside operations.

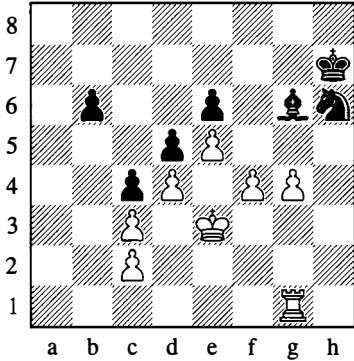
52...♖f7 53.♖b2 ♖g6 54.♖c1 ♔e8 55.♖d2



55...♔a4?!

This allows me to make progress straightforwardly.

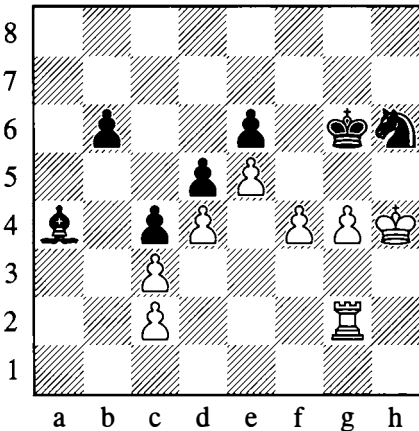
The regrouping 55...♖h7 56.♗e3 ♕g6! would have required radical measures.



57.♗f3! ♕xc2 58.f5! exf5 59.g5 ♖g4 60.e6 ♗g6 61.♗f4

By means of a double pawn sacrifice I have created two passers. ♖a1-a6 will come next, leaving Black defenceless.

56.♖a1 ♕e8 57.♖g1 ♕a4 58.♖g2 ♗f7 59.♗e3 ♗g6 60.♗f3 ♗f7 61.♗g3 ♗g6 62.♗h4



My king has successfully returned to the kingside.

62...♖f7 63.♖e2 ♖h6 64.♖f2 ♕d7

At this point the game was adjourned and I had to seal my next move.

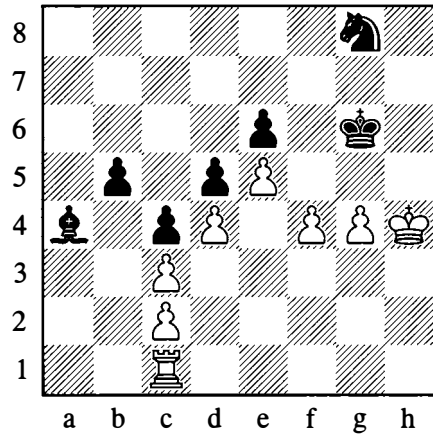
65.♖f1!

Finally hitting on the main idea. The rook is heading for either the a- or b-file.

65...♕a4 66.♖b1 b5

Black has managed to defend the queenside, but now the bishop cannot retreat along the a4-e8 diagonal.

67.♖c1 ♖g8



68.♖f1!

A well-calculated pawn sacrifice.

68...♕xc2

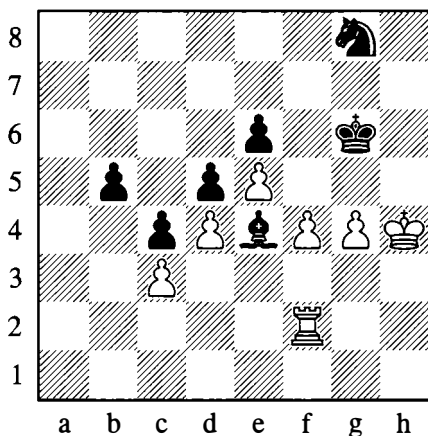
If 68...♖h6 69.♖f2 and Black is in zugzwang. He cannot prevent f4-f5.

69.♖f2

A familiar idea. The bishop has to choose between two wings.

69...♕e4

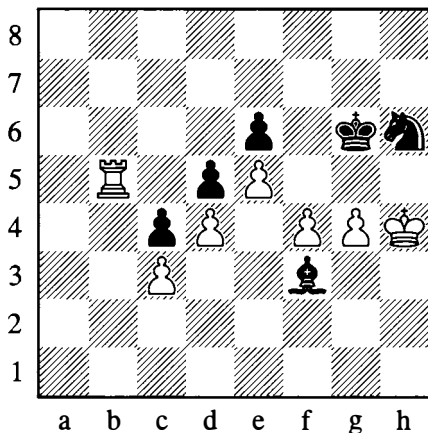
If 69...♕b3 70.f5+ ♗f7 71.f6 ♗f8 72.♗g5 ♗f7 73.♖h2 the passivity of the knight makes further defence impossible.



70. Bxb2 Qh6 71. Bxb5

The rook has finally cleared its path on the queenside. The immediate threat is Bb6, forcing ...Qf7, when Qh4-g5 would quickly decide the issue.

71... Qf3



72. f5!

The long-expected pawn break finally takes place.

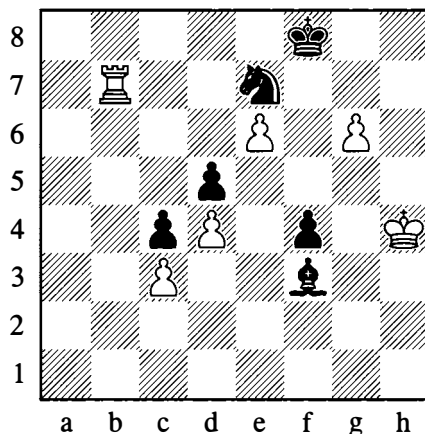
72... exf5 73. Bb6+ Qg7 74. g5 Qg8 75. Bb7+

Two passed pawns and an active rook are decisive factors. Moreover, the bishop is cut off from the defensive area by its own pawns.

75... Qf8

Or 75... Qg6 76. e6 Qd1 77. Bb7! (preventing ...Qa4) 77... f4 78. e7 Qf7 79. g6+ Qe8 80. Bb8+ wins the knight.

76. g6 f4 77. e6 Qe7



78. Bxe7!

Just a small trick to finish the game. In view of 78... Qxe7 79. g7 Black resigned. Not an easy first-round win, but creatively a rewarding one!

Accurate king manoeuvring in pawn endings

Kings become real kings of the board only in pawn endings. Free of the danger of mating attacks, they become strong fighting units and enjoy wide mobility. There are hidden limitations, though, imposed by such invisible elements as critical squares or the method of triangulation.

In the next game, accurate king manoeuvring allowed me to win what many thought to be a drawn ending.

Judit Polgar – Ashot Anastasian

Istanbul Olympiad 2000

Olympiads are very special events, involving a lot of hopes, uncertainty and emotions.

What will my team look like, on which board am I going to play, who will be the captain? One usually gets to know such things in advance.

Will we have a good hotel, how far from the playing hall will it be, close enough to walk or so far that we need to wait for a bus before every round? Will I meet all my old friends after a two-year break, will I make new contacts and receive invitations to new tournaments, as has happened before? All these are answered only after arrival...

On this occasion, my life was complicated by the fact that the night before travelling to Istanbul my laptop was infected with a virus. When I tried to switch it on in the morning it did not boot up! A good friend of mine who is a computer specialist came to the rescue and managed to fix the problem, but by then I had only half an hour left for packing...

Hungary had a strong team: Leko, Almasi, me, Portisch, Sax and Ruck, with Ribli as captain. We were entitled to hope for a medal, but we had to wait for two more years to fulfil our dream...

We stayed at the Dilson Hotel, only ten minutes walk from the playing hall. This was the first Olympiad with X-ray security at the entrance to the playing hall, many years before the use of miniature electronic equipment became a serious danger. The electronic live broadcast of the games was another Olympic premiere.

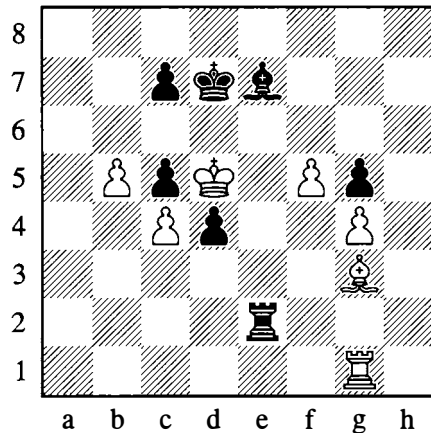
This tournament was not long after my wedding. I had a slow start, but when my husband Gusztav joined me on the fifth round, I won against Hracek. I found the following notes in my diary: "I needed this win as much

as a fish needs the water." There followed a free day, in which we visited such tourist attractions as Hagia Sofia, the Blue Mosque and the Topkapi palace. My fortunate series of results started soon after that, in round eight (see the game with Smirin, page 347).

We met Armenia in the 11th round. Just as I expected, the Armenian captain (who by coincidence was Leko's father-in-law) left Minasian out, on account of his loss against me at the previous European Team Championship.

My new opponent, Anastasian, was in really good form, having scored an impressive eight out of nine so far. We had a huge battle all the way and the tension was still there in the seventh hour of play. The other games had finished with an equal score and our encounter was going to decide the result of the match.

Armenian players are famous for their fighting spirit, not only at an individual level, but also as a team. During the last hour, most of Anastasian's teammates were following the game from a close distance, while from the Hungarian team I remember only Gyula Sax was rooting for me.



I have a considerable space advantage and both sides' pawn structures favour me if we take into account the presence of dark-squared bishops.



Earlier in the game

However, Black is not without trumps either. The protected passed d-pawn is a permanent danger and his rook is active.

Many players thought the game would end in a draw. Having just passed the second time control on move 60, I managed to focus and find the only winning move:

61.♖e1!

Exchanging Black's most active piece. The rook cannot step away because of 62.♙xc7, based on the hanging position of the e7-bishop.

I am proud to say that I managed to calculate all the details until the very end accurately. It will all depend on one tempo...

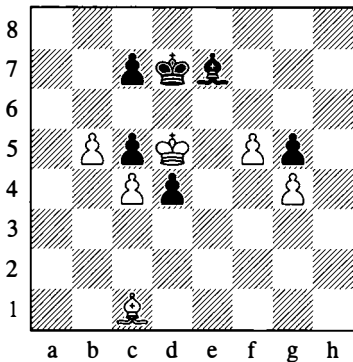
61...♗xe1 62.♙xc7 ♙d6

I had the feeling that my opponent was confident his strong passed pawn would guarantee him a draw.

63.♙d2 ♙f4

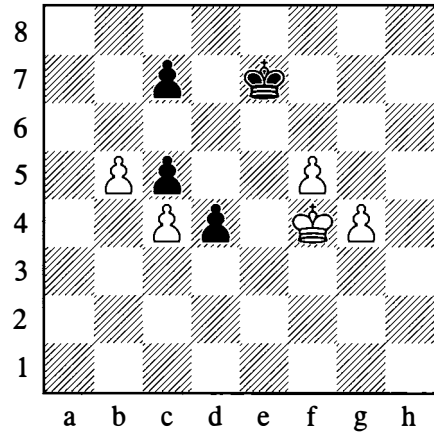
Practically forced, but pawn endings can be very tricky, despite their apparent simplicity.

If 63...♙e7 64.♙c1 Black is in zugzwang.



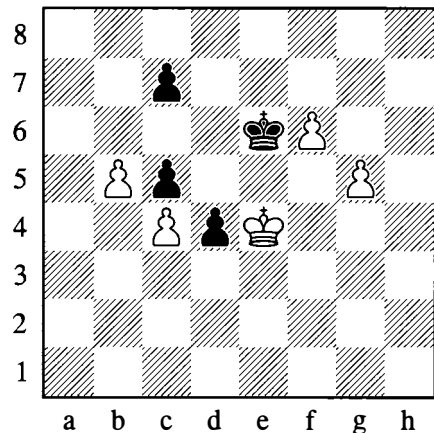
He would have to either give up the g5- or the c5-pawn, or play ...d3 and lose the d-pawn to ♖e4, or else concede the e6-square for my king. This is typical of what happens when one has a bad bishop!

64.♙xf4 gxf4 65.♖e4 ♖e7 66.♖xf4



Black has lost a pawn but in many cases a protected passed pawn restricts the active side's king so much that a win is impossible. This principle does not apply to the current position. Two connected pawns are very dangerous and can create mating threats if the king arrives in time to help them.

66...♖f7 67.g5 ♖e7 68.f6† ♖e6 69.♖e4



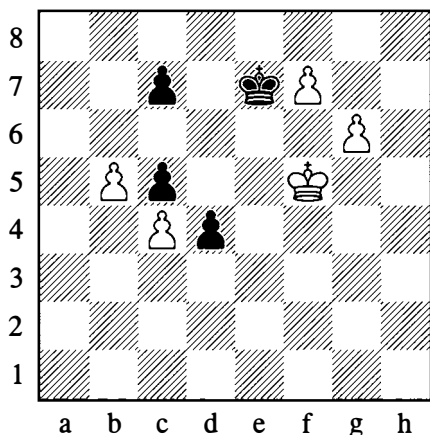
69...♖d7

Or if 69...♖f7 70.♖f5 d3 71.g6† ♖g8 72.f7† ♖g7 (72...♖f8 allows a typical mate with 73.♖f6 d2 74.g7#) 73.♖e6 d2

74.♔e7 d1=♚ 75.f8=♚† ♕xg6 76.♚f6† ♕h5
77.♚f5† ♕h4 78.♚xc5 White will take the c7-
pawn soon, with an easily won ending.

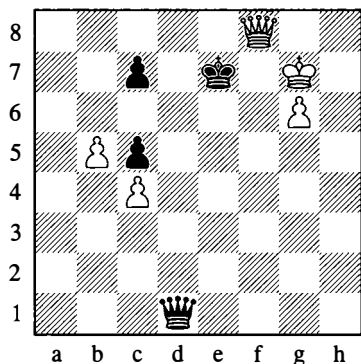
70.f7 ♕e7 71.g6 ♕f8 72.♕f5 ♕e7

After 72...♕g7 73.♕e6 White wins simply.



73.♕g5!

The last accurate move, which might have come as a surprise for some spectators. The play could have continued: 73...d3 74.♕h6 d2 (if 74...♕f8 75.♕h7 Black does not even get to promote his pawn) 75.♕g7 d1=♚ 76.f8=♚†



Inevitably followed by a queen exchange with ♚d5† (for instance after 76...♕e6 77.♚f7†). The pawn ending offers Black no hope at all.

1-0

We won the match and I happily went back to the hotel accompanied by Sax, who had been there all the time.

I have excellent memories of this Olympiad, as I won eight games, made four draws and lost only once. There was a bitter end, though. According to all probabilities, a 2-2 draw in our last-round match against Slovenia was 99% sure to win the bronze medals. Destiny was written differently, though.

We did draw the match, but what a pity that Leko could not find enough energy to win his won position. I remember that after we finished our match I was following the remaining relevant games together with my teammates. A famous sports journalist, Dani Molnar, who loved chess and was providing live coverage of the Olympiad, joined us for the excitement.

As time passed, we understood that the unthinkable was going to happen: Ukraine defeated Bosnia by 3-1, leaving the Hungarian team in a disappointing fourth place...

We all thought there would at least be some consolation for this misfortune. Before the last round, I was leading in the third board individual classification, which was based on percentages. Had I not played in the last round, I would have won the gold medal, but I did not wish to step down from the team at such a crucial moment.

True, other players thought differently in similar situations. The future gold medallist, Dragoljub Jacimovic from Macedonia, did not play in the last round and the silver medallist, Oswaldo Zambrana from Bolivia, did not play in the last two rounds!

I did not win my final game, which caused my percentage to drop a little, but I had every reason to believe that I would get the bronze medal at least. But this left me with another problem.

Due to my aforementioned computer problems and hurried departure, I had no

elegant shoes in my suitcase, nothing I could wear on the stage during the prize-giving. I had a couple of hours left and rushed from one shop to another. I eventually bought a pair of shiny red shoes with high heels that I was very happy with.

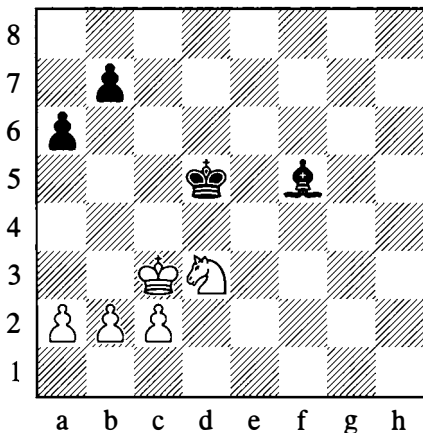
I arrived at the prize-giving ceremony in a good mood, but that did not last long. You may imagine my surprise when I did not hear my name when the third board medallists were invited up to the stage. I was only fourth, a very tiny distance from third place...

Although the last hours of the Olympiad were rather bitter and disappointing, I did not leave Istanbul with empty hands. First of all, I had my brand-new shiny red shoes! In addition, my eight wins remained a pleasant memory and gave me confidence for the next year's tournaments. Years later, some of them helped me in writing this book...

In the next game, accurate king play allowed me to force a draw from a seemingly dangerous position.

Alexei Shirov – Judit Polgar

Dortmund 1996



We had played an incredible middlegame, full of sacrifices and deadly dangers for my

king. To give a clearer picture, we played the same opening as in my 1999 game against Anand (page 337), but with me on the black side. At several points, I came extremely close to losing, but managed to escape from the tactical battle into this worse, but basically drawn, ending.

Shirov played:

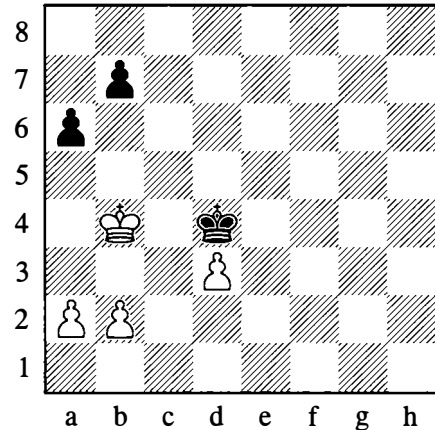
51.♖b4?!

Preparing a queenside invasion.

When a pawn down, one usually rejects transposing to a pawn ending on principle, but here I managed to calculate my way to a forced draw.

51...♙xd3! 52.cxd3 ♖d4

Regaining the pawn is easy, but will my king be back in time to create counterplay?

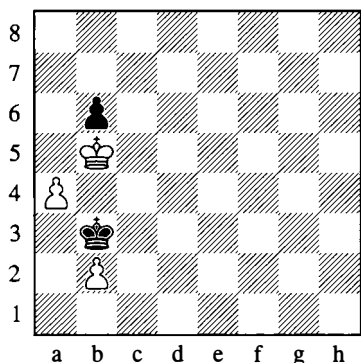


53.♙a5 ♖xd3 54.♖b6 ♖c2 55.a4

If 55.♖xb7 every reply would lose with the exception of: 55...a5 56.a4 (or if 56.♖b6 then 56...a4 57.♙a5 ♖xb2) 56...♖b3! The a4-pawn is more important than the one on b2.

55...♖b3

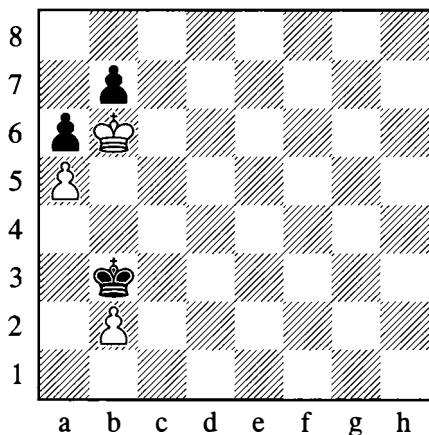
Remarkably enough, there was another draw by zugzwang: 55...a5 56.♖xa5 ♖b3 57.♖b5 b6



And, just as in the game, there is mutual zugzwang!

When calculating the game continuation I relied on an idea I had been familiar with since the age of 10! As the reader may remember from the first volume, I used to solve lots of studies in those years.

56.a5



56...♔a4!

Only not 56...♔b4? 57.b3! when it would be my turn to be in zugzwang!

After the small triangulation 56...♔a4! 57.b3† ♔b4, White has to give away the a5-pawn and with it any chance of winning. If we remove the a6-pawn, we would get the zugzwang position from the previous comment, with the

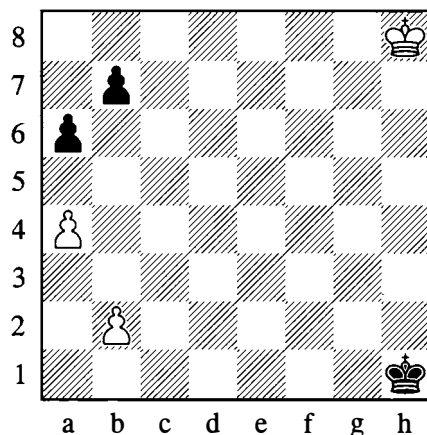
irrelevant difference that all the pieces have been shifted one rank upwards.

It felt great to apply a study idea in a practical game and it inspired me to compose a study of my own on this theme, just a few months later! ½–½

White wins

1996

I worked out this study in a relaxed mood, while visiting my sister Susan in New York.



The structure is familiar, but the kings are far from the critical area. Therefore, the first few moves are just natural.

1.♔g7 ♔g2 2.♔f6 ♔f3 3.♔e5!

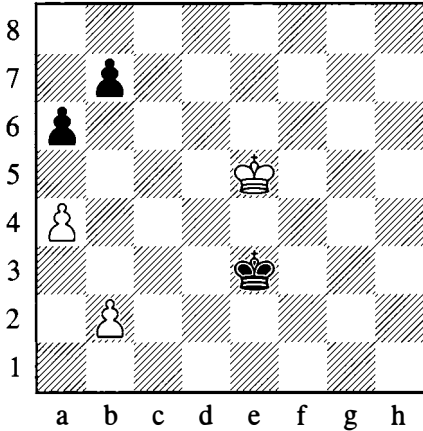
The good old shoulder-to-shoulder method. My king is first to arrive in the centre, restricting the possibilities of its rival.

If 3.♔e6? Black could make good use of the e4-square: 3...♔e4! 4.a5 ♔d4 5.♔d6 ♔c4 followed by ...♔b5. In the main line, the black king's trajectory will be less favourable.

3...♔e3

Black has no time for 3...a5 due to 4.♔d6 followed by ♔c7.

After the centralizing phase, White's plan consists of two elements: blocking the kingside with a4-a5 and approaching with the king. There is only one winning move order.



4.a5!!

The white king stands optimally for the time being. It keeps its colleague under control and is just three tempos away from capturing the b7-pawn.

4.♔d6? would start the attack prematurely, allowing 4...♔d4 with similar play as in the comment to 3.♔e5.

4.♔d5? does not improve White's position, since the king is no closer to the b7-pawn. It is only an illusion, generated by the specific chess geometry: the king still needs three tempos to take the pawn. This gives Black the time to play: 4...a5! 5.♔c5 ♔d3 6.♔b6 ♔c2 7.♔xb7 ♔b3! We had this drawn position in one of the comments to my Shirov endgame.

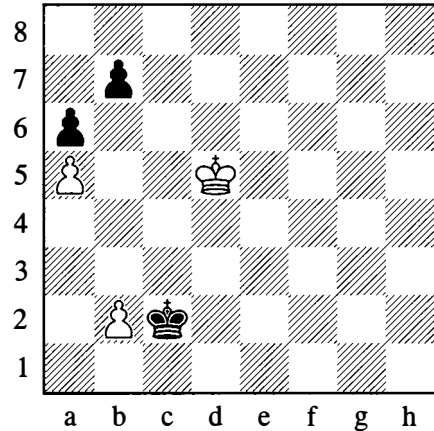
4...♔d3 5.♔d5

Still shouldering off the insistent black king.

5...♔c2

Finally, the black king has been forced to move away from the optimal b4- and b5-squares. And yet, Black can still hope to save the game in the same way I did.

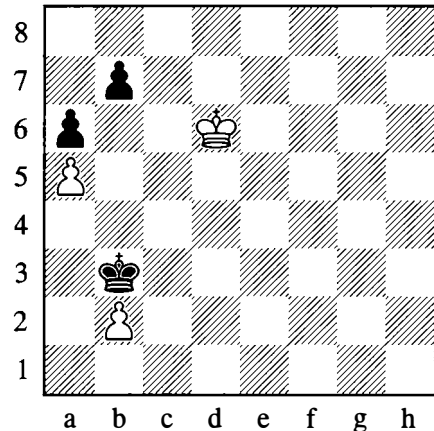
White now has two ways of attacking the b7-pawn, but only one of them wins.



6.♔d6!!

Visually, 6.♔c5? seems more natural, keeping the king closer to "everything". In fact, it would throw away the win: 6...♔b3!! 7.♔b6 ♔a4! 8.b3† ♔b4 The same mutual zugzwang position that saved me against Shirov.

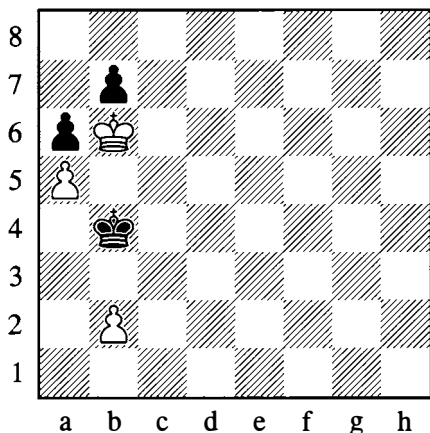
6...♔b3



7.♔c5!

Triangulating and shouldering at the same time! If Black could reply 7...♔b4 (!!!) 8.♔b6 ♔a4 9.b3† ♔b4 it would all end peacefully. Unfortunately, the black king can only go to a4.

7...♙a4 8.♙b6 ♙b4



9.b3!

Reaching the final position from my game, but with Black to move! White wins.

Mutual zugzwang is so strange. If your opponent offers you the possibility of making another move, do not believe he is just being friendly!

I was proud of my study because of its purity and the economy of material, as the connoisseurs would say.

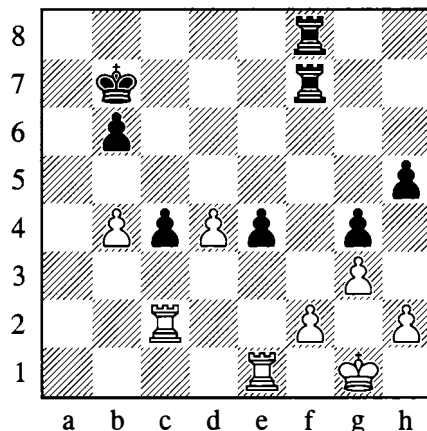
King safety and king activity

These terms would be in obvious contradiction in the middlegame, but in the endgame they many times go hand in hand. With few pieces on the board, it is hard to mate a centralized king. It is mostly on the edge of the board that danger may appear.

In the next example, the difference between king safety and king activity will be obvious.

Miguel Illescas – Judit Polgar

Pamplona 2000



We have a double-rook ending with a somewhat unusual structure. I decided that my king's activity *and* safety were the highest priorities. So...

33...♙c6!

Heading for either d5 or b5, according to circumstances. On either square, my king would enjoy the protection of the enemy d4- or b4-pawns!

34.♖xc4†

Removing a strong candidate for promotion. If 34.♖xc4 ♙b5! 35.d5 ♖c8 the c4-pawn would be too dangerous.

34...♙d5 35.♖c2 ♖f3

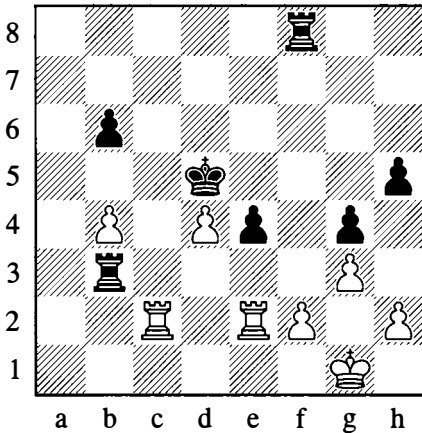
After centralizing my king, the time had come to find the best squares for my rooks.

36.♖ee2?

With only three minutes left to reach move 40, Miguel over-defends his second rank, in order to free the c2-rook for active duty. In doing so, he failed to realize that the back-rank weakness will cost him dearly.

36.♖ce2 was better. Despite being a pawn down, I would prefer my position after 36...♖e8, but objectively the game should end in a draw.

36...♖b3



Attacking the b4-pawn and with another secret little plan in mind. Miguel failed to guess the latter...

37.♖c7?

Losing the game.

White's position would remain difficult after the stronger: 37.♖b2 ♖xb2 38.♖xb2 ♔xd4! With just one rook each on the board, neither king has to worry about safety anymore. The threat is ...♖f5-b5 and the b4-pawn will fall soon. The difference in activity between the kings is enormous.

37...♖b1† 38.♔g2 ♖a8

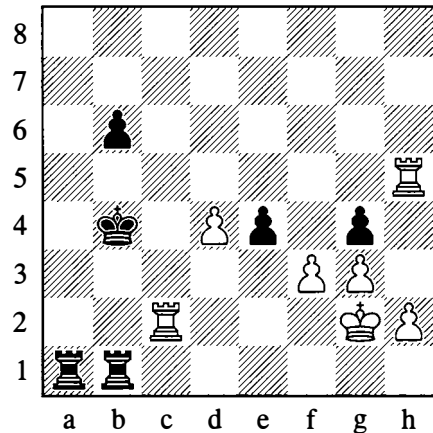
This is what can happen when you leave the back rank undefended. I threaten ...♖a1 followed by ...♖g1 mate.

39.♖d7† ♔c6 40.♖h7 ♖a1 41.♖c2† ♔b5 42.♖xh5† ♔xb4

The checks have come to an end and White has to clear some space for his king.

43.f3

If 43.f4 then 43...e3 taking the f2-square away from the king.



43...♔b3!?

There were other wins, but I liked this one, trapping the rook. If 44.♖d2 then 44...♔c3 or 44...exf3† followed by 45...♔c3.

0-1

In this game, my king's contribution to the attack was rather tangential. In the next example, my king will take an active part in the attack against its rival, who is placed on the edge of the board.

Valery Salov – Judit Polgar

Madrid 1997

Salov's name may not be familiar to younger readers, as he stopped playing chess more than ten years ago. In his best years he was a world title Candidate, a constant presence in the world's top ten, and peaked at a share of 3rd-5th place in the world rankings.

Salov had a solid and sometimes boring style. He was famous for his patience in drawish positions, which he would be happy and confident to play on forever. This strategy brought him many wins, but also had a

Comunidad de  Madrid

V. SALOV
G.M. - 2.665
RUS.



J. POLGAR
G.M. - 2.645
HUN.

negative effect. In those years, we still had adjourned games in many tournaments.

In Madrid 1997, Salov adjourned seven of his nine games, and he confessed to me that this was quite exhausting! He added that there should be no adjourned games. Since then, adjourned games have disappeared from the chess arena, but by then so had Salov...

Salov had been pressing in this ending with two pawns for an exchange for quite a while. By now, he must have felt that my king's centralization might cause him some problems, and he offered a draw with his next move.

50. ♖a8 ♔c4

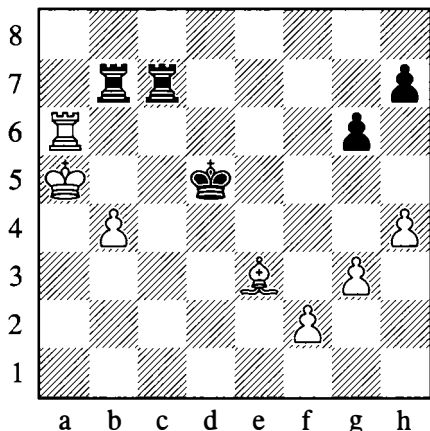
Three minutes were enough to convince me that it was too early to accept the draw. The b4-pawn is attacked and the white king is suddenly in great danger.

51. ♕c5?

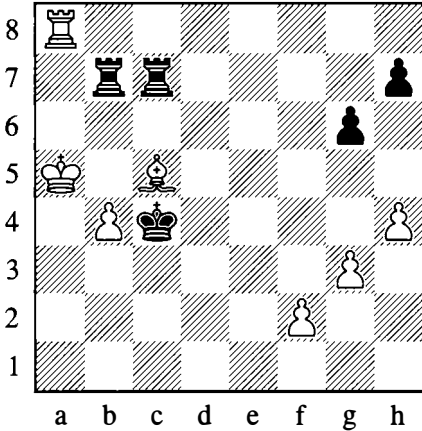
The decisive mistake, played after only two minutes. Salov probably thought that the bishop is stable on c5, and would ensure he had no problems.

51. ♕b6 ♖c6 would not change much.

The somewhat unnatural 51. ♕d2!, defending



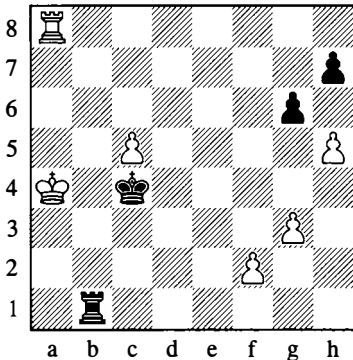
the b4-pawn, was the only way to maintain equality. True, the bishop is unstable, but there is no way to take advantage of it. If 51...♖b5† 52.♕a4 ♜d5 53.♙c1 ♜d1 54.♙a3 White is out of danger.



51...♖c6!

Creating a threat which Salov had probably overlooked.

If, say, 52.h5 I would play 52...♖b5† 53.♕a4 ♜xc5! Destroying the fortress. 54.bxc5 ♖b1

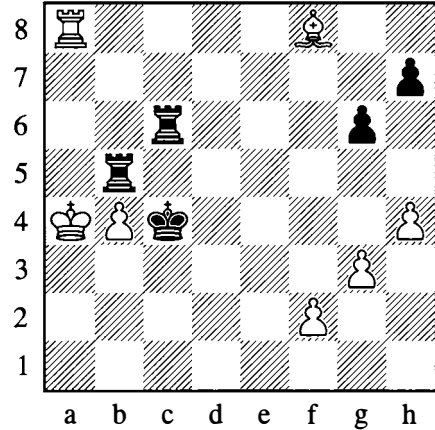


Black wins the enemy rook and White's counterplay with the c-pawn is too slow: 55.♕a5 ♜a1† 56.♕b6 ♜xa8 57.hxg6 hxg6 58.c6 ♕d3 59.c7 ♕e2 and wins.

52.♙f8

The only available square along the c5-f8 diagonal.

52...♖b5† 53.♕a4



53...♖b8!

As 54.♖xb8 ♜a6 is mate, Salov resigned.

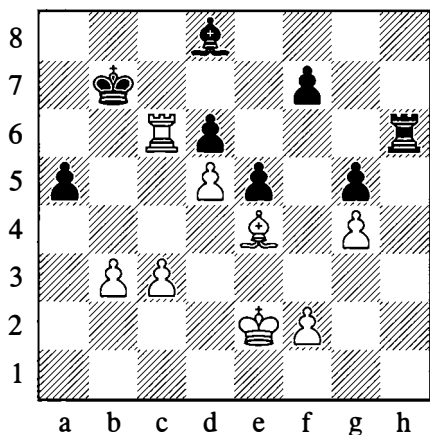
The next example is more sophisticated. I had in mind a long plan involving activating my king followed by a mating attack. My opponent could have parried it easily, if only he had spotted the danger in time.

Judit Polgar – Joel Lautier

Las Palmas 1994

I played my first game against Lautier at the Under-14 World Championship in 1986, when I was nearly ten years old. It was my first participation in a world championship. Since then we have met in many tournaments in different countries, first in youth events and later in tournaments for adults.

For years, Joel was the best French player. He took things very seriously, was diligent, hard working and spoke many foreign languages. He now lives in Moscow and is no longer a professional player.



We reached this position after the first time control. My mobile queenside majority and the weakness of the light squares offer me some ideas of playing for a win, despite the opposite-coloured bishops. I should find a good moment to break with c4-c5, but before that it would be useful to get my king to b5 or even c6.

41.♔d3

41.c4? would be a typical mistake, allowing 41...♙b6 followed by ...♙c5 with a perfect blockade.

I had the feeling that Lautier felt safe enough in this phase of the game, and he could not understand why I was playing on. This mistaken attitude will lead him to a lost position within just a few moves.

I had some ideas of how to make progress, but if I had to define what exactly helped me to win this game, I would first mention my great patience. Even now, so many years later, after a game I will have the involuntary thought: "I could have won if I had showed the same level of patience as I did against Lautier in 1994..."

41...♙b6

Played instantly.

42.f3 ♙c7

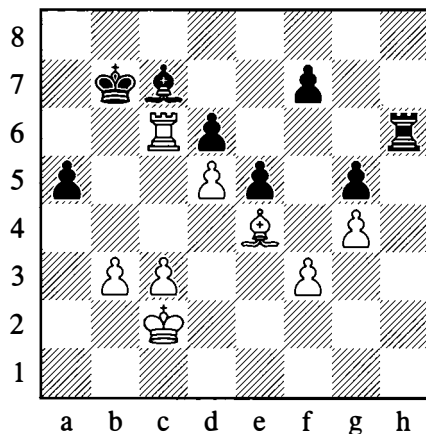
Freeing the rook from the task of defending the d6-pawn.

43.♙c2!

The most consistent try to activate the king, or at least the trickiest. My last move must have completely blown away any shadow of suspicion from Lautier's mind as to what my plans were.

My plan was to reach the a4-square and then play c3-c4, possibly followed by ♙b5 and c4-c5.

The straightforward 43.♙c4 would have been neutralized by 43...♞h2 44.♙b5 ♞b2 45.b4 axb4 46.c4 ♞a2 47.c5 ♞a5† 48.♙c4 ♞a6. After the rook exchange, the position is completely drawn.



43...♞h2†

Played after six minutes. Instead the correct defence was 43...♙b6! 44.♙b2 ♙c5.

44.♙b1 ♞h1† 45.♙b2 ♞h2† 46.♙a3

Black played his last few moves quickly, but they helped me to activate my king. It is now too late to save the game.

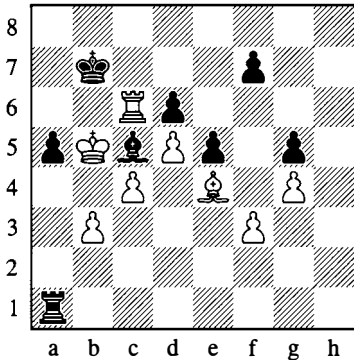
46...♞d2

Lautier played this move instantly. He probably wanted to put my d-pawn under

observation in anticipation of my planned c4-c5.

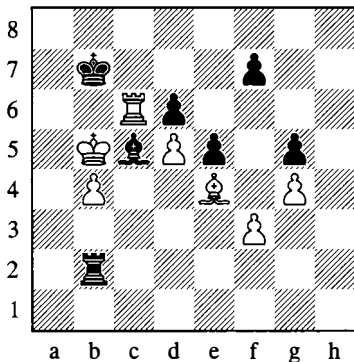
The following two lines show how Black's fortress would crumble after a well-timed exchange sacrifice:

46...♖h1 47.c4 ♗b6 The d6-pawn is indirectly defended. 48.♕a4 ♖a1† 49.♕b5 ♗c5

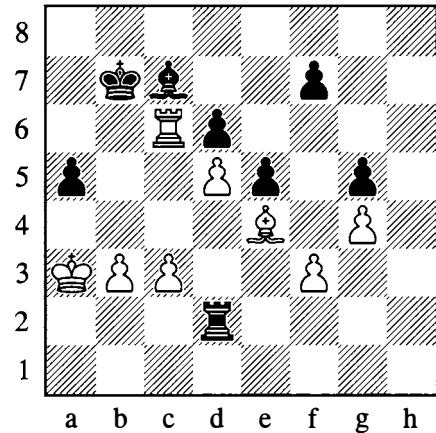


50.♖xc5! dxc5 51.d6† ♕c8 52.♕xc5 My connected pawns, supported by the king and bishop, are unstoppable.

Or: 46...♗b6 47.♕a4 ♖a2† 48.♕b5 ♗c5 49.b4 axb4 50.cxb4 ♖b2



51.♖xc5! The same idea, under slightly different circumstances. 51...dxc5 52.d6† ♕c8 53.♕xc5 ♕b8 54.b5 ♕c8 55.b6 ♖d2 56.♕c6 ♖d1 57.b7† ♕b8 58.d7 followed by ♗d5.



47.c4

I have two main threats: c4-c5 and ♕a4-b5.

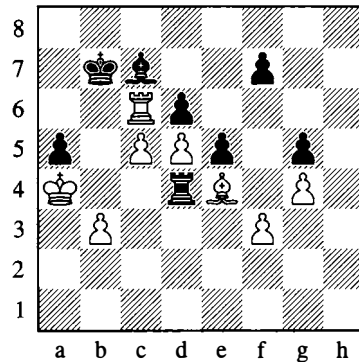
47...♕b8

Evacuating the dangerous long diagonal.

47...♗b6

would not save Black either:

48.♕a4 ♗c7 49.c5 ♖d4†



Hoping for 50.♕b5?? ♖b4 mate. I can do better, though:

50.b4!!

Deflecting the rook from the d-file.

50...♖xb4† 51.♕a3 dxc5 52.d6 ♗b8 53.d7 ♗c7 54.♖d6† ♖xe4 55.fxe4 ♗d8 56.♕a4

And wins.

48.c5!

The start of the decisive attack.

48...dxc5 49.♔a4!

In such a dominating position, I do not care about winning back any pawns. Given the opposite-coloured bishops, the correct plan is to create a mating attack with the participation of my whole army.

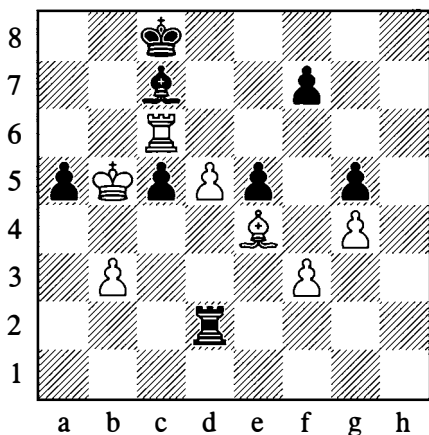
In fact, the difference in activity between the bishops is overwhelming. Mine is stable and controls the whole board, while Lautier's is passive and vulnerable.

49...♕c8

Hoping to use the king to stop the d-pawn.

50.♕b5

50.♖f6!? followed by ♕b5-c6 would also win.

**50...♕d8**

Or if 50...♕d7 then 51.♖f5+ ♕d8 52.♖a6 followed by ♕c6.

51.♖a6

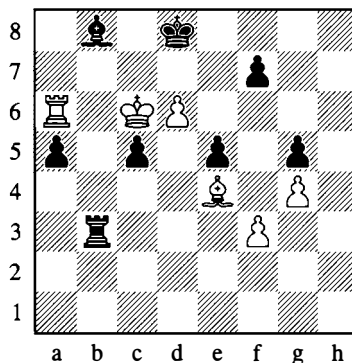
Clearing a path for His Majesty.

51...♖b2

There is more than one winning move available, and my choice might not have been the best.

52.♕c4

The fastest and most elegant win would have been: 52.d6! ♖xb3+ 53.♕c6 ♖b8

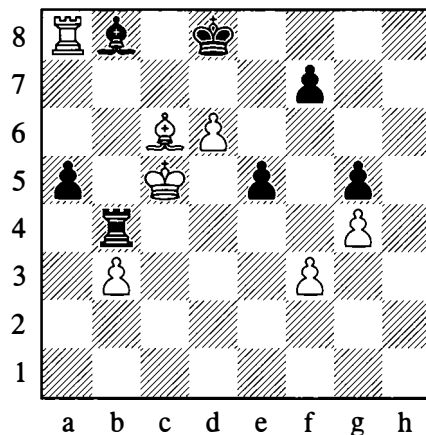


Black keeps the queenside under control, but I failed to see that after 54.♖xa5 he cannot stop the unexpected manoeuvre ♖a1-h1-h8 mate!

52...♖d2

Or if 52...♕d7 53.♖f5+ ♕e7 54.♕xc5 threatening either d5-d6 or ♖a7.

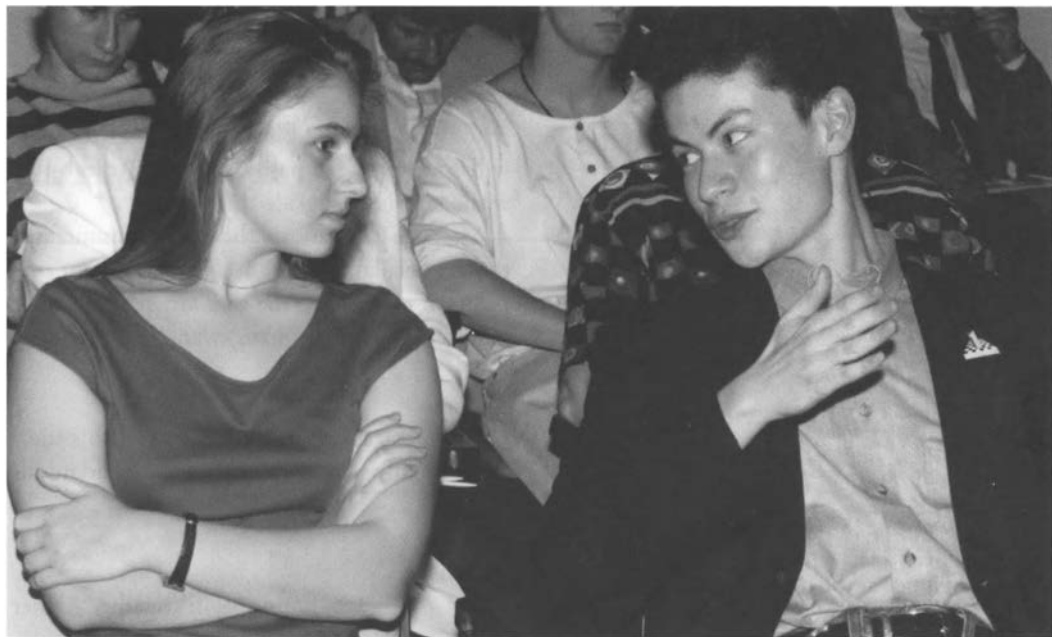
53.♕xc5 ♖d4 54.d6 ♖b8 55.♖a8 ♖b4 56.♖c6



The net around the black king gets tighter on every move.

56...♕c8

If 56...♖xb3 then 57.♖b5 ♕c8 58.d7+ wins.



A friendly chat to Lautier after the game

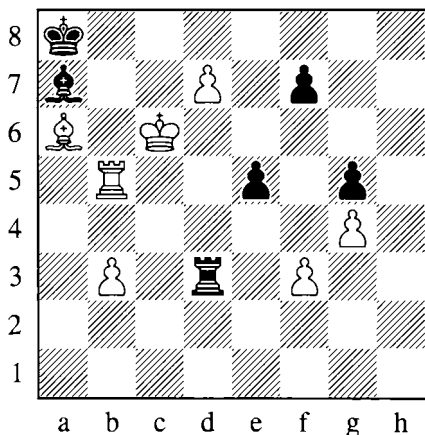
57. ♖b5 ♘b7 58. ♜xa5 ♜d4

The trick 58... ♜xd6 ♘b6 does not work because of 60. ♜a8! when Black can win back the bishop only by allowing a transposition to a lost pawn ending with ♜b8†.

59. ♜a6† ♘a8 60. ♜c8† ♜a7† 61. ♘c6

The rest is simple.

61... ♘b8 62. d7 ♜d3 63. ♜b5† ♘a8 64. ♜b7† ♘b8 65. ♜a6† ♘a8



66. ♜b8†!

The final touch. Next I would play 67. ♜xd3 followed by 68. d8=♞.

1–0

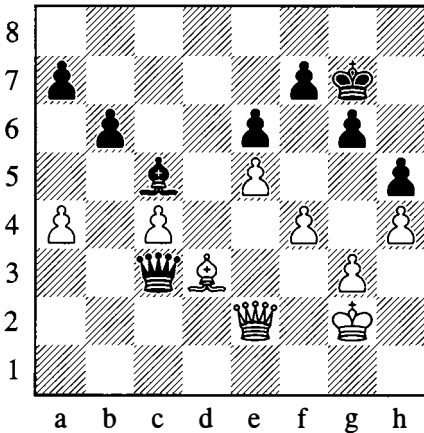
With queens on the board rather than rooks, the presence of opposite-coloured bishops makes things even more promising. In the next game I will not even need to bring in my king in order to create decisive threats.

Paul van der Sterren – Judit Polgar

Istanbul Olympiad 2000

This game took place in the 13th and penultimate round of the Olympiad. I had won my previous two games and was feeling optimistic.

Paul had played without much ambition, and I felt he was trying to reach a draw by simplifying. This over-caution might have been caused by the results of our previous games, in which he had played with Black. See our game on page 45 and also an older one in the first volume.



A brief glance at the position reveals that I am better. White's queenside is weak and his king somewhat unsafe. However, his kingside space advantage and the impossibility of activating my king offer him chances of survival. For instance, if allowed to regroup with ♖e4 and ♙c2 (or ♖c6), defending the long diagonal and the a4-pawn, he would be more or less out of any danger.

However, it is my turn to play.

37...♙a1

Taking full advantage of the queen's long-range action. I attack the a4-pawn and threaten to start an attack with ...♙g1†. As we will see, White will not be able to defend against the combined threats on the opposite wings.

38.♖c2

If 38.♙c2 then: 38...♙g1† 39.♔f3 (somewhat better than 39.♔h3 ♖f2 threatening ...♙xg3 mate) 39...a5 The immediate check on h1 would also do, but the last move is useful anyway, bringing the pawn one step closer to promotion. Black practically wins a tempo, since White cannot do better than 40.♙e2 ♙h1† 41.♙g2 ♙d1† 42.♙e2 ♙xa4 with a technical win.

38...♙g1† 39.♔f3

39.♔h3 would drop the c4-pawn to

39...♙h1† 40.♙h2 ♙f1† 41.♙g2 ♙xc4. Black will soon create a passed pawn on the b-file, while keeping kingside threats.

After the game move, there are no immediate threats available, but a deeper look at the position revealed to me that any neutral move would place White in zugzwang!

39...a5!

The most active way to carry out this idea, since the a-pawn is a dangerous candidate for promotion.

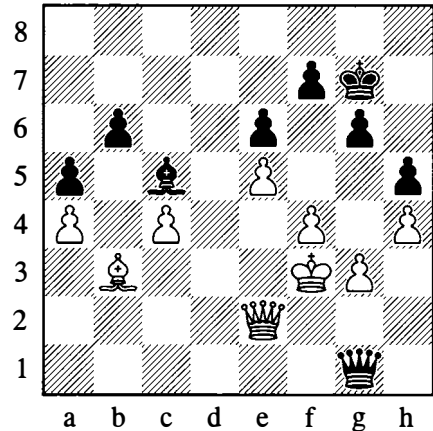
40.♖b3

Trying to hold his position together. Other bishop moves would lose the a4-pawn:

40.♖e4 ♙h1† 41.♙g2 ♙d1† 42.♙e2 ♙xa4
40.♖d3 ♙h1† 41.♙g2 ♙d1†

Queen moves are even worse: 40.♙d2 ♙f1† 41.♔e4 ♙h1† 42.♔d3 ♙f3† and mates.

40.♙d3 ♙f2† 41.♔e4 ♙g2† wins the bishop and mates soon.



40...♙h1† 41.♙g2 ♙e1

White's position crumbles: 42.♙c2 (42.♙e2 ♙c3† drops the bishop) 42...♙f1† 43.♔e4 ♙h1† 44.♔d3 ♙f3† and all White's kingside will vanish.

0-1

After resigning, Paul smiled and said: "It is no fun to play with White against you, either!"

Chapter 7

My KID



Dos Hermanas 1996 – Wearing a traditional Sevillana dress

While still keeping some connection with the previous volume, this chapter takes us deeper into the new period of my career. Indeed, the King's Indian made its first appearance in my games in 1988, but at the OHRA 1989 tournament I only used the Benko Gambit against 1.d4. It took a couple more years before the King's Indian became my main (and practically only) weapon.

There are several reasons that led me to dedicate a chapter to this opening, a unique case in my books so far. The King's Indian used to be a dear friend in those years and, as can be seen in the following pages, it helped me to defeat a series of strong opponents. It suited my style and creative aims perfectly, offering me plenty of opportunities for tactics, combinations and attacks. I have always been happy to sacrifice material in the fight for the initiative and this is precisely the spirit of Black's play in the King's Indian.

I also felt that the King's Indian was perfectly suited to my method of opening preparation. As the reader may remember, I used to focus on absorbing the typical tactical and strategic ideas by studying lots of model games and rehearsing them in training games. True, there are certain lines in which concrete theoretical knowledge is essential, but it is virtually impossible to avoid such lines altogether, no matter how creative one is.

From a practical point of view, when playing the KID it is important to have good nerves and the ability to avoid time trouble. The importance of each move may be huge; sometimes the fatal drawbacks of a losing mistake are revealed only eight or ten moves later! For White, the main danger is to rely on his free development and space advantage too much. There is often a tendency for White to enjoy the positional advantage and underestimate the hidden tactical dangers waiting on every corner.

Black has two main ways of attacking White's impressive centre: ...e7-e5 or ...c7-c5. In most of the variations I preferred the former, but against the Sämisch Variation and Four Pawns Attack I usually opted for the latter.

Although the King's Indian is held to be sharp and tactical, there are a lot of subtleties regarding the typical structures involved, so tactics and strategy go hand in hand most of the time. For this reason, a thorough examination of my best games with this opening will reveal a full spectrum of ideas.

The kingside attack

When speaking about King's Indian wins with Black, the first thing that comes to mind is a sharp kingside attack, burning the strategic bridges in order to deliver mate. We will start with a few games on this theme.

Vladimir Epishin – Judit Polgar

Dos Hermanas 1993

I first visited Spain in 1992 and liked the country so much that over the next years I played three to four tournaments yearly.

Dos Hermanas is a small city situated about fifteen kilometres away from Seville. Even now, after having travelled to nearly sixty countries all over the world, Seville remains one of my favourite cities of all. Spain is one of the countries in which I have visited more towns and cities than in my native Hungary!

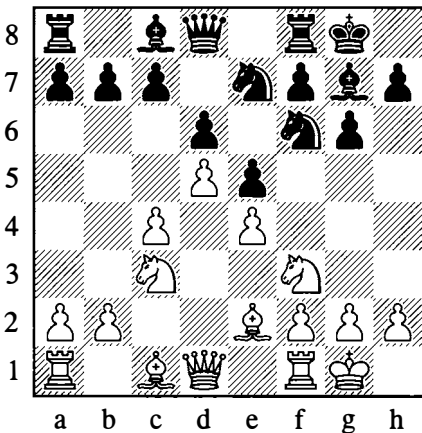
I always felt welcome in Dos Hermanas and I never missed the opportunity to visit the "Feria" (Festival), which lasts a whole week and involves practically all the inhabitants of Seville. People gather together enjoying *jamón*, *queso*, *paella* and *vino* and life in general. Girls and women wear *Sevillana* dresses; I once tried one myself!

The organizers' kindness is best illustrated by

the following episode. One year, my mom got a bad cold during the tournament and had to stay in her hotel room while I was playing. In order to allow her to follow my games, Jorge, the technician, installed a monitor in the room.

As I write these lines, all my pleasant feelings from Dos Hermanas have come back to me.

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 g6 3.♟c3 ♙g7 4.e4 d6 5.♟f3 0-0 6.♙e2 e5 7.0-0 ♟c6 8.d5 ♟e7



We have reached the most popular KID tabiya, the Mar del Plata Variation. More than half a century ago, the main pioneers were Najdorf and Gligoric, who had become living legends by the time this game was played. In the first volume, there is a picture with Gligoric putting the gold medal around my neck at the 1988 Olympiad. Later in this volume, I will speak about a tournament in which Najdorf played the role of organizer.

This was my third Mar del Plata game against Epishin, and each time he chose the same move:

9.♟d2

Another classical line is 9.♟e1, advocated by Korchnoi, who played it many times against me as well.

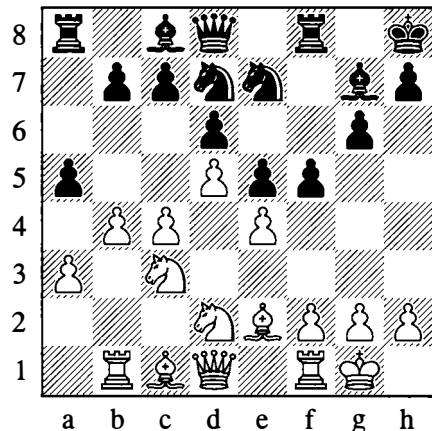
These days, 9.b4 is more fashionable. All these lines have a few things in common. They all lead to complicated play and require thorough preparation; as a rule, before each game I used to know which position I was going to have on the board by move 15, give or take.

9...a5

This used to be Kasparov's favourite. Besides studying the games of the great King's Indian masters, such as Gligoric and Geller, I was also following the path of the strongest player of my time.

Before starting to build up the kingside attack, Black takes some preventive measures on the opposite wing to hold up the b2-b4 advance.

10.♙b1 ♟d7 11.a3 f5 12.b4 ♖h8



Although this position is well known, I find that the last move deserves some explanation. The king steps away from the potentially dangerous a2-g8 diagonal, which may open after the thematic pawn sacrifice c4-c5. In doing so, it clears the g8-square for the e7-knight, which previously did not have any moves available.

From g8, this knight can sometimes facilitate a bishop exchange with ...♙h6, but more often will jump to f6, increasing the pressure on the

e4-square, while its colleague will remain on d7, in order to inhibit the c4-c5 break.

Finally, 12...♖h8 has its merits as a waiting move, inviting White to define his intentions. As I will explain later, some of White's upcoming moves have a highly committal character.

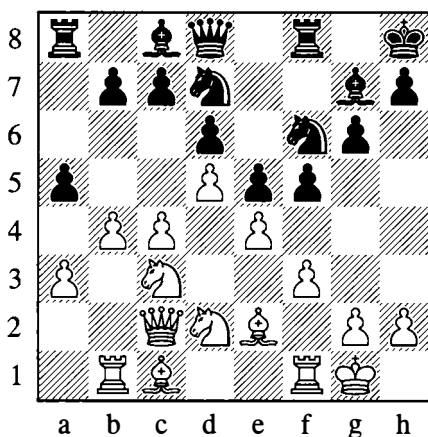
13.f3 ♘g8 14.♖c2

Generally speaking, a constructive move. In combination with the next one, White increases the pressure against the f5-pawn, which will force me to take a decision. Leaving Black with an ongoing choice between ...f5-f4, ...fxe4 and ...♘f6-h5-f4 would make the future uncertain for White. Furthermore, controlling the c-file will be useful later, after the inevitable c4-c5.

Nevertheless, there is a hidden drawback of White's plan: it weakens the defence of the d1-h5 diagonal, which will help Black to carry out the standard ...g5-g4 plan.

14...♘g6

Preparing two possible plans: either ...♘h5-f4, with the aim of provoking the weakening g2-g3, or ...f5-f4 followed by ...g5-g4.



15.♙d3

Consistent and committal at the same time. White forces the f5-pawn to advance, but weakens his defence of the d1-h5 diagonal.

The black king's safe position in the corner is important in the line 15.exf5 gxf5 16.♗xf5 ♘xd5, when there is no intermediate check on e6.

15...f4

There is no sense in considering 15...fxe4?, which would give away all Black's attacking chances. Practically any capture with a piece would leave White with a considerable advantage.

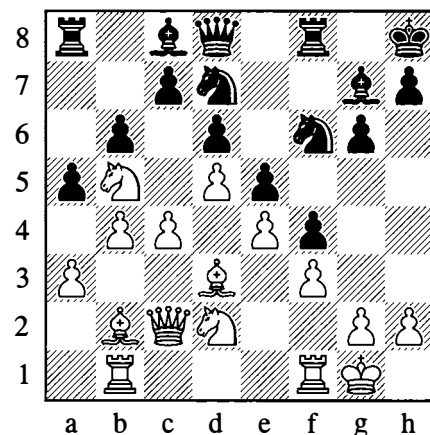
16.♙b5

Having stabilized the kingside, White makes some steps forward with his queenside plan.

16...b6

Holding up c4-c5 for as long as possible. There is no easy way to take advantage of the c6-square.

17.♙b2



This is the kind of position that could offer White a false (or exaggerated) feeling of wellbeing, based on the classical evaluation of the position, something I have mentioned in the introduction. White controls more space and is several tempos ahead in development, while it is not clear if the black rooks will be able to get connected at all. And yet, the only

important thing is the speed and effectiveness of carrying out the respective pawn attacks; in this aspect, Black's play remains a lot easier, at least for the time being.

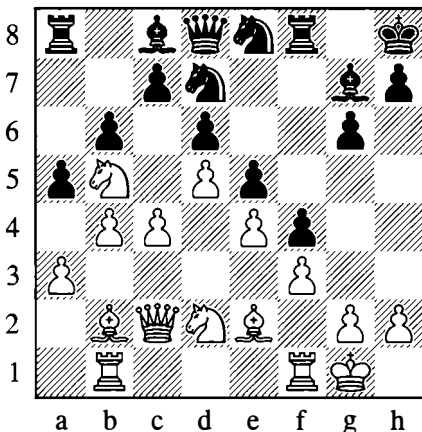
I would make a special mention of the queenside pawn tension. Black should refrain from ...a5xb4 for as long as possible, because this would open the a-file for the white rooks and give meaning to White's better development. Besides, the a5-pawn is useful for inhibiting the plan of ♖b3 followed by c4-c5, in view of the permanent threat of ...a5-a4.

Apart from its developing merits, White's last move has a concrete idea behind it. The pressure against e5 creates some motifs that may make c4-c5 feasible without sacrificing a pawn.

17...♖e8

For tactical reasons, this move was not necessary yet, but 17...h5 would most likely lead to a transposition: 18.♙e2! By removing the bishop from the vulnerable d3-square, White creates the threat of 19.c5 bxc5 20.bxc5 ♖xc5 21.♙xe5. In order to avoid that, Black should play 18...♖e8, over-protecting the e5-pawn and bringing us back to the game continuation.

18.♙e2

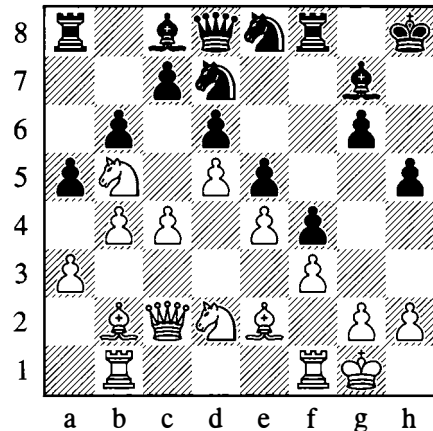


A good move in anticipation of both sides' plans. White takes preventive measures against ...g5-g4 and places the bishop out of the black knight's reach after a future c4-c5.

18...h5!

The modern treatment of the kingside attack. In the event of 18...g5 Black has to reckon with 19.g4 h5 20.h3, blocking the kingside. In order to get an overview of the ideas available in this structure, please refer to the next two main games. In the present game, I would have suffered from an unfavourable version of it. My king would be exposed after the opening of the h-file, while White is poised to invade on the queenside.

At the same time, the early ...h7-h5 creates some limitations in my attack. If I could carry out ...g5-g4 with the support of the pieces only, I could use the h-file for my queen and rook, or the h5-square for my knight. Unfortunately, in chess as in real life, one cannot have it all.



19.♙f1

This must have been part of Epishin's preparation, as he only spent eight minutes up to this moment. Aesthetically, the last move looks impressive: before launching his attack, White brings in all his pieces. In some cases, he can meet ...g5-g4-g3 with h2-h3 followed by ♙f1, defending against sacrifices on h3 or g2.

Still, I feel that White has lost enough time with piece manoeuvring already, which makes 19.c5 the critical move, with similar ideas as in the game, but with an extra tempo.

19...g5

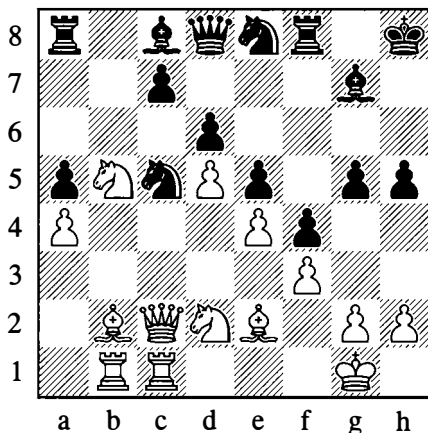
Played without thinking. With mutual attacks on the opposite wings, speed is an essential element.

20.c5!

White could not strengthen his position any more, which makes this pawn sacrifice absolutely logical. It is also true that Black now clears the h3-c8 diagonal, which is useful for the kingside attack, but in the event that White employs waiting moves, I could continue improving with ...g5g8 and ...f6f6, when ...g5-g4 would happen anyway.

20...bxc5 21.bxc5 dxc5 22.a4!

Black has achieved some temporary queenside stability, so White's first aim is to attack the c5-knight with f2-a3.



22...g4!

It took me seven minutes to understand that it made no sense to try and hold the c5-point: 22...f7? 23.f2a3 f8 24.fxc5 dxc5 25.f2b3± After fxc5-e6 White would neutralize one of my key attacking pieces, the c8-bishop.

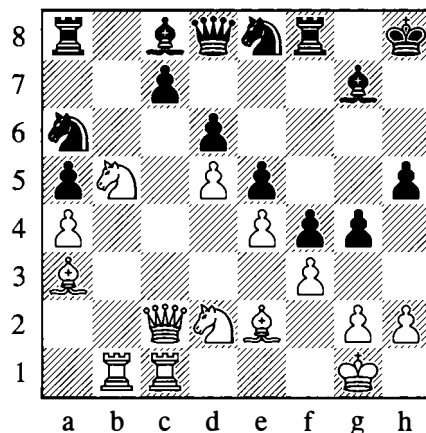
23.f2a3 d2a6

To be honest, this kind of calm retreat was not my style as a kid. I much preferred to move forward with my pieces and deliver mate as soon as possible!

However, with a bit of effort and calculation I understood that the direct 23...f2h4 24.fxc5 g3 would not be successful. True, 25.h3 fxc5 offers attacking chances, but the calm 25.f2f1! parries all the threats. In this line we can see one of the ideas behind the earlier f2f1.

After my last move, Epishin sank into his first deep think: 40 minutes! Had he reached the end of his preparation or did he simply want to double-check some details?

I remember that while he was thinking I felt very confident and happy about my position. The kingside attack develops so naturally!



24.f2c3

24.f2c6 is not too worrying as after 24...f2d7 my pieces would be well defended.

The main alternative was 24.f2c4!?, planning f2xa5-c6. Epishin probably wanted to keep his knight close to the kingside, fearing that 24...f2h4 followed by ...g5g8, ...f6f8 and ...g3 (intending to meet h2-h3 with ...fxc5) may cause some trouble.

24...♖g8

Played after seven minutes. Although the elements of my attack are obvious (...♖g8, ...♙f8, ...♗h4, ...g3) the move order may make some difference. I felt there was no need to define the queen's intentions so soon.

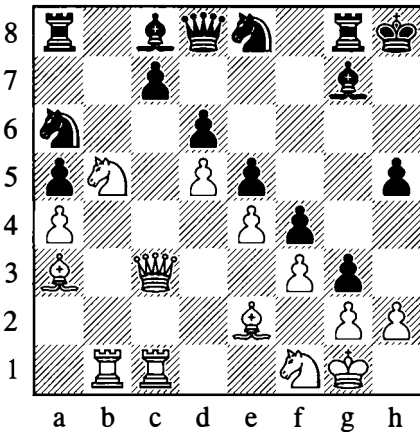
25.♘f1?!

Too hesitant. Instead 25.♗xa5 would have been the logical follow-up of the previous move. I would have continued 25...♙f8, possibly followed by ...♗g5, with two possible ideas: ...h5-h4-h3 or ...gxf3 and if ♙xf3, ...♙g4.

25...g3?

After a few patient moves, I eventually reverted to the impulsive style that characterized my earlier years. I must have been confident about my attacking chances, since I only used four minutes on my last move.

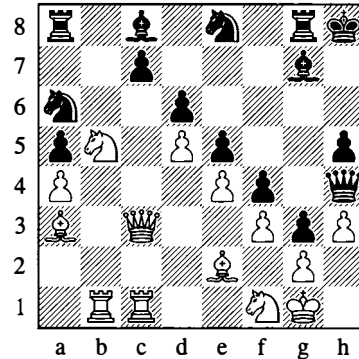
The best way to continue the attack was 25...♙f8! followed by ...♗g5, with similar ideas as explained above.

**26.hxg3?**

The wrong decision, after only twelve minutes.

Something about my confidence must have transmitted to my opponent, inhibiting him

from playing the correct 26.h3!. He must have been afraid of 26...♗h4 which, admittedly, looks awfully dangerous for White.



What we both overlooked is that the thematic sacrifice ...♙xh3 does not threaten anything and does not force gxf3 in any way. This is the merit of the f1-knight and we can say that the inaccurate 25.♘f1?! was justified by the incorrect 25...g3?.

Thus White could play 27.♗c6 ♖b8 28.♘a7 with a complete invasion of the queenside. Black would no longer have any attacking ideas at all.

Instead of 26...♗h4, Black should prefer the neutral 26...♙d7, but this would only underline that 25...g3 was premature.

26...♙h6

Played after one minute of thinking, which is equivalent to no thinking. My intuitive choice was not bad but 26...fxg3 was at least as good since, aside from ...♙g7-h6, I could also choose the dangerous plan of ...h5-h4-h3.

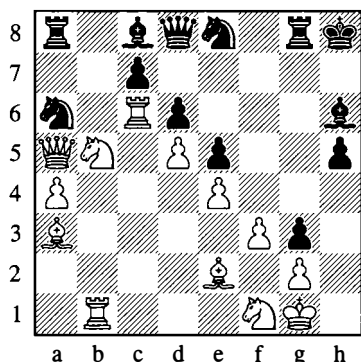
27.♖c2

Eighteen minutes of thought convinced my opponent that he had to protect his second rank and prepare to exchange the dark-squared bishops with ♙a3-c1.

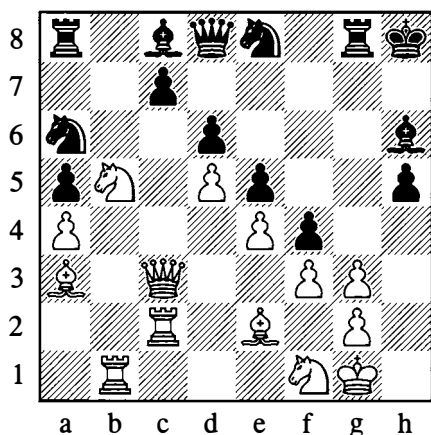
If 27.gxf4 the strongest answer is 27...♙h3! (27...♙xf4 is good enough too) 28.♘e3 ♙xf4 29.♙f1 ♗h4 with an irresistible attack.

Changing the kingside structure with 27.g4 would not bring any relief: 27...hxg4 28.fxg4 ♙xg4 29.♙xg4 ♖xg4 30.♗h3 ♗g5 Planning ...♜f6 followed by ...♞g8.

White's attack does not get anywhere after: 27.♗xa5 fxg3 28.♖c6 True, White has created threats against the d6-pawn as the c7-pawn is pinned, but Black's attack is faster.



28...♙f4! Planning ...♗g5 followed by ...♙e3†. 29.♙c1 After this forced defensive move, the pressure against the d6-pawn is released and I can continue my attack without any inconvenience. 29...♙xc1 30.♞bxc1 h4 Trouble is looming over the white king's position.



27...fxg3 28.♙c1

An admission of the fact that my potentially bad bishop was about to become a dangerous

attacking piece. Strategically, the exchange favours Black. There are no more problems with the c7- and d6-pawns, and the b4- and c5-squares become available for my knight.

28...♙xc1 29.♞bxc1 ♗f6

Having no queenside problems at all, I can afford to build my attack slowly. The active-looking knight on b5 rather stands in the way of its colleagues. A regrouping like ♜b5-a3, ♙e2-b5, ♜a3-c4 would be desirable, but there is no time for such slow manoeuvring. Finally, just as a safety net, I am a pawn up!

30.♗e3

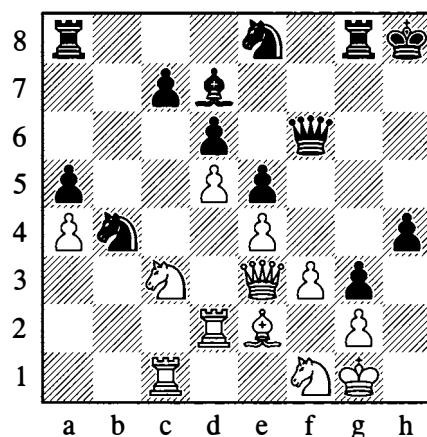
Planning ♜a7.

30...♙d7

Intending to meet ♜a7 with ...♜b4.

31.♜c3 ♜b4 32.♞d2 h4

A brief look at the position reveals that Black is better on both wings.



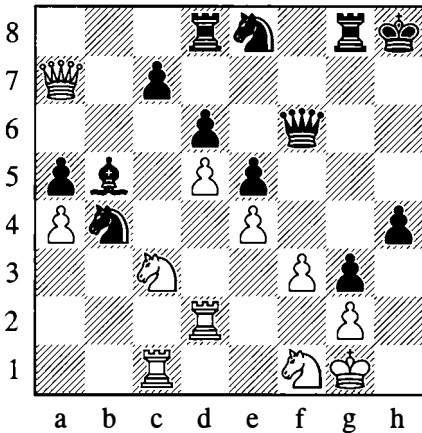
33.♙b5 ♞d8!

My last piece prepares to join the attack via d7-h7.

34.♗a7 ♙xb5

It is obvious that White was not keen to help me activate my rook with ♙xd7, so I decided

to clear the path myself. At the same time, I force my opponent to make a difficult choice in time trouble.



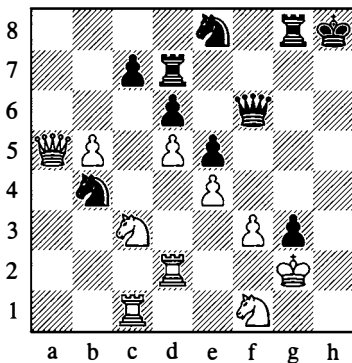
35. dxb5?

This seemingly active move has two drawbacks: it takes the knight further away from the kingside defence and fails to create counter-threats on the opposite wing.

35. axb5!

This is a considerable improvement and the only reasonable defence. In some lines the b-pawn could become dangerous, if, for instance, Black gives up the c7-pawn for the sake of activating the e8-knight. From a human point of view, White's position appears just as hopeless as in the game, but the engines keep finding defensive resources.

35...h3 36. ♖xa5 hxg2 37. ♜xg2 ♜d7



The b4-knight is trapped, but Black's massive kingside attack seems irresistible. And yet, there is still hope for White.

38. ♜e2!

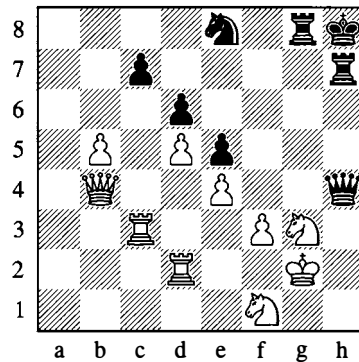
A fantastic resource.

The black knight cannot run away, so 38. ♖xb4? is pointless. 38...♜f7 39. ♜d3 ♖h6 40. ♜e2 ♜h7 41. ♜fxg3 ♜xg3†! 42. ♜xg3 ♖h2† 43. ♜f1 ♖xg3 and Black wins.

38...♜f7 39. ♜c3

White is vulnerable along the h-file, but otherwise his pieces are cooperating harmoniously to put up stubborn resistance.

39...♖h4 40. ♖xb4 ♜h7 41. ♜exg3

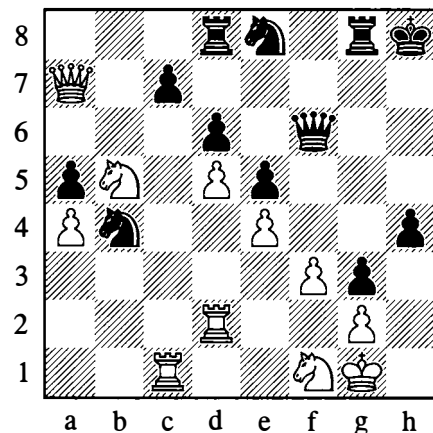


41...♜xg3†!

This sacrifice seems to win on the spot, but there is one more nuance.

42. ♜f2!

42. ♜xg3? ♖h2† 43. ♜f1 ♖xd2 is hopeless for White, but rejecting the sacrifice keeps him more or less alive.



35...h3

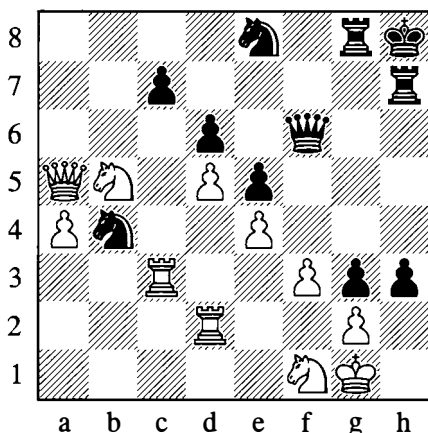
Now the game is virtually over.

36.♞c3

36.♞xc7 ♞c8 creates an unpleasant pin. The finish might be 37.♞b7 ♞d8 and Black wins, as 38.♞e6 allows Black to throw in 38...h2†.

36...♞d7

The rook is getting there little by little.

37.♞xa5 ♞h7

I can afford to give away the useless b4-knight.

38.♞e3 ♞h6

The best square for the queen, creating threats along the h-file and a pin along the c1-h6 diagonal.

39.gxh3 ♞xh3

White cannot avoid the mate.

0-1

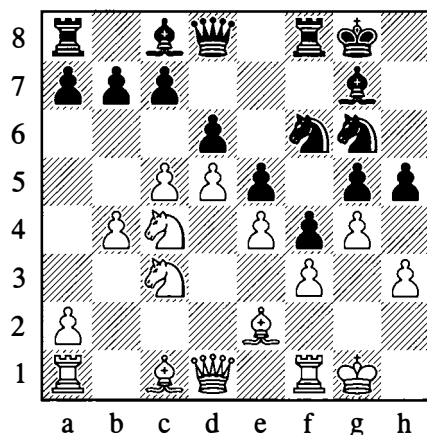
With this game, I stayed in the fight for the first place, but more important is the feeling of winning in such great style. It certainly is the kind of experience which encourages one to play the King's Indian!

White plays g2-g4

In the comments to my 18th move of the previous game, I mentioned the possibility of blocking the kingside structure with g2-g4. This plan does not always prove reliable, since the g4-pawn may become a target. Here are two games with this structure.

David Garcia Ilundain – Judit Polgar

Oviedo (rapid) 1992



At first sight, White has a great position. Not much is happening on the kingside so far, while the queenside attack looks threatening. Nevertheless, White should be mindful of the relatively weak defence of the g4-pawn, which is a direct consequence of transferring the king's knight to the active c4-square. In such positions, the knight is often well placed on f2, where it over-protects the e4- and g4-pawns against potential piece sacrifices.

17.♞f2

Played with the aim of defending the h-file with a later ♞f2-h2, but this is time-consuming and unrealistic. Black can choose the moment of opening the file with ...hxg4, and may also play ...♞h4, two elements that render the planned manoeuvre a loss of time. White

should instead have hurried with his queenside attack, based on a2-a4, ♖a3 and b4-b5.

In blocked King's Indian positions, the most dangerous illusion is that time is not an important factor. It may appear that you have enough time to do whatever you want, but how frustrating it can be when after four or five moves of the main plan you find that just one tempo is missing.

17...♖f7

My symmetrical rook lift is much more effective, being an essential link of a consistent plan. The rook vacates the f8-square for the bishop, which in its turn will clear the rook's path to h7, over-protecting the d6-pawn at the same time. The rook's manoeuvre along the seventh rank is important not only for the attack, but also for the defence, taking measures against an invasion on c7.

18.a4

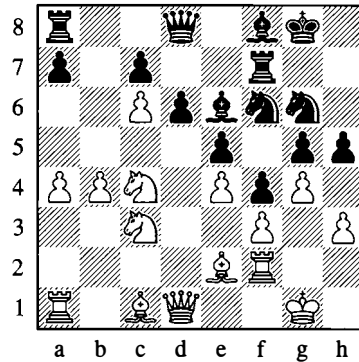
If carried out in time, White's attack is strong. Black has no obvious way of resisting in the long run. For instance, ...a7-a6 prevents ♖b5 but weakens the b6-square, allowing a4-a5 followed by cxd6 and ♖c4-b6xc8. This is more than a piece exchange, since the c8-bishop is essential for the sacrificial attack. Without it, Black would be left without any kingside threats.

The only question is whether Black can move faster on the kingside. As usual in games with mutual attacks on the opposite wings, speed is essential.

18...♙f8 19.♙a3

Both sides must keep in mind the possibility of c5-c6, increasing White's space advantage at the cost of some structural flexibility.

At the present moment, 19.c6 is hardly a good solution: 19...bxc6 20.dxc6 ♙e6



In the ending, White's queenside space advantage would be decisive, but here he has problems maintaining his position in the centre and on the kingside. 21.♖d5 ♙xd5 22.exd5 White's central pawns have migrated to the left, leaving the kingside vulnerable. Black can take over the initiative with 22...hxg4 23.hxg4 e4!.

19...♞h7

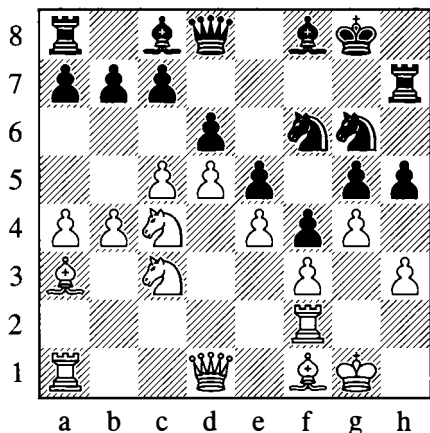
Some danger is looming already over White's position. If allowed, I would play ...hxg4, ...♞h3-g3 and ...♖h4. With such an invasion on the dark squares, I would have little trouble finding a favourable moment to sacrifice on g4.

20.♙f1?!

White still believes that he will be in time with everything. His last move prepares the connection of the rooks with ♞aa2 followed by ♞h2, putting up active resistance on the h-file. The hidden drawback of the bishop retreat is the weakening of the pawn chain f3-g4.

20.♞h2! was better. Black does not yet have enough attacking resources to break through, so I would have had to keep developing with 20...♙d7. This prevents a4-a5 followed by ♖b5, while preparing the slow transfer of the queen's rook to the h-file. Since b4-b5 loses the c5-pawn, we can infer that both sides' attacks require thorough preparation. In this case the chances would remain approximately equal.

Another useful move would be 20.♖c1!?, which does not change the evaluation above.



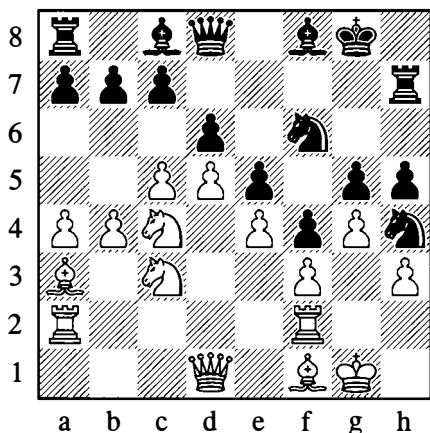
20...♖h4

Immediately spotting the possibility to demolish the pawn wall with a piece sacrifice.

21.♖aa2?

Not taking my sacrifice seriously.

Admitting the previous mistake with 21.♖e2 would have kept White in the game, despite the loss of two tempos.



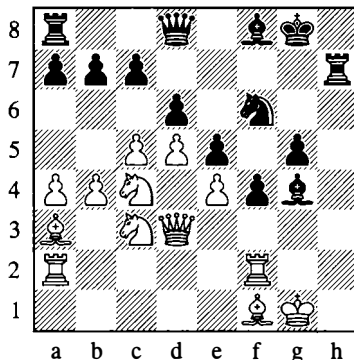
21...♖x3!

Eliminating the base link of the pawn chain. In rapid games, I used to be even

more at ease when sacrificing than in regular games, although the present sacrifice is strong regardless of the time limit.

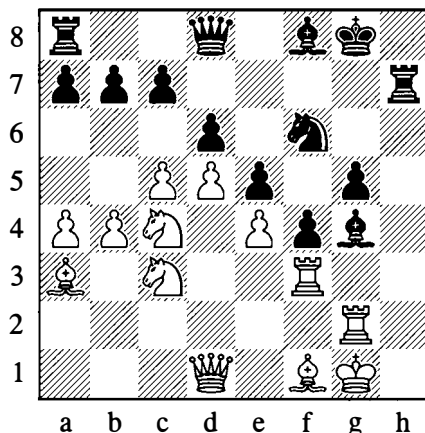
22.♖xf3

22.♖xf3 does not change anything essentially: 22...hxg4 23.hxg4 ♕xg4 24.♖d3



The best way to prepare the advance of the pawns is 24...♕h5, allowing me to keep control of the f3-square even after ...g5-g4-g3.

22...hxg4 23.hxg4 ♕xg4 24.♖g2



The best practical chance. White is ready to give up one of his rooks for my bishop, even though this will leave him with a minimal material disadvantage.

24...♕x3?

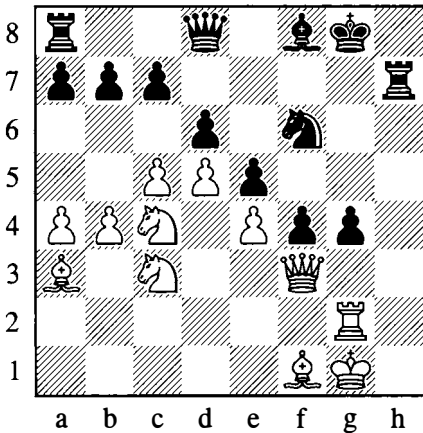
This premature release of the tension came as a result of miscalculating.

24...♖e8! followed by ...♗h5 offers Black a decisive attack; 25.♙xg4 ♕xg4 would only activate my pieces even more.

25.♗xf3?

We both underestimated the merits of 25.♙xg5! which should have saved the game. I was relying on 25...♖h8 26.♗xf3 ♕xd5, but after 27.♙h5 ♕xc3 28.cxd6 cxd6 29.♙xh7† ♖xh7 30.♗xc3 White gets a stable position. Even 27.♙g2 would have been playable; the main thing for White is to eliminate the dangerous g5-pawn.

25...g4



Now I have a material advantage *and* an attack.

26.♗e2 ♙g7

26...♗e8 followed by ...♗h5 would have been at least as strong. I had planned the last move in advance, and somehow I knew my position was so good that I could hardly ruin it anyway.

27.♗e1 g3

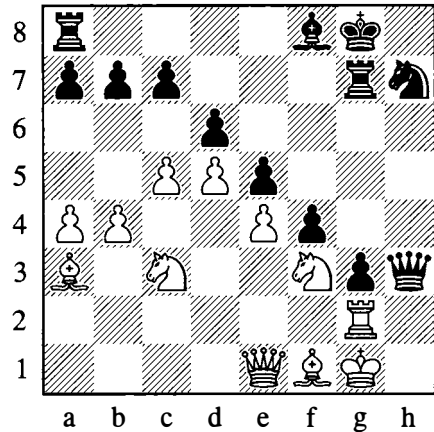
27...f3 also wins, but I had ascertained that

White would not be able to maintain the blockade on f3.

28.♙e2 ♕h7!

Opening the path for the queen and preparing ...♕g5.

29.♕d2 ♗h4 30.♕f3 ♗h3 31.♙f1



31...♕f6!

White has managed to prepare well against ...♕h7-g5, but in doing so has congested his pieces around his king. My last move prepares ...♕g4 and ...♙h7 with mate in sight.

32.♕e2

Hoping for the hurried 32...♙h7? which would run into 33.♕xg3!.

32...♗h5

Attacking the f3-knight and renewing my main threat.

33.♗c3 ♕xe4

Now it is all over. White could fight against two connected pawns, but three is too many! The last move also guards the g3-pawn, leaving White with nothing left to fight against ...♙h7.

34.♗d3 ♙h7

0-1

In the next game, I had a strategically improved version of the same structure, but my opponent was much stronger and defended accurately. The latter aspect proved significant and I failed to find a decisive blow.

Boris Gelfand – Judit Polgar

Linares 1994

1994 was a memorable year, since I got my first invitation ever to Linares, the ‘Chess Wimbledon’ as it was considered by that time. You can imagine my enthusiasm playing in a tournament with the strongest players on Earth, including Kasparov and Karpov! I started my preparation several months prior to the tournament, in the company of my sister Susan and Gata Kamsky. I was impressed by how seriously Gata took the tournament and his preparation. He also had incredible physical conditioning and self-discipline.

My second in Linares was Susan, but our mom joined us as she had done so many times. I started with a loss to Illescas, but struck back with a win over Topalov. In this game, for the first time in my life I opened with 1.d4,

something Gata had persuaded me to consider during our joint pre-tournament preparation. After a draw with Ivanchuk, I reached the fourth round with an honourable 50%.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3

Boris may still have feared the Benko Gambit, so he uses the same move order as in our game from Volume 1. This time, this small trick has no effect on my opening scheme.

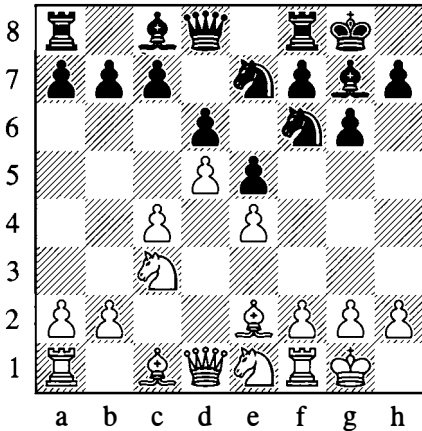
2...g6 3.c4 ♘g7 4.♘c3 0–0 5.e4 d6 6.♘e2 e5 7.0–0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘e1

Boris has always been well prepared for the opening phase. At the time of this game, he had both 9.♘d2 and 9.♘e1 in his repertoire. His choice for our game has the advantage of supporting c4-c5 after a subsequent ♘e1-d3. This is in contrast to the Epishin game above, in which White had to sacrifice a pawn to open the queenside.

On the other hand, the knight will not stand well on d3 after the c-file has been opened, so further regrouping will be needed. In most cases, the knight will go to f2 (after f2-f3), fulfilling defensive tasks.



Linares 1994 – Resting on the free day with Boris Gelfand and Evgeny Bareev

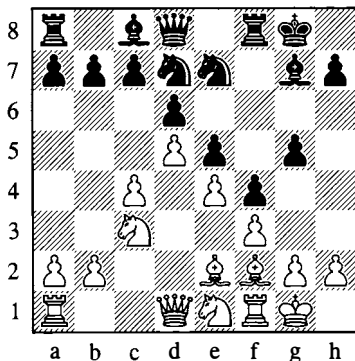


9...♖e8

The usual continuation is 9...♖d7, but the game move can easily transpose if Black returns the knight to f6 after ...f7-f5. Old theory regarded the retreat to e8 as dubious, because it fails to hold up the advance of the enemy c-pawn. However, there are also some positive features, as Black avoids blocking the light-squared bishop and may be able to meet a future c4-c5xd6 with ...♖xd6.

Although 9...♖e8 was my main repertoire choice, I also paid close attention to the top-level games with 9...♖d7. It always helps to know model games from other variations than yours, if they bear at least some resemblance. Kasparov's games in particular had made a deep impression on me, and I will show you a couple of them.

9...♖d7 10.♙e3 f5 11.f3 f4 12.♙f2 g5

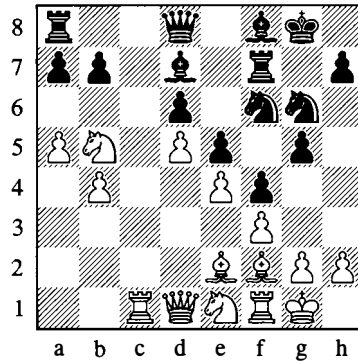


Here White must decide how to proceed on the queenside. Kasparov faced both 13.b4 and 13.a4.

a) 13.b4 ♖f6

Note that the knight only returns to the kingside after White has invested an additional tempo preparing c4-c5.

14.c5 ♖g6 15.cxd6 cxd6 16.♙c1 ♙f7 17.a4 ♙f8 18.a5 ♙d7 19.♖b5



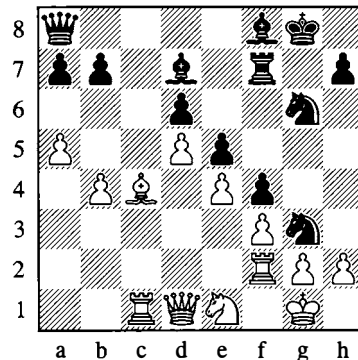
19...g4!

In the note to move 18 of the Epishin game, I commented that Black ideally wants to play ...g5-g4 without relying on the support of a pawn on h5. The present game provides a perfect example.

20.♖c7 g3 21.♖xa8 ♖h5!

This strong move would not be possible with a pawn standing on h5.

22.♙h1 gxf2 23.♙xf2 ♖g3† 24.♙g1 ♙xa8 25.♙c4



Black has a minimal material advantage, but this will be relevant only if he can find a useful job for the g3-knight.

25...a6!

An elegant way to activate the queen.

26.♖d3 ♖a7 27.b5?

Careless.

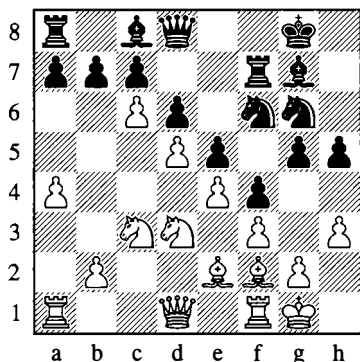
27...axb5 28.♙xb5 ♘h1!

Mission accomplished! 0–1 Piket – Kasparov, Tilburg 1989.

b) 13.a4 ♘g6 14.♘d3 ♘f6

Once again, the knight moves away from d7 only after White has prepared c4–c5.

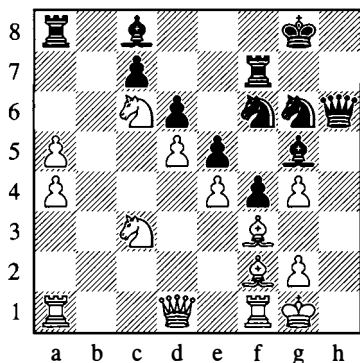
15.c5 h5 16.h3 ♖f7 17.c6



17...a5!?

An original defence, delaying the white knight's journey to b4 and c6 by just one tempo!

18.cxb7 ♙xb7 19.b4 ♙c8 20.bxa5 ♙h6
21.♘b4 g4 22.♘c6 ♖f8 23.fxg4 hxg4 24.hxg4
♙g5 25.♙f3 ♖h6

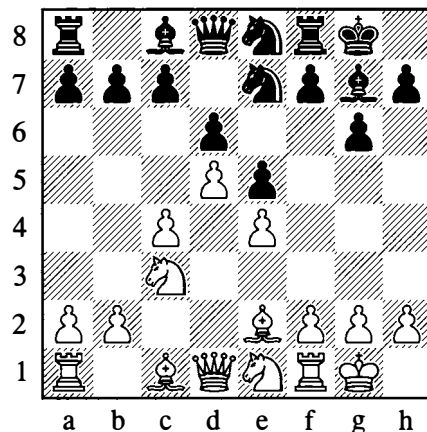


Black's kingside regrouping is awesome. Despite his considerable queenside progress, White is in trouble.

26.♖e1 ♘h4 27.♙xh4 ♙xh4 28.g5 ♖xg5
29.♖e2 ♘g4 30.♖b1 ♙g3 31.♖d3 ♖h4

0–1 Korchnoi – Kasparov, Amsterdam 1991.

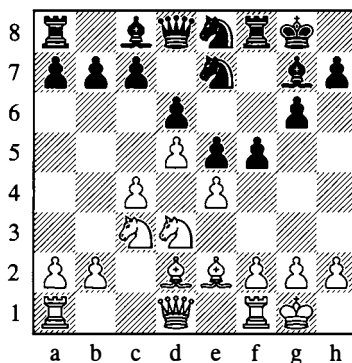
Let's return to the position after 9...♘e8 as played in the game.



10.f3

Another approach is to delay this move with the aim of provoking ...♘f6. This is where the transposition to the 9...♘d7 line comes into play.

10.♘d3 f5 11.♙d2



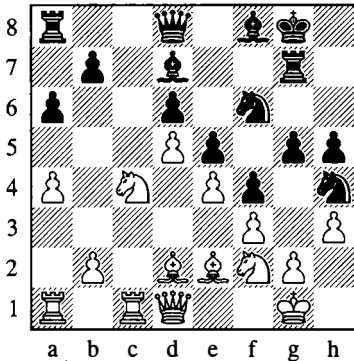
I would like to show two relevant games from this position.

a) Another of my model games was the following effort from the young Kasparov:

11...♖f6 12.f3 f4 13.c5 g5 14.cxd6 cxd6
15.♗f2 ♗g6 16.a4 ♜f7

We saw the same manoeuvre in my game against Epishin. Black's long regrouping, combining attack with defence, is highly instructive.

17.♗b5 h5 18.h3 ♙f8 19.♞c2 a6 20.♗a3 ♜g7
21.♞fc1 ♗h4 22.♞d1 ♙d7 23.♗c4



If given the time to play ♙a5 followed by ♗b6xd7, White would reduce Black's attacking potential to nothing. Without the break ...g5-g4, the impressive kingside space advantage would remain meaningless, so there is no time for second thoughts.

23...g4! 24.hxg4 hxg4 25.fxg4 ♗xg2!

Eliminating all the pawn barricades.

26.♗xg2 ♗xg4

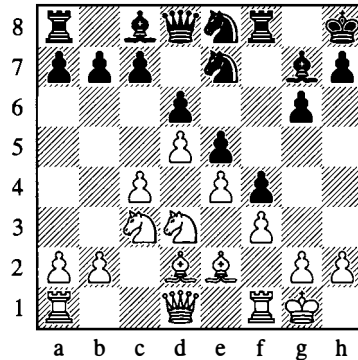
With a strong attack in Yuferov – Kasparov, Minsk 1978. This kind of attacking game, along with Kasparov's subsequent wins against some of the world's best, gives one confidence and moral reasons to play the King's Indian!

b) I won a fine game by mimicking White's semi-waiting policy with:

11...♗h8!?

The idea is quite similar to that seen in the Epishin game: to improve the placement of the e7-knight.

12.f3 f4



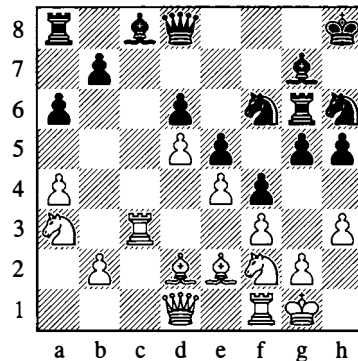
The knight retreat to e8 is fully justified now, since the c7-square is defended against any kind of intrusion. The knight will join the attack only after all other preparations have been made. In some lines based on 9...♗d7, the knight loses time with ...♗d7-f6-e8.

13.c5 h5 14.♞c1 g5 15.cxd6 cxd6 16.♗f2 ♜f6

Since the seventh rank does not need additional defence, I chose a slightly different regrouping than in the previous examples.

17.h3 ♜g6 18.a4 ♗g8 19.♗b5 ♗h6 20.♞c3 a6
21.♗a3 ♗f6!

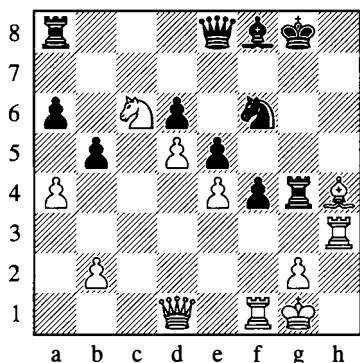
Finally, the knight is ready to support the attack. There is no way to prevent ...g5-g4.



22.♗c4 b5 23.♗a5 g4 24.♗c6

The knight looks attractive here, but it does not contribute to the fight in any meaningful way.

24...♞e8 25.fxg4 hxg4 26.hxg4 ♗hxg4
27.♗xg4 ♙xg4 28.♙xg4 ♞xg4 29.♞h3† ♗g8
30.♙e1 ♙f8 31.♙h4

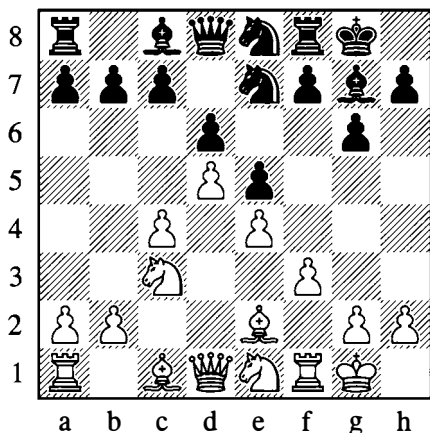


31...♖h5!

A complex system of pins. The bishop is pinned because ♗xf6 would lose an exchange to ...♖xh3, taking advantage of the rook's pin on the g2-pawn.

32.♖e1 ♖h7!±

With the knight far from c3, White cannot save his e4-pawn, Piket – Polgar, Monte Carlo (rapid) 1994.



10...f5 11.♖d3

The main alternative is:

11.♗e3

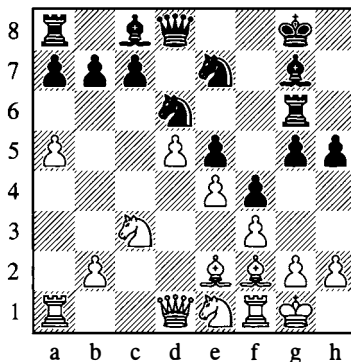
The old books gave this move as some sort of refutation of 9...♖e8. At first sight, this sounds logical, since White will get to play c4-c5 effortlessly. Concretely, things are not that simple. I believe that I am not too far from the truth by claiming that the 11.♗e3 systems (against both 9...♖e8 and 9...♖d7)

are the most complicated in the King's Indian.

Here is a game I played against the number one specialist of the 11.♗e3 lines:

11...h5 12.c5 f4 13.♗f2 g5 14.a4 ♖f6 15.a5 ♗g6 16.cxd6 ♖xd6!?

This is an important detail in the 9...♖e8 lines: Black can deviate from the standard ...cxd6.

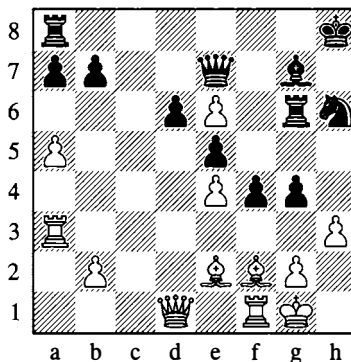


17.h3 ♗h8 18.♖d3 ♖g8 19.♖c5 ♖e7 20.♗a3

White also combines attack with defence.

The a3-rook helps to protect the kingside along the third rank.

20...♖h6 21.♖b5 g4 22.fxg4 hxg4 23.♖xd6 cxd6 24.♖e6 ♗xe6 25.dxe6



This was Korchnoi – Polgar, Monte Carlo (rapid) 1994. At this point 25...♖xe6 would have kept the game unclear and roughly level. Instead I chose the tempting 25...f3? but after 26.♗c4! White was better and went on to win.

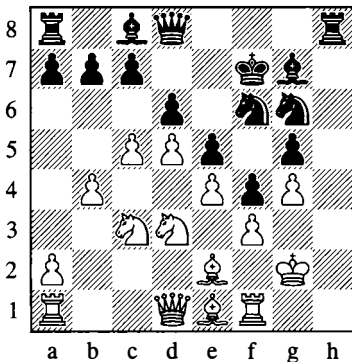
11...f4 12.g4!

This was the first time a strong grandmaster played this way, and I am sure it was part of Boris's preparation. It looks like a good moment to block the kingside, since 12...fxg3 13.hxg3 opens the c1-h6 diagonal and makes the desirable ...g6-g5 impossible. The drawback of White's plan will be revealed after my next move.

12...♙f6!

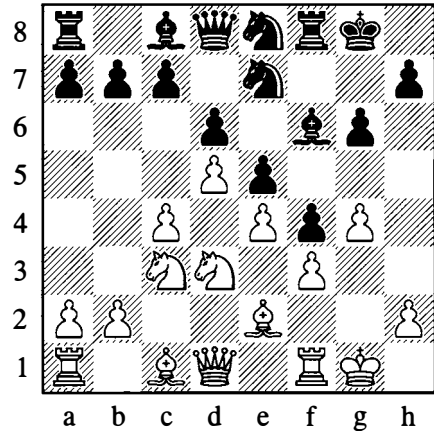
This resource is available because White played f2-f3 without waiting for ...♙f6, and g2-g4 without waiting for ...g6-g5. Since the bishop has no prospects on the long diagonal, it is better to activate it on h4, possibly leading to its exchange.

12...g5 13.♙d2 ♙f6 would transpose to an earlier game of my opponent: 14.b4 h5 15.h3 ♙f7 16.♙e1 ♗h8 17.♙g2 ♙g6 18.c5 hxg4 19.hxg4



So far the play has flowed slowly, but here Black decided to speed up his attack with the spectacular 19...♙h5!? 20.♗h1 ♙g3 21.♙xg3 fxg3 22.♗d2 ♗h4 with adequate counterplay in Gelfand – Kasparov, Reggio Emilia 1991. In his extensive annotations for *Chess Informant*, Gelfand concludes that the piece sacrifice was entirely correct, but there are certain unclear points in his variations. For our game, he might have found some refutation of his

own analysis; it is worth adding that modern engines are sceptical about Black's sacrifice.

**13.♙d2**

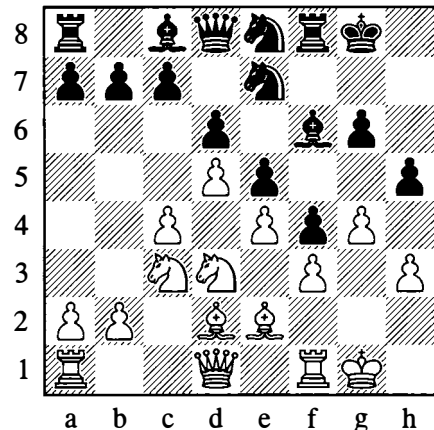
Besides clearing the c1-square for the rook, this move introduces the potential plan of ♙e1-f2, ♗e1 and h2-h4, safely blocking the kingside. Fortunately Black gets to play some moves in the meantime!

13...h5

This move or less forces the weakening of the g3-square.

14.h3

Gelfand avoids 14.gxh5 g5! followed by ...♙f7 and ...♗h8, when White's kingside would be in big danger.

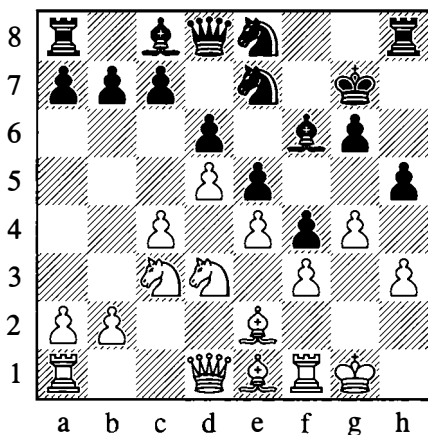


14...♔g7!?

I decided to delay the inevitable ...♔h4 until White's bishop reaches f2 in order to make White spend an additional tempo on his manoeuvre.

15.♕e1 ♖h8

Black has a fantastic game, as the kingside attack is underway while White has yet to get started on the queenside. Moreover, the forthcoming bishop exchange will solve Black's most important strategic problem.

**16.♔g2**

Not only preparing ♖h1, but also taking the king away from a dangerous diagonal. If 16.c5 then 16...c6!? comes into consideration, although the neutral 16...♘g8 is not bad at all.

16...♘g8

I could have speeded up the thematic ...♔h4 by exchanging on g4, but maintaining the tension for as long as possible places White in a psychologically unpleasant situation. The last move is useful anyway, as it clears the path for my queen.

Taking some preventive measures on the queenside also comes into consideration. True, 16...b6 does not slow down White's

attack in view of 17.b4, but 16...c5 is worth considering. One important point is that after 17.dxc6 bxc6 my e8-knight would be quick to reach d4, using the newly-available e6-square.

17.♕f2!?

Preparing the next move in order to fight for kingside space, but it is rather slow.

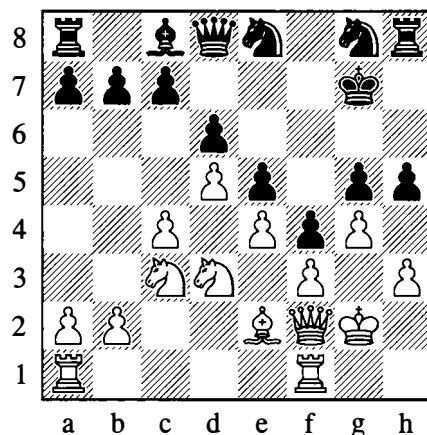
White should have started his queenside attack with 17.c5, since after 17...♔h4 Black has no immediate threat. Exchanging on e1 would activate the white queen with gain of time, so White could play the prophylactic 18.♖h1 followed by ♖c1.

17...♔h4

Threatening ...♕xf2 followed by ...♖h4.

18.♖e1

Avoiding the exchange with 18...♕g1? allows 18...♕g3 followed by ...♖h4 and ...hxg4 with a decisive attack.

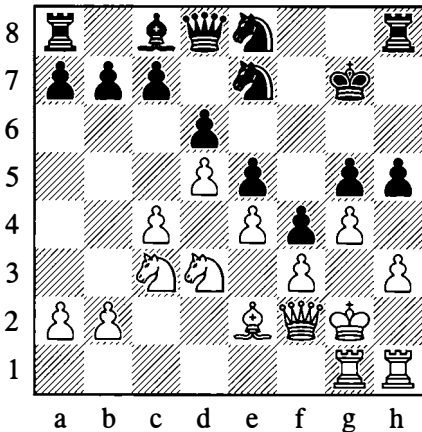
18...♕xf2 19.♖xf2 g5

After accomplishing the strategically favourable exchange, I had no further use for the g5-square and the h4-d8 diagonal. The last move clears the g6-square for my g8-knight, which is heading for h4.

20.♖h1 ♜e7 21.♞ag1

Another overcautious move, wasting valuable time.

White should have used this rook to fight for the c-file with 21.c5 ♜g6 22.♞ac1. I would have responded with 22...♔d7, preventing ♜b5 and planning a slow attack involving ...♜f6, ...♞e7, ...♞h6 and ...♞ah8. Still, White would have maintained some queenside counter-chances.

**21...♜g6**

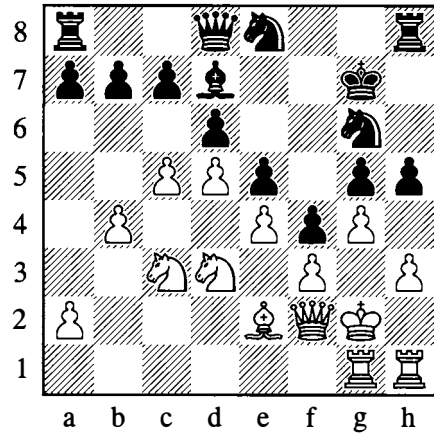
21...b6!? would make a bit more sense now, since the attack with 22.b4 requires the rook's presence on the queenside. Nevertheless, over the years I became cautious about advancing my pawns without a clear plan; as they say, pawns never move backwards! In this case, I was worried about the manoeuvre ♔d1-a4-c6.

22.c5

Just when I was starting to think that White would never open the queenside!

22...♔d7 23.b4

White prepares a massive pawn storm supported by the minor pieces. Trying to slow it down with 23...a6 would weaken the b6-square, adding force to the knight manoeuvre played in the game.

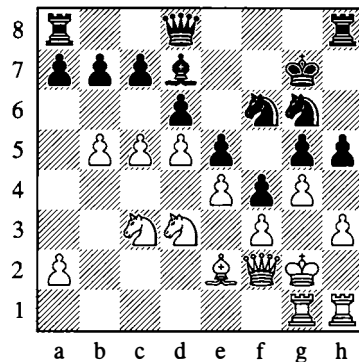
**23...♜f6**

Clearing the eighth rank in order to prepare the major-piece triplication on the h-file.

24.♜b2

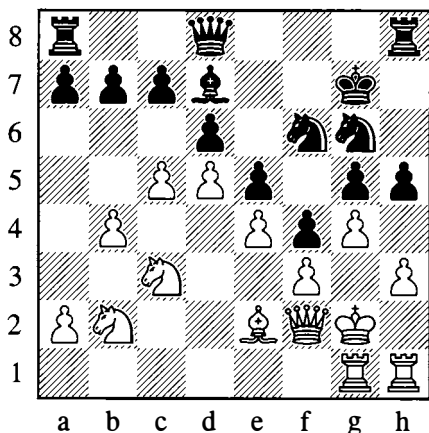
An important decision after only four minutes.

The alternative was 24.b5 with the idea of c5-c6.



If 24...b6 25.cxd6 cxd6 26.♜b4 followed by ♜c6 and a4-a5, the race between the mutual attacks becomes extremely sharp.

Black's best defence would be the surprising 24...a6! intending 25.c6 ♜h4! 26.♜f1 ♔c8. With the white rooks isolated from the queenside, Black has good prospects for counterplay in this area.



24...♞h6 25.♘c4

With the knight far from the b4-square, 25.b5 would not be effective, and I could choose between 25...b6 and 25...a6.

25...♞h8!

Although both my knights are obstructing the sixth rank, it transpires that the d6-pawn is indirectly defended. If 26.cxd6 ♘h4† 27.♙f1 cxd6 28.♘xd6 hxg4 29.hxg4 ♘xg4 Black retrieves the pawn, having weakened the enemy king's position in the process.

26.b5 b6

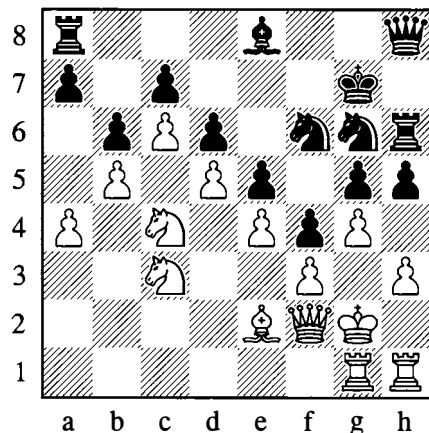
This defensive set-up works well here, as the white knights do not have rapid access to the c6-square after 27.cxd6 cxd6.

27.c6 ♙e8

Keeping the g4-pawn under pressure with 27...♙c8 would render the bishop immobile for the rest of the game. I could free it only by means of a sacrifice, but White could anticipate such an action with relative ease.

28.a4

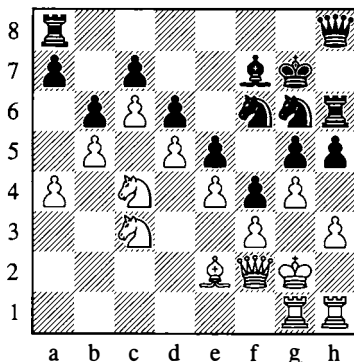
Despite his impressive space advantage, White needs some time before creating dangerous threats. One possible attacking idea would be a4-a5xb6 followed by ♘xd6(b6), but this can only work with a safe kingside.



28...♘h4†?

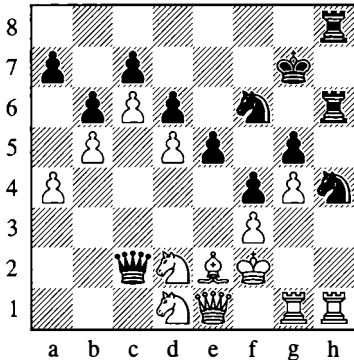
There was no need to obstruct the h-file so soon. This move, in conjunction with the follow-up, is an open invitation to a draw by repetition and a hint that I underestimated the strength of my attack. Another contributing factor may have been the distracting prospect of my first ever game against Kasparov, scheduled two days later and immediately after the rest day.

I should have continued my regrouping with 28...♙f7!, threatening ...♞h7 and ...♞h8. White's only defensive plan is to prepare ♞e1 and ♘d1-f2, but the knight retreat may leave the e4-pawn exposed to ...♘h4† followed by ...♘xe4. The continuation might be:



29.♘d2 Over-defending e4, preparing the aforementioned manoeuvre. 29...♞h7 30.♘d1

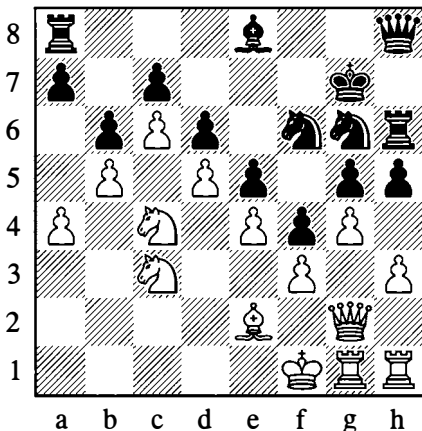
♖h8 31.♙e1! ♜h4† 32.♙f2 hxc4 33.hxc4
 White's pieces are passive and his only hope lies in the blocked character of the position. However, Black can open it with a positional sacrifice: 33...♙xd5! 34.exd5 ♙c2 White cannot properly defend his far-advanced pawns, while the tension along the h-file can lead to tactical explosions, for instance:



35.♙c4 ♜xf3! 36.♙xf3 ♖xh1 37.♖xh1 ♖xh1
 38.♖xh1 ♙xd2 with a decisive attack.

29.♙f1 ♜g6 30.♙g2!

White does not need to return to the uncomfortable position before my hurried check. Instead, he uses the offered tempos to regroup. In certain cases, h3-h4 is possible, intending to meet ...♜xh4 with ♖xh4 followed by g4-g5.



30...♜h4

The simplest way to force a draw against a strong opponent. There was no point in pushing things too far, especially knowing that my next opponent was Kasparov.

30...♙h7 31.h4! should also lead to a draw, for instance 31...♜xh4 32.♖xh4 gxc4 33.g5 ♖g6 34.gxc4 ♙xf6 35.♙h3 ♖xg1† 36.♙xg1 ♙g7† 37.♙f1 ♙g3 and White has nothing better than taking a perpetual check.

Evacuating the king from the dangerous g-file with 30...♙f7?! would be too slow. White could also regroup with 31.♙f2 followed by a4-a5 and ♖g1-a1.

31.♙f2 ♜g6 32.♙g2

½-½

With this draw I maintained the respectable level of fifty percent.

On the first of March, I sat down for a monumental game, my first ever chess encounter with Kasparov. Sofia travelled to Linares especially for this game so my father was the only family member who was absent.

My family and I were not the only ones to look forward to the game with eagerness: the whole chess world was impatient to follow the fight between the strongest player on the planet and the female number one. I imagine that Garry felt a lot of pressure on his shoulders, too. Any result other than a convincing win would strongly disappoint his fans and especially himself.

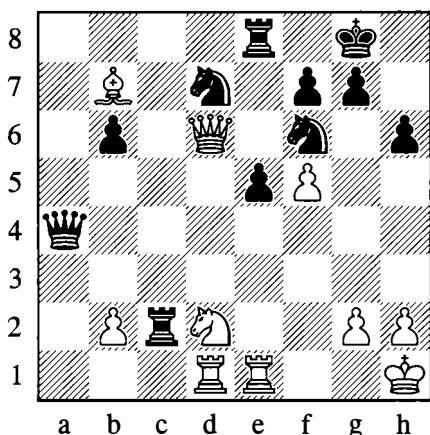
I had a full day at my disposal for preparation, and was content with the fact that I had White and he would almost certainly play the Sicilian. I was aware of the fact that Kasparov was an outstanding specialist of this opening but, as I explained in the first volume, I also felt very much at home in that arena.

The game itself had nothing to make it worth publishing it in this book: Kasparov simply outplayed me. However, it featured an incident that received worldwide media attention; after publishing the first volume, I received countless requests from readers to tell the story. Even though I do not have good memories about the episode, here I am to share the experience.

Judit Polgar – Garry Kasparov

Linares 1994

My last move was 36.♖b3-d2. White's position is close to losing, and I only had two minutes on the clock to reach move 40, compared with Kasparov's five.



In this position Kasparov played 36...♘c5 but then put the knight back on d7. This only lasted an instant, but happened in front of numerous witnesses. The famous Linares organizer Don Luis Rentero and the chief arbiter Carlos Falcon were standing next to the board, the spectators' area was full and there was even a remote camera filming the game.

I quickly looked up at Garry and then turned my face to Rentero and Falcon, so as to give them a hint that something out of order had just happened. I was convinced that Garry

had released his fingers from his knight before 'cancelling' the move.

It was easy to understand that he noticed in the last moment (or shortly after it) that the knight on c5 interferes along the c-file, allowing 37.♙c6 with a double attack.

True, subsequent analysis showed that Black can draw with 37...♗h4 38.♙xe8 (After 38.g3 ♗h5 39.♙xe8 ♖xe8 Black is able to hold a draw thanks to White's vulnerable king) 38...♖g4 39.h3 ♖f2† 40.♙g1 ♖xh3† 41.gxh3 ♗g3† with a perpetual, but it is safe to assume that Garry was unaware of this at the time.

While I was looking around in confusion, Garry kept thinking. I suppose he was mainly asking himself whether his fingers had really lost contact with the knight and waiting to see whether I or the arbiter would make any comment.

The main question that comes to mind is: *why did I not say anything?*

The answer is complex and involves several aspects. Imagine: I was playing at Linares at the age of just 17; I started the game as the underdog and my position was objectively lost. I did not like the prospect of being suspected of trying to win a lost position by launching an unfair accusation against such an outstanding authority as Garry Kasparov. And I certainly did not want my first ever invitation to Linares to be my last!

As if all these factors were not enough to inhibit me, I also had some anxieties about what would happen if my protest was overruled. I knew something about a rule, according to which the arbiters might take away two minutes from my clock, but that was all the time I had left! Of course, this was a case of misunderstanding of the rules on my part. The time deduction does not apply in cases

where a player will be left with less than two minutes as a result of the time penalty; in this particular scenario, an unsuccessful protest on my part would have resulted in two minutes being added to Kasparov's clock.

Anyway, with all these thoughts buzzing around my mind, I decided that since I was already losing the game I should just sit and wait for the outcome of the situation. Kasparov used up three of his five remaining minutes and, since neither I nor the arbiter said anything, played:

36...♖f8

I remember how puzzled and frustrated I felt at that moment. Nowadays, after so many years I know that, even in chess, things are not always black and white.

I would like to invite you, dear reader, to imagine yourself in Garry's shoes: you are

involved in a must-win game; chess fans and media are watching; you play a fine game... and then this accident happens. You are not sure whether or not your fingers fully released the knight, and there is no protest for three whole minutes.

36...♖f8 is far from the best move available, but it is better than 36...♖c5 and maintains some advantage for Black. I failed to offer much resistance and resigned on move 46. Afterwards we had the usual post-mortem analysis.

Later that evening, I stopped for a moment by the table where Anand and his second Alex Sherzer (who was also a good friend of mine) were having dinner. I told my story in an excited manner, which happened to draw the attention of the main arbiter, who approached and asked me whether there was anything



Linares 1994 – Analysing with Garry Kasparov. Susan, Sofia, Danailov, Kaplan, O'Connell and Topalov are all on my side

wrong and if he could help me. Prior to that moment, I was not sure whether to undertake any official action, but Falcon's good-willed intervention unleashed my frustrations and I answered: "Since you are asking, I would like to check the video recording of the game. I am sure that Kasparov released the knight from his hand."

The impact of my request was much wider than I imagined. Before the video became public, some of my colleagues did not believe that this could have happened, but by the next free day, the journalists already knew that the slow-motion replay had proven my suspicions right. Kasparov had indeed released the knight on c5 for just a fraction of a second. To spice things up even more, Rentero issued a press release, stating that he would not allow anybody to watch the video in his hotel. Predictably, everybody rushed to the room where the video was known to be guarded and the incident acquired even greater notoriety.

I cannot help asking myself whether this subsequent escalation of the incident was good for anybody. I went on to lose a few more games and Kasparov's results also took a downturn. Although we were opponents at the moment when it all happened, I feel that we were afterwards caught in the same trap by the journalists' lust for the sensational, which distracted our thoughts from the tournament.

I have rather sad memories about the whole story, but have also learned a lot from it. Most crucially, I came to understand that the only time at which I could and should have undertaken any form of protest was during the game. After we signed the scoresheets, my unofficial complaints could not change the result.

After this small digression from the main theme of this chapter, let us follow one more game

in which White's defensive plan involved the advance of a pawn to g4, albeit in a different type of structure.

I should warn the reader that the game is strategically quite complex, with certain tactical subtleties along the way. I have used several question marks in my annotations, but from a practical point of view these inaccuracies are fully excusable.

Vladimir Epishin – Judit Polgar

Las Palmas 1994

I played this game in the second round of the tournament, right after a marathon first-round win over Illescas. When I checked my scoresheet, I could not believe my eyes: that game lasted for seven hours and thirty-three minutes! That's the way it was in those days...

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘f3 ♙g7 4.g3

The Fianchetto System is the most solid way of meeting the KID and was a part of Karpov's repertoire in the second half of his career. In my later years I frequently switched to the Grünfeld against g2-g3, in the search for better possibilities for counterplay.

4...0-0 5.♙g2 d6 6.0-0 ♘c6 7.♘c3 e5!?

The traditional main line goes 7...a6 followed by 8...♞b8, but my chosen system experienced a burst of popularity in the 1990s.

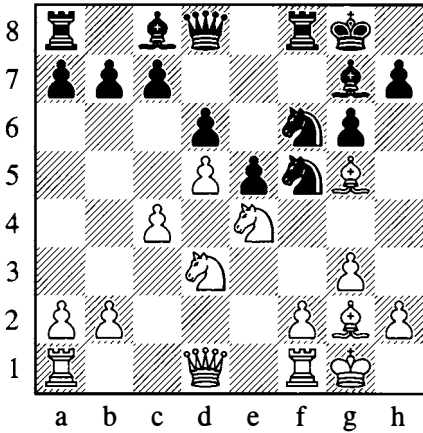
8.d5 ♘e7 9.e4 ♘d7 10.♘e1 ♜ 11.♘d3 ♘f6

Black is employing the same aggressive set-up as against the Classical System (see the previous games), but here the white king is better defended.

12.♙g5

With the bishop on g2, f2-f3 is not appealing at all. Therefore White has to allow the activation of my e7-knight with the following manoeuvre.

12...fxe4 13.♖xe4 ♖f5



14.♗h1

High-level tournaments were quite frequent in those good old times, and it was quite typical for me to meet the same opponents almost monthly! This had a positive impact on our creativity, as we worked hard to improve from one game to the next.

One month earlier, Epishin had played the developing 14.♗d2 against me. 14...♖xe4 15.♗xe4 ♗e8 16.♗a1 ♖d4 17.♗g2 b5! An effective way to undermine the d5-pawn, which has already lost the support of the e4-pawn. 18.c5 ♗f5 The vulnerability of the d5-pawn offers Black good play, Epishin – Polgar, Dos Hermanas 1994.

Nowadays it is known that the resolute 14.g4! gives White an advantage. The weakening of the king's position is of no consequence, since White is much better developed. 14...♖e7 Unpinning the f6-knight and threatening ...♗g4. (14...♖d4 is met by 15.f4! with a strong initiative.) 15.♗xf6 ♗xf6 16.f4 The weak f6- and e6-squares are inviting targets for the white knights; meanwhile Black will find it hard to connect his rooks.

The idea behind the game move is to prepare

f2-f4 without fearing surprises along the a7-g1 diagonal. It came as a surprise and I spent 19 minutes deciding how to reply.

14...h6

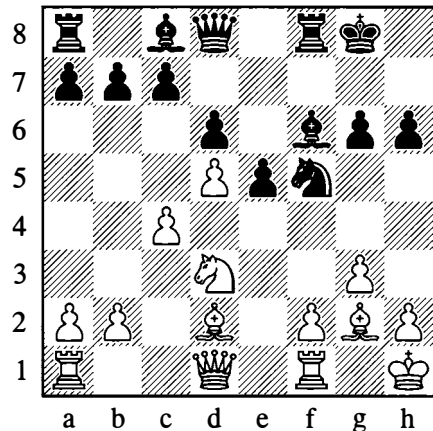
The pin was quite bothersome so I took the first opportunity to release it. The weakening of the g6-square may look worrying, but later I will advance my kingside pawns anyway, filling the empty space behind them with pieces.

White faces a difficult choice as to which piece he should exchange for my f6-knight.

15.♗xf6†

There are arguments in favour of 15.♗xf6!?, maintaining the blocking knight on e4. The only problem is that after 15...♗xf6 White needs to spend a tempo on 16.♗d2, in order to cover the e3-square before threatening f2-f4. One tempo is all I would need to prevent his plan with 16...g5!, after which White would have to revert to a slow build-up on the queenside, since 17.f4?! allows 17...exf4 18.gxf4 g4+ with a great game for Black.

15...♗xf6 16.♗d2

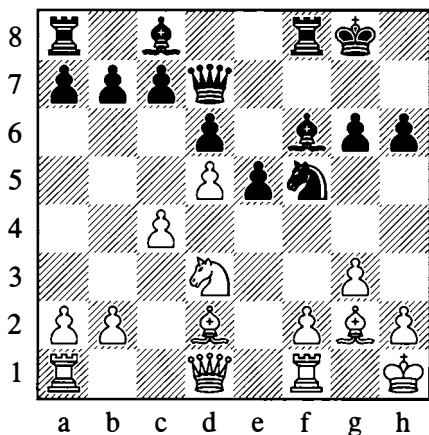


All this must have been part of Epishin's home preparation, as he had spent only five minutes so far. White's method of regrouping is interesting. The d2-bishop defends e3,

allowing f2-f4, but may go subsequently to c3, increasing the pressure against the e5-pawn. There is some risk that the d3-knight will be misplaced in the long run, but for the time being it supports both of White's thematic breaks, f2-f4 and c4-c5. The g2-bishop defends the king, and is ready to occupy the excellent e4-square at any time.

Black needs to complete development in a way that reduces the impact of White's pawn breaks, with a special focus on f2-f4, which would transform the d3-knight into a dangerous attacking piece. In principle, the queen should go to g7 and ...♙c8-d7 will be essential to connect rooks, but finding the best move order requires some imagination.

16...♙d7!



Optically a paradoxical move, since the queen obstructs the bishop. Geometrically, though, it makes a lot of sense. The queen controls the important h3-c8 and a4-e8 diagonals, inhibiting White's intended pawn breaks.

I had the feeling that only my last move took Epishin out of his preparation, since from now on he started spending more time.

17.♙c3

The main tactical point behind my last move

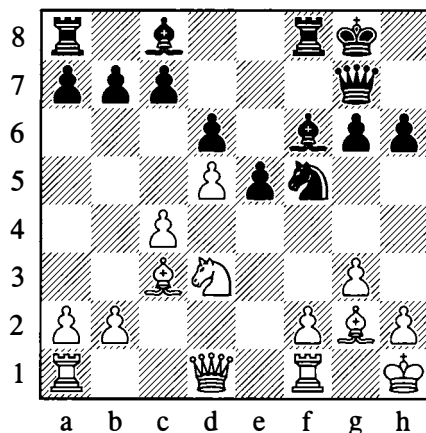
is that 17.f4 can be met by 17...e4! 18.♙xe4 ♜xg3†! 19.hxg3 ♜h3† 20.♙g1 ♜xg3† with perpetual check, since the e4-bishop needs to defend the knight.

During the game, we both assumed that 17.c5 is premature. I was counting on 17...♙b5 18.♙e4 dxc5, but this is questionable, since 19.a4 gives White a great game on account of the exposed position of Black's queen and the weakness of the e5- and c5-pawns.

In fact, the advance of White's c-pawn does not improve the situation of the d3-knight in any way, and offers Black time for a favourable regrouping: 17...h5!? Preventing g3-g4 and threatening ...h5-h4-h3 in certain cases. 18.♙c1 ♜h7 Black has adequate counterplay. Rather soon, the white king may feel less comfortable in the corner than Epishin might have anticipated when he prepared his novelty.

17...♙g7

Here, too, the plan based on 17...h5 followed by ...♙h7 is worth considering, but I was aiming for rapid piece development.



18.♙b3!:

White keeps focusing on piece pressure, aiming to weaken my queenside before advancing any of his pawns.

In his comments for *Chess Informant*, Epishin recommended 18.c5 followed by ♖c1 “with a clear advantage”. This sounds too optimistic, since White does not have any threats yet, while I can still proceed with my kingside plan. Nevertheless, starting the pawn attack would certainly have been an improvement for White over the game.

18...b6

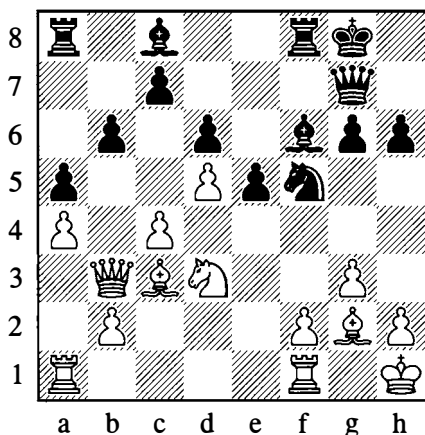
Freeing the bishop from the task of defending the b7-pawn while slowing down the c4-c5 attack.

19.a4?!

Another questionable move, played after ten minutes. Epishin wanted to provoke my next move in order to weaken the b6-square. This would make sense only if he could force through c4-c5 by tactical means or somehow attack the c7-pawn by opening the centre. Since this is impossible after accurate play from Black, he should not have allowed me to block the queenside.

I do not know precisely what Epishin had in mind, but my general feeling was that, starting with 18.♖b3, he rather lost the thread. It would have been better to play 19.♞a1 without touching the a-pawns.

19...a5



20.♞a1

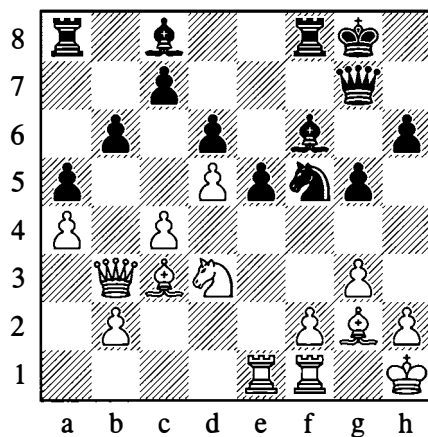
Completing development and defending the e3-square, thus preparing f2-f4.

White's previous move would have been justified if 20.c5? had worked out well. Indeed, 20...bxc5?! 21.♟xc5! dxc5? 22.d6† is good for White, but the intermediate 20...♞a6! wins a pawn.

20...g5?!

We are familiar with this way of anticipating f2-f4, but the premature weakening of the f5-square offers White an unexpected tactical possibility.

The developing move 20...♞d7 is better, as 21.f4 is not too dangerous: 21...exf4 (After 21...♟d4?! 22.♞d1 the black knight is loose.) 22.♞xf6 ♞xf6 23.♟xf4 ♞af8 Black is fully developed and well equipped to deal with the knight's intrusion to e6: 24.♟e6 ♞xe6 25.dxe6 ♟d4 or even 25...♟e7, blocking the pawn. Note the lack of scope for White's bishop.

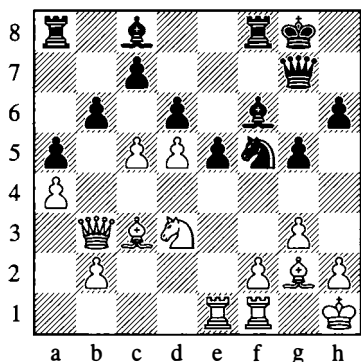


21.♞d1?!

After six minutes Epishin came to the conclusion that the queen had fulfilled its queenside job and should return to the centre.

We both overlooked a chance for White to obtain a drastically improved version of an

idea that he had been forced to reject on the previous move: 21.c5! Black faces the following unenviable choice:



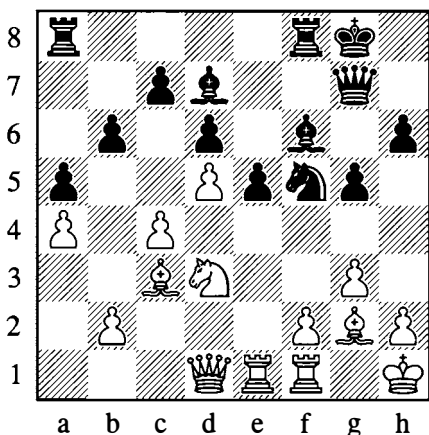
a) 21...bxc5 22.♖xc5 dxc5?! 23.d6† wins material.

b) 21...♖d4 would only open the position for the white pieces: 22.♗xd4 exd4 23.cxd6 cxd6 24.♞e6! with fantastic play on the light squares.

c) If 21...♗a6 White gains an essential tempo with 22.♗e4, defending his knight and attacking mine. The line does not end here, but White remains on top anyway: 22...bxc5 23.♗xf5 c4 24.♞c2 cxd3 25.♗xd3 ♗xd3 26.♞xd3±

d) Black's best chance is to defend passively with 21...♞b8, but this would have justified White's previous play, and after 22.cxd6 cxd6 23.♗e4 White has a small plus.

21...♗d7

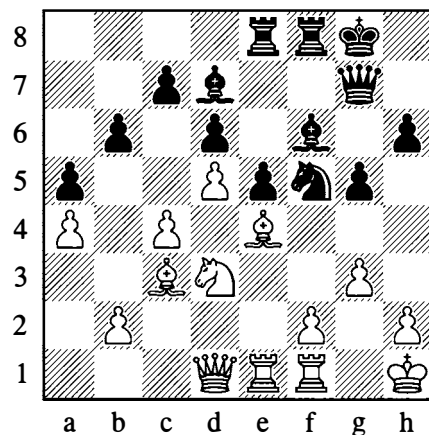


Everything returns to normal paths now. Black needs one more move (...♞ae8) to complete development and White has not yet managed to develop play on either wing. A slow manoeuvring phase will start, in which my chances will be not worse at all. True, if White manages to exchange all the pieces with the exception of Black's dark-squared bishop, he will get a favourable ending, but this is easier said than done.

22.♗e4

Over the next few moves White will look to improve his knight, which is not useful on d3 anymore. Before playing f2-f3 followed by ♖d3-f2, it is natural to activate the bishop. However, this will lead to a situation where the knight and bishop will both be competing for the e4-square.

22...♞ae8



23.b3

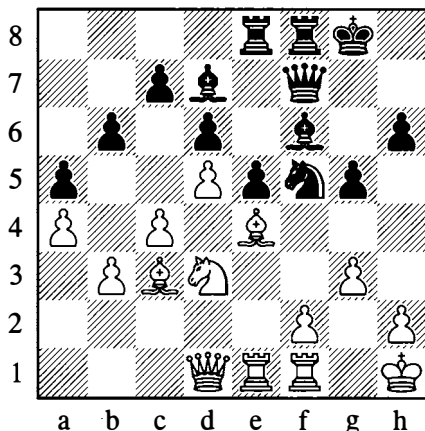
A consolidating move, defending the a4-pawn in order to free the queen. I actually got the feeling that Epishin hesitated to play such committal moves as f2-f3 just yet.

With his major pieces massed elsewhere, White is not prepared for an effective opening of the queenside. If 23.b4 axb4

24.♙xb4 ♖a8, the a4-pawn becomes a weakness.

24.♘b4 is slightly more accurate, preparing to meet ...♖a8 with ♘c6, but after 24...♘d4 followed by ...♙h3 the knight's remoteness from the kingside may tell.

23...♞f7



Having achieved full mobilization, I, too, needed to regroup. I formulated a plan of ...♙g7 followed by a knight move (probably to d4) and ...♙f5.

The idea of exchanging the light-squared bishops requires some explanation. From the point of view of a future endgame it certainly is undesirable, but in the middlegame White's kingside weaknesses on the light squares would offer me attacking chances.

I did not want to rush with ...♘d4 either, since this move can be played at any time. Rather than expose my knight to a possible exchange, I wanted to see if there was a way to use it to create tactical threats.

24.f3

As if anticipating the aforementioned plan, White begins fortifying his light squares.

The careless 24.f4? would reveal that Black's coordination is superior: 24...exf4 25.♙xf6

♘e3! 26.♙xe3 fxe3 winning. White cannot save his bishops and prevent the fork ...e3-e2 at the same time, for instance: 27.♞f3 ♙h3 or 27.♙f3 ♞xf6.

24...♙g7 25.♘f2

Another possible regrouping was 25.♘c1!? planning ♘e2, g3-g4 and ♘g3, or perhaps ♙b1 and ♞d3. I would have played 25...♘d4 preventing the knight transfer to the kingside and preparing to defend the b1-h7 diagonal with ...♙f5.

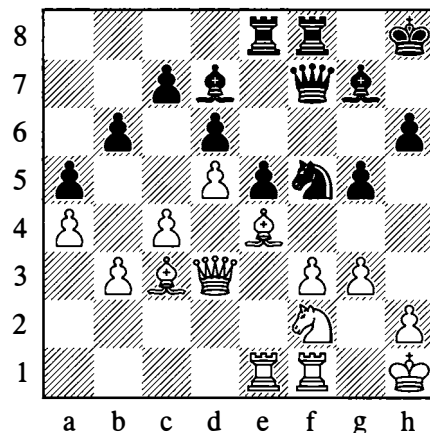
25...♙h8

I thought it would be useful to take the king off the light squares before undertaking concrete action. In the current configuration, the corner is the safest place for His Majesty.

26.♞d3

Preventing ...♘d4 in view of ♙g6.

26.♙b1!? planning ♞d3 could be met by 26...♘d4.



26...♙e7

Not only avoiding a future attack by ♙g6, but also defending the seventh rank and preparing to double on the f-file later. Such regrouping moves were typical for Karpov, who knew how to place his pieces on their

best squares in anticipation of future events. Whenever a forcing sequence started, Karpov's pieces would do a perfect job of controlling the position.

27.♔g2

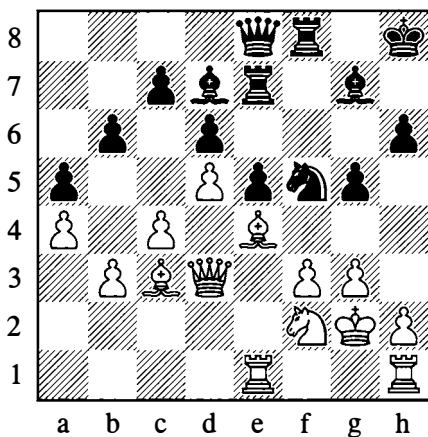
Epishin's play in this phase of the game looks rather hesitant and confusing. I thought that, not finding a clear plan, he wanted to maintain a solid position and provoke me into a show of aggression. Despite this insight, I succumbed to the provocation a couple of moves later...

A later comment will shed further light on Epishin's process of thinking. It is also true that White cannot easily find a promising plan; with the queenside frozen, it is Black who can be more proactive.

27...♖e8

Continuing the manoeuvres and maintaining my flexibility.

28.♞h1



28...h5?!

I took White's last move as an attempt to prepare h2-h4 (for instance if my knight moves to d4) or perhaps anticipating the advance of my h-pawn. I only understood his real idea much later, when reading through his annotations to the game.

In his annotations, Epishin writes that 29.♔f1 is dubious on account of 29...g4. Actually this is far from clear after 30.fxg4, but 29...♞ef7! is better, when ...g5-g4 is a real threat and White has nothing better than returning with the king to g2.

In any case, the important point is that Epishin's comment reveals the subtle intention behind his last move: he was thinking of evacuating his king all the way to the queenside! My last move discouraged him from attempting to carry out that plan, although I was oblivious to it at the time. However, advancing the h-pawn does have the drawback of weakening g5.

Keeping all these aspects in mind, the optimal continuation would have been:

28...♞ef7!

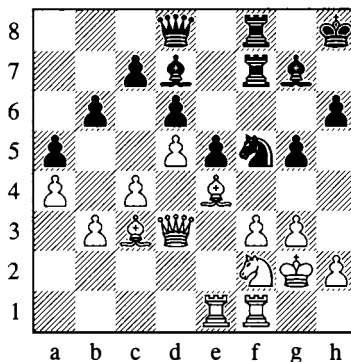
The most flexible choice, improving the rook without weakening the kingside.

29.♞hf1

29.♔f1 h5 transposes to the note above, so White may as well return with the rook and be ready to defend the f-file.

29...♖d8

Aiming for ...h6-h5 and ...♖f6-h6.



30.♖d1!

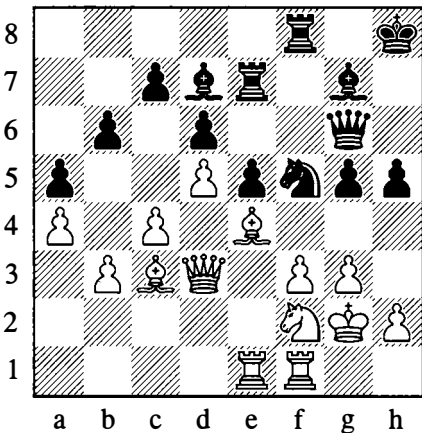
Preparing to meet ...h6-h5 with f3-f4. Neither side has an obvious way to make progress, so the position remains dynamically balanced.

29. ♖h1!

We have already seen that the king walk is not quite working. It may look as if White has simply lost time, but the weakness of the g5-pawn is more significant than it may initially appear.

29... ♕g6

The queen is heading for h6, from where it will support the attack based on ...h5-h4. Everything seems to be running smoothly, but there is a flaw in the plan.

**30. ♔h1?**

After this error, the evaluation of the last three moves can be summed up in only one way: White has lost three tempos and spent twenty valuable minutes in the process!

The pin is not dangerous as 30.g4 can be met with 30... ♔h4†.

However, White has an elegant way to prevent my intended ... ♕h6:

30. ♔g4!

At first sight, there seems to be no immediate threat, so Black could keep regrouping:

30... ♖ef7

30...h4 would clear the h5-square for the queen, preparing to get out of the pin, but the excessive weakening of the light squares

would lead to an unpleasant position: 31. ♔e3 ♔xe3† 32. ♕xe3 ♔f5 33.g4 ♔xe4 34.fxe4 ♖f4 35. ♕e2 Followed by ♔d2, which more or less forces the exchange of both pairs of rooks. True, in view of the lack of mobility of White's queenside structure I may have managed to hold the ending, but fighting for a draw with a terrible bishop is hardly one's dream when playing the KID.

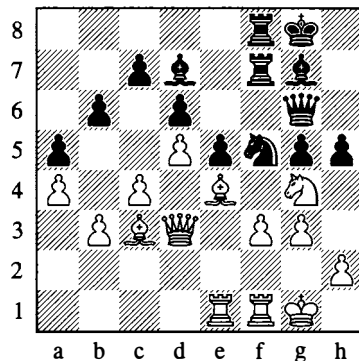
31. ♔g1!

Another fine move, removing the king from the knight's checking range and creating two main threats: ♔g4-e3 and c4-c5. The latter is justified by the fact that Black's e5- and a5-pawns are under pressure, which makes the pawn break a pseudo-sacrifice.

By the way, the immediate 31.c5 is premature due to: 31...bxc5 32. ♔xa5 c6! This way, Black gets rid of his main strategic problem, the backward c7-pawn. The tactical point is that 33.dxc6 ♔xc6 34. ♔xc6? (34. ♔e3!-) loses the queen to 34... ♔h4†!

31... ♔g8

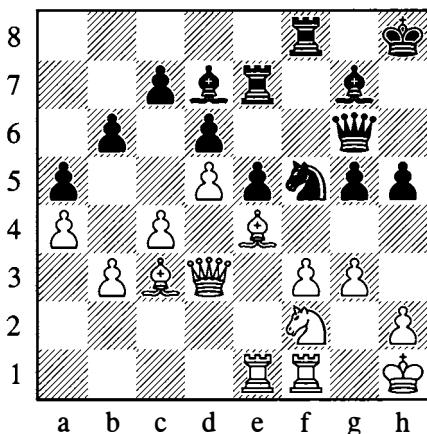
Planning to clear space for the queen with ... ♔h8, in order to get out of the irritating pin.

**32.c5!**

32. ♔e3 is comfortably answered by 32... ♕h6. White can prepare this idea with 32. ♔d2, putting some pressure on the h6-square, but now Black has time to regroup with 32... ♔h8 33. ♔e3 ♕g7 with approximate equality.

32...bxc5 33.♙xa5

Black is well placed on the kingside, but there is no concrete action available yet. Meanwhile, there are some problems on the queenside: the c7-pawn is weak and the passed a4-pawn could become strong. White stands better.



30...♙h6

After White's missed opportunity, my play becomes fluent again.

31.♞g1 ♞ef7 32.♞ef1

White gathers his pieces around his king, a correct decision since there was not much else to do. By this point in the game, Epishin had thirteen minutes left to reach move 40 compared to my fifteen minutes, which placed us both in a degree of time pressure.

32...h4?!

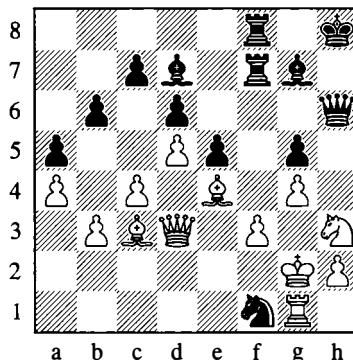
One more premature pawn advance on the kingside. Abstractly, it does not make sense to commit a seventh and final pawn to a dark square. Concretely, it offers White the possibility of setting up a fortress at several moments.

The immediate occupation of the d4-square would have offered me better chances for an objective advantage: 32...♞d4! 33.♙xd4 exd4 The ...h5-h4 advance can be kept in reserve, and used later at a more favourable moment.

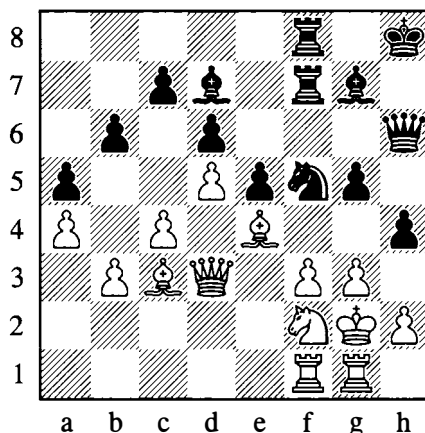
33.♜g2

I must have secretly hoped for 33.g4 ♞g3† when 34.hxg3? hxg3† leads to mate.

However, not even this line would work against correct defence, as White can construct an impregnable fortress: 34.♜g2! h3†! An interesting way to complicate matters. (If 34...♞xf1 35.♞xf1 Black has no breaks in view.) 35.♞xh3 ♞xf1



36.♞f2!! ♞xh2 37.♞h1 ♞xf3 38.♞xh6† ♙xh6 Black has a strong attack, but White can provoke saving simplifications: 39.♙xf3 ♞xf3 40.♙xf3 ♞xf3 41.♜xf3= White has no problems holding a draw.

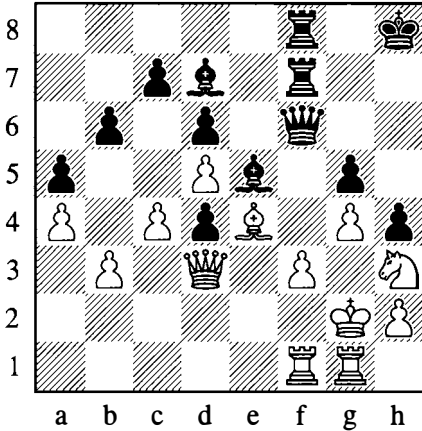


33...♞d4 34.♙xd4 exd4 35.g4

After blocking the kingside, White's position looks a bit unpleasant, but it should be solid enough for a draw with careful play.

35. ♖g4 would force 35... ♗xg4 36. fxg4 with a similar evaluation in view of the opposite-coloured bishops.

35... ♗e5 36. ♖h3 ♔f6



37. ♗f2??

A typical time-trouble mistake, allowing a well-masked tactical trick.

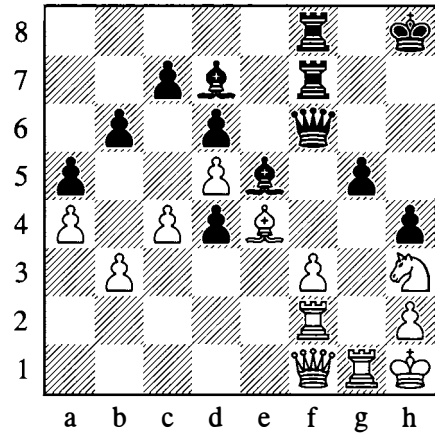
After a sensible move such as 37. ♖h1 there is no way for Black to make progress. It would be nice to transfer the bishop to e3, but ... ♗f4 can always be answered by ♖xf4 when the d4-pawn will be lost.

37... ♗xg4! 38. ♔f1

38. fxg4 ♔xf2† 39. ♖xf2 ♗xf2† followed by 40... ♗xh2# leads to an attractive mating pattern, but not from White's point of view.

38... ♗d7 39. ♖h1

Black's position is obviously winning, but it still needs to be won! As is so often the case, there is a difficult choice between the tactical and the positional method. Is it the time to liquidate to a winning endgame or can Black win more convincingly with the queens on the board?



39... ♗g4!?

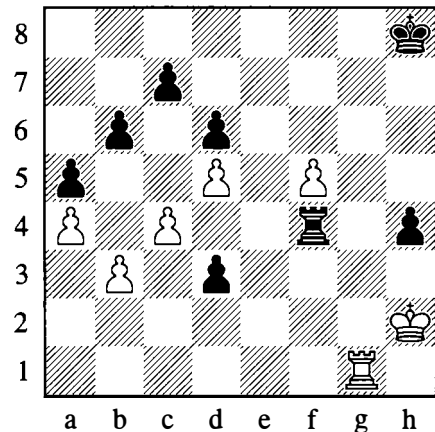
I decided to force matters by simplifying to a winning rook endgame.

39... ♗g7 should be good enough too. This is one of those situations when the choice is a matter of taste.

40. fxg4 ♔xf2 41. ♖xf2 ♗xf2 42. ♔h3 ♗xh2† 43. ♔xh2 ♗xh2 44. ♖xh2 ♗f4 45. ♗f5

The only shadow of a chance.

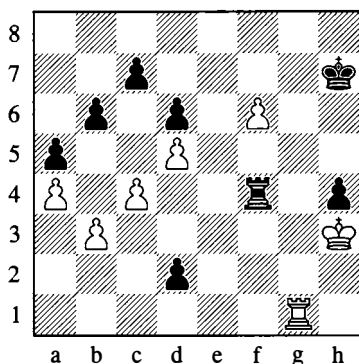
45... ♗xf5 46. gxf5 d3



When I opted for this forced line, I stopped here, thinking that I should win in a few moves. My assessment was correct, but I soon made a small inaccuracy, prolonging the fight.

47.♔h3 ♕h7 48.f6 ♕h6?!

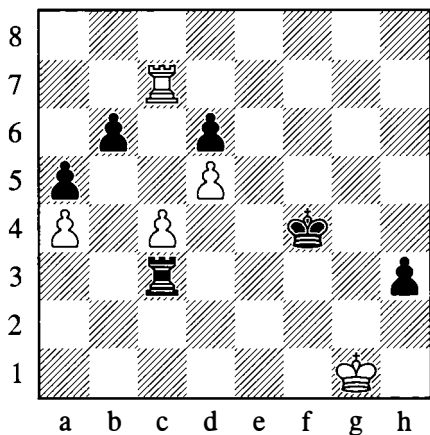
48...d2! would have spared me a lot of time and effort:



49.f7 ♖xf7 50.♞d1 ♞f3† 51.♕xh4 ♞xb3 52.♞xd2 ♞b4 Black wins a second pawn and the game.

After my move, White gets the chance to stay in the game for a longer while.

49.f7 ♕h5 50.♞d1 ♞f3† 51.♕g2 ♕g4 52.♞xd3 h3† 53.♕g1 ♞xf7 54.♞e3 ♞f3 55.♞e7 ♞xb3 56.♞xc7 ♞a3 57.♞d7 ♕g3 58.♞g7† ♕f4 59.♞b7 ♞c3 60.♞c7



60...♕e5!

This is the right time to come back with the king in order to defend the d6-pawn. With the white king busy elsewhere, the pawns are doomed.

61.♕h2 ♞a3 62.♞e7† ♕d4 63.♞d7 ♕xc4 64.♞xd6 ♞b3

Tying the white rook to the defence of the d5-pawn.

65.♞d8 ♕c5 66.d6 ♕c6 67.♕h1 ♞a3 68.d7 ♞b3 69.♕h2 ♕c7

White will lose the a4-pawn soon, so Epishin did not see any reason to keep playing.

0-1

The dark squares

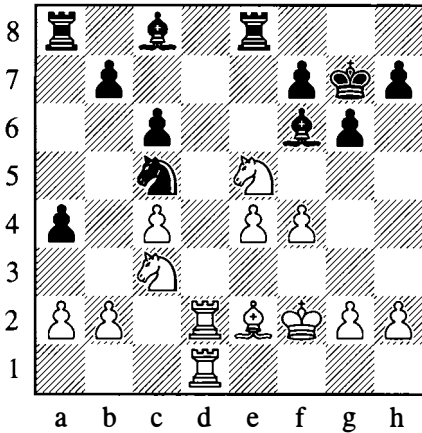
The King's Indian is very much a 'dark-squared opening', and it is no surprise that the same theme often plays a pivotal role later in the game, whether in the form of active middlegame counterplay for Black or the nightmare bad-bishop endgame. In the above game against Epishin I took the strategically risky decision to place all seven of my remaining pawns on dark squares without having exchanged my king's bishop! The final outcome was in my favour, but most of the time Black should avoid such a scenario, for obvious reasons.

With regard to the dark squares, there are two main types of favourable situation that a King's Indian player may seek to obtain. The first involves opening the long (or another) diagonal for the dark-squared bishop, aiming for dynamic play on the dark squares. The second involves exchanging the dark-squared bishops and using the pieces and pawns on dark squares to exploit the opponent's dark-square weaknesses. We already encountered one such scenario in the Gelfand – Polgar game on page 158.

The following two games illustrate both of these situations.

Lubomir Ftacnik – Judit Polgar

Budapest (Zonal playoff) 1993



White had chosen an opening variation in which grabbing the pawn on e5 looked like more of a drawing than a winning attempt.

I could have played 17...♙xe5 18.fxe5 ♖xe5, but White's overall activity would compensate for the minor structural defect on e4. I hoped for more, so I looked for a way to bring my king's bishop into the limelight. In order to achieve that, I needed to undermine both white knights.

17...a3!

The first step is to take away the defence of c3.

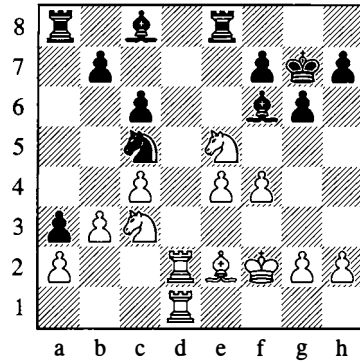
18.b4

This gains time only apparently, since the knight is driven to a square from which it attacks the f4-pawn.

True, the alternative was also unappealing for White:

18.b3

This allows a surprising tactical operation in which the c5-knight plays a key role.

**18...♖xe5!**

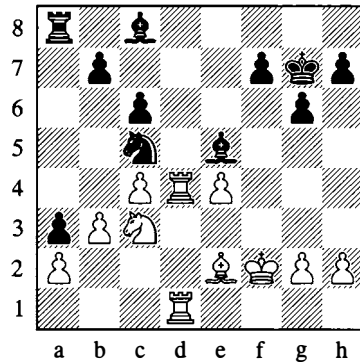
Black removes the active knight but keeps the dark-squared bishop.

19.fxe5 ♙xe5

The knight is attacked, and defending it or moving it away would lose material because of the fork on e4.

20.♗d4!?

The best chance, but a tactical finesse awaits.

**20...♙xb3!**

It is fitting that the pawn that refrained from attacking the knight now becomes a victim of it! The idea is to clear the path for the a3-pawn; we see that Black's pieces are acting as a team, changing their posts according to White's answers. In this case, the a-pawn becomes a hero, while initially it was meant to be an auxiliary piece.

21.axb3 ♙xd4† 22.♖xd4 a2 23.♙xa2 ♖xa2

Black has the better structure *and* the more active pieces. After ...♖b2 and ...♙f6-e5 my

11...♖h7

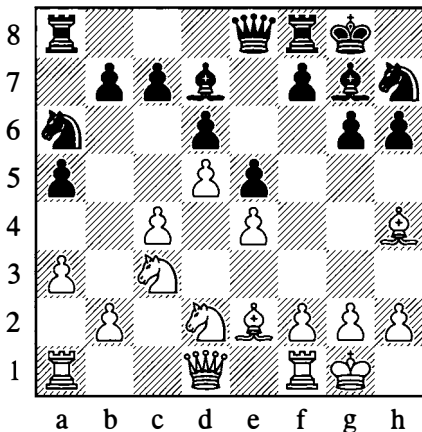
This is not threatening 12...f5 yet, since after 13.exf5 gxf5 14.♕h5 the queen would be left with only one unfavourable square, on d7. Instead Black's plan is to activate the bishop with ...h5 and ...♕h6. The ...f7-f5 break remains a possibility though, as we will see.

12.a3

White's queenside intentions are far more concrete. The last move threatens b2-b4 without the necessity of additional support, thanks to the potential pin along the a-file. In the next phase, the focus will be on White's preparing and my preventing b2-b4, with some intermediate switches to the kingside.

12...♗d7

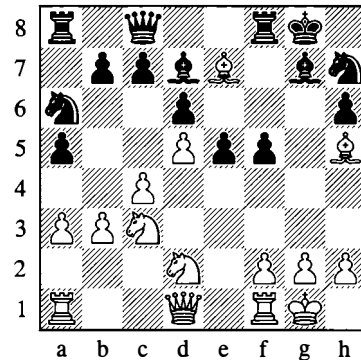
This not only parries b2-b4, but also creates the potential idea of ...a5-a4, reducing White's queenside flexibility.

**13.♔h1!?**

A refined plan. The prophylactic king move will be useful after the inevitable opening of the g1-a7 diagonal, while on the queenside White does not make any commitment.

13.b3 has the idea of preparing ♖b1 and b3-b4, and transposes to the old main line (the more common move order being 12.b3 and 13.a3). Kasparov's sharp dynamic eye spotted

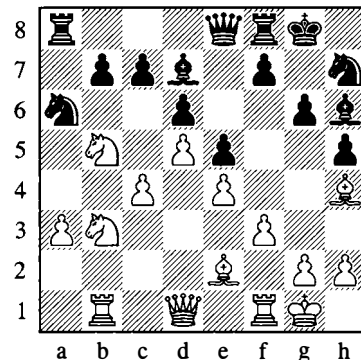
the way to take advantage of the apparently irrelevant weakening of the long diagonal: 13...f5 14.exf5 gxf5 15.♕h5 ♖c8 16.♕e7



16...♖e8 17.♕xe8 ♖xe8 18.♕h4 e4. Black had at least enough compensation for the exchange in Yusupov – Kasparov, Barcelona 1989.

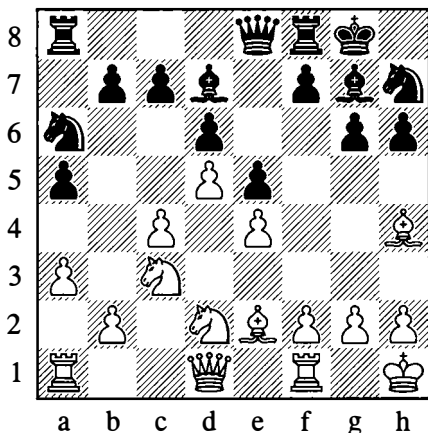
After the game move, the same plan would be less effective, since the c3-knight would remain defended.

13.♖b1 invites 13...a4!, when the natural continuation is: 14.♖b5 h5 15.f3 ♕h6 16.b4 axb3 17.♖xb3. There are two reasons why the rook's placement on b1 is less than ideal. In general terms, it could prove more useful on a1 where it supports the a4-a5 advance. More concretely, Black can proceed with:



17...f5! 18.exf5 ♕xf5. The attack on the rook gains an important tempo. Black intends ...♕e3+ followed by ...g5 and ...♖g6 with a strong kingside initiative.

If Black were to try something similar after 13.♖h1 (instead of 13.♝b1), White could play 19.c5 with advantage.



13...h5

Neither 13...f5 nor 13...a4 are fully satisfactory, for reasons explained in the previous note.

The text move is highly thematic. Black threatens to trap the bishop with ...g5 and ...h4, and practically forces the opening of the g1-a7 diagonal.

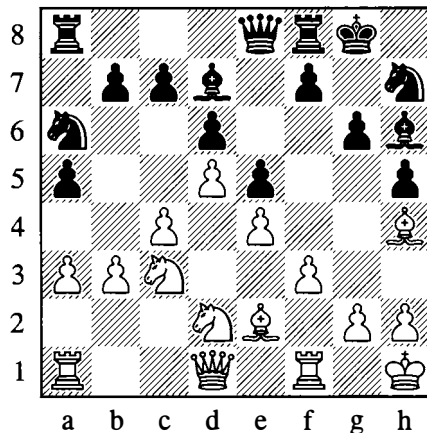
14.f3 ♗h6

The controversial King's Indian bishop has finally found an open diagonal! The optical sensation is that from h6 it cuts like a blade, but there is a risk that in the long run it will remain without scope. In some cases, it could be transferred on the g1-a7 diagonal, but this would leave the kingside weak. Keeping both active diagonals under control from e3 is not a reliable solution, since the bishop would be vulnerable.

All this leads us to the conclusion that the most desirable outcome for Black would be to provoke the exchange of the dark-squared bishops.

15.b3

White prepares ♝b1 and b3-b4 without allowing ...a5-a4. With the bishop on h6, the weakening of the long diagonal is not relevant anymore.



15...♗b8N

Shirov's last move took me out of book, but only my last move was the real novelty. When I face an unknown move, there are three main questions that cross my mind:

- 1) Is it the fruit of home preparation or did he find it over the board?
- 2) Should I believe in myself and in the position and make a natural move, or should I look for some unexpected answer, aimed to make the surprise turn against my opponent like a boomerang?
- 3) Should I reveal my surprise by having a long think, or would it be better to react relatively quickly and confidently?

There are no universal answers to these questions; it largely depends on the character of the position. In this game, I played my novelty relatively fast (after four minutes), relying on the fact that the position was peaceful and there was nothing to blunder. This was only partly true, as we will see. The same attitude would of course be quite risky in a tactically sharp position.

The idea behind my last move is to activate

the queen with ...♙a7. It is interesting that my only two pieces that can control dark diagonals are going to the edge of the board in order to focus their attention on e3. In the King's Indian, as in other blocked positions where Black has little space, such unusual piece trajectories are quite typical.

There had been a recent game that I did not know about at the time: 15...♙e3 16.♙c2 c6?! 17.♙f2! After Black has set up some queenside tension, White can exchange the bishops, creating the future threat of f3-f4. 17...♙xf2 18.♙f2± White went on to win in Illescas – Gelfand, Linares 1994.

16.♙c2

Shirov reacted after only four minutes, and failed to choose the most challenging continuation.

16.♙f2 prevents ...♙a7, but I would be only too happy to take another important diagonal under control with 16...♙d8! followed by ...♙g5, ...h4 and ...f5.

The critical test of my novelty is:

16.♙b1!

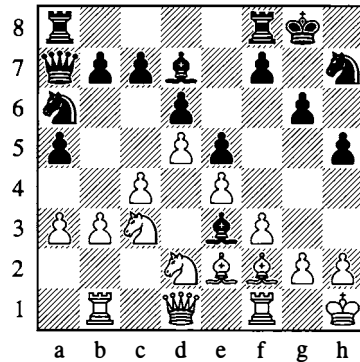
Preparing the thematic b3-b4. I was intending:

16...♙a7 17.♙f2

If 17.b4 axb4 18.axb4 Black can cause White some coordination problems with 18...♙d4. The only satisfactory way to defend the knights is 19.♙e1! based on the fact that 19...♙xc3? 20.♙b3 ♙e3 21.♙d2 followed by ♙xh6 favours White. However, after the correct 19...h4! Black has good play.

17...♙e3

We both probably stopped here, failing to notice that there were some tactics available. This is hardly surprising, since neither of us had spent much time after being surprised in the opening. Perhaps Shirov simply trusted what he assumed to be my home preparation!



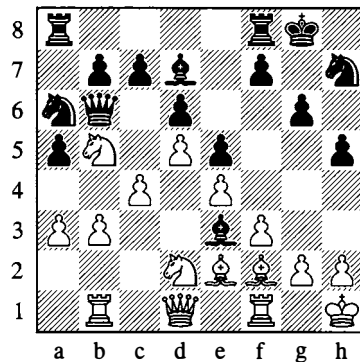
18.♙b5!

This and the next move prove that the queen is not comfortable on the a7-g1 diagonal.

18...♙b6

18...♙c5? loses material to 19.b4 axb4 20.axb4 ♙xb4 21.♙b3 (21.♙xe3? is ineffective and actually transposes to the 20.b4 line analysed below) 21...♙b6 22.c5! ♙xc5 23.♙xc5, for instance 23...♙xb5 24.♙d3 or 23...dx5 24.♙xb4.

18...♙xb5 would clear the c4-square for the knight: 19.♙xe3 ♙xe3 20.cxb5 ♙c5 21.b6! followed by ♙c4 and ♙xd6 with important positional achievements for White.



19.c5!!

White clears the c4-square and the c-file, creating new threats against the queen at the same time.

19...♙xc5

19...♙xc5? 20.♙c4 ♙xb5 21.a4 ♙b4 22.♙e1 traps the queen.

20.♞c1!

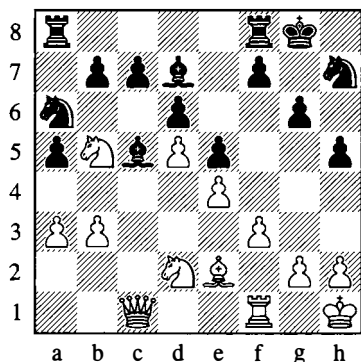
20.b4 wins a piece only temporarily: 20...axb4 21.axb4 ♖xb4 22.♙xe3 ♜xe3 23.♙xb4 ♞a2! One of White's minor pieces will be lost. This line gives us a hint that White should be careful when opening the a-file, as this may offer Black dangerous counterplay.

20...♙xf2!

20...♜b6? loses the queen for almost nothing: 21.♖c4 ♜xb6 22.♖xe3 ♜b6 23.♖c4 ♜b5 24.♖d2+–

The text move allows Black to obtain adequate material in return for the queen.

21.♙xc5 ♙xc5 22.♜c1



I would evaluate the position as slightly in White's favour. Black's main problem is that opening the kingside with ...f7-f5 would be dangerous, while the threat of f3-f4 is always in the air. Therefore Black should settle for:

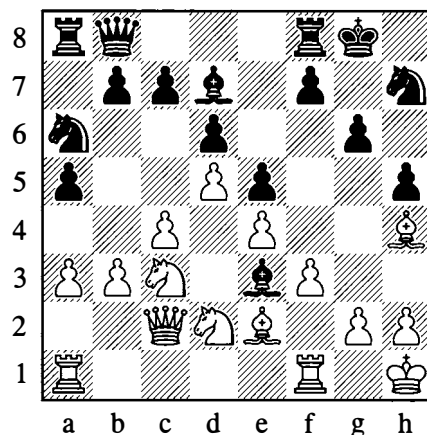
22...♖f6!

Intending to improve on the kingside with ...♖g7, ♞ae8, ...♞h8 and ...h4. The reason for the last move is shown after 23.f4?! exf4 24.♙xf4 ♖g4 when White suddenly experiences some problems.

16...♙e3

Apart from its aesthetic value, this move prepares action on both wings. If necessary, I can slow down b3-b4 by retreating the bishop to c5. On the kingside, I could start an attack

with ...g6-g5 followed by ...f7-f5 without fearing that my bishop will remain passive on h6.



17.♙f2!?

After thirteen minutes Shirov decided to exchange the annoying bishop, but this simplifies my task, for reasons explained earlier.

True, White would make no progress after 17.♞ab1 ♙c5 or 17.♖d1!? ♙d4 18.♞b1 ♙c5. In both of these lines he would have to spend a tempo defending the a3-pawn before looking for a way to make b3-b4 work.

The most consistent continuation would have been:

17.♜b2 ♖c5

17...♙c5 18.♙f2 would gain time for White's queenside advance.

The text move threatens ...♙xd2 followed by ...♖xb3, leaving White with no choice but to start the queenside attack at once.

18.b4 ♖a4!?

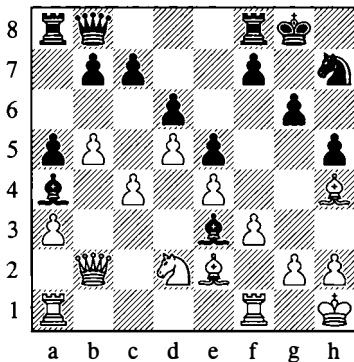
This is a typical reaction; under no circumstances should the knight return to the passive a6-square. More about this in the next game.

If 18...axb4 19.axb4 ♞xa1 20.♞xa1 ♙xd2 21.bxc5! ♙e3 22.cxd6 cxd6 White retains certain queenside pressure. Black's main

problem is that the knight is too far from the c5-square. The bishop does not offer full protection of the dark squares, since it can be exchanged with ♖f1 followed by ♖f2.

19. ♖xa4 ♖xa4 20. b5!

The only chance to complicate the fight. Saving the exchange would mean placing the pieces on uncomfortable squares, for instance: 20. ♖a2 ♖d4 21. ♗b1 c6 22. b5 ♖c8 There is no obvious way to create threats against the a4-bishop. Actually, Black's bishops do a fine job of protecting one another by controlling the squares from which the enemy knight could attack either of them.



20... ♖d4 21. ♗a2 ♖xa1 22. ♗xa1

White threatens to win the bishop with ♗b2 followed by ♖b1-c3, but Black can stay in the game with:

22... c6

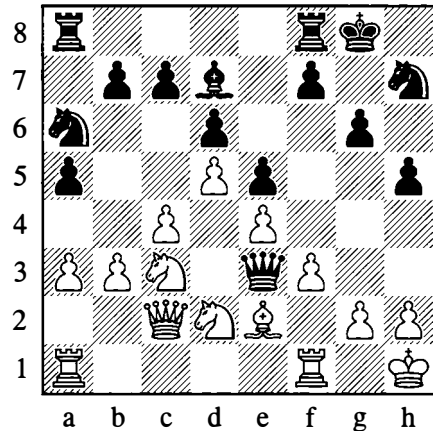
Followed by ... ♖c8, threatening to open the c-file. The position remains unclear.

17... ♗a7 18. ♖xe3

The familiar idea 18. ♖b5 is not dangerous: 18... ♗b6 and if 19. c5? ♗xc5 the white queen is hanging.

18... ♗xe3

Both players were heading for this position. I was happy to get my queen into the heart of White's position, while Shirov must have planned to use her as a target to gain time.



19. f4?!

This is consistent with White's previous play, but he is not sufficiently prepared for such aggressiveness. True, my king's position has been slightly weakened after the bishop exchange, and both my knights are far from the e5-square. And yet, I will manage to maintain control over the dark squares using my major pieces, while the knights will play supporting roles.

Black would also have great play after the more neutral 19. ♖a1. I was planning 19... ♗g5 followed by ... ♖f6, ... h4 and ... ♖h5, with such threats as ... ♖f4 or the sacrificial ... ♖g3†.

19... exf4 20. ♖ae1

Threatened ♖h5 is the most economical method of driving the queen away.

20. ♖f3 would virtually lose a tempo since after 20... ♗d4 21. ♖xf4 ♖ae8 White would have to develop the other rook anyway in order to unpin the knight.

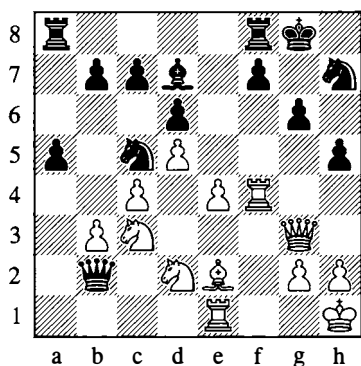
20... ♗c5!?

An interesting moment. The queen belongs on the long diagonal, of course, but I wanted to take advantage of a hidden drawback of White's last move. By attacking the a3-pawn, I induce the white queen to move to a less favourable square.

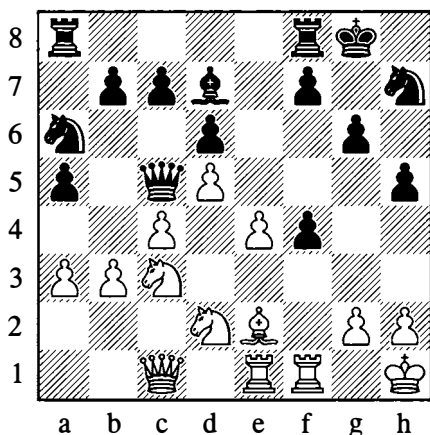
21. ♖c1

21. ♖b2 ♖d4 would place White under an unpleasant pin.

Ignoring the threat with 21. ♜xf4!? deserves attention. After the virtually forced 21... ♖xa3 (otherwise the last move would make little sense), the queen would be isolated from the kingside, offering White some hopes for an attack. Black threatens ... ♖b4, which would force the white queen to retreat to a passive position, so the next move is also more or less forced. 22. ♖d3 ♖c5 23. ♖g3 ♖b2!



A strong move, not only placing the queen on the long diagonal, but also harassing White's pieces in a way that prevents him from focusing on his attack. White's compensation is not fully adequate.

**21... ♖d4**

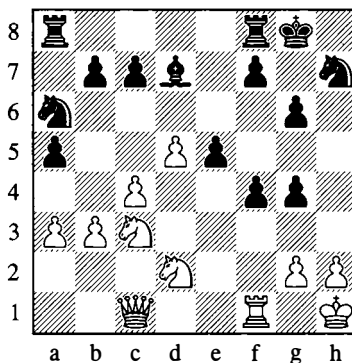
It is interesting that I spent eighteen minutes on this natural move. I sensed that I had a good position, but was aware of the need to play accurately in order to consolidate.

21... ♜ae8 22. ♜xf4 ♖d4 would have been a slightly more restrictive move order and I find it hard to explain why I chose the other one. Maybe I just wanted to have my queen on the long diagonal as soon as possible.

22. ♜xf4

Shirov also took his time (eleven minutes). He probably considered the anti-blockading breakthrough 22. e5!?, hoping for 22... dxe5 23. ♖f3 when White has the initiative.

However, Black can improve with 22... ♖xe5! preparing an effective queen sacrifice: 23. ♖g4 hxg4 24. ♜xe5 dxe5

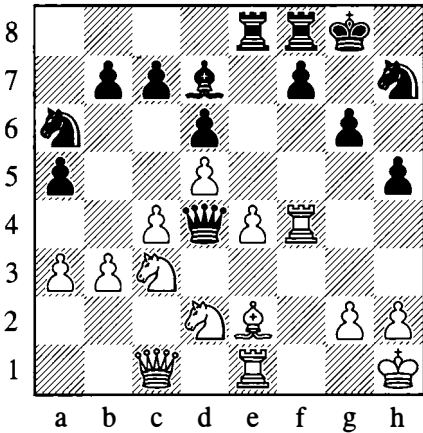


My kingside majority is quite threatening, while White still needs some time to prepare c4-c5. My plan would be ... f7-f5, ... ♖f6, ... ♖g7 and ... ♖h8 with good attacking chances.

22... ♜ae8

Finally completing my development.

22... f5? would be a bad mistake, not only giving up the idea of the blockade, but also weakening the e6-square. After the simple 23. ♖f3 ♖g7 24. exf5 followed by ♖f3-d4 White is clearly better.



23. ♖f1!?

Alexei needed fifteen minutes to convince himself that there was nothing better than this paradoxical retreat. In order to fight for the e5-square, White needs to play ♔d2-f3, but with the rook on f4 this would leave the rook exposed to ...g6-g5.

23... ♕g7

The queen retreat finally offered me the feeling of safety, knowing that everything was all right with my position, with all the major pieces standing in the right places.

I still faced the challenging task of activating my knights. In a way I felt sorry that only one of my knights could occupy e5 at a time, but this is how life is. Besides, there is no obvious way for either of the knights to occupy the dream square yet.

24. ♖c2

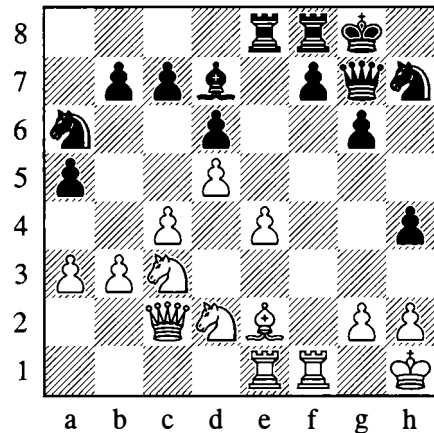
Admitting that my 20th move has gained me a tempo.

24... h4!

An impulsive move played after just a few minutes. I wanted to weaken White's kingside before breaking with ...f7-f5, but the opening of the g-file will offer White additional ideas. I was still 'paying tribute' to my impatient character.

If Black is going to advance the h-pawn, it would be better to prepare it with 24... ♖e7 followed by ...♗fe8, ...♖h6 and possibly even ...g5.

I could also have considered 24... ♔g5, taking measures against ♔d2-f3. This is a bit provocative, but driving the knight away with h2-h4 would involve a major weakening of White's kingside.



25. ♔f3!

White rightly decides to provoke the advance of my pawn rather than block it. Alexei played this and the next couple of moves rather quickly, whereas I started thinking more. As a psychological consequence of my previous weakening move, he obviously became more confident whereas I began to feel unsure of my position.

25.h3? would weaken the dark squares and after 25... ♔g5 Black is doing well.

25... h3

Once you say "A"...

If 25... ♖h6?!, the blocking 26.h3 suddenly becomes good. The h4-pawn is in some danger and the g3-square is out of my knight's reach: 26... ♔f6 27. ♔h2! ♔h5 28. ♔xh5 ♖xh5 29. ♔f3±

Moreover, it would be too late for 26...♘g5? because of: 27.♚d2 f6 28.e5! dxe5 29.♘e4± White regains the pawn and crushes Black's dreams of a blockade.

26.gxh3!

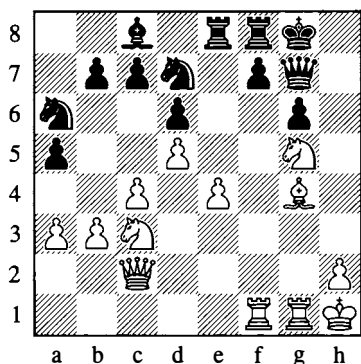
From a structural point of view this is a slight concession, but White gets an essential thing he was previously missing: a second open file for his rooks.

I vividly remember how surprised I was by Alexei's decision; I even spent five minutes before playing my obvious next move!

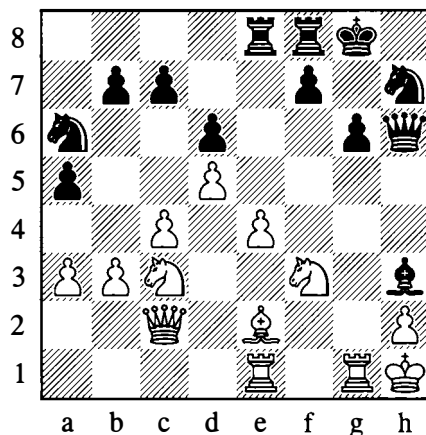
26...♙xh3 27.♖g1 ♚h6

I decided to build up an attack along the h-file, in order to give meaning to the advance of my h-pawn.

The plan of transferring a knight to e5 would be hard to carry out under optimal circumstances: 27...♘f6 28.♘g5 ♙c8 29.♖ef1 ♘d7 30.♙g4! With my pawn on h5, this would not have been possible. White not only gets rid of his potentially bad bishop, but also makes the h3-square available to the rook.



30...♘e5 31.♙xc8 ♖xc8 32.♖g3 The plan of ♖h3-h7 will most likely win the queen. True, Black will remain with a fairly solid fortress, but White does not need to rush in, and can look to combine action on both wings. One strong plan is ♘a4 followed by c4-c5.



28.♖g3 ♘g7 29.♚b2?!

After ten minutes, Shirov decides to challenge me on the dark squares, but his last move weakens the e4-pawn without causing me any trouble.

Now was a good moment to carry out the long-awaited 29.e5!, for instance 29...dxe5 30.♘e4 ♙f5 31.♙d3 followed by either c4-c5 or d5-d6, with more than enough play for the pawn.

29...♘f6!

Placing the knight under the indirect pin is not dangerous, since White cannot easily put a rook on the f-file. My last move not only defends the long diagonal, but also clears the h-file for my attack.

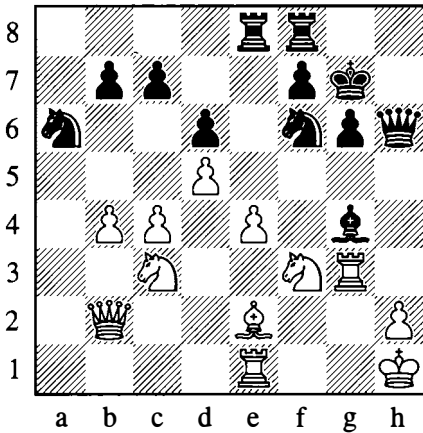
30.b4?!

White is not well prepared to play on two wings. His queen will now be busy on the queenside, making the kingside more vulnerable.

He should have prevented ...♙g4 with 30.♖eg1, and after 30...♖h8 the position is roughly balanced.

30...axb4 31.axb4 ♙g4?!

Hoping to exchange the f3-knight, a key piece in the fight for the e5-square.



32. ♖d1!?

Unwisely allowing me to carry out my plan.

White should have preferred 32. ♖d4!? ♕c8 when Black's play would be pleasant, but maybe not more than that.

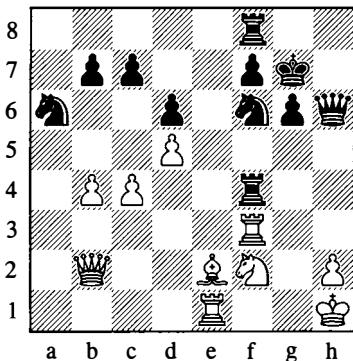
32... ♕xf3!?

I took six minutes before rejecting the pawn sacrifice on e4. There was no obvious reason for doing that, but I knew that Shirov is an excellent attacking player and tactician, so why enter into a position that would suit him well?

32... ♖xe4

Subsequent analysis demonstrated that this was playable, but only if Black follows up with extremely accurate defence.

33. ♖f2 ♕xf3† 34. ♖xf3 ♖f4

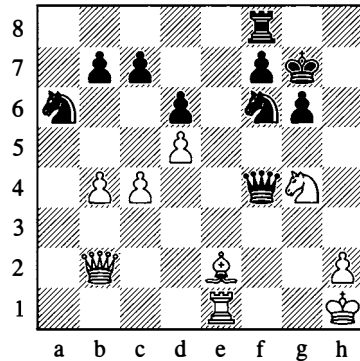


35. ♖xf4

As Shirov indicated during the post mortem, 35. ♖g4?! ♖xg4 36. ♖xf6? would lose in a beautiful way. It may seem that Black is in trouble, with his g4-rook attacked and several discovered checks available, but there is a small combination on the way: 36... ♖xh2†! 37. ♖xh2 ♖h8 mate!

35... ♖xf4 36. ♖g4

How can Black defend against ♖f1?



36... ♖e8!

The tactics work out fine for Black.

37. h3

The threat was ... ♖xe2, and 37. ♖f1? ♖xe2! does not help White.

The text move is forced, but it weakens the king too much to allow White to hope for an advantage. One possible way finish is:

37... ♖e3! 38. ♖xe3 ♖xe3=

Forcing a perpetual. Although this variation contained some attractive points, the game continuation is stronger in every sense, as Black has every reason to play for more than a draw.

33. ♕xf3 ♖h8 34. ♖e3

Shirov probably thought that the threats ♖g4 and ♖f5† would be decisive, but he overlooked a small tactical nuance.

34... ♖f8!

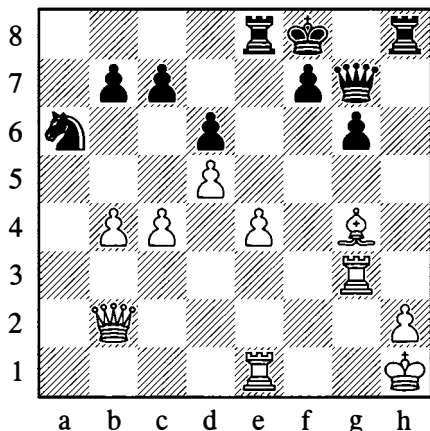
Getting out of both pins. The knight is taboo because of the mate on h2.

35. ♖g4

35. ♖f1 is well met by 35... ♗h4! threatening both ... ♗xg3 and ... ♖xe4.

35... ♖xg4 36. ♕xg4 ♗g7!

I played this almost without thinking. Finally it becomes clear that I have won the battle for the dark squares.

**37. ♗f2!?**

I was surprised by Shirov's 'generosity'. In fact, his last move is White's best chance to cause problems.

37. ♗xg7†? would be equivalent to surrendering: 37... ♖xg7 38. ♖b3 ♖h4 39. ♕f3 f5 Black wins a pawn while keeping an active position.

37. ♗d2 is more sensible. I was planning 37... ♗e5 followed by ... ♖g7 and doubling rooks on the h-file. Black stands better, but the passive position of the knight would have made it difficult to convert my advantage.

37... ♖xb4?!

Having won the strategic battle, I suddenly allowed unexpected tactics.

37... ♖g8! would have been best, vacating the king from the f-file, avoiding any



Madrid 1994 – Relaxing on the free day

complications and leaving White with his positional problems.

38.♖b1?

Missing the last possibility to get back in the game.

38.♙e6!

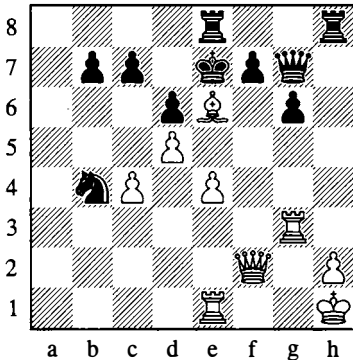
This move is a lot stronger than it looks.

38...♙e7

After 38...♙g8 39.♖xg6! ♜xg6 40.♖g1 White is not at all worse.

38...♖e7 39.♖f1 ♙e8 is safest, but then 40.♙a7! fxe6 41.♙xb7 leads to a quick perpetual.

I had been intending the text move, thinking it would render White's previous move pointless, but the fun is just about to start:



39.e5!!

An amazing attacking idea, opening lines for the white pieces.

39...fxe6 40.exd6† ♙xd6 41.dxe6

With my major pieces relatively passive and my king in the centre, I would have faced serious dangers.

41...c5!

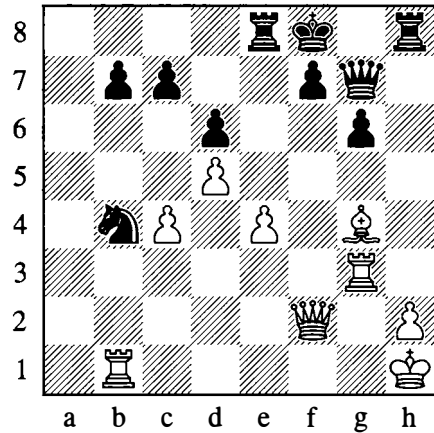
The best defence, leading to a probable draw.

42.♖d1† ♙c6 43.♖d7 ♙a1† 44.♖g1 ♙a8

Black needs to defend the b7-pawn in view of the threatened ♙f3†.

45.♖g5=

Attacking c5 and forcing 45...♙a1† with a repetition to follow.



38...♙a6

Threatening to consolidate with ...♙c5.

39.♖xb7?

This loses on the spot, but White already faced difficult problems.

39...♙c5 40.♖xc7 ♙xe4 0-1

Playing on both wings

In positions with a blocked centre, which are so typical for the King's Indian, it often happens that each player is attacking on 'his/her' side. This was the case with the first few games of the present chapter, but subsequent games have shown that the play may take on more of a global character. It often happens that one of the players can fight back on the wing where he (or she) is attacked, while maintaining the upper hand on the traditionally stronger wing.

In the first example, the central structure remains rigid and the play on two wings will be carried out only using the pieces.

Vadim Zvjaginsev – Judit Polgar

Las Vegas (4.3) 1998

I faced Zvjaginsev in the last eight of the competition. This was the first rapid playoff game after we had drawn both of the classical games.

My experience with the knockout championships has revealed to me some specific psychological aspects. Each new round matches up players who have won all their previous matches, meaning that both of them start the new match in a favourable state of mind. This feeling gets stronger and stronger as the tournament advances. This does not happen in open and round-robin tournaments, where the psychological balance between the opponents is largely decided by the results in the previous round.

It makes little sense to plan ahead; one should be completely focused on the current game without thinking about the next one with the same opponent, and especially not about the next potential opponent!

Between players of similar strength, there is a high probability of getting an equal score after the main games. This does not mean, though, that the playoff starts from the same reference point as the classical mini-match. During the first two games, each contestant can obtain valuable information about the opponent's general style and their present form.

Many players tend to assess their chances in the rapid and blitz games before the start of the classical games. Players who are confident about their skills at faster time limits may well aim for equality in the first two games. The shorter the time limit gets, the greater the tension, which increases the significance of the players' physical fitness and psychological condition.

I always felt at home in rapid and blitz games, since they used to make up part of my daily training as a child (as explained in Volume 1). I would always play the normal games with ambition, as if they were round-robin tournament games, but I certainly did not mind if the match had to be decided in the playoff.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♙g7 4.e4 d6 5.♙e2 0-0 6.♘f3 e5 7.d5 a5 8.♙g5

I am facing the same opening as in the game against Shirov, with the difference that this time it is exactly what I expected from my opponent!

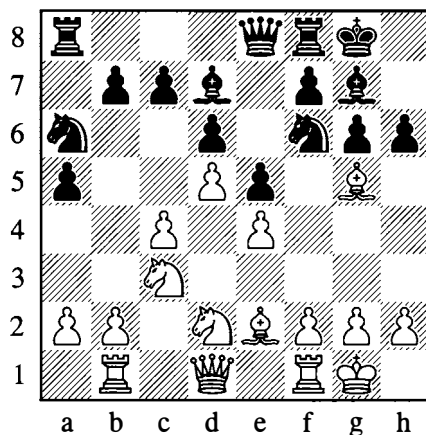
8...♘a6

Without being outright bad, this will give White an extra option later. 8...h6 is more precise, when 9.♙e3 makes no sense in view of 9...♘g4 followed by ...f7-f5.

9.♘d2 ♚e8 10.0-0 ♙d7 11.♗b1

This is only a slight change of the move order compared to the Shirov game.

11...h6



12.♙e3!?

This is a much more significant deviation. The bishop controls the g1-a7 and c1-h6

diagonals, supporting the queenside attack and preventing the enemy bishop's activation, but on the other hand it does not prevent my kingside plan.

12...♘h7 13.b3 f5 14.f3

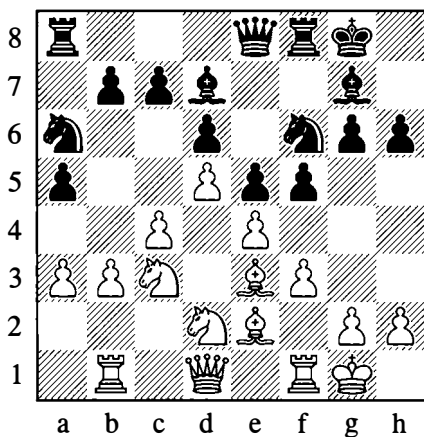
Even if he had not played b2-b3, 14.exf5 gxf5 15.♕h5, by analogy with the Yusupov – Kasparov game, would not have been dangerous due to 15...♞e7, utilizing the bishop's absence from h4.

14...♘f6

From here the knight puts some pressure on the e4-square, setting up the potential plan of ...fxe4 without allowing a piece blockade on e4. Alternatively, the knight may jump to h5 and f4.

15.a3

With White's pawn attack about to start, I had to choose the most effective plan from the many options available.



15...♘c5!?

The standard attacking plan of 15...f4?! 16.♕f2 g5 is too slow. After 17.b4 followed by c4-c5 White's queenside assault is well underway, while the knight on a6 would be much more useful on the kingside.

15...♘h5 is another idea, but I did not see how to make progress after 16.♞e1 ♘f4 17.♕f1.

One idea behind putting the knight on c5 is to prepare ...fxe4. However, Black has to keep in mind that b3-b4 might come at any moment.

16.b4?

This careless move allows me to hit back on the queenside.

It was absolutely necessary to prepare b3-b4 with:

16.♞c2!

The queen clears the d1-square for the knight and defends the c3-square, meaning that after a subsequent b3-b4, Black's ...♘c5-a4 move can be answered by either ♘b5 or ♘d1. The only drawback of this move is the loss of control over the d1-h5 diagonal, and I planned to make use of this with:

16...fxe4 17.fxe4

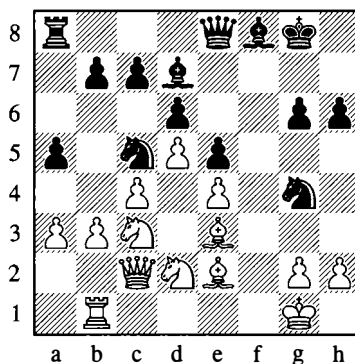
The best way to retain the space advantage. 17.♕xc5 allows the intermediate 17...exf3!, while after 17.♘dx4 ♘cxe4! 18.fxe4 ♞e7 Black does not have to worry about the queen's knight anymore.

17...♘g4 18.♞xf8†

18.♕xg4 ♞xf1† lures one of the enemy pieces away from its optimal position.

18...♕xf8!

Slowing down the c4-c5 attack.

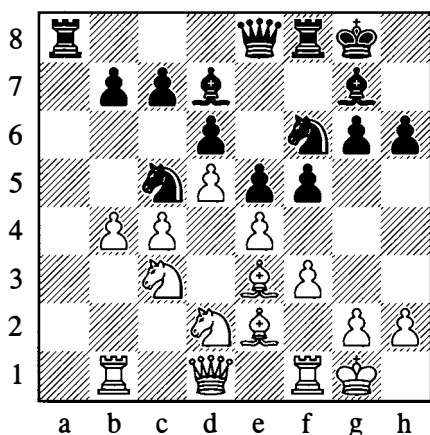


19. ♖xg4 ♖xg4 20. b4 axb4 21. axb4 ♖a6

Black has lost some time, but the bishop pair provides some compensation. Without White's light-squared bishop on the board, the a6-knight will be under less pressure even after the impending c4-c5.

16...axb4 17.axb4

It may seem like a success for White to have attacked my knight before it could exert any effect in the centre, but the next move proves this judgement wrong.



17...♖a4!

Solving the problem at once.

18.♖xa4

White has no favourable way to avoid the exchange:

18. ♖b5? loses an exchange to 18... ♖xb5 followed by ...♖c3.

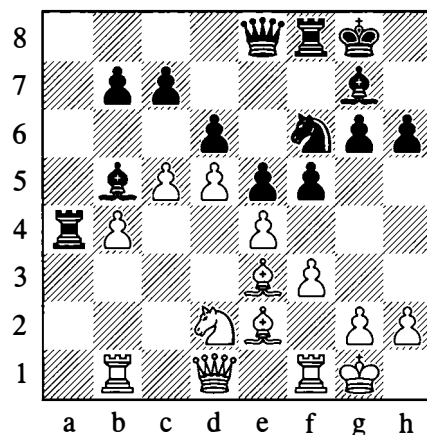
18. ♖a2 is way too passive to bother Black, who may proceed with the kingside attack: 18... ♖h5 19. ♖e1 ♖f4 20. ♖f1 g5 The weakening of the f5-square is not too relevant, since one of the white knights is so far from the blockading e4-square.

18...♖xa4

From this excellent square the rook controls the open file and puts pressure on the enemy pawns.

19.c5 ♖b5!

Another queenside invading move. It is interesting that while my kingside attack has not yet progressed a great deal, on the opposite wing I have started to take control.



20.♖e1

White correctly maintains the tension for the time being, trying to prevent me from taking control over the f1-a6 diagonal.

20...♖a3

This indirect way of fighting for the critical diagonal is crowned by unexpected success.

21.♖xb5?

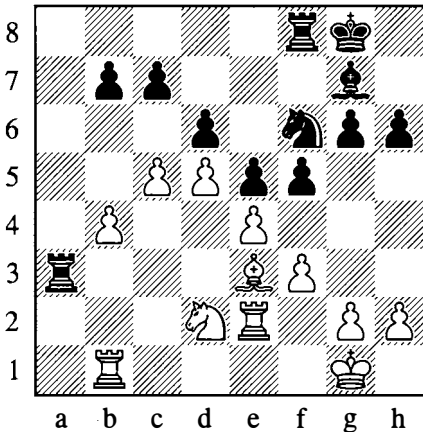
This leads to further activation of my pieces. Keeping the tension with 21. ♖c4! would have been preferable.

21...♖xb5

In the King's Indian, the black queen on e8 is typically connected with a subsequent transfer to g6 or h5. Like in the game against Shirov, my queen proves quite adaptable to the concrete necessities of the position. From b5, it blocks the b4-pawn, prevents the active ♖c4 and is poised to invade on d3.

22. ♔e2?!

Attempting to neutralize my queenside pressure. This is consistent with the previous move, but overlooks that the fight has a global character, with plans and threats on both wings.

22... ♖xe2 23. ♜xe2**23... ♜xe4!**

I felt that this came as a surprise to my opponent.

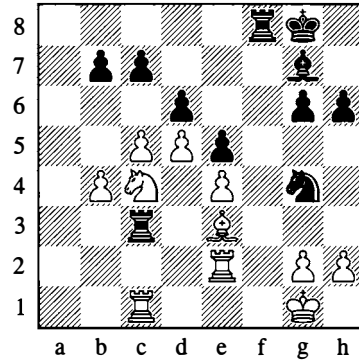
23... ♜a2! would also have been strong, pinning the knight and threatening to win the e4-pawn.

24. ♜xe4 ♘g4

Now White faces the consequences of the queen exchange: the g4-square has become available for the knight, allowing me to establish absolute control over the dark squares. This is a typical illustration of how dangerous the position can become, should Black be allowed to play on both wings.

25. ♜be1

25. ♘c4? would allow some nice tactics:
25... ♜c3 26. ♜c1



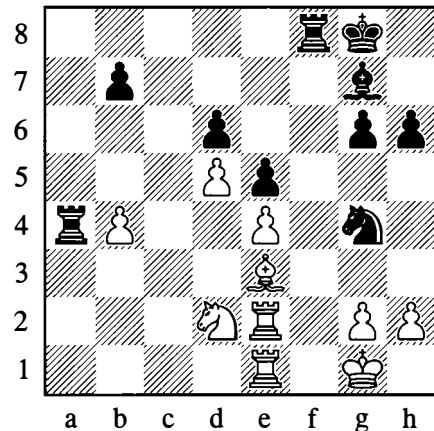
It may seem that White's pieces are defending each other satisfactorily, but 26... ♘xe3! blows the mechanism apart, since 27. ♜xc3 ♜f1 mates!

25... ♜a4

Continuing the policy of creating little threats on both wings alternately, quite an irritating course of events for White. I did not care about exchanging the white bishop yet. By trying to keep it alive, my opponent will just place it on a passive square.

26. ♜xd6

On 26. ♜b1 I planned to keep harassing him with 26... ♜a2!.

26... ♜xd6**27. ♘b6**

Hoping to attack the d6-pawn with ♘c7.

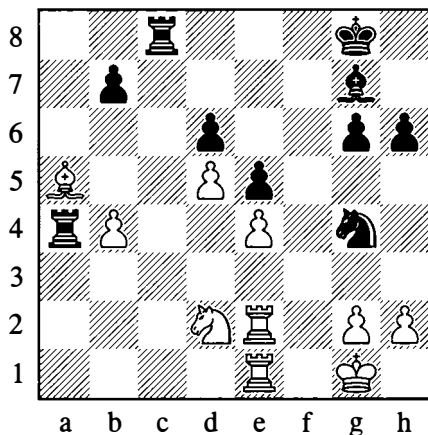
27.♖c4?! would be an ineffective way of carrying out the same idea, since after 27...♞xb4 28.♗xd6? ♗xe3 29.♞xe3 ♞d8 the knight would be trapped!

27...♞c8!

The open files were my first priority; the b4-pawn could wait for a while.

28.♗a5

Quite a sad location for the white bishop.



28...h5

By contrast, my bishop is ready to join the attack.

29.♞f1

29.h3 ♗f6 would drive the knight away from the kingside but closer to the opposite wing, creating the threat of ...♗f6-d7 followed by ...b7-b6.

29...♗h6

It is obvious that Black's initiative cannot be contained easily. My opponent went down relatively quickly.

30.h3 ♗e3 31.♞fe1 ♗c2 32.♞c1 ♖g7 33.♖h1 h4 34.♞f1 ♗f4 35.♗f3 g5 36.♗d8 ♗d4 37.♗xd4 exd4 38.♗b6 ♞xb4 39.♗a5 d3 40.♗xb4 dxe2 41.♞e1 ♞c4

This was a good start to the playoff; by winning the second game as well, I progressed to the quarter-finals.

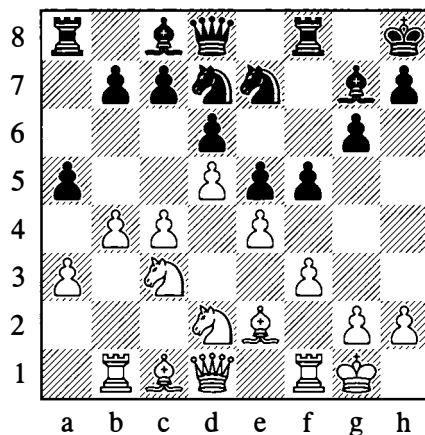
0-1

The next example is more complex; apart from my pieces' activity on both wings, there will be radical structural transformations, as a result of my well-timed counterattack on the queenside.

Alexander Khalifman – Judit Polgar

Dos Hermanas 1993

1.d4 ♗f6 2.♗f3 g6 3.c4 ♗g7 4.♗c3 0-0 5.e4 d6 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 ♗c6 8.d5 ♗e7 9.♗d2 a5 10.a3 ♗d7 11.♞b1 f5 12.b4 ♖h8 13.f3



13...axb4

It is always important to consider whether or not to exchange on b4. Releasing the tension in this way may allow White to take control over the open a-file. Avoiding the exchange gives White the option of bxa5, intending to meet ...♞xa5 with ♗b3 followed by c4-c5.

At the time of this game I was playing the King's Indian exclusively, so in order to avoid being too predictable, I needed to have a few different plans available against the most fashionable lines. Three rounds later, against Epishin, I refrained from ...axb4 and went

for a set-up involving ...♖g8-f6 rather than ...♙g7-h6 (see the first game of the chapter, beginning on page 146).

14.axb4 ♖g8 15.♙c2 ♙h6

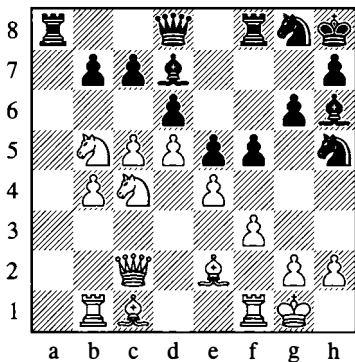
This way of activating (or exchanging) the bishop is familiar to us from the games against Shirov and Zvjaginsev, although the character of the play is different, as is the location of White's dark-squared bishop.

16.c5!?

The critical move and very much in line with Khalifman's direct style of play. At the same time, it came as a complete surprise, as in my preparation I thought that White should prepare c4-c5 with either ♖b5 or ♖b3. Both moves have the drawback of weakening White's control in the centre; the latter also takes away the option of ♖c4, unless White is willing to invest additional time rerouting the knight:

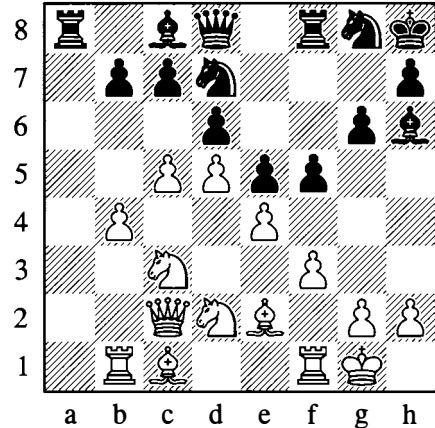
16.exf5 gxf5 17.♙d3 did not bother me because I knew I could keep my pawn structure intact with 17...♖df6, since 18.♙xf5 fails to 18...♙xf5 19.♙xf5 ♖xd5.

In my notes, I had the following game as a model: 16.♖b5 ♖df6 17.c5 ♖h5! 18.♖c4 ♙d7!



19.♖c3 (19.♖a5 dxc5! 20.♖xb7 ♙b8+

leaves the knights hanging.) 19...♙xc1 20.♙fxc1 ♖gf6 21.b5 fxe4 22.fxe4 dxc5 With counterplay, Dokhoian – Velikhanli, Helsinki 1992.



16...dxc5

I only spent three minutes on this critical move, feeling that I had no choice. If I allowed my opponent to play ♖c4, his attack would develop too fast.

17.♖b5!?

Played after thirteen minutes, which rather surprised me. As I found out later, only this move was new; I wonder if Khalifman double-checked his home analysis and found a problem somewhere, or if he got caught up in over-the-board inspiration.

In view of my strong reply in the game, it makes sense to consider:

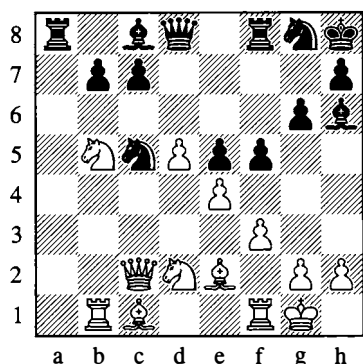
17.bxc5

This had been played previously, and was also tested in some subsequent games.

17...♖xc5

17...♙e3† 18.♙h1 ♙xc5 19.♙b2 leads to unpleasant pressure along the a1-h8 diagonal, and Black may regret not having a 'bad bishop' on g7.

18.♖b5



18...♙e7!

18...b6 remains the only move to have been tested in practice, but I would probably have avoided weakening the c6-square so soon, especially as 19.♘b3 leads to problems with the backward c7-pawn.

The queen move is more flexible, and maintains the possibility of ...c7-c6.

19.♘c4

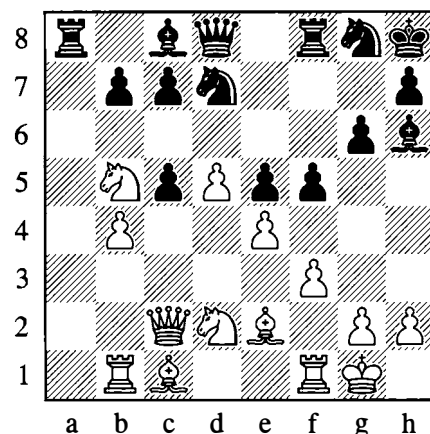
An important point is that the straightforward 19.♙a3?! allows 19...♞xa3! 20.♘xa3 ♘xe4 with two pawns for the exchange and fantastic play on the dark squares.

19...b6

By now Black does not have anything better, but at least the unpleasant reply ♘b3 is no longer available to White. The position remains rather unclear.

As will become clear at a later stage, it would have been useful for White to insert a pawn exchange on f5 somewhere, but it appears that each time Black has an adequate way to sidestep the opponent's plan. For instance, 17.exf5!? allows 17...cxb4.

Going back one step further, if White inserted 16.exf5 gxf5 prior to 17.c5, I could have ignored the central tension, having been granted additional kingside space and an open g-file. One good answer is 17...♞df6.



17...c6!

This is one case where the rule “do not move your pawns on the side where you are under attack” does not apply. Other moves would lead to Black getting crushed on the queenside.

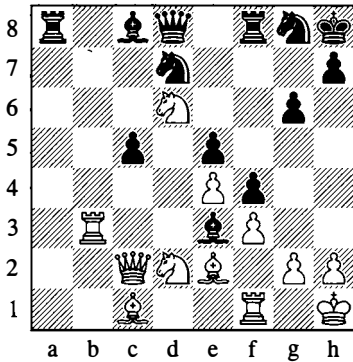
18.dxc6 bxc6 19.♘d6 cxb4

As a result of the successive captures, I have managed to get rid of all my weaknesses and neutralize White's space advantage in the centre. Files and diagonals have opened not only for his pieces, but also for mine! True, White's pieces have active prospects, but he is not yet fully developed and needs some time to recapture the two pawns.

20.exf5

Judging from this and his 17th move, Khalifman was trying to get the most he could from his position – or perhaps just trying to confuse me – with intermediate moves. Eventually, this policy will turn against him like a boomerang. That being said, his last move surprised me to such an extent that I took 27 minutes before answering!

I did not worry too much about 20.♞xb4 ♙e3† 21.♙h1 c5 22.♞b3 f4. Black intends ...♙d4, keeping the extra pawn with perfect stability on the dark squares.



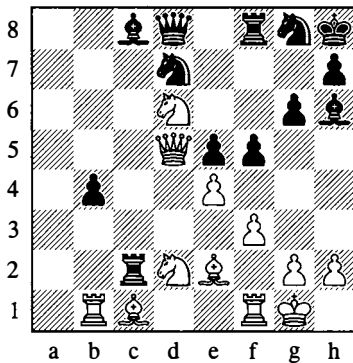
White should probably try 23.♖xe3!? fxe3 24.♘c4 ♕a6 25.♕xe3 ♜f6 when his compensation for the exchange is beyond any doubt, but at the same time Black should not have many problems.

20. ♜xc6

This is the move I was expecting. A possible continuation is:

20...♖a2 21. ♜d5 ♖c2

White's position is not as dominating as it may seem at first sight, as his queen and minor pieces are unstable.



22. ♖xb4

22.♘f7+?? is a hit into the wind because after 22...♖xf7 the other knight will be left hanging.

Ftacnik evaluated the present position as clearly better for White, but he must have underestimated Black's tactical resources.

22...fxe4!

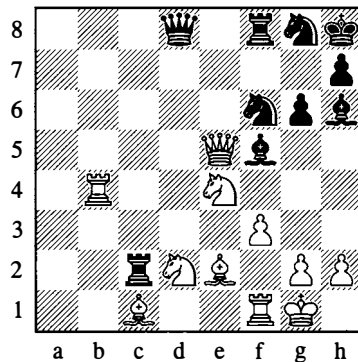
The d2-knight is pinned, so White faces a difficult decision. Let's see what happens if he tries to establish a blocking piece on the e4-square.

23. ♘6xe4

23.fxe4 ♜h4 offers Black a strong initiative. The safest continuation is 23.♖c4!, eliminating the nasty intruder, but after 23...exf3!? White's activity should only suffice for a draw.

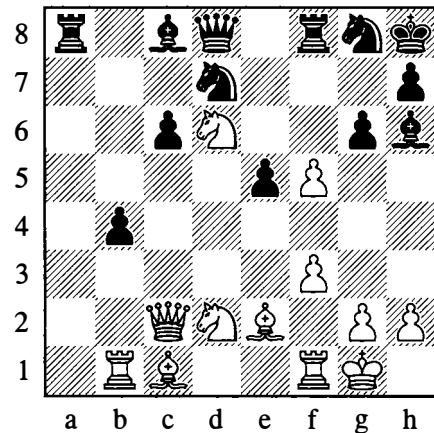
23...♘df6 24. ♜xe5 ♕f5

Suddenly all White's minor pieces are vulnerable!



25. ♖b2 ♕xe4 26.fxe4 ♖xc1! 27. ♖xc1 ♕xd2

Black has some winning chances with two minor pieces against a rook and pawn.



20...♘df6!

This was the turning point in the game. I could sense that this move, aiming for activity more than anything else, came as a real surprise to Khalifman. His answer came after 28 long minutes.

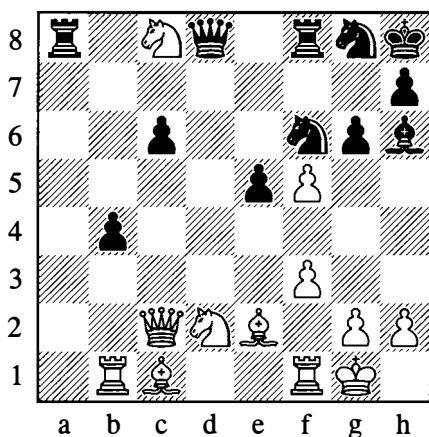
He was probably relying on getting a favourable form of the 20.♟xc6 line mentioned above, after 20...gxf5 21.♟xc6.

21.♘xc6

This natural answer runs into a far-from-obvious trick.

21.♟xc6 ♘xf5 gives Black no worries.

The alternative is: 21.♘c4 ♘xf5 22.♘xf5 ♘xc1! (An important intermediate exchange, avoiding 22...gxf5 23.♘b2 with attacking chances.) 23.♟fxc1 gxf5 The e5-pawn is taboo because of ...♟d4† and White can only aspire to equality after picking up the queenside pawns.



21...gxf5!

The key to my idea; the knight cannot run away. Capturing it prematurely would permit the damaging of my kingside structure after fxg6.

22.♘c4

There is nothing better. White strives for positional compensation for the pawn he will be missing.

22.♟xf5? would run into 22...♟d4†! 23.♘h1 ♘d5 followed by ...♟axc8 with perfect centralization and an extra pawn.

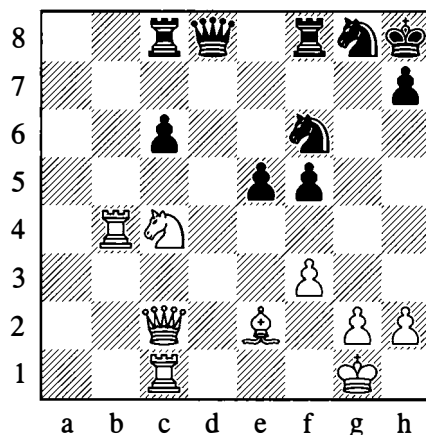
22...♘xc1 23.♟fxc1 ♟xc8

The e5-pawn remains indirectly defended, so White has to content himself with the less important b4-pawn.

24.♟xb4

Apart from picking up a pawn, this move also makes ♘xe5 a real threat, as the check on d4 will be prevented.

Optically, White has excellent compensation for the sacrificed (or lost) pawn. His pieces are arranged harmoniously and the black structure is fragmented. In the next phase of the game, I will manage to keep all my pawns defended while gradually building up a kingside attack.



24...♟d4† 25.♘h1 ♟cd8

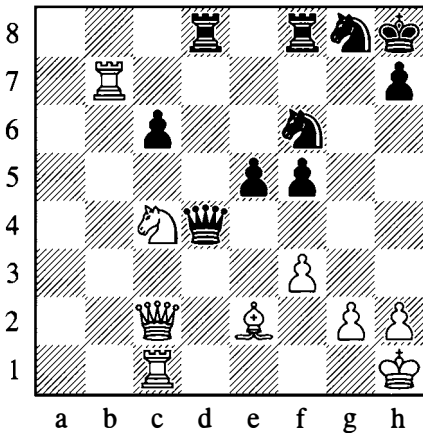
I was happy to increase my control over the d-file, but 25...e4!? was a valid alternative.

26.♟b7

This does not threaten anything concrete yet, but the rook certainly stands better on the seventh rank than on the exposed b4-square.

The f5-pawn is poisoned: 26. ♖xf5? ♕d5 wins an exchange.

The seemingly active 26. ♖d1 just loses coordination after 26... ♖c5.



26... ♕h5

I could not resist creating the threat of 27... ♕g3†. 28.hxg3 ♖f6 followed by ... ♖h6 mate, though of course there is more to this move than a one-move trick. More abstractly, playing on the kingside is justified by the fact that White's pieces are occupied on the queenside where he is a pawn down.

27.g3

For several moves, White will be looking for the best moment to kick my queen away from the centre, and will eventually choose the most unfortunate time.

With hindsight, this may have been the right time to try:

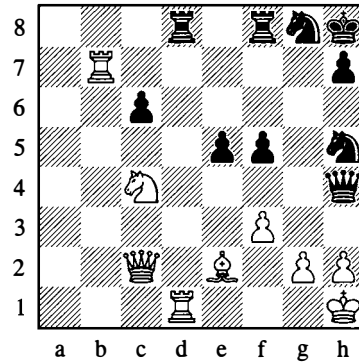
27. ♖d1

I would probably have played:

27... ♖h4!?

27... ♖f2 is objectively more precise, leading to balanced play.

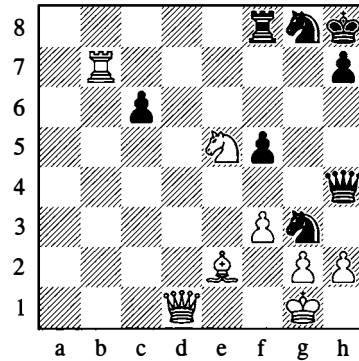
The text move sets up a nice trick:



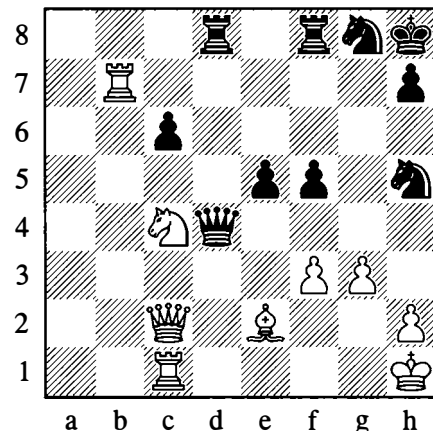
28. ♕xe5??

28. ♕g1! is necessary. Play may continue 28... ♖xd1† 29. ♖xd1 ♖d4† 30. ♖xd4 exd4 31. ♕e5 with excellent compensation for White, although Black should be able to hold the endgame.

28... ♕g3† 29. ♕g1 ♖xd1† 30. ♖xd1



30... ♖d4†!! 31. ♖xd4 ♕xe2† 32. ♕f2 ♕xd4–+



27...♖f6!

Activating the rook and setting up another small trick: if 28.♞d1? ♜f2! 29.♞xd8 ♜xg3† 30.hxg3 ♞h6 is mate.

28.♞g1 ♞e8

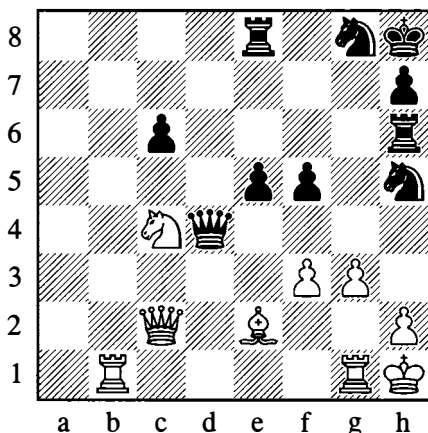
In the absence of concrete threats, I over-defend the e5-pawn, in order to free the queen from defensive duties and add force to a later ...e5-e4.

29.♞bb1

Still hoping to oust my queen from d4 with ♞bd1.

29...♞h6

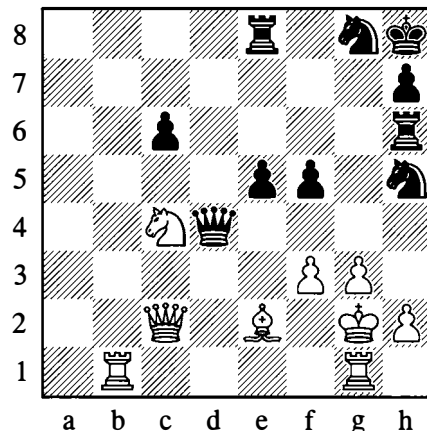
Creating two threats: a serious one (...♜f2 followed by ...♜xg3† with mate) and a secondary one (...f5-f4 and if g3-g4 then ...♜g3†). The latter is not immediately devastating but is still an unpleasant prospect for White to think about.

**30.♔g2?**

With three minutes left on his clock, Khalifman decides to parry both threats, failing to evaluate the objective merits of the second one. In doing so, he exposes the king too much.

There was no time for 30.♜xf5? because of 30...♜f2! 31.♞g2 ♜xg3†! with mate.

30.♔f1! would have been safest, and after 30...f4 31.♞d1 ♜a7 32.g4 ♜g3† 33.♔g2 White should be able to survive, although 33...e4!? keeps things sharp.

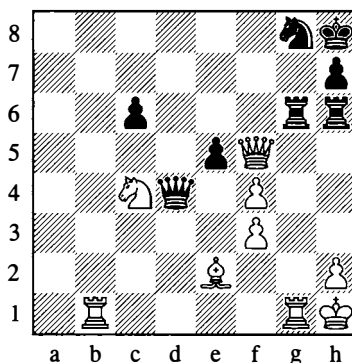
**30...♞e6!**

My next soldier steps forward. The only piece left behind is the g8-knight, which fulfils the important task of protecting the king. White is in a critical situation, having to contend with threats such as ...♜f4† or the simple ...♞eg6.

31.♔d3

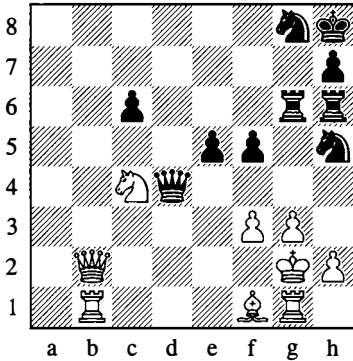
Clearing the second rank, but speeding up my attack.

31.♜xf5? allows a nice sacrificial attack: 31...♜f4†! 32.gxf4 ♞eg6† 33.♔h1



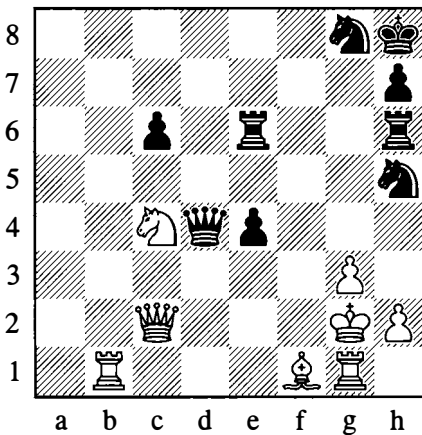
33...♞xh2†! 34.♔xh2 ♜f2† 35.♔h3 ♞h6† 36.♔g4 ♜h4 mate.

31. ♖f1 would have been a better defensive try:
 31... ♖eg6 32. ♖b2 It is essential to exchange
 the queens, even at the cost of losing another
 pawn.



32... ♖xg3! 33. ♖xd4 (33. hxg3? leads to mate:
 33... ♖xg3+ 34. ♖xg3 ♖h4+ 35. ♖g2 ♖h2#)
 33... ♖xf1+ 34. ♖xf1 exd4 Converting Black's
 material advantage is not easy, but the ending
 is absolutely one-sided.

31... e4 32. fxe4 fxe4 33. ♖f1



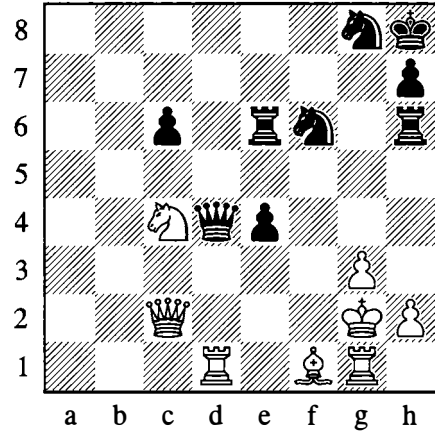
33... ♖hf6

Setting up another trap into which my
 opponent will finally fall.

Objectively, a better continuation would have
 been 33... ♖f4+! 34. ♖h1 ♖d3 with an extra
 pawn and complete domination.

34. ♖d1?

The correct way to fight against my queen
 was 34. ♖b2!, for instance 34... c5 35. ♖e2
 when White recovers some coordination and
 has genuine chances to save the game.



34... ♖g4!

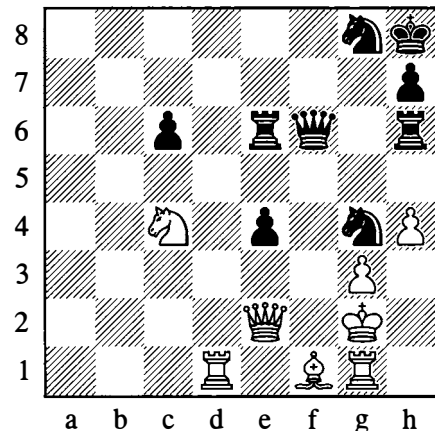
Quite a shock! Mate in one is a stronger
 threat than capturing the queen. Now White
 has to make a positional concession.

35. h4

Keeping some breathing space around the
 king, but weakening the structure.

35... ♖h1 ♖f6 would leave White poorly
 coordinated.

35... ♖f6 36. ♖e2



36...♖g7?

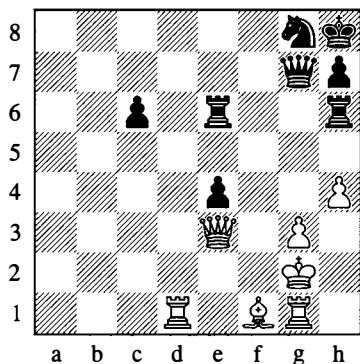
A human, pragmatic move, setting up pressure along the g-file, but far from the best.

I checked 36...♞xh4! of course, but after 37.gxh4 I did not spot 37...♞f4! with a decisive attack: 38.♞b2† ♞f6 Threatening ...♞h2 mate. 39.♙h1 ♖f2† 40.♙g2 ♞g4† 41.♙h2 ♞xh4† 42.♙g2 ♞h3 mate.

The next phase of the game contains mutual inaccuracies, but White will be the last to err, just before reaching the time control.

37.♙h1

37.♖e3! ♖xe3† 38.♞xe3 was the best defensive try.

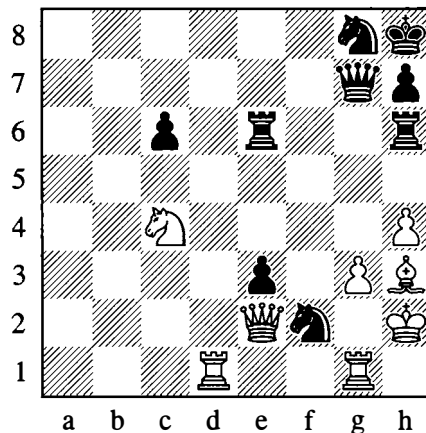


The hurried 38...♞xh4?! is met with 39.♞d8!, which should save the game, for instance 39...♞eh6 40.♞xg8†! and the exposed king prevents Black from delivering mate.

The correct move is 38...♞e8!, defending the back rank and preparing the activation of the knight, with a persistent attack.

37...e3

37...♞hf6! was strongest, and 37...♞ef6 was also better than the game continuation.

38.♙h3 ♖f2† 39.♙h2**39...♞e7**

39...♞e4! is more active and, for reasons that will be revealed below, also better.

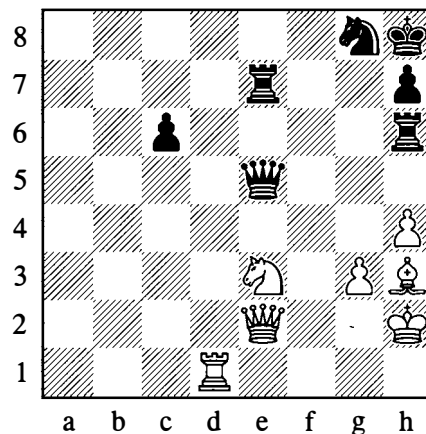
40.♖xe3?

With his flag hanging, Khalifman must have feared some ghosts.

The active 40.♞d8! would have kept him in the game. Had I played 39...♞e4, I could have met this move with 40...♖xh3 41.♙xh3 ♞f6, attacking the rook and threatening ...♞exh4† with a decisive attack.

40...♖xd1 41.♞xd1 ♞e5

The time trouble is over, but Black is an exchange up and will win more material thanks to the two deadly pins.



42.♖d3 ♗xh4 43.♗f3 ♗h6 44.♖b3 ♗f6
 45.♗g2 h5 46.♗d2 ♗f3
 0-1

Boris Gulko – Judit Polgar

Aruba 1992

In many ways this was a typical King's Indian game. In the beginning there were two critical points: the opening surprise 16.c5 and the turning point 20...♗df6. Later, I managed to unbalance my opponent with a series of tricky threats, but the final part, after I got an advantage, was marred by mutual mistakes, in which his time trouble proved decisive.

In the next game we will see a further development of our theme of playing on both flanks. In a position with opposite-sided castling, White started to attack on the kingside, while I was looking for chances on the opposite wing – a reversal of the traditional King's Indian roles. The plans were soon derailed, though, when the centre was blown apart by tactical means.

On the final day of the Roquebrune 1992 rapid tournament, my sisters and I had a long chat about our upcoming plans with our Maecenas, Joop van Oosterom. For some reasons, that was a period when we had no invitations to strong tournaments, so Joop kindly offered to organize one for us!

The island of Aruba, from the Dutch Antilles in the Caribbean, used to be Joop's favourite place and he spent at least half of the year on it. Joop was eager to see us play in Aruba, but also wanted to lend us a hand for our preparation. He invited us for a training session about ten days before the tournament. Susan was training with Boris Gulko, Sofia with Lev Psakhis and I with Gyula Sax. Four more players joined us later for the tournament.



Aruba 1992 – Relaxing on the beach

We did not neglect the physical preparation either. We used to start the day with two hours playing tennis, and in the breaks we frequently swam in the sea. I remember that after spending one month in this fantastic place, I dreamed of being able to live there some day.

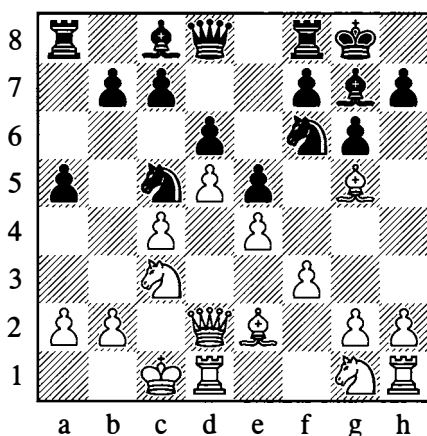
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♙g7 4.e4 d6 5.♙e2 0-0 6.♙g5

The Averbakh System is an ambitious set-up, aiming to put pressure on Black from an early stage. Its main drawback is similar to that of the Sämisch, namely the slight problems White experiences in developing the g1-knight.

6...♘a6 7.♙d2 e5 8.d5 ♘c5 9.f3 a5 10.0-0-0

White makes clear his intention to prepare a kingside attack with g2-g4 and h2-h4-h5. His last move also sets up pressure along the d-file in order to inhibit the freeing ...c7-c6.

My attacking ideas are less clear at this moment, but I can count on stirring up some complications before White gets to develop his problem knight.



10...♙d7

The time spent on this natural developing move (eleven minutes) gives a clear hint that I had no specific preparation in this line. I only knew that I had to play ...a5-a4, ...c7-c6 and

...♙d8-a5 in one order or another, in order to get counterplay.

11.♔b1?!

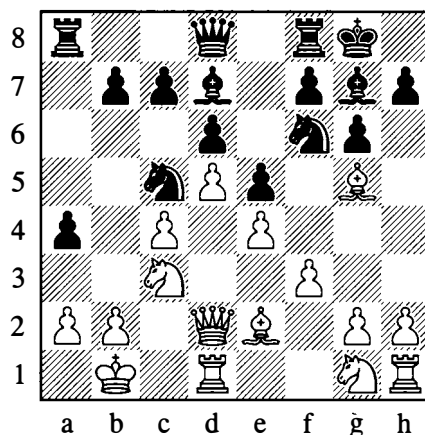
There is no need for this typical prophylactic move yet. The king might only experience some discomfort on c1 after ...c7-c6, which is out of the question for the time being.

11.h4 preparing either ♘g1-h3 or g2-g4 would have been a better try to develop White's initiative.

11...a4

By this point I had spent as much as 25 minutes. This was quite unusual, and a sign that I did not know what to do exactly. I also considered 11...♘a4, but after 12.♘b5 White would avoid the knight exchange and increase his pressure on d6.

My chosen move clears the a5-square in advance, hoping to play ...c7-c6 followed by ...♙a5 soon. I also thought that being able to weaken the long diagonal with ...a4-a3 may make the opening of the centre work tactically, while in some (admittedly rare) cases, the natural answer b2-b3 might allow some tactical ideas based on ...♘xb3.



12.g4?!

Gulko played this move after barely one minute. It probably did not cross his mind that the weakening of the h1-a8 diagonal might offer Black some additional ideas and, more importantly, that it would immediately cause me to ‘wake up’ from my initial lethargy!

12.h4! with the idea of either g2-g4 or ♖h3 would be a more restrictive move order.

12...c6

Played after only seven minutes and with great confidence, which rather surprised my opponent. I did not find any active possibilities after the other possible idea (12...a3 13.b3), so I had little trouble making my decision.

Boris now took his first long think (seventeen minutes), which was absolutely correct, as this was the first critical moment of the game. Should he accept the sacrifice or continue with his plan as if nothing had happened?

13.dxc6

13.h4!

I was more worried about this move, which maintains White’s space advantage while continuing the main plan. I would have played:

13...♖a5

13...cxd5 14.♕xd5 would allow White too much activity in the centre.

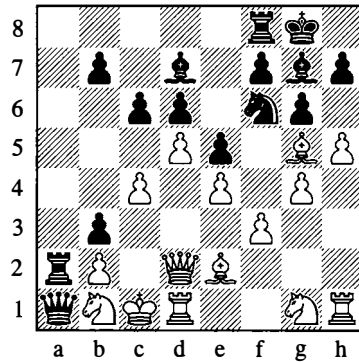
14.h5 ♕b3!

By that time I had built up the reputation of a dangerous attacking player, and I am pretty sure this is the type of sacrifice that Boris feared. Accepting the offer is dangerous:

15.axb3?

Matters are less clear after 15.♖e1 or 15.♖e3. Black is allowed to install the knight on d4, but the kingside attack remains dangerous. As they say, this would have been an entirely different game.

15...axb3 16.♔c1 ♖a1† 17.♕b1 ♖a2



18.♖c3

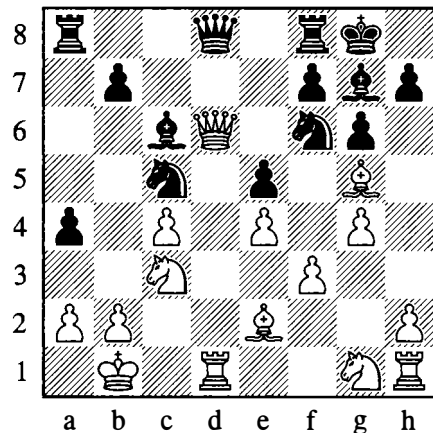
Black was threatening ...♖xb1†!! followed by ...♖fa8 and mate.

18...cxd5

Black has a huge initiative for the piece, and I could only imagine myself on one side of such a position!

13...♕xc6 14.♖xd6

The only consistent move, without which the c5-knight would jump closer to the d4- and f4-squares with ...♕e6.



14...♖xd6!?

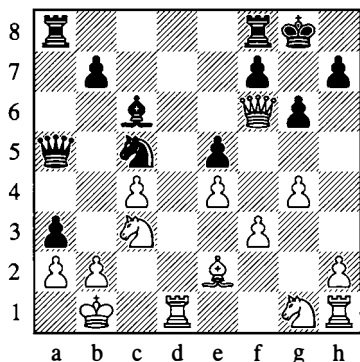
Unlike my opponent, I spent relatively little time (seven minutes) on what was clearly a critical moment for me. I saw the ensuing tactical operation and went for it!

14...♖a5!

This strong piece sacrifice did not escape my attention, but my calculation was too superficial.

15. ♖xf6 ♖xf6 16. ♖xf6 a3

White is a piece and a pawn up, but his king is vulnerable and his coordination is chaotic.

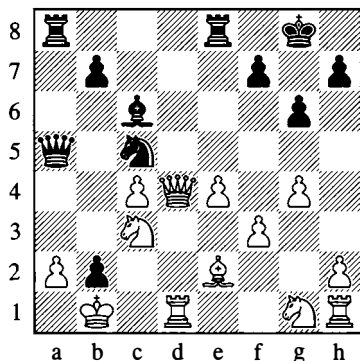


17. ♖xe5 ♖fe8!

I only considered 17... ♖b4? when 18. ♖d2 parries all the threats.

I could also choose a different move order, starting with 17... axb2!, with a probable transposition after a subsequent ... ♖fe8.

18. ♖d4 axb2

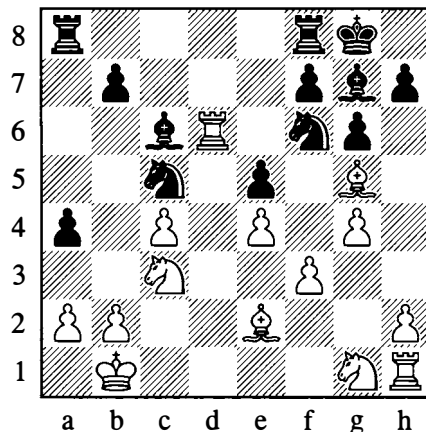


Black has fine compensation; the immediate threat is 19... ♖xe4 20. fxe4 ♖xe4†.

A critical reader may wonder why the same attack would not work after the recommended 12.h4!. The position after Black's 16th move above offers us a simple answer. With h2-h4

having been played instead of g2-g4, White could play 17.h5! with a decisive counterattack.

15. ♖xd6

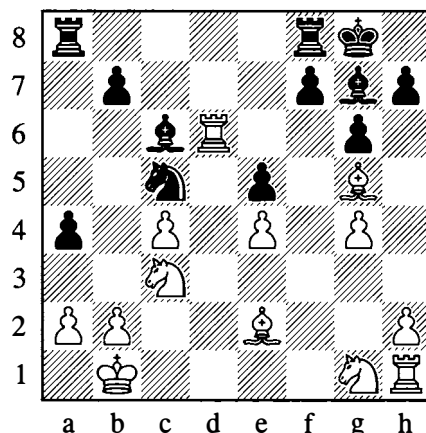


15... ♖fxe4!

Played without thinking. This is the only way to take advantage of the weakness of the long light diagonal.

16. fxe4

At this point I stopped for two minutes(!) to double-check which way of capturing was better.



16... ♖xe4†!

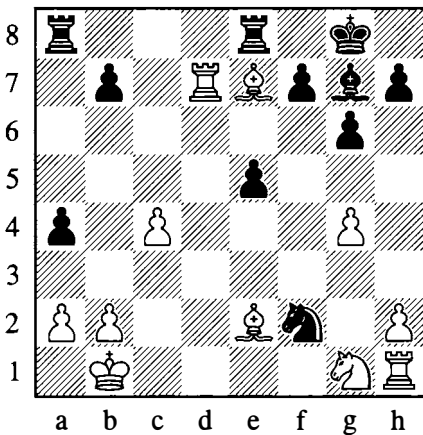
It is hard to say whether this is better than 16... ♖xe4 in an absolute sense. However, from

a practical perspective the latter leads by force after 17.♖xc6 ♜xc3† 18.bxc3 bxc6 19.♟f3 to a position in which White has completed development and enjoys good prospects for his pieces.

The game continuation forces White to make more difficult choices, causing him to eat up his reserves of time and energy.

17.♟f3 ♜xc3 18.♙e7 ♜fe8 19.♞d7 ♟f2

This is the position I was aiming for, thinking that the next move is forced.



20.♙f3!

Apparently, Boris also did not believe there was an alternative, since he only spent two minutes here.

Instead, he should have continued his development at any cost:

20.♟h3!

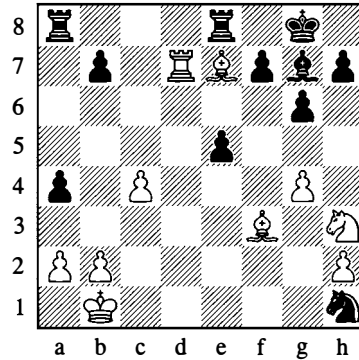
A remarkable move; instead of defending the rook, White puts another piece en prise!

20...♟xh1

Black should win as much material as possible. If 20...♟xh3?! 21.c5 followed by ♙c4, White would obtain a strong initiative at the cost of only one pawn.

21.♙f3

The knight is almost doomed, but as long as it remains on the board, I can throw in some intermediate moves to activate my position.



21...e4 22.♙xe4

22.♙xh1 ♞a6 indirectly defends the pawn in view of ...♞e6, while threatening its advance. 22...♙f8 23.♙xb7 ♞ab8 24.♙f6 ♙g7 25.♙xg7 ♟xg7

By clearing the e-file, Black has managed to avoid losing the knight, but the price has been two pawns.

26.♟g5 h6 27.♟xf7 ♟f6 28.c5

White has two pawns for the exchange and active pieces. True, Black's active king is an asset, but overall White's position is more pleasant.

20...e4

Boris must have spotted another critical moment, since he invested more than twenty minutes on his next move. Long thinks do not always produce good moves though.

21.♙g2?

Once again delaying the kingside development, and underestimating my forthcoming initiative.

21.♟h3!

This familiar idea was absolutely necessary. I would have surely played:

21...♟xh1

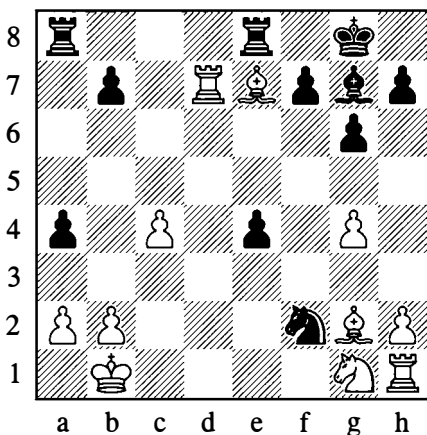
I could not have stood the disappointment of playing a slightly worse ending after having complicated the game so nicely, so the variation 21...♟xh3?! 22.♙xe4 ♟f2

23.♞e1 ♜xe4 24.♞xe4 b6 would not have been for me.

22.♙xh1

Transposing to the line 20.♜h3 ♜h1 21.♙f3 e4 22.♙xh1 given above, when 22...♞a6! gives Black a full share of the chances.

I suspect that Gulko's mistake can be attributed to psychological factors. Quite probably, he was not entirely satisfied with either of the two candidates. In such cases it is easy to lose one's self-discipline in calculation and start switching from one line to the other without a clear overview. When the game is finished, we often ask ourselves why we had thought for so long since we had seen the correct move in an instant.



21...♞ac8!

My last piece joins the fight and White's underdeveloped army will not be able to contain my initiative.

22.c5

The best try. If 22.♜e2 ♜xh1 23.♙xh1 ♞xc4 my pieces would display great activity, which is more than can be said for the bishop on h1. Moreover, I would not even be behind on material.

22...♙f8!

Exchanging bishops will enable me to win a pawn and clear the c-file for the rook.

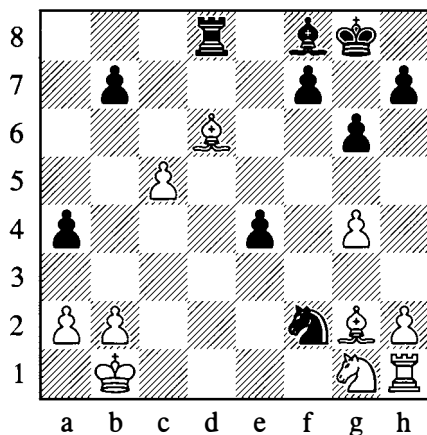
23.♙d6

If 23.♙xf8 ♜xf8 24.♜e2 ♜xh1 25.♙xh1 ♞xc5 Black is clearly better. An important point is that 26.♞xb7? loses material after 26...♞d8 27.♜c3 ♞xc3 28.bxc3 ♞d1†.

23...♞cd8!

Continuing the policy of exchanging White's active pieces – an effective strategy in positions with a lead in development. With several of his pieces still passive on the kingside, White loses ground in the centre.

24.♞xd8 ♞xd8



25.♜h3

On two previous occasions, this knight move would have spared White lots of problems, but now it comes too late to improve his position.

Clearing the d-file with 25.♙xf8 ♜xf8 would leave White facing the unpleasant prospect of a check on d1. He could try 26.♙xe4!? ♜xe4 (26...♜xh1 is less clear, as after 27.♙xb7! the c-pawn is dangerous) 27.♜f3, but after 27...♜xc5 Black's extra pawn should decide the game.

25. ♖e2? is even worse, as after 25... ♖xh1 26. ♗xh1 ♗xd6 27. cxd6 f5 28. gxf5 gxf5 29. ♖g3 ♗xd6 the f5-pawn is indirectly defended, and the connected pawns will easily decide the game.

25... ♖xh1 26. ♗xe4

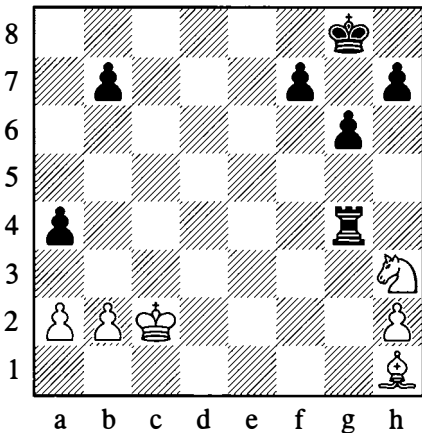
Played without thinking, as otherwise ...f7-f5 would create two connected passed pawns.

26... ♗xd6 27. cxd6 ♗xd6 28. ♖c2

White needs to prepare the capture of the knight, as 28. ♗xh1? loses to 28... ♗d1†. Still, the king does not control all the important squares along the d-file.

28... ♗d4 29. ♗xh1 ♗xg4

With a kingside pawn majority of three versus one, my position is winning. White cannot coordinate his minor pieces properly, especially with pawns on both wings. For more on this theme, please refer to my game against Helgi Olafsson on page 190 of the first volume.



30. ♗xb7

Only a temporary achievement.

30... ♗c4†!

An accurate move, forcing the king to move farther from one of the wings.

31. ♖d3

31. ♖b1 ♗h4 32. ♗g2 g5-+ is also winning for Black. The g5-pawn is taboo in view of ...♗g4, and the white king is too far away to help the poorly coordinated minor pieces.

31... ♗b4

Eliminating the potential danger of a white passed pawn.

32. ♗d5 ♗xb2 33. ♖g5 ♗xh2 34. ♖xf7 ♖g7

The rest is a matter of technique, as they say. White cannot fight against the connected pawns and defend his a2-pawn at the same time.

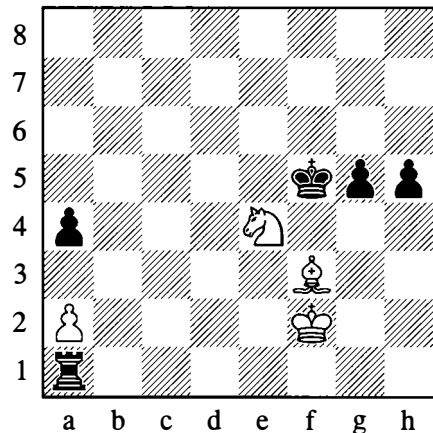
35. ♖e5 h5 36. ♖f3 ♗b2 37. ♖e3 ♖f6 38. ♖f4 ♗g2

Preparing ...g6-g5.

39. ♖e3 g5 40. ♖d2 ♗g3† 41. ♗f3 ♖f5 42. ♖e4 ♗g1

An indirect defence of the h5-pawn, as 43. ♗xh5? would drop the knight to 43... ♗e1†.

43. ♖f2 ♗a1



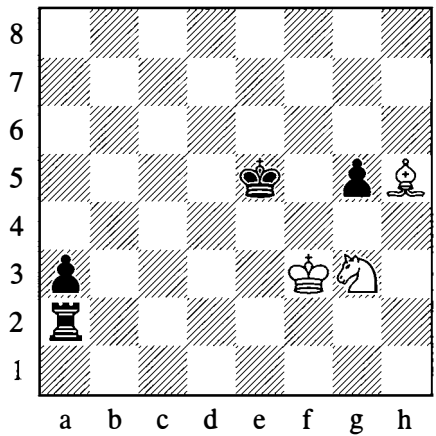
White has managed to set up a defensive system on the kingside, but what about the a2-pawn?

44. ♖g3†

If 44.♖c3 g4 45.♙d5 h4 46.♖xa4 the most accurate move would be: 46...♞c1! Cutting off the knight before advancing the pawns.

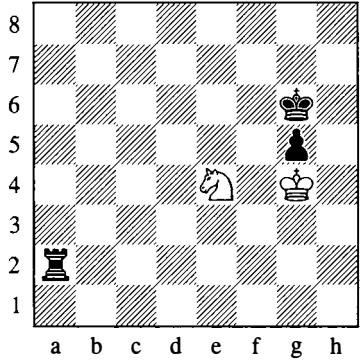
44...♗e5 45.♙xh5 ♞xa2† 46.♗f3 a3

The a-pawn will cost White one of his pieces, after which the g-pawn supported by the rook will decide.



47.♙f7 ♞b2 48.♗g4 ♗f6

White resigned without allowing me to reveal a final finesse: 49.♙g8 a2 50.♖e4† ♗g6 51.♙xa2 ♞xa2



And here 52.♖xg5 does not work due to 52...♞a4†. I ended my calculation here, evaluating that I win the knight and the game. The engines are far more precise, announcing mate in thirteen!

0-1



Chapter 8

Fluid Attacks



With the famous Lewis chessmen

Playing and analysing the King's Indian had a positive effect on my general style. I developed the ability to plan my attacks on a sound strategic basis, which increased their effectiveness.

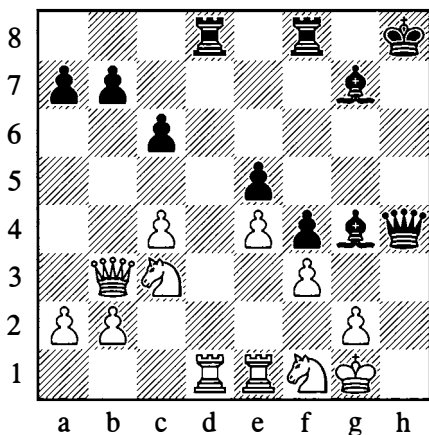
Although attacking the king frequently involves tactical elements, we should not mix up tactics with attacking play. A correct attack requires consistency and the ability to anticipate events, which rather relates to strategy. Tactics usually step in when everything is ready for them, or sometimes as auxiliary elements in the process of building up.

The examples examined in this chapter have one thing in common: the sensation of fluidity in my attacks, despite the opponent's stubborn defence. Move by move, I would find new resources to improve my position, while the defensive resources would at some point reach a dead end. I consider this to be a sort of trademark of my play.

We will start with a fragment that is closely linked with the previous chapter.

Vadim Ruban – Judit Polgar

Groningen PCA 1993



It is not difficult to recognize the King's Indian contours. Everything indicates that I am trying to attack on the kingside, but the

passivity of the g7-bishop seems to restrict my possibilities. If the bishop could join the attack in any way, while opening the g-file for my rooks at the same time, White's position would become critical. This is what will actually happen in the game, partly based on the remoteness of the white queen.

But first I had to make a decision with respect to the other bishop. Since most of White's pawns are placed on light squares, there are no active light-squared diagonals available. Therefore, I could not use this bishop for a better purpose than opening the g-file.

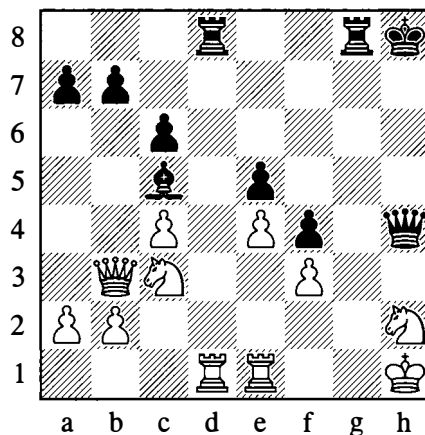
24...♙xf3! 25.gxf3 ♖g8!

Suddenly, the threat of ...♙f8† followed by ...♙c5 is killing. An important detail is that 26.♖xd8 does not prevent the deadly discovered check 26...♙f8†!. We discover another virtue of the bishop – the ability to block the eighth rank, thus protecting the g8-rook.

26.♘h2

The only reasonable defence, preparing a king retreat to the corner.

26...♙f8† 27.♔h1 ♙c5



How radically the position has changed in just a few moves! This is a clear warning that one should never underestimate the

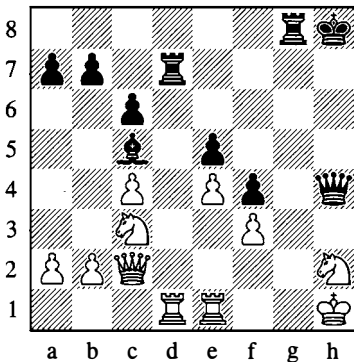
King's Indian bishop!

The immediate threat is ...♖g3, when White could not avoid being mated on g1 or g2. The hanging e1-rook prevents the simplifying ♜d1xd8, so White needs to try to regroup somehow.

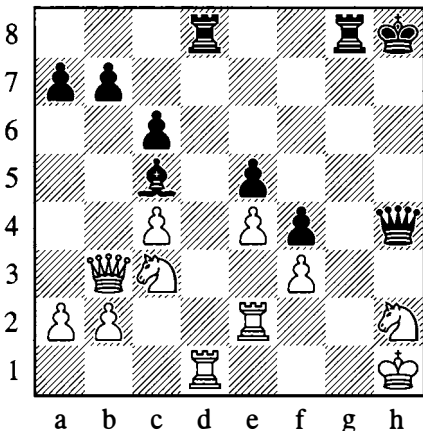
28.♞e2

This does not free the d1-rook from the task of defending the back rank, due to the possible mate on g1.

If 28.♞c2, finally bringing the queen back to the defence, my planned rook lift 28...♞d7! would be just as good as in the game.



The d7-rook is taboo because the e1-rook is hanging. 29.♞f1 ♞dg7 White cannot parry the threat of ...♞h3 followed by ...♞g2.



28...♞d7!

A familiar idea. The rook's activation is the final link in my fluid attack. In fact, 28...♞d6 would have been just as good.

29.♘a4 ♕f2!

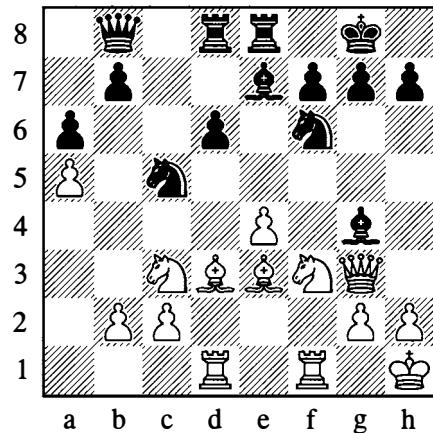
The final touch. After blocking the second rank, there is no satisfactory defence against the thematic combination 30...♞xh2! 31.♙xh2 ♞h7 mate.

0-1

In the next game I build up my attack very patiently. I even overlooked a tactical motif at an early stage, but delivered it a few moves later under better circumstances! A completely different picture with respect to many of my first-volume games...

Judit Polgar – Vassily Ivanchuk

Monaco (rapid) 1995



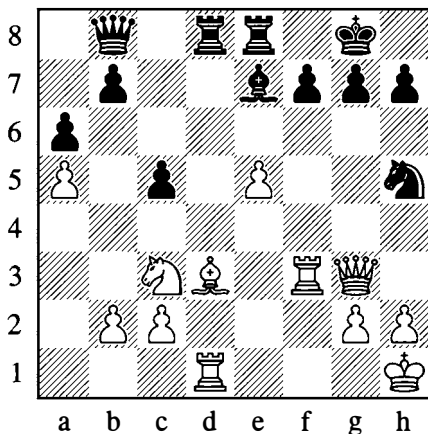
Both sides seem to have normal development, but once again my opponent's queen is rather far from the kingside. With all my pieces on optimal squares, I decided I was justified in launching an attack.

19.♙xc5!

I gladly gave up the bishop pair for the sake of clearing a path for my e-pawn.

19...dxc5 20.e5

The g4-bishop is hanging, forcing the next exchange. As a result, I will have overwhelming pressure along the f-file.

20...♙xf3 21.♞xf3 ♖h5**22.♞h3!**

The most accurate move. The seemingly active 22.♞g4?! would allow some tactics: 22...♞xe5 23.♞f5 ♖f6! Saving the knight and keeping the extra pawn.

With the queen on h3, the e5-pawn is taboo.

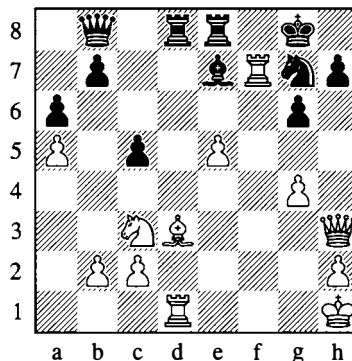
22...g6 23.g4!

The f-file activity will find an optimal complement in the pressure against h7. The last move does not imply any danger for the white king, since Black has exchanged his light-squared bishop.

23...♖g7 24.♞e1

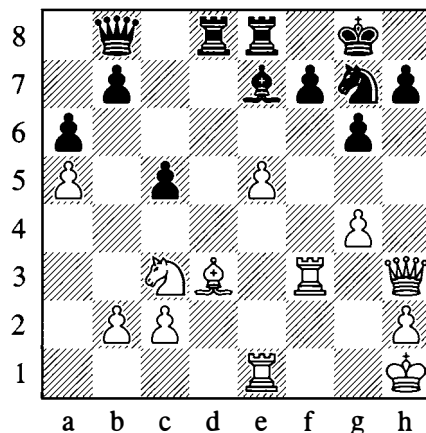
Defending the e5-pawn and preparing a slow but unpleasant attack with ♙c4 and ♖e4.

I am surprised to learn that I missed the thematic sacrifice: 24.♞xf7



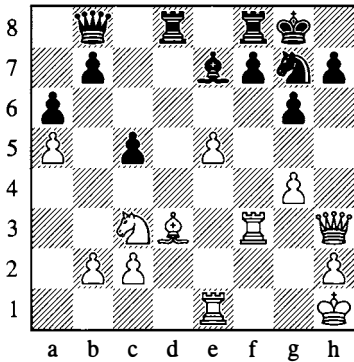
Since 24...♙xf7 25.♙c4† leads to mate, Black has nothing better than 24...♞xe5 25.♞df1 with a strong attack without any material investment.

When playing my last move, I probably was confident that my attack had enough force without the necessity of giving up the e5-pawn.

**24...♞e6?**

This natural move, placing the knight on an excellent blocking square, is the decisive mistake. Ivanchuk had calculated that now and on the next move the sacrifice on f7 was impossible due to ...♞e6-g5, but he was only partly right.

The passive 24...♞f8, over-protecting f7, was the only move that offered chances for survival.



I would have had a pleasant choice between the neutral 25. ♖c4 and the resolute 25. ♖e4! threatening ♖f6†. If 25... ♗xe5 26. ♖f6† ♗xf6 27. ♗xf6 ♖xf6 Black gets acceptable material compensation for the queen, but 28. ♗f3 would cause him serious problems defending both wings.

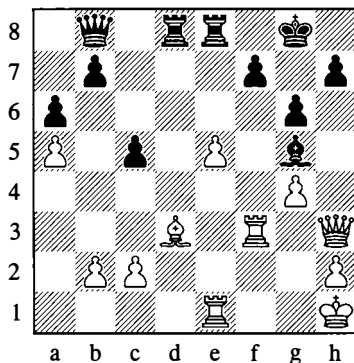
25. ♖e4!

The obvious threat is 26. ♖f6† ♖xf6 27. exf6 followed by ♗h6 with a decisive attack. There is another hidden purpose of my last move, though: defending the g5-square.

25... ♗xe5

Black could exchange my dangerous knight, but this would not save him from problems on f7:

25... ♖g5 26. ♖xg5 ♖xg5



27. ♗xf7!

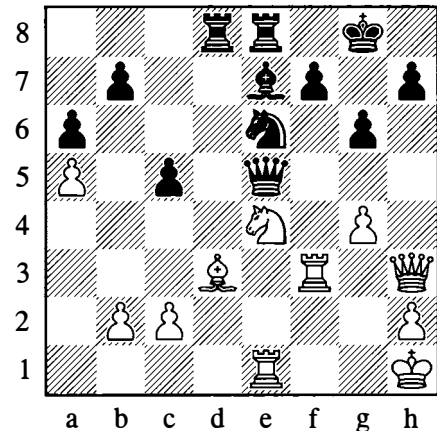
This type of sacrifice can be found in any collection of combinations, and is totally automatic for me.

27... ♖xf7 28. ♗xh7† ♖e6 29. ♖c4† ♖d5 30. ♖xd5† ♖xd5 31. ♗d7† ♖c4 32. ♗e4 mate!

A nice pattern!

It is easy to understand Ivanchuk's optical illusion when heading for the position after his last move.

Black seems to have regained optimal coordination, with an extra pawn and a centralized position. In such situations, one tends to think that simple tactics will work out well for him, but I had managed to see deeper.



26... ♗xf7!

Better late than never!

26... ♖g5

I had the feeling that Ivanchuk was enthusiastic about having caught me with this trick, but it did not last for long.

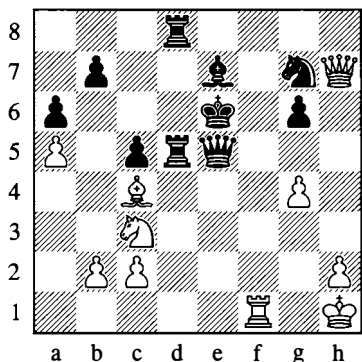
Instead if:

26... ♖xf7

There would be more than one winning continuation of the attack. I will examine the most practical of them, winning material and simplifying to a won ending.

27. ♗xh7† ♖g7

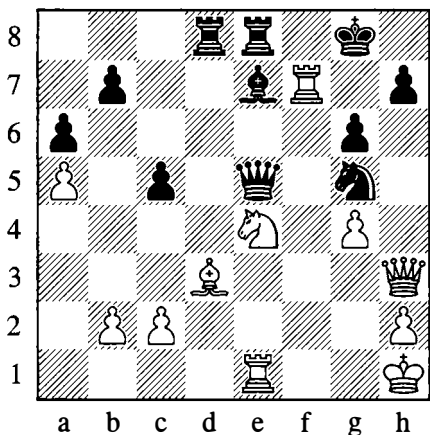
Or 27...♖g7 28.♜f1† ♕f6 29.♞xf6† ♘e7
30.♞xe6† wins the queen.
28.♕c4† ♜d5 29.♞f1† ♘e6 30.♘c3! ♜ed8



The tension has reached its culmination and the time has come to take back the material with interest.

31.♕xd5† ♜xd5 32.♞g8† ♘d6 33.♞xd5†
♞xd5† 34.♘d5 ♘xd5 35.♞f7

A nice concluding double attack.



27.♘xg5!

Ivanchuk must have thought this would not work because it loses the e1-rook with check.

27...♞xe1† 28.♕f1

In fact, Black's counterplay has come to an end after the check. Now his king is in trouble.

28...h5

The only defence against the mate.

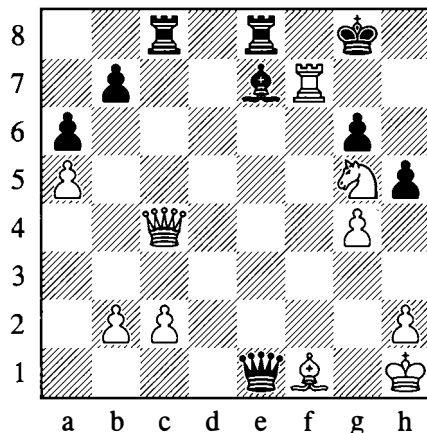
29.♞b3!

Or maybe Black had overlooked this killing queen switch? This move threatens several decisive discovered checks.

29...c4

Desperation. If 29...♕xg5 30.♞e7† ♘h8 31.♞xe1 ♞xe1 I would have 32.♞c3† winning the e1-rook. This would be one of those moments when many would say: "It's incredible how lucky she is!"

30.♞xc4 ♜c8



The attempt to kick my queen away from the active diagonal is not convincing, but I also have an immediate way to finish the game.

31.♞f8†! ♘g7

Or if 31...♘xf8 32.♞f7 mate.

32.♞g8†

Black resigned in view of 32...♘h6 33.♘f7 mate.

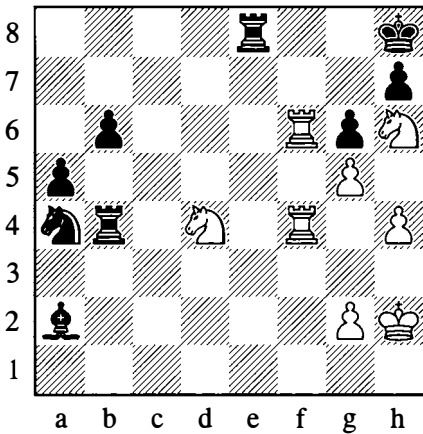
In the next example I managed to create a dangerous attack despite the absence of queens. My opponent, a future world champion, failed to sense the looming danger at the moment when he could still avoid it.

Judit Polgar – Veselin Topalov

Linares 1994

This is the only classical game in which I have started with 1.d4. I had been preparing for the tournament with Susan and Kamsky and they convinced me that I could use the queen pawn move as a surprise. Since I lost in the first round, I thought the second game would be ripe for this experiment.

The opening did not turn out well for me, but I eventually won!



I am a pawn down, but all my pieces are crowded in the neighbourhood of the enemy king. Since the a2-bishop safely defends the f7-square, I decided I needed the f5-square for my knights.

37.h5! gxh5?

Topalov took the pawn after only two minutes. He obviously underestimated the power of my attack.

Defending g6 with

37...g7?

would lose by force.

38.f6!

Ensuring a deadly check on f7.

38...g6 39.fxe6! fxf4

Forced, since 39...fxe6 leads to mate:

40.f7+ g8 41.f8+ g7 42.fg8 mate.

40.fxe8 f8

The only way to prevent f8 mate.

41.f7+ g8 42.fg4

Followed by f6, winning.

The previous variation reveals that Black should defend the e6-square rather than the g6-pawn:

37...c5! 38.hxg6 hxg6

I would not have more than a perpetual:

39.fh4

Or 39.fxg6 d6 40.fxe6 fxe6 and Black is out of danger.

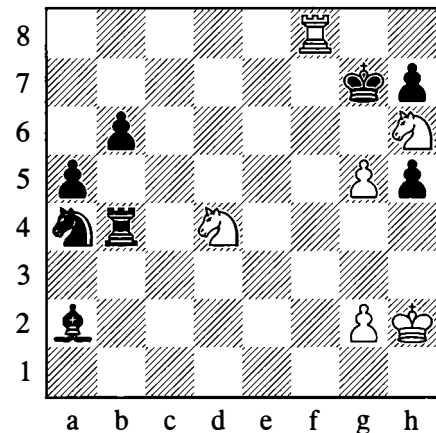
39...g7 40.fhf5+ gx5 41.fxf5+ g8

42.fg6+ f7 43.f6+ g8=

38.f8+

Exchanging an important defender of the kingside.

38...fx8 39.fxf8+ g7



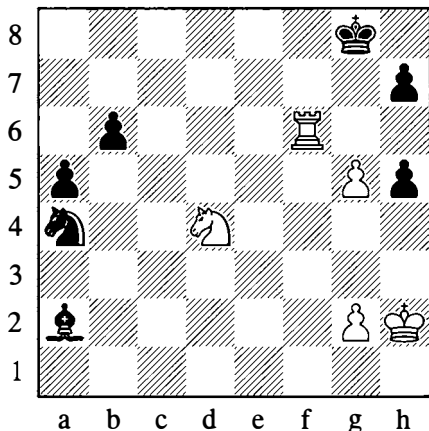
40.f6!

Veselin obviously overlooked this move. His king is dangerously caged, facing the threat of 41.fdf5+ g8 42.f8 with mate on the next move.

40...fxd4

The only way to save the king, but not the game.

41. ♖f5+ ♔g8 42. ♖xd4

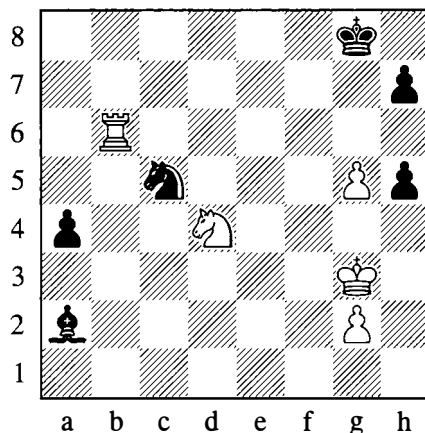


After winning the exchange, the win should be a matter of technique. Topalov's next move makes things even easier for me.

42... ♖c5?!

Black should not give away the b6-pawn so easily. 42... ♖f7 would have been more stubborn.

43. ♖xb6 a4 44. ♖g3



The king joins the attack with decisive effect.

44... ♖f7 45. ♖c6 ♖d3 46. ♖a6 ♖b2 47. ♖f4
 ♖d3+ 48. ♖f5
 1-0



Analysing with Topalov after the game

Attacking the French

I have always felt at home against the French Defence. This opening has something in common with the King's Indian, especially in the positions with a blocked centre and pawn chains.

The French is mainly a strategic opening and I usually build up my attacks on a strategic basis. True, after having accumulated enough positional pluses, I frequently finished things off tactically.

In the first fragment of this section, Black could not stand the positional pressure and tried to free himself with a typical pawn break. This had a tactical flaw, which I immediately took advantage of.

Judit Polgar – Oscar Panno

Buenos Aires 1992

This was my first longer visit to Buenos Aires. On the previous occasion I had stayed there for just one day, on my way to the 1986 Under-16 World Championship (please see my game against Majul in the first volume). Besides, I remember that it had been a rainy day, so I did not have time to see much of this beautiful city.



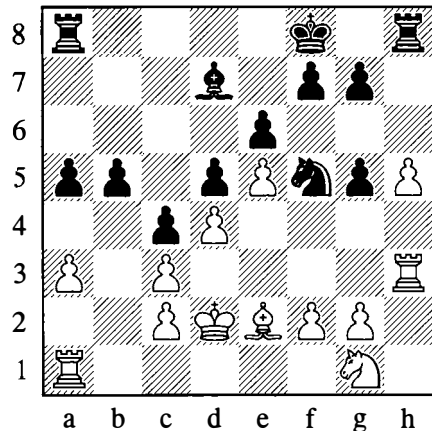
*A quick game with
Argentinian President Menem*

The event was known as the Najdorf tournament and rightly so. Apart from organizing it, Don Miguel was the heart and soul of the tournament. He came to the playing hall every day and often had a close look at the games... closer than customary. I remember an amusing incident.

On returning to his game after a short walk, Morovic found his chair occupied by Najdorf. Everything in Najdorf's appearance and behaviour suggested he was thinking about what to play next!

The clock was ticking, so at some point Morovic could not avoid disturbing Najdorf by gently touching his shoulder and kindly asking: "May I sit down?"

My opponent in this game was Oscar Panno, a very friendly man with an excellent sense of humour and a great love for chess. He had played Fischer more than once, as there were times when he was the strongest player in Latin America. In addition to playing, he spent a lot of time teaching, and his former students love him even today.



In a closed Winawer line of the French, Black managed to exchange queens at the price of weakening his kingside structure. My space advantage offers me chances of a lasting kingside attack, even in the absence of the queens.

20.g4

Blocking the weakness before attacking it, and also forcing the knight to a passive square.

20...♟h6

Forced, since 20...♟e7 would allow 21.♞f3 followed by ♟g1-h3, when Black would not be in time to defend the g5-pawn.

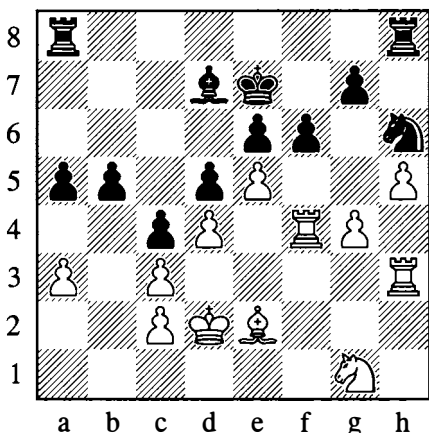
On h6, the knight is passive, but at least it prevents 21.♞f3 due to the hanging g4-pawn. At the same time, the knight safely blocks the h-pawn, so I felt I should start my attack without any delay.

21.f4!

Immediately challenging the stability of the black knight.

21...gxf4 22.♞f1 f6

A typical break in the French. In this exact position, it also fights for a blockade on the dark squares. At the same time, it weakens the g6-square. You can rarely get something without giving something else away.

23.♞xf4 ♔e7**24.♟f3**

It may seem strange that I develop the knight only on move 24, but in the closed lines of the

French this is relatively normal. In fact, Black's ...f7-f6 was just asking for ♟g1-f3-h4.

24...♞af8 25.♟h4 ♙e8

Both sides have regrouped in accordance with the necessities of the position. It can be felt, though, that Black has reached a maximum of coordination, while I can still improve my position.

26.♞h1!

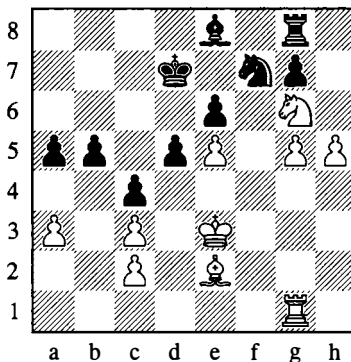
The rook enjoys the greatest mobility on the first rank. My plan was ♞b1 with the threat of a3-a4. Black would be practically forced to block his queenside on the light squares with ...a5-a4 and then I could switch to the kingside with ♞b1-g1, looking for the best moment to play g4-g5 (possibly after a previous exchange on f6).

Black can choose between a policy of neutrality, or preparing ...fxe5 or ...g7-g5. None of these possibilities guarantees a successful defence, but Panno's decision was the worst. This is one of the cases when the persistent threat of an attack is worse than its execution, inducing Black to go wrong.

26...♞hg8

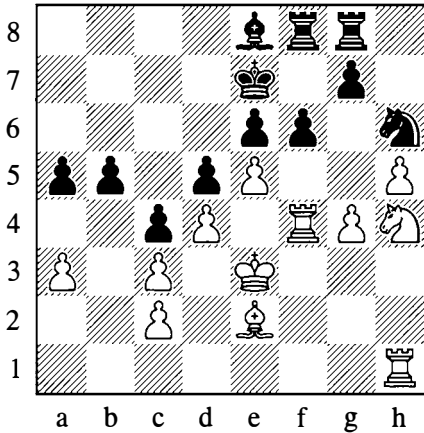
Preparing the mistaken ...g7-g5.

If 26...fxe5 27.♞xf8 ♞xf8 28.dxe5 ♞g8 29.g5 ♟f7 30.♟g6+ ♔d8 31.♞g1 ♔d7 32.♔e3



White's advantage is obvious in practically every sector of the board. Breaking through is not easy, but there should be a way to combine the threats of h5-h6 and a king invasion on the queenside.

27.♔e3



27...g5?

Overlooking a small tactical detail.

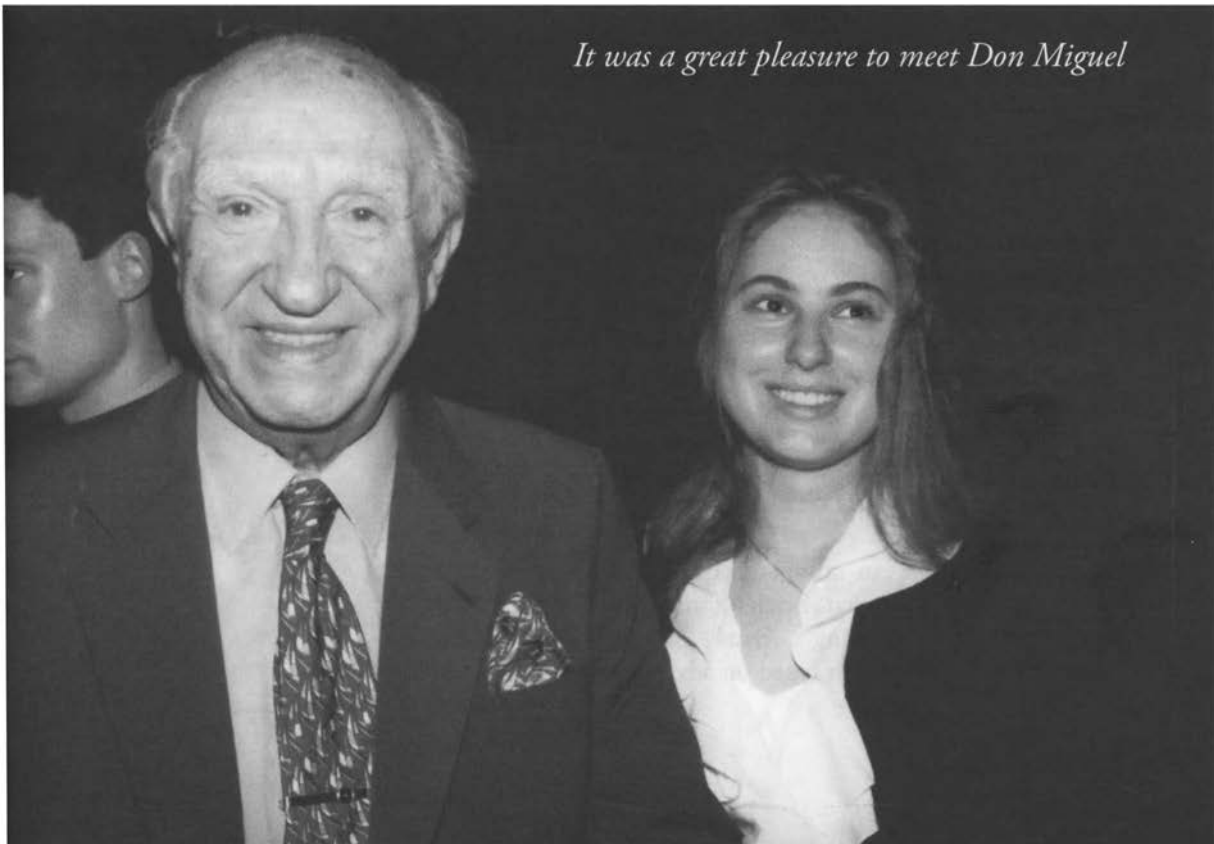
If Black wanted to break with ...g7-g5, he should at least have inserted the exchange on e5: 27...fxe5 28.dxe5 g5 29.hxg6 ♕xg6 30.♖xf8 ♜xf8 True, I would retain an advantage with 31.♖f1† due to the possibility of invading through f6, plus my passed pawn.

28.hxg6 ♕xg6?

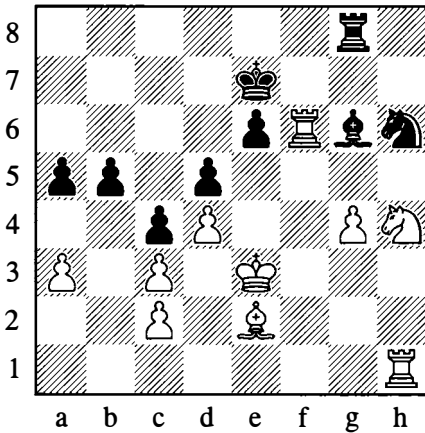
It was not too late to look for an emergency exit, but Panno played quickly, after only two minutes, without realizing the seriousness of his mistake.

True, 28...fxe5 does not promise Black an easy life: 29.♖xf8 exd4† 30.cxd4 ♜xf8 (or if 30...♖xf8 31.♘g2 ♘g8 32.♘f4 with complete domination) 31.g5 ♘f5† 32.♘xf5 exf5 33.♕f3 ♖xg6 34.♔f4 With a clear advantage despite the temporary material disadvantage.

29.exf6† ♖xf6 30.♖xf6



It was a great pleasure to meet Don Miguel

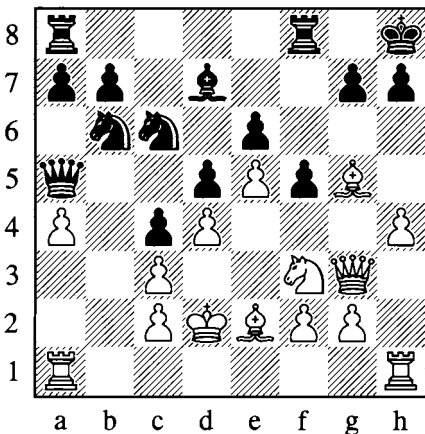


Panno suddenly realized what was awaiting him: 30...♖xf6 31.g5† ♕xg5 32.♘f3† winning the knight. Therefore, he resigned.

The next game features mutual attacks on the opposite wings. Time is essential in such cases, so tactics play an important role. In this case they worked out well for me, mainly because I had a strategic advantage in the first place.

Judit Polgar – Jacek Gdanski

Budapest Zonal (playoff) 1993



Both sides have an advantage on “their” wing. It may seem that Black’s threats are more concrete, including ...♘xa4 followed by ...♚xc3†. My attack is based on advancing

the h-pawn, but opening files requires some imagination.

17.h5! ♘xa4

After eight minutes, Gdanski decided to carry on with his own attack, without paying attention to mine.

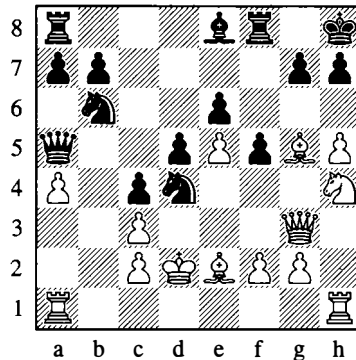
17...♙e8

This could lead to fascinating play:

18.♘h4

Creating several threats: ♘g6†, ♙f6 or h5-h6.

18...♘xd4



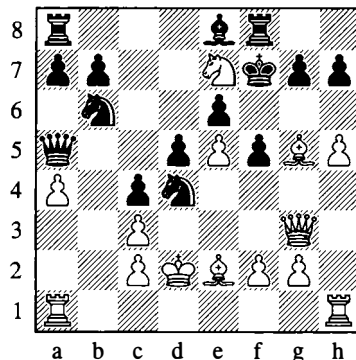
The only way of trying to punish my last move.

19.♘g6†!

The knight is taboo since Black cannot afford to open the h-file.

19...♙g8 20.♘e7† ♙f7

If 20...♙h8 the prettiest win is 21.♙f6 gxf6 22.exf6 and Black cannot parry the mates on g8 and g7 at the same time.



21. ♖h4!!

A fantastic move, threatening 22. ♜g6†!!
hxc6 23. hxc6 mate!

21... ♖xa4

Clearing the e8-square for the king.

22. h6

Preparing ♖h5, which Black cannot avoid,
for instance:

22... g6 23. ♖h5! gxh5 24. ♜g7† ♔e8 25. ♘g8
♜c5 26. ♘f6† ♝xf6 27. exf6

White wins.

17... h6 would be unappealing strategically and
bad tactically: 18. ♖xh6 gxh6 19. ♜g6 followed
by ♜xh6† and ♘g5.

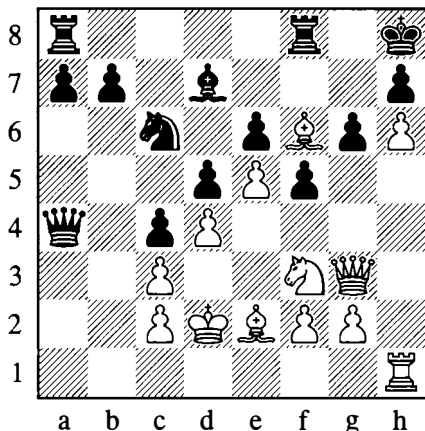
18. ♝xa4!

I was delighted to give away this passive rook to
gain time.

18... ♜xa4 19. h6 g6

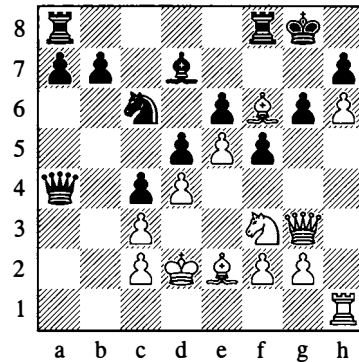
19... ♝f7 would allow a similar combination
as in the next comment, based on opening the
h-file: 20. hxc7† ♔g8 21. ♝xh7! with mate in
sight.

20. ♘f6†



20... ♝xf6

A sad necessity. 20... ♔g8 is worse.



21. ♜g6†! leads to a spectacular mating
set-up: 21... hxc6 22. h7† ♔f7 23. h8=♜ ♝xh8
24. ♘g5† followed by ♝xh8 mate.

21. exf6

Black's dark squares are desperately weak
and his king remains in danger.

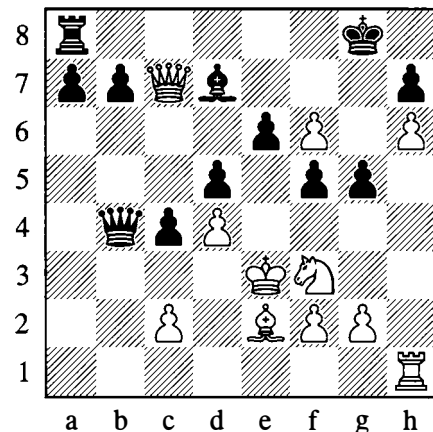
21... ♔g8 22. ♜c7

A decisive invasion.

22... ♘b4

Desperation. Black could not hold the
position after 22... ♝d8 23. ♘e5 either.

23. cxb4 ♜xb4† 24. ♔e3 g5



Hoping for 25. ♜xd7?? f4 mate! No thanks!

25. ♘xg5

1-0

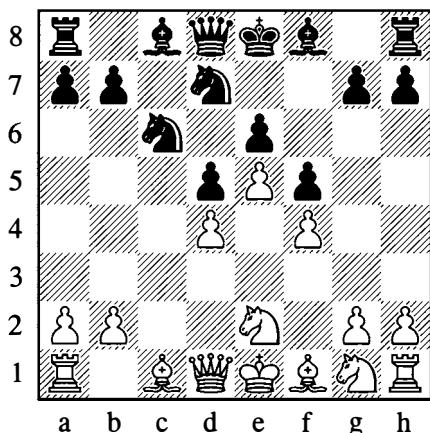
The next game is one of the most spectacular in the whole book, but I would hardly call it tactical. Calculating all the possible variations was virtually impossible, especially as it was a rapid game. Therefore, I believe I owe my win mainly to better long-term planning and better vision regarding the trajectory of the pieces.

Judit Polgar – Nigel Short

New York PCA (rapid) 1994

I examined the first game of my mini-match against Nigel on page 49. After a few minutes' break, we sat down for the second game.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7
5.♘ce2 c5 6.c3 ♘c6 7.f4 cxd4 8.cxd4 f5

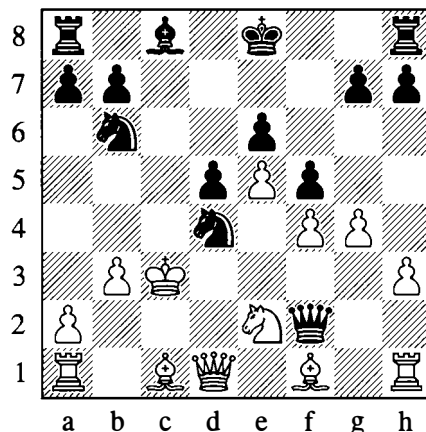


The French is one of Nigel's biggest specialties and greatest chess loves. By choosing a closed position he probably hoped that I would lose my patience and give him chances to equalize the score. He was right about the former, but wrong about the latter...

I played the next phase in an adventurous way. One might well think that the game was played in the 18th century. Please do not be too critical of my play during the first 18 moves; I did not do any special preparation for rapid games in those days, and was focusing more on having fun.

Throughout his career, Nigel has shown sympathy for all kinds of romantic lines and gambits, especially in the open games. This time, he will find himself on the material-grabbing side, and he did not sense when it was time to stop.

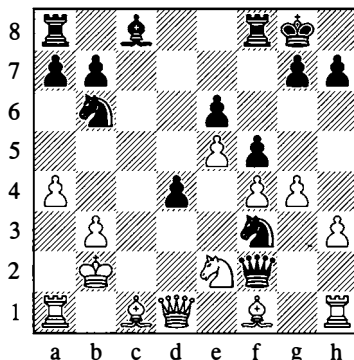
9.♘f3 ♘b6 10.h3 ♙e7 11.g4 ♙h4† 12.♘xh4
♙xh4† 13.♙d2 ♙f2 14.b3 ♘xd4 15.♙c3



I was well aware that Nigel suspected I had gone mad. Indeed, he has an advantage, but his problem was the wide choice of tempting continuations. His next moves will prove too greedy.

15...♙f3†

The safest way to an advantage was: 15...♘f3! 16.♙b2 (or 16.♘d4 ♙d7 followed by ...♙c8†, winning) 16...0-0 (16...d4 is also good) 17.a4 d4



Black is a pawn up and I would find it difficult to coordinate my pieces.

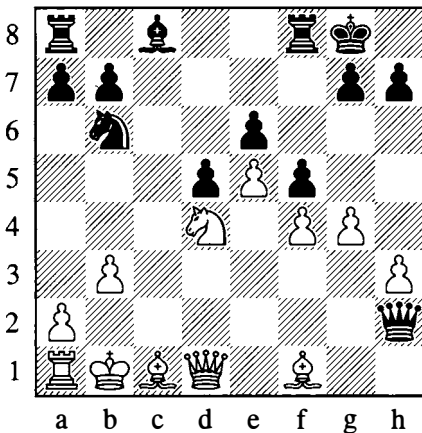
16.♠b2 ♖xh1 17.♜xd4

At this point I felt I had entirely adequate compensation for the big material deficit – an exchange *and* a pawn! My knight is a fantastic blocking piece, the bishops can be activated rapidly, while most of Black's pieces are passive. The only exception is the black queen, which however is more exposed than active.

17...♞h2?!

As will soon become clear, this is not a good square for the queen. Black should have castled at once.

18.♠b1 0-0



19.a4!

A very strong move, threatening 20.a5 ♜d7 21.♜xe6, but also planning the radical activation of my rook with ♖a1-a2-g2. Now we can see how unfortunate the last check was.

19...a5?

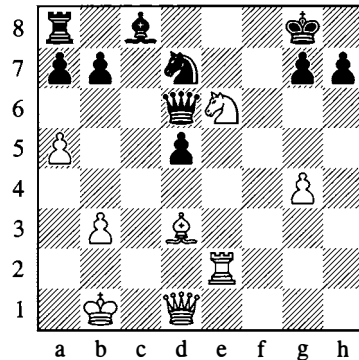
This natural move wastes an essential tempo on parrying what actually should be considered the secondary threat.

Black's only chance of staying alive was:
19...fxg4!?

True, his position remains very dangerous.

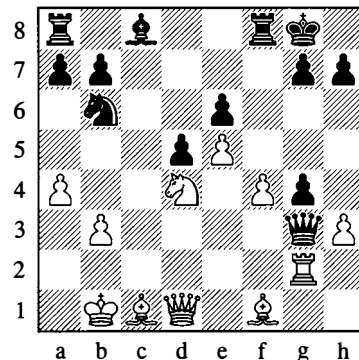
20.♖a2 ♞g3

20...♞h1 would practically lose two tempos:
21.hxg4 ♖xf4!? The only way to try to justify the previous move. Disrupting my structure certainly has some point. 22.♙xf4 ♞e4† 23.♙d3 ♞xf4 24.a5 ♜d7 25.♜xe6 ♞xe5 26.♞e2 ♞d6



My lead in development is so great that tactical solutions are now available.
27.♙xh7†! ♜xh7 28.♜g5† ♜g8 29.♞e6 followed by ♞f3 with a decisive attack.

21.♞g2

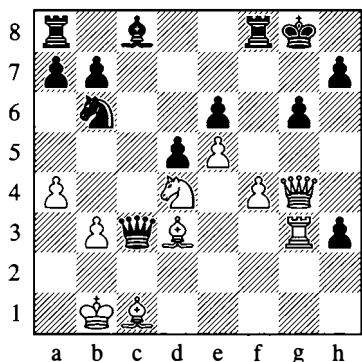


Another tempo gained!

21...♞c3

Or 21...♞h4 22.♞xg4 ♞e7 23.♙d3 with a powerful attack with the participation of all my pieces. Even my king could prove useful with ♜a2 followed by ♜a3!

22.♙d3 gxh3 23.♞g3 g6 24.♞g4

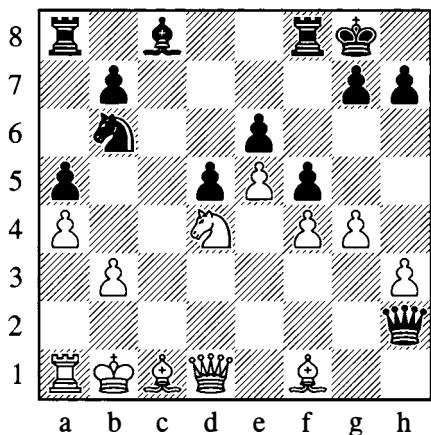


24...Rf5

The only way to prevent ♖xg6.

25.♙xf5 exf5 26.♖h4

Followed by ♖h3 with a winning attack.



20.♖a2 ♖g3

20...♖h1 21.♙f3 would soon trap the queen.

21.♖g2

By now, we both knew the truth about the position. It was obvious that Nigel did not feel comfortable at all, while I was sure to win the game and the match, unless I did something really stupid.

21...♖c3

Or if 21...♖h4 22.gxf5 exf5 23.♙a3 ♖xf4 24.♙xf8 ♖xf8 25.e6 and Black is completely paralysed.

22.gxf5

I decided now was a good moment to open the g-file and prepare to open the long diagonal with e5-e6.

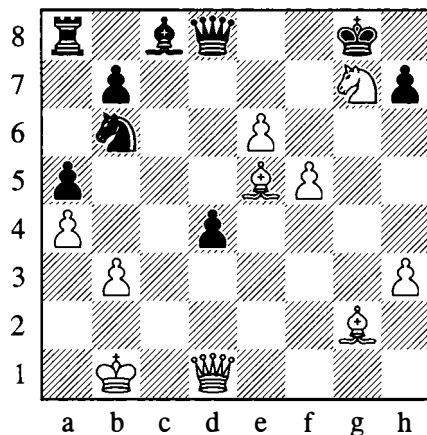
22...exf5 23.♙b2

Black is helpless. The pressure against g7 will soon become unbearable, while his queenside pieces (a small army in fact!) are completely out of play.

23...♖c7 24.e6 ♖f6

I felt the main difficulty was choosing between several winning moves.

25.♙xf5! ♖g6 26.♙e5 ♖d8 27.♙xg7 d4 28.f5 ♖xg2 29.♙xg2



I guess Nigel kept playing because he was not ready yet to resign. He could not have had any real hopes of saving the game.

29...♖g5 30.♖h5 ♖xh5 31.♙xh5 ♖a6 32.♙xd4 ♙a8 33.♙d5

And Nigel finally had had enough.

1-0

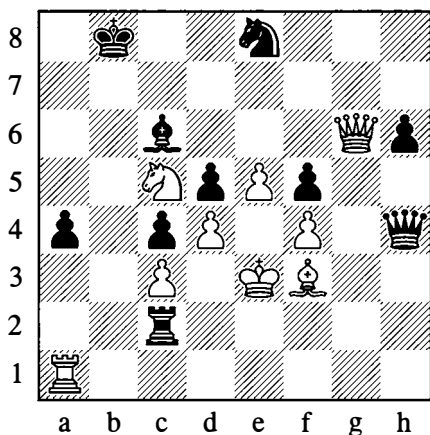
The spectators could follow live commentary on their headphones. The highly entertaining Maurice Ashley commented on this game, and many times he made the audience laugh out loud.

Chapter 9

Solving 2

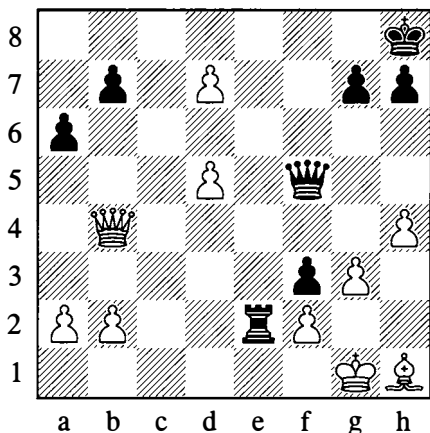


1. Polgar – Lautier, Madrid 1993



It is easy to guess the opening, especially after the previous section: it was a closed French. Black threatens mate in one, but fortunately it was my turn and I played: 43. ♖b1† Much to my frustration, Black resigned without letting me show the beautiful combination I had prepared. Can you find it?

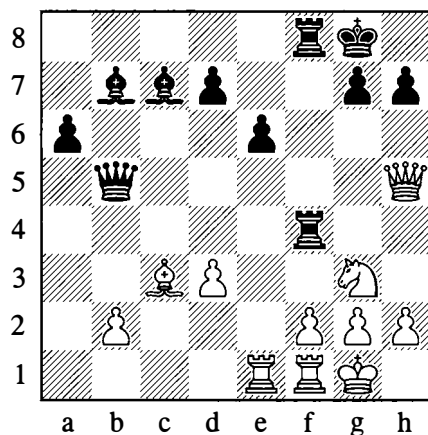
2. Kamsky – Polgar, Buenos Aires 1994



This game was played in the second round, right after I had won against Shirov. White's last move was 35.d7. With three minutes on his clock, Gata might have thought things were turning out well for him, but I had my own say on the matter.

Can you find a win for Black?

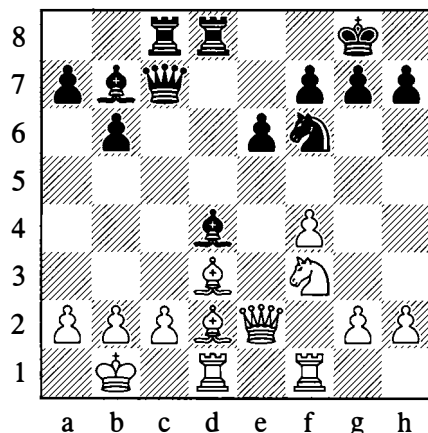
3. Macieja – Polgar, Batumi 1999



On this occasion, Hungary took the silver medals, missing gold by a hair. Still, we were all happy with the result.

At this point, White was in time trouble and had a difficult position. His last move, 30. ♖h5? allowed me to play an elegant combination.

4. Polgar – Ehlvest, Vienna 1996



Black has a comfortable position. He could have played 17... ♔c5, but after 13 minutes Ehlvest decided he could exchange my active bishop with:

17... ♔a6?

Can you find the flaw in his calculations?



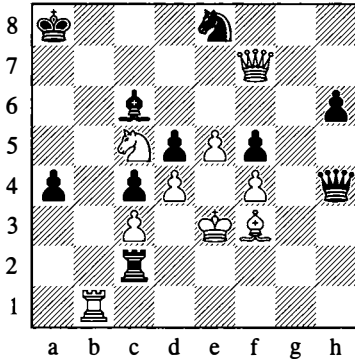
Solutions

1 Judit Polgar – Joel Lautier

Madrid 1993

The black king would have been mated after a series of checks:

43...♖a7 44.♜f7† ♔a8

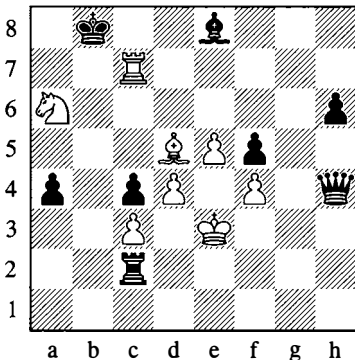


It may seem that everything is defended around the king, but...

45.♜xe8†!

Decoying the only defender of the b7-square.

45...♙xe8 46.♙xd5† ♔a7 47.♞b7† ♔a8
48.♞c7† ♔b8 49.♜a6#

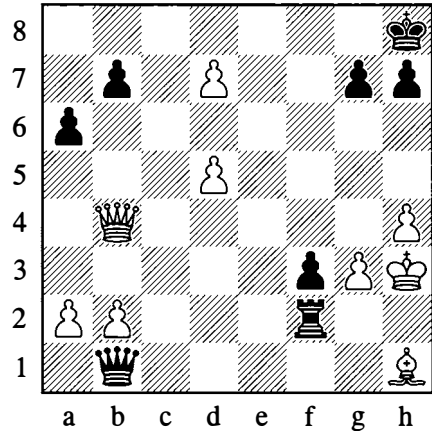


A nice mating pattern!

2 Gata Kamsky – Judit Polgar

Buenos Aires (Sicilian theme) 1994

35...♜b1† 36.♙h2 ♞xf2† 37.♙h3



White threatens two different back-rank mates, while his king is ready to escape via g4. There might have been people asking themselves how I could have ruined my earlier winning position to such an extent. If true, they surely had a big smile on their face after seeing my next move.

37...h5!!

Clearing the h7-square for my king and blocking the white king's escape. The spectacular thing is that White is allowed to promote his pawn with check, as this does not change anything.

38.♜f8†

Or if 38.d8=♜† ♔h7 39.♜e4† ♜xe4+ with an extra exchange and a continuing attack.

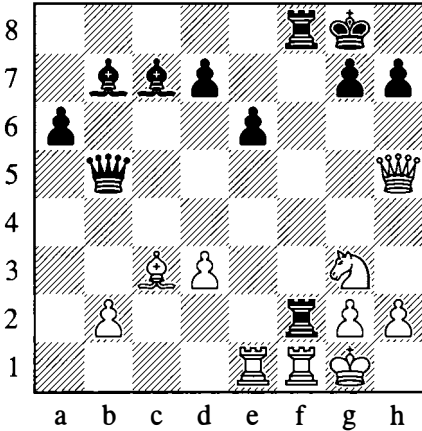
38...♙h7 0-1

Gata lost on time, but his position was hopeless anyway. 39.♙xf3 ♜f1† 40.♙g2 ♜xg2 mate.

3 Bartłomiej Macieja – Judit Polgar

European Team Championship, Batumi 1999

30...♞xf2!



Putting both bishops to work. The main idea is to decoy the king to f2 in order to play ...♙xg3† followed by ...♞xh5.

31.♞xf2

31.♞xb5 is met with the intermediate check 31...♞xg2† 32.♔h1 axb5 when Black threatens ...♞xg3† with mate and 33.♘e4 allows 33...♞xh2† with a decisive material and positional advantage.

31...♞xf2 32.♞e8†

White avoids the thematic line 32.♔xf2 ♙xg3†, but the game is lost anyway.

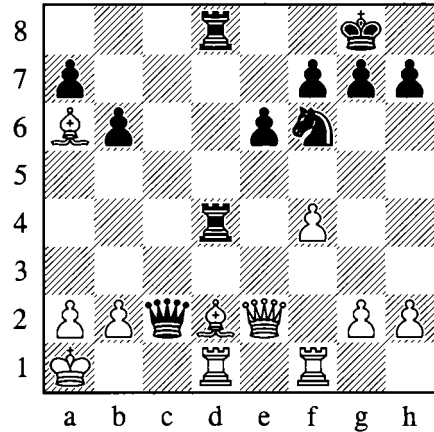
32...♞f8

I had won a pawn while retaining all my positional pluses. White kept fighting for a while, but could not avoid the loss.

4 Judit Polgar – Jaan Ehvest

Vienna 1996

18.♘xd4 ♞xd4 19.♙xa6 ♞xc2† 20.♔a1 ♞cd8



This is the position Ehvest had in mind. It seems that the pin will allow Black to win back the piece with an advantage, but I managed to see one move further.

21.♙c1!

He who sets a trap for others may fall into it himself... The bishop defends the back rank for a decisive instant.

21...♞xd1 22.♞xd1 ♞xd1 23.♔b1

Black kept playing for 15 more moves, but could not save the game.



Chapter 10

My Matches



Analysing with Boris Spassky after Game 3 (which I lost)

Playing matches was part of my life from a very young age. As reported in the first volume, I played countless training matches with my sisters and my trainers, but they consisted mostly of blitz and rapid games. Given the relaxed circumstances of this kind of experience, it was not until much later that I understood the psychological differences between matches and tournaments.

I played my first ever proper match against Polugaevsky in 1991. This is the final year of the period covered in the first volume and the reader may remember my win in the first game. Despite the unfavourable start, Polu used his huge experience to change the course of events and ended up winning the match convincingly.

After 1991, I played several matches against strong players and had the opportunity to gain experience of the differences between tournament and match play.

The theoretical duel tends to be much deeper in matches and one should be aware of that during the pre-match preparation. There is more than one viable approach: for instance one can prepare several openings or variations, or come up with surprise weapons which he (or she) has never faced before.

It is highly advisable that one's opening arsenal contains variations that are not easy to prepare against in the relatively short time between the games. One great example is Kramnik's choice of the Berlin Wall against Kasparov, which took the steam out of Garry's attacking potential.

Match fighters need to adapt themselves to the changing situation created by the score after each game. Unlike in tournaments, a "plus one" result would ensure overall success in a match. In a tournament, one's first victory is only a hint that things have started well, and he (or she) would strive to get a few more of them, while in a match a won game already induces the feeling that the victory is partly in one's hands.

In this chapter I will try to illustrate different types of situation while examining some of my most memorable match games. In order to retain some connection with the first volume, we will start with a friendly rapid match. The new elements are the somewhat surprising way the match was set up and the strength of my opponent.

Judit Polgar – Vladimir Kramnik

Paris training match (rapid) 1992

I found some interesting notes regarding this game in my old diary.

On November 4th 1992, I travelled to Paris with my mom. The Immopar Trophy, a 16-player rapid knock-out event to which I had been invited, was scheduled to start several days later, but my intention was to dedicate the available time to training with Polugaevsky, who had been living in Paris for several years. We focused on preparing against my first opponent, Timman, so the Sämisch King's Indian was a main theme and our work eventually paid off (see the game on page 110).

The media paid huge attention to the tournament and in particular to my arrival. At the airport a camera crew was waiting for us and on the way to our hotel (Concorde la Fayette) we stopped at the Eiffel Tower to film some sequences with me.

I had several interviews and on November 7th I had a photo session together with Kasparov! I have no words to express how much his presence impressed me; we mainly chatted about the return Fischer – Spassky match, which was the sensation of the time. The next day, Kramnik joined us for the interviews and more photos; you can imagine how proud I was to be in such good company! In such situations, a common thought is that by simply being around these guys you learn to play better chess!

Although he was still very young, Kramnik was already known to be a fantastic player. He asked me if I would like to play a few training games the next day and I gladly accepted.

On November 9th, Kramnik came to my room at 18:30. As a true gentleman, he brought a beautiful bouquet of roses...

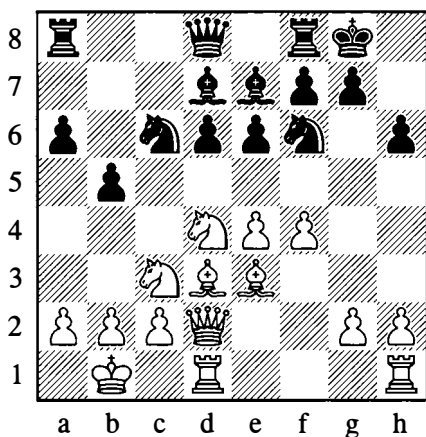
We played four 25-minutes-each games until 20:30. The match ended in a tie, 2-2, with one win each.

Here is the first game, in which I used one of my secret novelties.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 d6 6.♙g5 e6 7.♚d2 a6 8.0-0-0 h6

Kramnik played this variation of the Rauzer Attack from 1992 until 2000, obtaining great results. It suited his dynamic style perfectly and gave him the opportunity to carry out some of his trademark positional sacrifices.

9.♙e3 ♙d7 10.f4 ♙e7 11.♙d3 b5 12.♙b1 0-0



Black's play looks rather provocative. Strategically, the move ...h7-h6 is supposed to slow down the kingside attack, but with the black king nearby, it looks more like a weakness. The normal continuation used to be 13.h3, preparing g2-g4, but Black was usually in time to start his counterplay with 13...♘xd4 14.♙xd4 ♙c6.

Spending a tempo on a move like h2-h3 was not at all my style.

13.g4!?

This idea of speeding up the attack came from a very close friend of mine, Alex Sherzer, who had spent several years in Budapest.

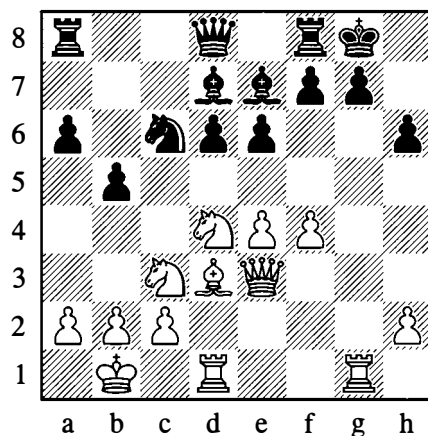
If the game had been played a few years later, I would probably have been reluctant to disclose such a novelty in a friendly game, but at the age of 16 I did not content myself with just training – I also wanted to win!

Frankly speaking, I expected that a player of such calibre would have analysed this move at home, but I soon realized it came as a complete surprise to him! Even though I did not win the game, I could at least claim to have obtained a moral victory...

13...♘xg4

The principled continuation; otherwise White would get an extra tempo with respect to the lines with 13.h3.

14.♙hg1 ♘xe3 15.♚xe3



As a result of the pawn sacrifice, I have considerably activated my play. There are two main attacking ideas: doubling pieces along the g-file, and opening the diagonal for the d3-bishop with e4-e5. For both situations, the

insertion of ...h7-h6 weakens the black king's defence.

15...b4?!

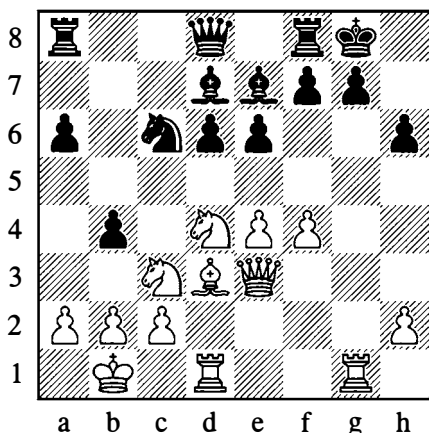
This is inaccurate for not very obvious reasons. Black had several alternatives, but only one is good.

15...♙f6? loses on the spot: 16.e5 dxe5 17.♞e4 g6 18.♞xg6! followed by mate. This is just one of the situations when ...h7-h6 hurts Black.

Kramnik's first reaction in the post-mortem analysis was 15...♜xd4?! 16.♞xd4 e5, but White retains active play with equal material after 17.fxe5.

The best defence is 15...♞h8! as in my game against Salov at Madrid 1994, which eventually ended in a draw.

It was in the Salov game that I officially introduced my novelty, two years after my training match against Kramnik. So I was left with no regrets about having prematurely revealed a secret in a game that had no competitive importance.



16.e5!?

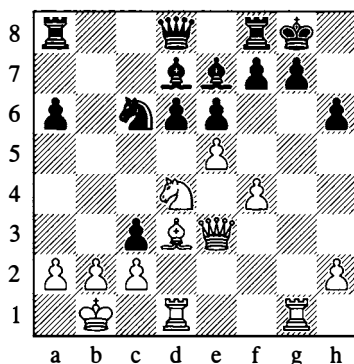
It was not my style to pay attention to material while attacking, but a knight is a high price to pay for just one tempo.

16.♞ce2, transferring the knight closer to the kingside, would have been more consistent. After the game move, play could have more or less liquidated to a draw.

16...♜xd4?

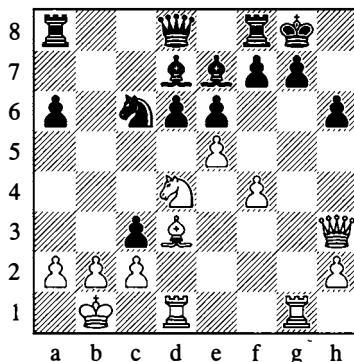
Confronted with a few psychological shocks, Kramnik loses the thread.

He should have accepted the sacrifice with 16...bxc3, not fearing any ghosts. My initiative would have been very dangerous, but there is no clear way to an advantage.



For instance: 17.♞e4 f5 18.exf6 ♙xf6 19.♜xe6 ♙xe6 20.♞xe6 ♜f7 21.♙c4 ♞e7 with unclear play.

There is another, less obvious, way to continue the attack, with similar consequences: 17.♞h3 threatening ♞xh6.

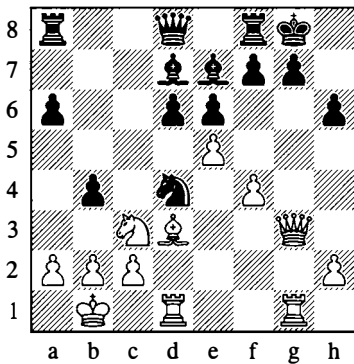


17...♖xe5!! A fantastic defensive resource. If 18.fxe5 ♕g5† Black avoids any kingside problems. So instead 18.♖xh6 ♘g6 19.♙xg6 fxg6 20.♖xg6 when White is a rook down, but the exposed position of the black king should lead to a draw by perpetual, but no more than that.

17.♖xd4?!

Missing my chance. I could have set huge problems for Black by ignoring the material balance for the third time with:

17.♖g3!



The natural defence is:

17...g6 18.♕xg6 ♖h8

Has White's attack come to an end?

19.♕h7!!

Not really, the initiative is very much on! White clears the g-file while also taking the g8-square under control.

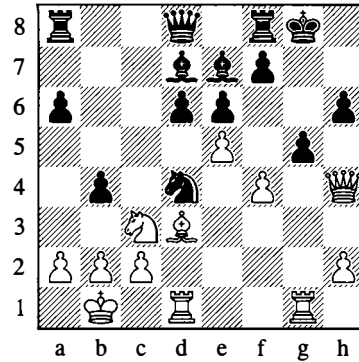
19...♙g8 20.♕xg8 ♖xg8 21.♖xg8† ♙xg8 22.♙xg8† ♖xg8 23.exd6

Material is about equal, but Black has serious problems. Since 23...♕xd6? loses material to 24.♖e4, the d6-pawn will be dangerous in the ending.

17...g5

This would not solve Black's problems either.

18.♖h4!



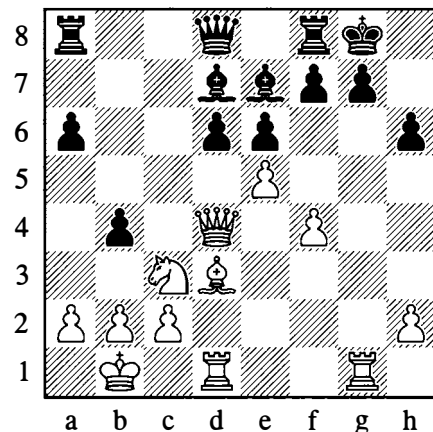
Threatening not only ♖xh6, but also fxg5, attacking the d4-knight.

18...bxc3

The immediate knight retreat also fails to keep the kingside closed: 18...♖f5 19.♕xf5 exf5 20.♖xh6 g4 21.h3! Black will soon be mated along the h-file.

19.♖xh6 ♖f5 20.♕xf5 exf5 21.♖d3!

This rook lift to the third rank reminds me of the game against Khalifman from the KID chapter (page 198). There is no adequate defence against ♖h3, as after 21...g4 the g-pawn is pinned. Or if 21...♙b8 22.b3 and Black's counterplay vanishes at once.



17...d5

Black prevents ♖e4 and aims to keep the d4-g7 diagonal closed. However, I have not exhausted my resources:

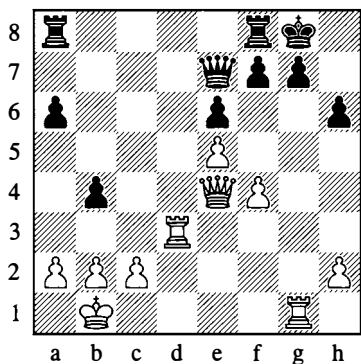
18.♘xd5!

It is essential to open lines before Black completes his development.

18...exd5?!

This should have led to trouble.

The safer 18...♗b5, aiming to exchange minor pieces, would have been best. True, I would have maintained an active position after: 19.♞e4 ♕xd3 20.♘xe7† ♞xe7 21.♞xd3



White has a space advantage and controls the only open file, but Black has at least avoided the immediate danger.

19.♞xd5

It was not easy to choose between the game move and 19.f5; they probably have equal merit.

19...♞e8!?

One move earlier I thought the game would soon be over, but Kramnik found an original way of defending the g6-square in advance, anticipating my next move:

20.♞g2

After 20...g6, this led to a complicated fight, resulting in a draw.

Instead, 20.f5! would have yielded a powerful attack, for instance 20...♗g5 21.h4.

Match-tournaments

Since Botvinnik's time, the term *match-tournament* has been used to define round-robin tournaments with more than just one game against each opponent. This kind of event does indeed combine the typical aspects of matches *and* tournaments.

Day by day you meet new opponents, with different styles and in different sporting form, but later inevitably get to play return games against the same opponents, with reversed colours. And although the psychological round-by-round fight is typical of tournaments, one cannot avoid taking some impressions (positive or negative) from the first encounter against a specific opponent when sitting down for the return game, which is characteristic of matches.

In the distant past, match-tournaments used to consist of four to six games against each player, but in modern times, double round-robin tournaments is the maximum. Even though two games against the same opponent is a very short form of "mini-match", the psychological match aspects apply entirely. I will share with you now my most successful experience of this kind.

Evgeny Bareev – Judit Polgar

Hastings 1993

By winning the Open group of the 1988/89 Hastings event, I had qualified for the Premier group. For reasons that I do not remember now, I only managed to play in it four years later.

The 1992/93 edition was a strong double round-robin event, with the participation of Polugaevsky, Nunn, Speelman, Bareev, Sadler, Ilya Gurevich, Crouch and me.

Bareev made an excellent start and after six rounds he was leading by a full point. He must

have been familiar with this feeling, since he had won the two previous editions.

This game was played in the seventh round, the last of the first series of games.

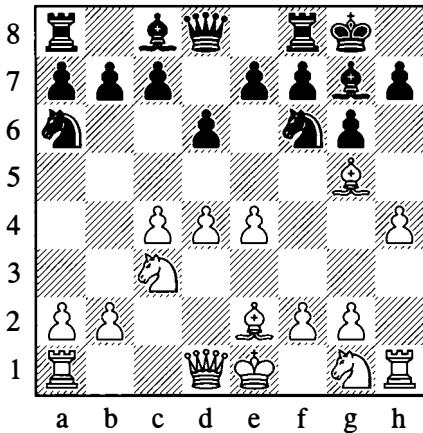
1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗e2 0-0 6.♗g5

The Averbakh Variation was Bareev's favourite weapon against the King's Indian at the time. He had played a very interesting game against Kasparov, in which he tried the same h2-h4 plan as in this game, so I had some reference points when preparing for our encounter.

6...♗a6

A typical move in the KID to retain flexibility. Although the most popular way of attacking the centre remains ...e7-e5, developing the knight keeps the possibility of deviating with ...c7-c5.

7.h4



7...c5!

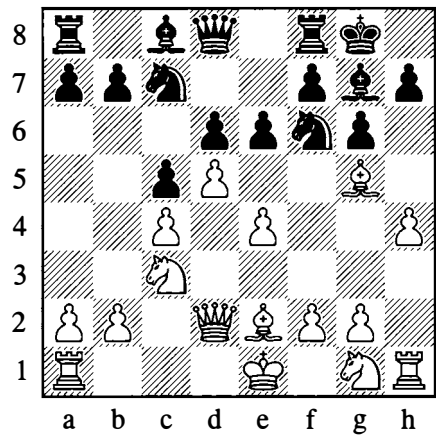
Bareev was known for his outstanding theoretical preparation and I found it useful to deviate as soon as possible from the known paths. Play may now transpose to some sort of Benoni, in which the usefulness of h2-h4 is questionable.

The aforementioned game Bareev – Kasparov, Linares 1992, went 7...h6 8.♗e3 e5 9.d5 and eventually ended in a draw.

8.d5 ♗c7

Bareev now thought for 12 minutes, apparently not only about his next move, but also for the whole sequence from moves 10 to 12, since for them he used no more than another minute.

9.♖d2 e6

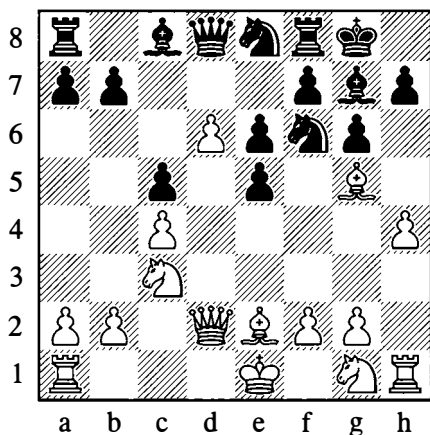


My main idea when switching to the Benoni set-up was that after h2-h4 White would hardly castle short, while the queenside would not be very safe either with the a1-h8 diagonal wide open. A neutral course of events would be 10.h5 exd5 11.exd5 ♖e8, with several ideas in mind, such as ...♗f5, ...♗e4 or even the Benko Gambit-like ...b7-b5.

10.e5!?

A radical change in the course of the game. Bareev surely understood that in the long run my resulting mass of central pawns could become dangerous, but for the time being he was mainly fighting to gain time for his development and his attack, as well as trying to spoil my coordination.

10...dxe5 11.d6 ♗ce8



I was aware that my position looked passive, but also that everything depended on whether I could win the d6-pawn under favourable circumstances.

12.0-0-0

Bareev was the kind of player who would not give up his opening variations easily. After a loss, he would instead try to find and fix the “bug” in the line, and unleash the improvement at the first opportunity.

So in his 12th round game against Nunn he deviated with 12.♞d1, but lost again!

12...♞d7

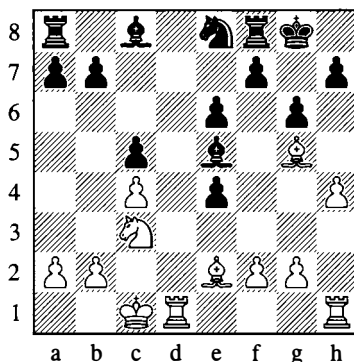
A multifunctional move, getting out of the pin, blocking the d6-pawn and defending the seventh rank.

Black could win the d6-pawn with 12...a5, but this would weaken the b5-square and lose too much time. After 13.♟f3 ♞a6 14.♟xe5 ♞xd6 15.♞e3 ♞ White has excellent coordination and I would gladly sit in his chair!

13.h5

Very consistent with White’s previous play. After the predictable h5xg6, I would have to spoil the flexibility of my structure with ...fxg6, rather than allow a mating attack with ...hxg6, ♟h6.

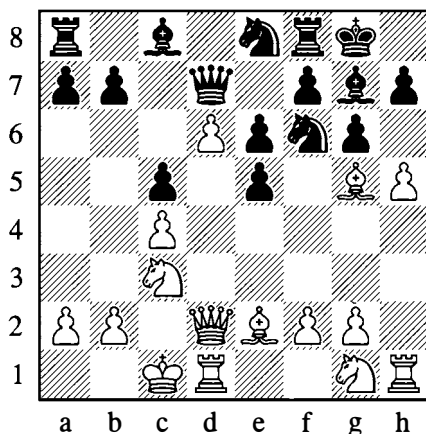
During the game, I planned to meet 13.♟f3 with 13...e4 having calculated the following line: 14.♟e5 ♞xd6 15.♞xd6 ♟xd6 16.♞xd6 ♟e8 This double attack regains the material at once. 17.♞dd1 ♟xe5



As I am two pawns up, I did not mind 18.♟e7?! on account of 18...f5 with fantastic compensation on the dark squares.

White does not need to go for the exchange, though. Instead, 18.♟xe4 would win back one pawn, while keeping excellent compensation for the other, in view of his considerable lead in development.

Instead of embarking on this forcing line, I would have done better to play the simple 13...♟g4, defending the e5-pawn, hitting f2 and putting the g5-bishop in a delicate situation in view of the threats of ...h7-h6 and ...f7-f6.



13...b5!?

Up to this point I had spent 25 minutes. The last move seemed the most natural candidate to me. It was not only my experience as a young Benko Gambit player, but also my innate tendency to sacrifice material for activity.

The idea of the last move is interesting, but its execution could have been better. It would have made sense to prevent the natural $\text{d}g1\text{-f3}$ with $13...e4$ and only if, say, $14.f3$ then to sacrifice with $14...b5!?$.

14.cxb5

White has to weaken his control in the centre one way or another. His move keeps the b-file closed, but leaves the d5-square in my hands.

The alternate way of taking the pawn would simply be bad: $14.\text{d}xb5?$ $\text{d}e4$ $15.\text{w}e3$ $\text{d}xg5$ and my g7-bishop would soon be firing.

14...b7

A pleasant developing move, preparing to occupy the d5-square, after which the d6-pawn will be doomed. White needs to react quickly.

15.gh6?

Played after 12 minutes, which is maybe too little time for such an important moment in the game. Most certainly, Bareev missed my tactical idea. There were two important alternatives.

He must have rejected

$15.\text{d}f3$

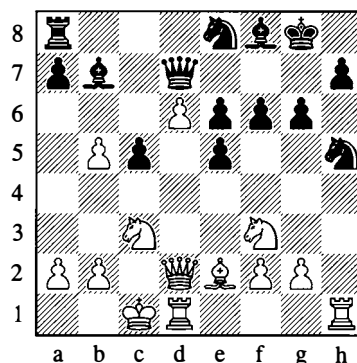
because of

$15...\text{d}xh5!$

$15...\text{d}d5?!$ weakens the kingside defence, offering White a strong attack: $16.hxg6$ $fxg6$

$17.\text{gh}6$ $\text{d}xd6$ $18.\text{d}g5$

$16.\text{de}7$ $f6$ $17.\text{de}f8$ $\text{de}f8$



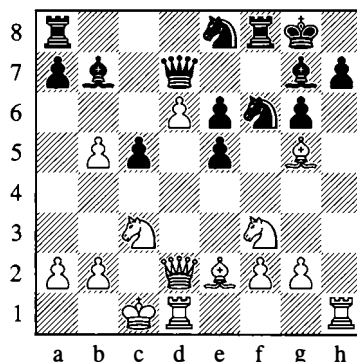
Black has excellent compensation for the exchange in view of the bishop pair and compact mass of pawns. The attempt to disrupt it with $18.\text{d}xe5$ $fxe5$ $19.\text{gh}h5$ $gxh5$ $20.\text{exh}5$ $\text{d}xd6$ offers White compensation, but not more.

By a method of elimination, we can infer that this was the right time to execute the main strategic threat of the whole opening line:

$15.hxg6!$

The main psychological trap in such situations is that White may feel tempted to think that he can carry out this exchange at any later time he might want to, which makes maintaining the tension the most logical approach.

$15...fxg6$ $16.\text{d}f3$

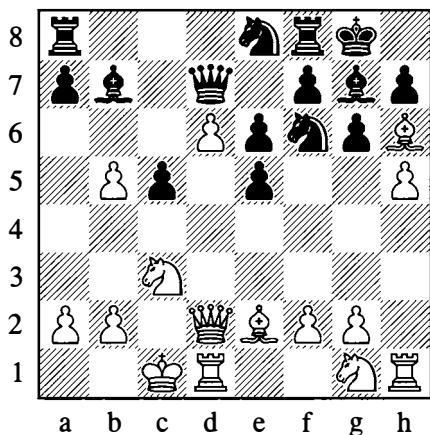


Bareev probably did not wish to open the f-file so early, but after for example: $16.\text{d}g4$ $17.\text{de}7$ $\text{ef}4$

Black's kingside activity and stability are only an illusion. For instance:

18.♖h4 ♘xf2 19.♖f1

And the only one who could benefit from the open f-file will be White.



15...♗xd6!

A nasty surprise! If 16.♗xd6, the zwischenzug 16...♕xh6† restores material equality. In this case, the previous opening of the h-file would also have been useful, by over-protecting the bishop.

White needs to keep the queens on, which forces him to lose a tempo.

16.♗g5 ♕xh6

I spent nine minutes deciding whether to insert the bishop exchange now or retreat my queen to e7 first, but eventually I realized that 16...♗e7 17.♕xg7 ♘xg7 would just transpose to the game.

17.♗xh6 ♗e7

Suddenly, I felt that my position was not dangerous at all. Strategically, the bishop exchange favours me, while tactically White cannot build up anything, since he has not made much progress with his development.

It is symptomatic that the generally desirable 18.♘f3 drops an exchange to 18...♘g4.

18.♗g5

Remarkably, he played this without thinking. Under the new circumstances, the exchange 18.hxg6 fxg6 would only open the seventh rank for my queen.

18...♘g7

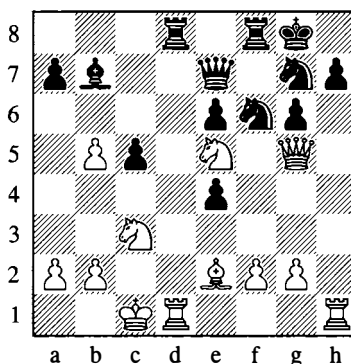
I had the feeling that this regrouping move, aiming for piece activity, came as another surprise for my opponent.

19.♕f3?!

I do not know if Bareev blundered or just underestimated my 21st move.

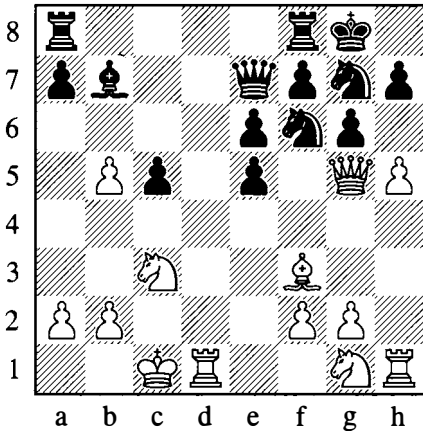
19.♕f3?! runs into a similar trick: 19...h6! 20.♗xe5 (The point is that 20.♗xh6 ♘g4 followed by ...♘xf2 wins the exchange.) 20...g5† This safely blocks the kingside.

This was the last moment when he could have weakened my kingside slightly: 19.hxg6! fxg6 20.♕f3 e4 21.♕e5 ♖ad8



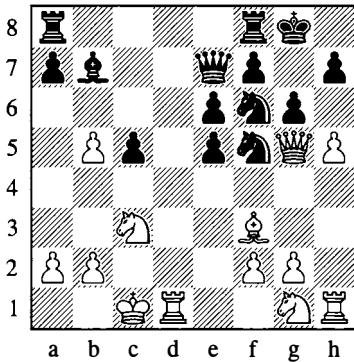
White has full compensation for the pawn and I was slightly worried about my structure. I like islands only when there is water around, not when they refer to my pawns!

And yet, the position may be about equal. Both sides have normal development and stability, and it is not easy for either of us to make progress.

**19...e4!?**

I return the extra pawn (which was in danger anyway) in order to gain some dynamic trumps.

Since I was happy with the game position after 23 moves, I did not look for other candidates. Otherwise, I might have spotted the tricky and rather strong:

19...d5!?**20.♙xb7**

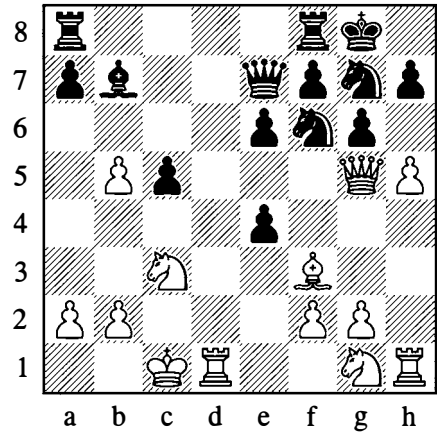
This is more accurate than 20.hxg6 fxg6 21.♙xb7, when the f6-knight would be defended. After 21...♙xb7 22.♘f3 a6 White's king would suddenly feel more insecure than mine, especially with the prospect of my knight arriving on d4.

20...h6!

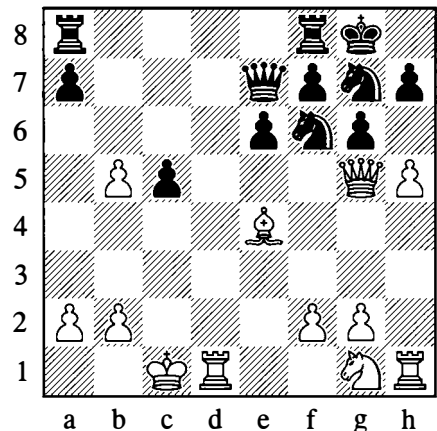
An essential intermediate move to avoid losing a piece.

21.♙d2 ♜ad8 22.♙e2 ♙xb7 23.hxg6 ♜xd1†
24.♙xd1 fxg6

Black is perfectly coordinated and, after the exchange of one pair of rooks, the king is not so vulnerable.

**20.♘xe4**

The piece sacrifice 20.hxg6 does not offer White realistic attacking chances: 20...exf3 21.gxh7† ♖h8 22.♘xf3 ♜ae8 Black unpins the f6-knight, preparing ...d5 with a won position.

20...♙xe4 21.♙xe4

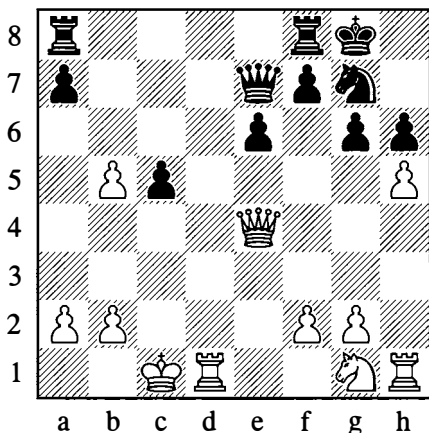
Bareev might have hoped I would have to move my rook, and then 22.hxg6 would open the kingside under favourable circumstances,

given that the pawn count is now equal. But he missed a small tactical detail.

21...h6!

The queen is forced to unpin the knight, so White has to defend the bishop, which makes the h6-pawn taboo.

22. ♖e3 ♜xe4 23. ♖xe4



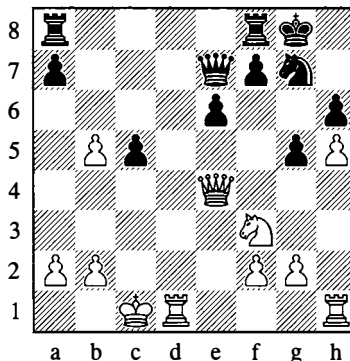
23...g5

I played this without hesitation and did not consider 23...♜xh5 to be a serious candidate. I like to sacrifice such pawns for the sake of an attack myself, but objectively taking the pawn would have been better than my move. 24. ♜f3 (24.g4?! ♖g5† would not shake my kingside stability at all.) 24...♞f6 With so few pieces left on the board after the inevitable rook exchange, White's attacking chances are feeble, which would leave me with a sound extra pawn.

24. ♜e2?!

There may be two main reasons why Bareev decided to play this somewhat passive move. The knight does not block the f-pawn, maintaining the possibility of f2-f4, and is heading for c3, in order to stabilize the queenside. The latter aspect is not without drawbacks: after ♜e2-c3, my knight could reach the d4-square.

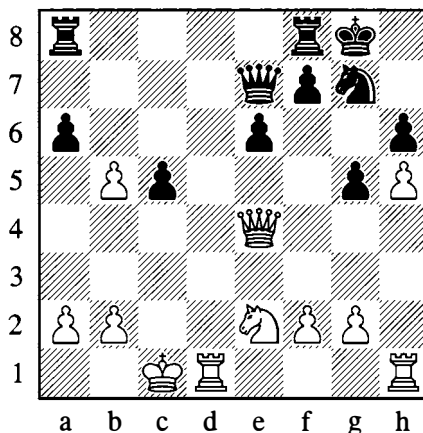
24. ♜f3! would have been more active and better.



The same idea as in the game would not work in this case: 24...a6? 25. ♜e5! axb5? 26. ♞d7 ♖f6 27. ♜g4! with a strong initiative for White.

Instead, I should also activate my knight: 24...♜f5 25. ♜e5 ♜d4 with roughly equal play.

24...a6!



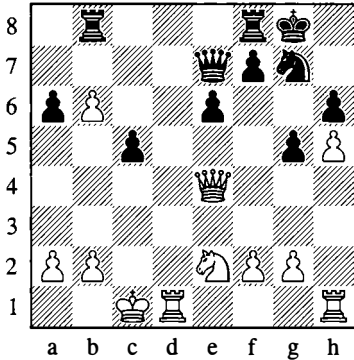
The time has come for the second pawn break in the spirit of the Benko Gambit. True, in that opening the moves ...b7-b5 and ...a7-a6 are played consecutively and not separated by 11 moves!

25.bxa6?

Bareev played this rather quickly (after only four minutes)-failing to notice a hidden tactical possibility of keeping the b-file closed:

25.b6

This is also typical in the Benko Gambit.
25...♖ab8



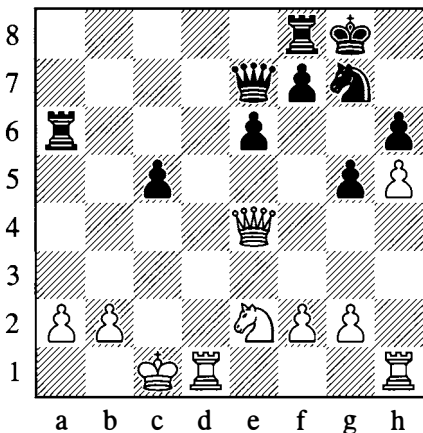
26.♘c3!

I overlooked this move, indirectly defending the b6-pawn in view of ♘d5, and I am almost sure Bareev did not see it either!

26...♙e8 27.♘a4 ♘f6

Black's regrouping looks more harmonious since the white knight does not impress on the edge of the board. Still, the b6-pawn restricts my activity and could become dangerous in the endgame.

25...♖xa6



Finally, I have a fantastic position. The pawns are equal, but I have two open files to attack his king.

26.a3

Bareev chooses to weaken his queenside slightly and keep the knight defending the d4-square.

26...♞f6!

An important move, taking control of the long diagonal. 26...♖b8 27.♞e5! would have been less clear.

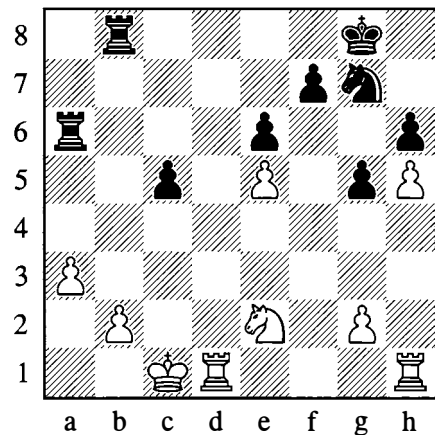
27.f4

The only way to display some activity, and consistent with 24.♙e2.

27...♖b8 28.♞e5

White has to simplify to an unpleasant ending, since 28.♖d2 would lose to 28...♖xa3!.

28...♞xe5 29.fxe5

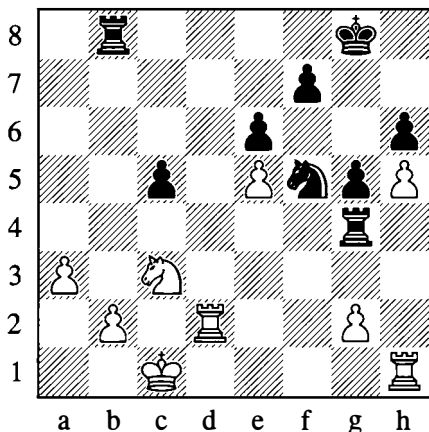


If White had time to play g2-g4 and restrict the g7-knight, his position would suddenly not be so bad. However, it is my turn. A few active moves will suffice to prove that White's structure is rather weak.

29...♖a4!

The rook takes the g4-square under control and threatens to win a pawn with .. Re4 . Such ways of creating rook pressure along a rank are common in my games.

30. dxc3 Rg4 31. Rd2 d5



All my pieces are on optimal squares, maybe with the exception of my king, which would stand better on g7, closer to the centre and avoiding a knight check on f6.

32. Re1

Hoping for dxe4 . Had he doubled rooks at once with 32. Rhd1 , I would have blocked the d-file with 32... d4 .

32... d3

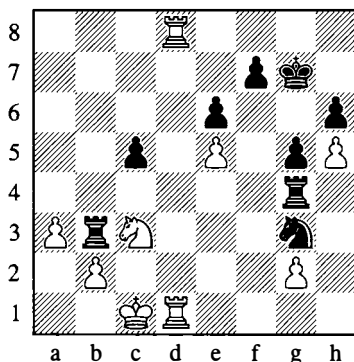
Not only preventing dxe4 but also attacking the weak h5-pawn.

33. Rd1 g7 34. Rd8 Rxd8 ?

This is a mistake on principle. After the exchange of one pair of rooks, the a3-pawn suddenly becomes a dangerous candidate for promotion, ensuring White has enough counterplay to draw.

34... Rb3 !

This would have been stronger.



35.a4

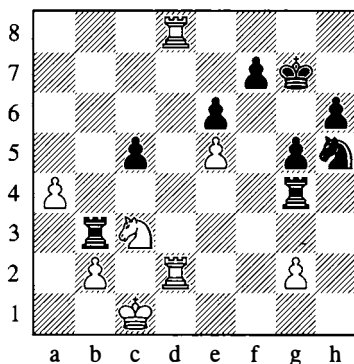
35. Kc2 places the king on an exposed square, allowing me to gain a tempo in some lines. 35... Rb7 36. Rd7 Rxd7 37. Rxd7 d5 ! The h6-pawn would hardly be a candidate for promotion, so it is best to keep the knight active. What really counts is the g-pawn. 38.a4 d4 † 39. d3 Rxc2 and Black's passer is more dangerous.

White fails to create a mating net with 35. Rc8 followed by Rdd8 because of the simple 35... dxe5 when the king can escape through g6-f5.

35... dxe5 36. Rd1

White needs to combine active play with defensive measures.

The hurried advance of the a-pawn would give me too much play: 36.a5 Rxc2 37.a6 Rxb2 38. Rd1 Rxd1 39. Rxd1 Rb8 40.a7 Ra8 41. Rd7 d4 42. d5 h5 Black's pawns have made a slow start, but they act in tandem, and will become unstoppable after I give up my rook for the a-pawn: 43. Rb7 h4 44. Rb8 Rxa7 45. dxa7 h3 winning.



36...♖xc3!

A well-timed simplification to a favourable ending, eliminating the main source of White's counterplay – his a4-pawn.

37.bxc3 ♖xa4

With two pawns for the exchange, active pieces and a compact structure, Black's position is preferable. White faces an unpleasant defensive task.

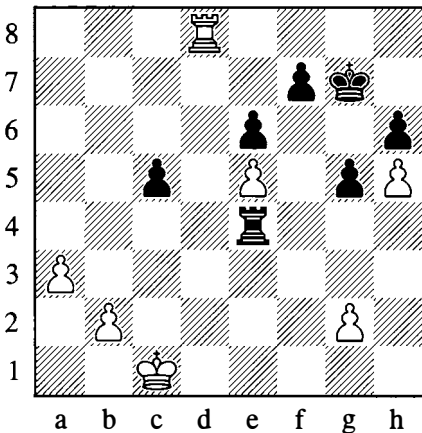
35.♖xd8

Suddenly, I realized the position had become double-edged. Apart from advancing the a-pawn, White can think of bringing his knight to d6, with dangerous threats.

35...♗e4

I understood that the position would become drawish, but I could find no other way to parry the aforementioned threats.

36.♗xc4 ♖xc4



37.♖d3?!

Bareev has defended rather well so far, but now he starts playing passively and without a clear plan. The rook stands well on the eighth rank and there was no need to retreat it.

37.♗c2! would have been more active and stronger. If 37...♖xe5 38.a4 ♖e1 39.♖d1 ♖e2†

40.♗c3 ♖e3† I would have had nothing better than harassing the enemy king perpetually. Otherwise, the a-pawn would become too dangerous.

37...♗f8

I immediately took advantage of the last move's drawbacks in order to activate my king. I had no intention of allowing the effortless advance of the a-pawn with 37...♖xe5.

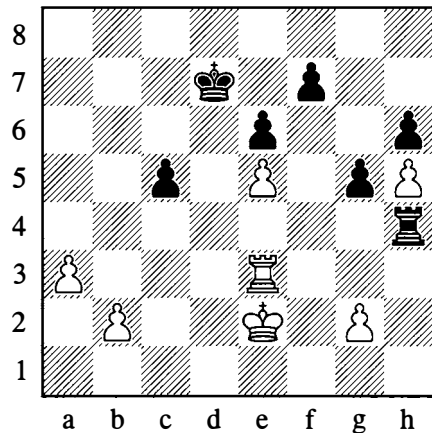
38.♗d2 ♗e7 39.♖e3 ♖h4 40.♗e2?

This move is not easy to understand; White should have searched for active play.

40.♖c3 would lead to a sharp ending with approximately equal chances: 40...♖h2 41.♖xc5 ♖xg2† 42.♗c3

40.♗c3?! should also suffice for a draw.

40...♗d7!



Activating the king is a higher priority than taking the h5-pawn. Now that I can defend my c5-pawn, White's position becomes unpleasant.

41.♖h3??

Strangely enough, Bareev thought for 20 minutes before playing this losing move.

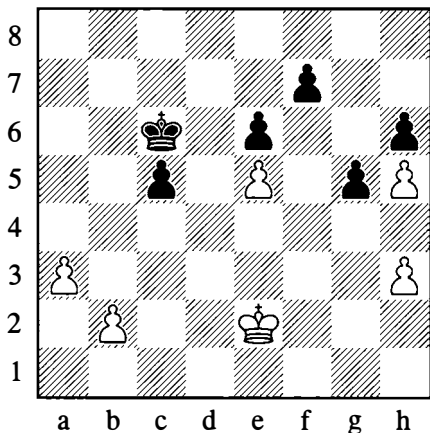
I can only guess his train of thought. Maybe he missed the final triangulation in the pawn ending and noticed that the position after the better 41.♖f3 ♘c6 42.♖xf7 ♖xh5 would remain unpleasant. The pressure of having a clear lead in the tournament may also have played a part.

Be that as it may, this is the place to say that simplifying to a pawn ending is a very committal decision. With rooks on the board, there are always chances to squeeze out a draw, even when the position is bad. In pawn endings, things are very precise – there is no such evaluation as “slightly better” or “unpleasant”. Pawn endings are either won, drawn or lost. At the same time, calculating the forcing variations is far from easy, despite the apparent simplicity of positions with little material.

41...♖xh3

I spent eight minutes before replying – not so much evaluating the pawn ending, but asking myself whether it was really possible to beat a strong opponent in such a way.

42.gxh3 ♘c6



The threat of ...♔d5xe5 forces the a-pawn to advance.

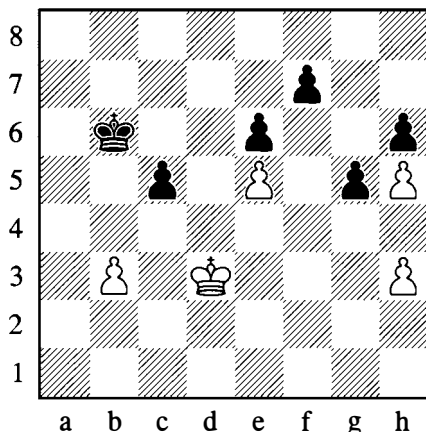
43.a4 ♔d5 44.a5

44.♔d3 ♖xe5 45.♔c4 ♔d6 46.♔b5 e5+

44...♔c6

Could Bareev have overlooked this? It would be a remarkable example of chess blindness.

45.♔d3 ♔b5 46.b3 ♖xa5 47.♔c4 ♔b6 48.♔d3



White seems to retain some hope of stopping the enemy king from penetrating, but the triangulation method makes these illusions vanish.

48...♔c7! 49.♔c3 ♔b7!

Finally, Bareev understood what was happening and resigned.

Here are some illustrative variations justifying his decision:

50.♔d3 ♔b6!

White is in zugzwang and has to allow my king to infiltrate to either d5 or b4.

51.♔c3

51.♔c4 ♔c6 52.♔d3 ♔d5+ and 51.♔c2 ♔c6 52.♔d3 ♔d5+ are no better.

51...♔b5 52.♔d2 ♔b4 53.♔c2 c4+

Quite an exciting game, with many interesting ideas along the way. By winning it, I caught up with Bareev on 4½ out of 7.

This painful defeat did not discourage Bareev and he played very well in the return games; in tournaments it is quite normal for a strong player to recover after an isolated defeat, and continue at full steam. But when the situation from the end of the first round of games repeated itself exactly before the last round, the mini-match psychological aspects prevailed.

Bareev was in the sole lead with 9 out of 13 and I was trailing by a full point. Once again, a win would be enough to catch up with him and this time I was helped by the fact that I had the white pieces.

I went in to the game quite optimistically. I knew I had some psychological advantages: I had beaten him just one week earlier and, at least subconsciously, he must have felt that I could be dangerous. I had much more to gain than he did, as he had been leading all the way, and must have wished the tournament would end with the current standings.

In short, I had everything I needed: the motivation and will to win! But I used one more “trick” that had worked well in the past. During my walk with Sofia, I made the solemn promise that if I won I would buy myself a Teddy Bear I had fallen in love with a few days earlier, and get her a nice skirt and jacket! On most occasions when I had made such promises, I managed to get an extra boost and win the decisive game spectacularly!

Judit Polgar – Evgeny Bareev

Hastings 1993

1.e4 e6

Just as in the previous game, Bareev’s opening choice was hardly a surprise. Throughout his career, he played the French constantly and confidently, and knew it inside-out.

2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♙g5 dxe4 5.♘xe4 ♘bd7 6.♘f3 h6

This move was played for the first time in Smyslov – Zagoriansky as early as 1944, but it was only in the 1990s that it started to become popular. Despite being traditionally regarded as a sideline, there were times when it was the most annoying continuation for White.

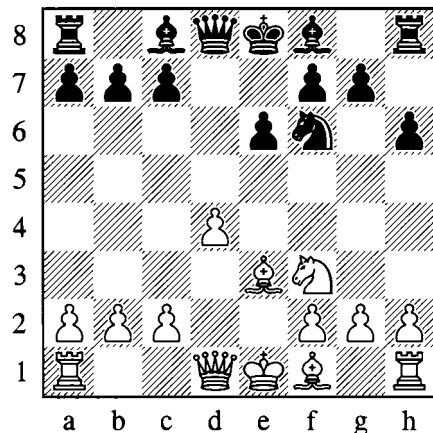
The main idea is to force the bishop to make up its mind at an early stage, before the contours of both sides’ plans have been drawn.

6...♗e7 7.♘xf6† ♗xf6 is the main line. I also had quite a few games against it, the most memorable being against Berkes at Budapest in 2003, which I will annotate for Volume 3.

7.♘xf6† ♘xf6

Through the years, I have tried all sorts of bishop retreats and even ♗xf6, but this time I decided to stick to the continuation I had used against Speelman in Round 10.

8.♗e3!?



The bishop is exposed to exchange on this square, but the main aim is to prevent the freeing ...c7-c5.

8...♗d6

My game with Speelman went 8...♘d5 9.♗d2 ♗d6 10.0-0-0 ♗d7. In the middlegame, my opponent found an original way to simplify to an equal ending.

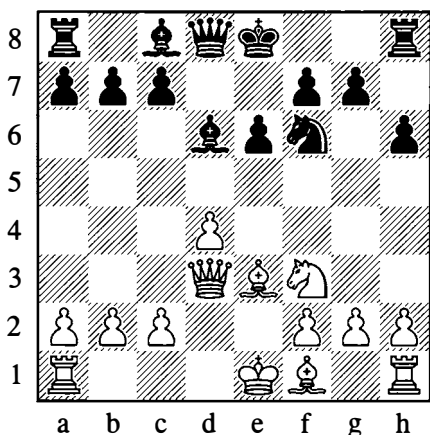
Bareev did not seem to be curious to check if I had found an effective improvement.

9. ♖d3

This somewhat awkward move was a novelty. I feared that Bareev had worked out the usual 9. ♖d2 and 9. ♔d3 well enough, and I wanted to surprise him slightly with an unnatural plan.

The obvious drawback of my move is that the queen obstructs the f1-bishop's natural development. Also, after ...h7-h6 the queen seems to belong on d2, in order to set up a battery against the h-pawn.

Apart from the surprise effect, an important merit of my novelty is that it prepares to castle long, something I could not think of doing without! As a final conclusion, I must confess that objectively I do not like my move that much, at least not with today's understanding.



9...b6

Bareev was probably intuiting my aggressive intentions and decided to avoid castling short, at least for a while. He might also have been considering the possibility of castling long.

Even though things are not clear yet, he might also have relied on the fact that there is currently no danger for his king in the centre, which is only partly true, as we will see.

If 9... ♔d5 I wanted to leave my bishop on e3

and play 10. 0-0-0, in similar style to my game against Speelman.

I would suggest 9... 0-0, maintaining flexibility with his queenside development. I planned 10. ♔e5 with the idea of f2-f4 and g2-g4, but then Black could start his counterplay at once with 10...c5, since my knight is hanging for just an instant. For instance: 11. 0-0-0 cxd4 12. ♔xd4 ♖c7 13. f4 ♔d8 with unclear play.

10. ♔e5!?

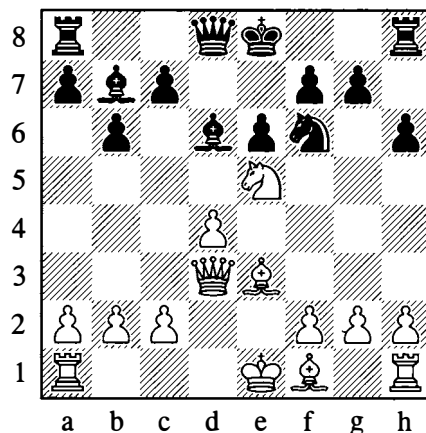
After the weakening of the c6-square, this knight jump is even more justified than in the line above. I was worried that if I gave Black time to complete his development harmoniously, I would face the question: how on Earth can I win this?

For instance, if 10. 0-0-0 ♔b7 11. ♔e5 0-0 I would still need to waste a tempo on ♖h1-g1 before starting the attack with g4-g5, and I knew that one tempo can make all the difference.

At the same time, delaying castling corresponds to the same kind of philosophy as Bareev's, except for me it is 100% risk free, whereas for him, not entirely.

10... ♔b7?!

Consistent, but too provocative. I would still prefer 10... 0-0!?



11. ♖b5!

Not really a deadly check, but it spoils Black's coordination.

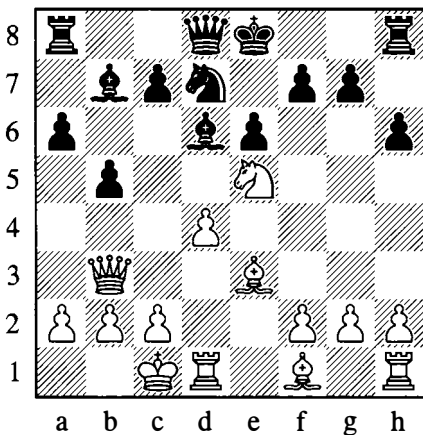
11... ♠d7 12. 0-0-0

The black knight has been forced to retreat to a passive square, and also Black cannot castle now. In principle, I was happy about the course of the game, but the position is still far from clear.

12...a6 13. ♖b3!?

I spent 20 minutes before playing this slightly speculative move, which is certainly not best.

13. ♖e2! was correct, followed by the main plan based on advancing the kingside pawns. The queen clearly stands well in the neighbourhood of the black kingside. It is symptomatic that in the game, the queen reached e2 only ten moves later and then the game lasted only five more moves!

13...b5

Bareev tries to take advantage of the exposed position of my queen, but ignoring this aspect with 13...0-0 would have been perfectly good. I would be left with the question whether my queen is doing anything at all on b3.

14.c4!?

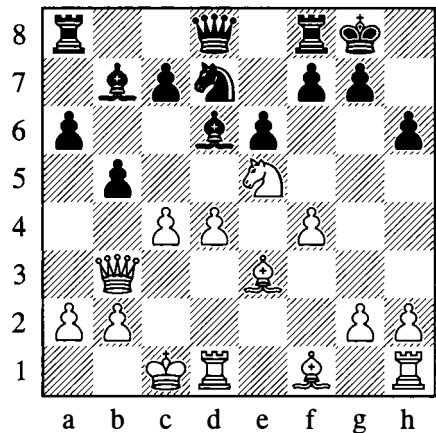
I had the feeling that I kept playing unexpected moves. I was supposed to prepare a kingside attack, but now I just opened up my own king's position!

The strategic aim of my last move is preventing ...♠d5 with comfortable play for Black on the light squares.

14...0-0 15.f4

This way of alternating moves on the opposite wings suited my intentions rather well. The position is messy and every new little surprise would make Bareev spend more time and energy.

I did not even consider trying to "win a pawn" with 15.cxb5 since after 15...♠d5 Black would get too much play. The initiative was what I needed most; pawn grabbing could never distract me from my path!

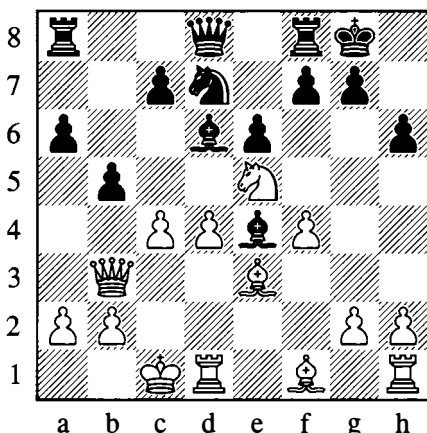
**15...♠e4**

Black faced a wide choice of how to resolve the central tension. He spent 17 minutes on the last move, which is safe enough, but probably not best.

Had he anticipated my next move, he might have played 15...♠f6 16.c5 ♠xe5 17.dxe5 ♠d5. The knight would reach a fantastic

square, which it could not even dream of later in the game.

The developing 15...♞e7!, intending a harmonious regrouping with ...♞fb8, might have been even better. The main point is that if 16.c5 ♕xe5 the c5-pawn would be hanging, forcing me to play 17.fxe5 with great play for Black on the light squares after 17...♕d5 18.♞c2 f5.



16.c5!

Since I could not keep control over the d5-square anymore, I wanted to gain some space in exchange.

16...♕e7 17.♕d3!?

I was not aware that this might pose any kind of psychological problems for my opponent. I simply thought that the only reasonable answer is 17...♕xd3, aiming for a blockade on the light squares. After 18.♞xd3 ♖xe5 19.dxe5 White's position looks more active, but the accurate 19...♞e8! followed by ...♞c6 and general rook exchanges on the d-file would most probably lead to a draw.

You can imagine my surprise (a pleasant one, for sure) when Bareev grabbed my g-pawn after only one minute!

17...♕xg2?!

Had he thought for longer, I would have imagined there was a fight going on inside him, between the safe approach and the challenge to prove my sacrifice wrong. The way it happened, I believe he simply could no longer stand the growing pressure.

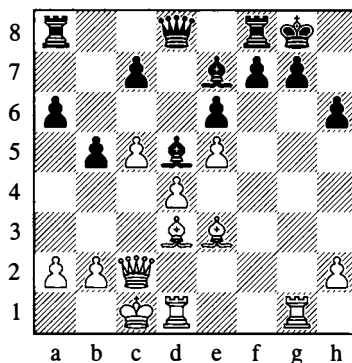
Black's position may be entirely defensible, but White's compensation after the opening of the g-file is beyond doubt. The resulting position not only suits my style, it is also perfectly adapted to my last-round approach.

18.♞hg1 ♕d5 19.♞c2 f5!

Objectively a strong move, consolidating the kingside and creating the positional threat of ...♖xe5 with a sound extra pawn. Bareev must have relied on this resource when taking the pawn, which is correct objectively, but he must have underestimated the practical difficulties in over-the-board play.

19...♖xe5 20.fxe5

This is less appealing for Black.



20...f5

Here, too, the advance of the f-pawn is the best defence, even though the h6-pawn is attacked.

20...♖h8 21.♞e2 followed by ♞h5 leads to a decisive attack.

Or if 20...♕g5 21.♕xg5 hxg5 22.h4 Black can hardly survive: 22...gxh4? 23.♞xg7+ ♖xg7 24.♞g1+ ♖h8 25.♞d2 with mate in sight.

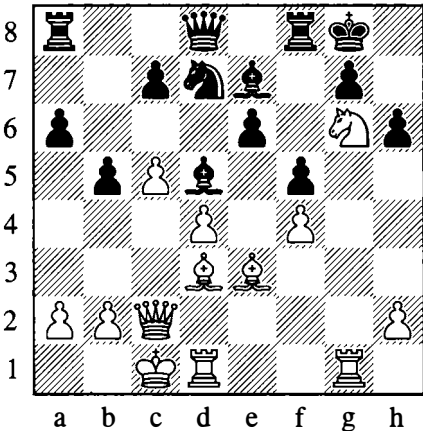
21.♙xh6

White also retains some attacking chances after 21.exf6 ♜xf6.

21...♞f7

White has no decisive threats yet, but can build up the attack along the g-file in conditions of material equality.

20.♘g6!



Finally, the weakness induced by ...h7-h6 tells. The knight's presence on g6 hinders Black's coordination and may become threatening when other pieces join the attack.

20...♞e8

Bareev played this reasonable move relatively quickly (after five minutes). Its practical drawback is that it fails to start the fight against the intruding knight.

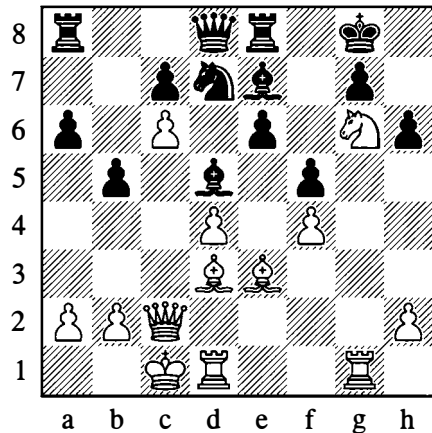
20...♞f6! was suggested by Nunn during the post-mortem analysis. The main idea is to sacrifice the exchange, leaving Black with an impenetrable fortress. For instance: 21.♞g3 ♞xg6 22.♞xg6 ♘f8 23.♞g3 ♙f6= I cannot find any constructive plan to make progress.

21.c6?

I believe we were both becoming increasingly nervous in this phase of the game. I played

this highly committal move after just four minutes. I wanted to take control over the e5-square as soon as possible and prevent the defensive idea of ...c7-c6 followed by ...♞a7, but I failed to understand that the c6-pawn is likely to become a target and the availability of the d6-square may be very useful for Black.

21.♞g3 would have been better, with the possible continuation: 21...c6 22.♞dg1 ♞a7 23.♞e2 ♘f8 24.♘e5 ♙f6 25.♞h5 ♖h8 Black is under strong pressure, but in the absence of pawn breaks, he may well survive.



21...♘f8!?

Bareev could no longer bear the sight of my knight on g6, but his last move is too passive.

21...♘f6! would have been stronger: 22.♘e5 ♙d6! Taking full advantage of the d6-square. 23.♞g6 ♙xe5 24.fxe5 ♘g4 followed by ...♞h4 and Black becomes active on the wing where I was supposed to attack.

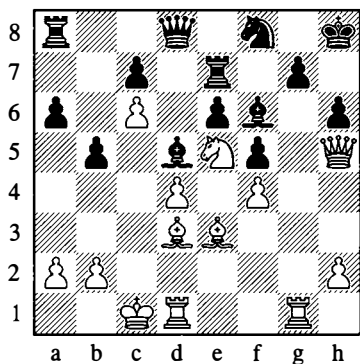
22.♘e5

Bareev still had 35 minutes to reach move 40, but he unleashed the next, rather unfortunate, move after only two minutes.

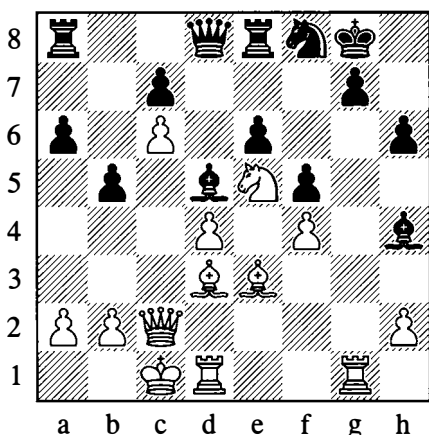
22...♙h4?

22...♔f6! would have been much better. Black would defend the g7-pawn and keep the e5-knight under observation. Next, he would play ...♞e7 so as to be able to meet the queen transfer to h5 with ...♞e8. In this case, a draw would still have been the most probable result, since neither side can come up with a clear plan of improving the position.

For instance, Black would be in time to defend against the game manoeuvre: 23.♞e2 ♞e7 24.♞h5 ♖h8



25.♖f7+? As we know from Nunn's variation, "winning" the exchange does not do White any good in general, but here it is simply bad: 25...♞xf7 26.♞xf7 e5! 27.♞h5 exd4 followed by ...♞d6 with a strong initiative.



His plan was probably to control most of the squares along the g-file with his pawns and

minor pieces, but he must have completely overlooked my queen manoeuvre.

23.♞e2!

The queen finally reaches this optimal square after a long detour, and suddenly Black does not have time to regroup for the defence.

23...♞f6?

Consistent and fatal; this move was played after only four minutes.

Even with the loss of a tempo, 23...♔f6 was still the only way to fight on. 24.♞h5 ♞e7 25.♞xh6 ♞xe5 26.dxe5 ♞e8 27.♖b1 There is nothing Black can be proud of, but I would still have needed to work a bit to secure the point.

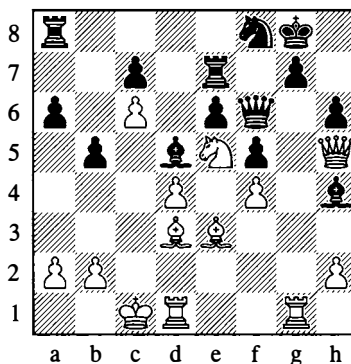
24.♞h5

In addition to other worries, the h4-bishop is now in danger.

24...♞e8?

This move is hard to understand; it looks as if Bareev had decided to willingly cut off both his rooks from the kingside.

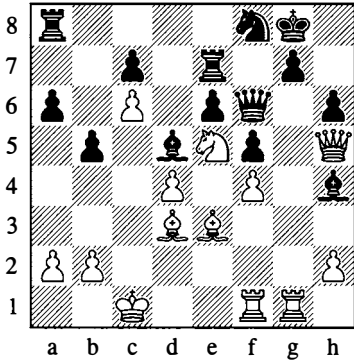
24...♞e7 would have been more logical and also quite tricky.



The point is that the tempting 25.♖g6? runs into: 25...♖xg6 26.♞xg6 ♔f3! Quite a nasty

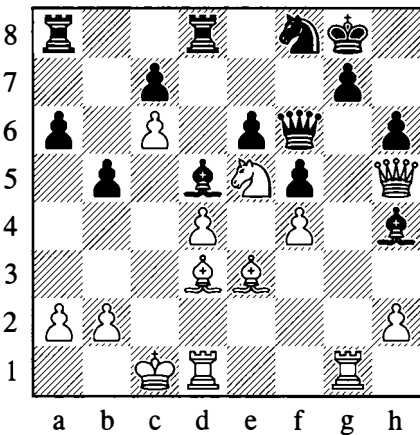
zwischenzug! 27.♖xh6 ♕xd1 Now 28.♞xf6 unpins the g-pawn and leads only to a queen exchange.

Therefore, I should play 25.♞df1 over-protecting the f3-square and preparing ♜g6.



For instance: 25...♞d8 26.♜b1 ♞d6 27.♜g6 ♜xg6 28.♞xg6 ♞f7 29.♞xh4+—

Instead of 26.♜b1, the spectacular 26.♞f3!! (26...♕xf3 27.♜xf3) would also trap the bishop.



25.♞xg7+!!

To Bareev this seems to have fallen like thunder from a blue sky, but for me it had been in the air for a while already.

25...♜xg7

Or 25...♞xg7 26.♞xh4 followed by ♞g1.

26.♞g1† ♜h8

There is no safe retreat: 26...♜h7 27.♜g4! ♞g7 28.♜xh6 ♞xh6 29.♞f7† mates.

27.♜f7† ♜h7 28.♜xh6!

In view of 28...♞xh6 29.♞f7† Bareev resigned.

The shops were closing shortly after the round ended, so from the post mortem I had to move fast to fulfil my pre-game promise and in this way keep the tradition alive!

The final standings in the tournament were:

1st-2nd Polgar and Bareev 9/14

3rd Spielman 8/14

4th-6th Ilya Gurevich, Sadler and Nunn.

7th-8th Polugaevsky and Crouch.

The result of this mini-match with Bareev had a strong psychological impact on our next games, which resulted in a convincing plus score in my favour.

This is the right place to mention another form of one-on-one confrontation, some sort of pseudo-matches over the years, which became a characteristic of the period covered in this volume. As I climbed the rating list, my circle of opponents became narrower each time. This resulted in me facing the same player several times in a relatively short period of time. I have mentioned the implications for theoretical preparation in this situation in my notes to the game with Epishin, Las Palmas 1994 (page 170).

In a wider sense, many psychological aspects of the fight in a real match apply in these prolonged duels. True, there is a certain time limit for these influences. I would more or less keep track of the personal score against one player or another during the first 10 or 15 games, but nowadays when I prepare against, say, Anand, it would make very little sense to think of our first games played more than

20 years ago! Obviously, neither of us is the same player anymore.

From my pseudo-matches of this kind, I would mention that most of my games with Shirov were very interesting; the reader will find some of my wins against him throughout this book.

My first match with a World Champion

In the beginning of November 1992 negotiations started for a match between me and Spassky. After returning home from the Immopar Trophy (on November 18th, to be exact) I received the news that the match would start next year on January 31st and would consist of 12 games, half to be held in Budapest and the other half in Sveti Stefan. The prize fund would be 200,000 US dollars and we would play with the Fischer clock, which had been used for the first time in the return Fischer – Spassky match, only a few months earlier! The time control would be 1 hour and 50 minutes plus an increment of one minute per move for the first 40 moves, meaning two and a half hours each.

Later, some minor modifications to these general terms occurred. The match was changed to only 10 games, all of them to be played in Budapest. However, there was no certainty about the match taking place until the 20th of January. I had been a bit sceptical during this whole period: was I really going to play against a living legend for such a high purse?

Immediately after I learned the negotiations had concluded successfully, I phoned Lev Psakhis to ask him whether he would travel from Israel to Budapest to help me as a second. “When would you need me?” Lev asked. “Tomorrow!” I answered.

I have introduced Lev to the reader in my comments to the very last game from Volume 1; this was the first time he helped me as a second.

In the summer of 1992 my sister Sofia had trained with him and she told me what a nice guy Lev was, with his subtle sense of humour and deep knowledge of chess.

We barely had ten days to prepare before the match, one for each scheduled game. Looking through the games of the recent match against Fischer as well as some others played by Spassky over the last few years, we thought it probable that the main theoretical duel was going to be held in the Ruy Lopez and the King’s Indian. Lev rejected the possibility that Spassky would embark on a long duel in the Najdorf variation, but he mentioned the Closed Sicilian as something to be considered.

We dedicated the available time to the intense study of these opening systems, but the most important novelty of the match was the fruit of Lev’s inspiration during the morning before the eighth game. In a recent conversation, Lev described the situation like this: It was not too difficult to prepare against any of Spassky’s weapons, since his preparation was not based on huge analysis or concrete lines, and he relied mainly on his vast experience; the real problem was that he had too many such weapons and we did not have time to prepare against them all!

Since Spassky had recent practice of facing the King’s Indian after his match against Fischer, it would have made some sense to look for another opening against 1.d4. Unfortunately, I had no alternative in my repertoire. In fact, Lev estimated that Spassky’s sporting form and level of preparation was higher than usual in those years, thanks to the Fischer match.

Spassky was accompanied by two seconds, Aleksander Nikitin and Yuri Balashov, the same as during the match against Fischer. Balashov was in charge of the theoretical preparation, while Nikitin’s role was more general. They also had only ten days before the match, so we did not expect too many opening surprises either.

The opening ceremony took place at the Varkert Casino. Before the official dinner, we had the drawing of lots at the roulette table. I drew 13, meaning Black in the first game, but I was happy all the same because I used to consider 13 my lucky number. And I also thought of the fact that 31 (the starting day) was the reverse of 13...

It had been established that 120,000 dollars would go to the winner and the remaining 80,000 to the loser. During the dinner I received an unexpected proposal from Spassky: would I agree to split the prize equally regardless of the final result? He asked this in a natural and friendly way, but I declined the offer without giving it much thought. I considered that the prizes were generous anyway, and I did not intend to complicate matters unnecessarily.

With hindsight, I believe this was a psychological blunder from Spassky, as it gave me valuable information about his state of mind. Had he been sure that he would kill me in the match, he would hardly have made such a proposal. When rejecting the deal, I knew I had chances to win, but did not consider

myself the favourite. Despite my extra 30 rating points, I knew Spassky could still be a fantastic player.

I was surprised to find out recently that Lev *did* consider me the favourite, due to having witnessed my play in Aruba (see for instance the games with Gulko on page 207 and Granda, page 313). Lev stayed at the same hotel as Spassky and they happened to walk together a few times. With his inimitable sense of humour, Lev confessed to me: “I was very tempted to sell Boris some of our opening secrets... but we did not have any!” And then he continued in a more serious tone: “Boris expressed his high opinion of your play more than once!”

We had a great venue – the ballroom of the Intercontinental Hotel (now the Marriott) which hosted roughly 1000 visitors every day! On YouTube there is a video showing the spectators with pocket chess sets on their lap, analysing the position that was displayed on the big mechanical demo board! And we had daily coverage on national television; ah, the good old days...



The handshake at the start of Game 1

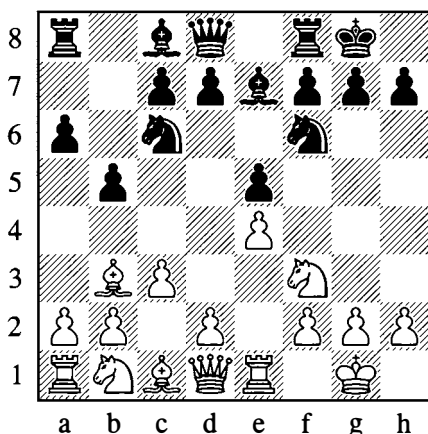
I sat down for the first game with all kinds of questions swarming in my mind. Would our hurried King's Indian preparation stand up to the pressure of an outstanding Sämisch specialist? How would I adapt to the completely unusual (for then) time control? I knew one of my strong points was putting pressure on my opponents in their time trouble... but not with an addition of time on every move. I feared that the Fischer system would rather favour my opponent.

In the first game an intense struggle ended in a perpetual check. This finally gave me faith that I was in good shape and that our preparation was at least satisfactory. But now I had to prove a little bit more in the second game, in which I had White.

Judit Polgar – Boris Spassky

Budapest (2) 1993

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♞e1 b5 7.♙b3 0-0 8.c3



In those days one could play this without fearing the Marshall Attack, which was on the edge of being considered dubious. True, Spassky had used it as a main weapon in his Candidates final match against Tal in 1965 and one year later achieved a relatively easy draw against Fischer with it, but more than a

quarter of a century later the Marshall did not seem to suit his style anymore.

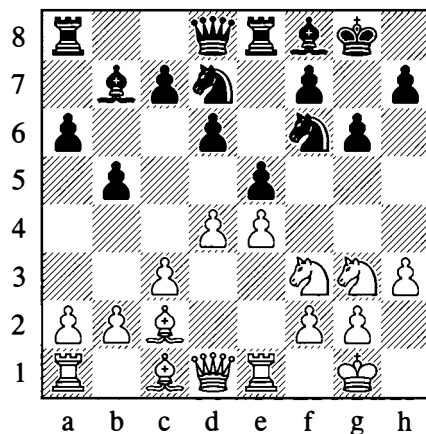
8...d6 9.h3 ♘b8

At this stage of the match, Spassky did not have any reason to refrain from the Breyer system, a solid variation that had served him well over the years as well as during his match against Fischer.

The year before the match, when I finally abandoned my beloved King's Gambit, I had worked on the Spanish a lot with my old trainer Laszlo Hazai. Laszlo played it with Black and helped me to understand the smallest details of the characteristic positions; the Breyer system did not escape our attention, of course.

In other words, we both could be satisfied with the opening chosen.

10.d4 ♘bd7 11.♘bd2 ♙b7 12.♙c2 ♞e8
13.♘f1 ♙f8 14.♘g3 g6



15.b3

In those days, this was just an experimental alternative to the main continuation 15.a4. I had prepared it together with Hazai and Sofia, and then my sister was the first one to try it out in practice. In 1991 I played it against Beliavsky in the last round at Munich. I needed a draw to get a grandmaster norm; so I played aggressively and lost!

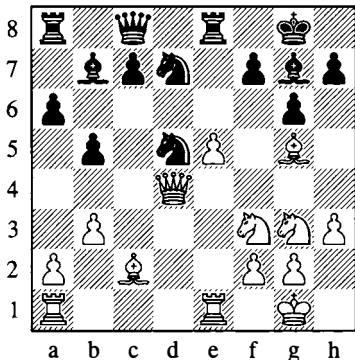
15...♙g7

Boris played this after 15 minutes. I do not know whether my opening choice surprised him, or if he simply tried to understand which of the possible moves would best suit his mood.

15...c5?! 16.d5 just helps White to stabilize the centre, leaving Black without any counterplay at all, as happened in Sofia Polgar – Thomas, Bad Mergentheim 1989.

I assume Boris felt tempted to play 15...d5, which would suit his enterprising style, but eventually decided to postpone this theoretical debate until after he had checked the forcing variations with his seconds.

My game with Beliavsky went: 16.exd5 ♖xd5 17.dxe5 ♜xc3 18.♞d3 ♜d5 19.♙g5 ♞c8 20.♞d4 ♙g7



Black's position is solid, but his queen is passive and also obstructs the a8-rook. Although I needed just a draw, I played the spectacular 21.♜f5!!? gxf5 22.♙xf5 ♞e6. Black eventually defended and won.

In the crucial eighth game, I played Lev's brilliant suggestion of 16.♙g5 h6 17.♙h4; more about this below.

16.d5

Black's last move made the threat of ...d6-d5 look more real. At the same time, it left the

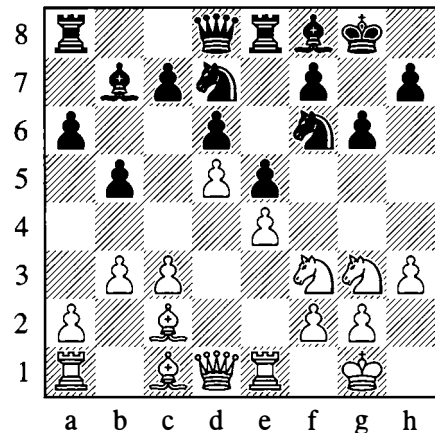
d6-pawn insufficiently defended, which after my move means that preparing the thematic ...c7-c6 now requires more work.

16...♙f8!?

This kind of open-mindedness is typical of Spassky. He does not consider that Black is losing two tempos for nothing; he instead thinks that each of the bishop moves corresponds to the concrete necessities of the moment.

In an earlier game I faced 16...♜b6 17.♙e3 ♜fd7 18.♞d2 ♜c5 19.♞ad1 ♞e7 20.h4 ♞ad8 21.h5 c6 22.c4 bxc4 23.♞a5 cxb3 24.axb3 with pressure on both wings, Polgar – Southam, Debrecen 1990.

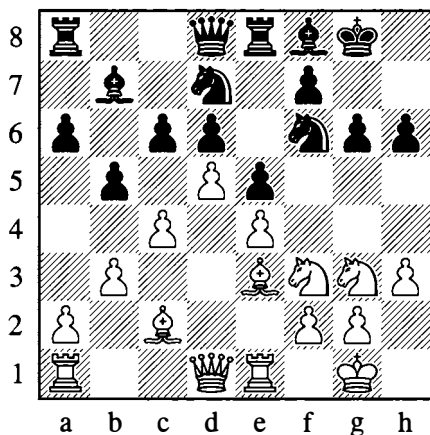
In Game 10, Spassky deviated from this previous game of mine with 17...♞c8 and soon obtained active play. Later, it was established that 17.♞b1 is best, in order to meet 17...c6 with 18.c4, taking advantage of the X-ray pin along the b-file.

**17.♙g5**

I always liked to provoke ...h7-h6 in such positions, although at this stage it is hard to say whether it really helps White. In principle, the slight weakening of the kingside offers White additional attacking ideas, which suited me perfectly fine. On the other hand, the control

over the g5-square and the availability of the h7-square for the knight or king may prove useful for Black in the long run.

17...h6 18.♙e3 c6 19.c4!



White needs to keep the centre blocked in order to be able to focus on the kingside attack. One of Black's main problems is finding a good square for his b7-bishop.

19...a5

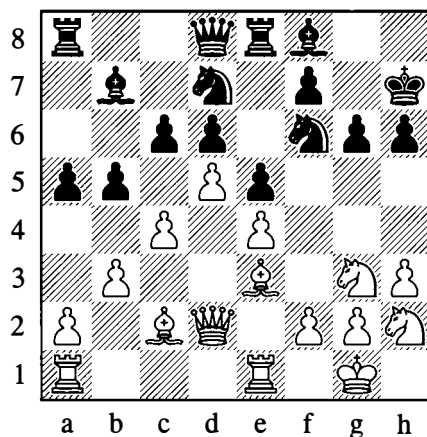
A multipurpose move, clearing a6 for the bishop, defending the b4-square in advance in anticipation of ...b5-b4 and preparing to open the a-file with ...a5-a4.

20.♜d2 ♘h7

With so many white pieces controlling the g5-square, 20...h5 is not an appealing alternative.

21.♘h2

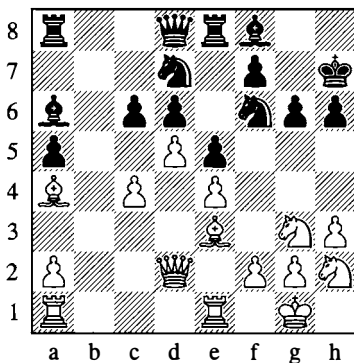
In connection with the next move, one of my favourite attacking ideas. I had played relatively quickly so far, having spent only 25 minutes. This was a clear sign that I felt at home in this kind of position, which shows that the process of switching from the King's Gambit to the Ruy Lopez had come to a successful end.



21...b4!?

Spassky thought for 15 minutes on this move, but I consider it a mistake, both objectively and from a practical point of view. Black should aim to keep the queenside tension, in order to hinder my kingside attack.

21...bxc4?! 22.bxc4 ♙a6 opens the queenside prematurely, and is strongly met with: 23.♙a4!



The a6-bishop is not so effective, while its rival cuts like a blade along the a4-e8 diagonal.

21...♙a6!?

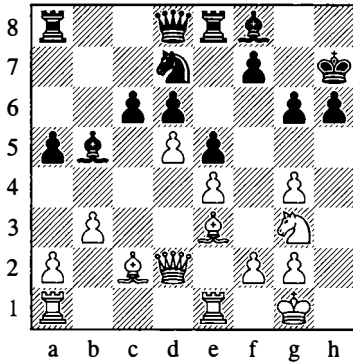
This runs into different kinds of problems: 22.cxb5!

A well-timed release of the tension. With the bishop on b7, this could be met with ...c6xd5.

22...♙xb5

22...cxb5 23.a3! leaves the a6-bishop passive. Apart from the kingside plan, I could consider playing on the queenside with ♖d3 and ♜ecl-c6.

23.♟g4 ♟xg4 24.hxg4

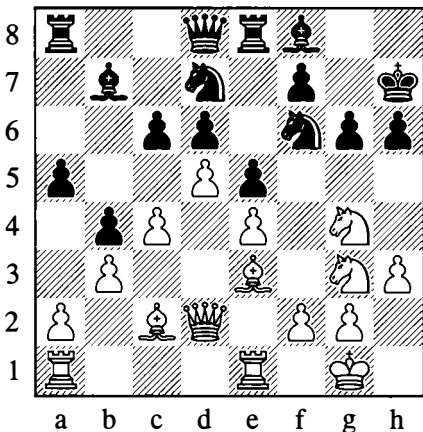


In view of the permanent threat of a2-a4, the black queenside is unstable. If ...c6xd5, White could consider exd5, clearing the diagonal for the Spanish bishop.

21...h5 is also not without drawbacks. I would play 22.♟f3 followed by ♟g5† and f2-f4, with an attack.

Black should probably try 21...a4, maintaining his flexibility and aiming to provoke as many piece and pawn exchanges as possible.

22.♟g4



22...♟xg4

Spassky pondered for about 20 minutes about the possible alternatives.

If 22...h5 23.♟h6! the invading knight would cause Black a lot of headaches.

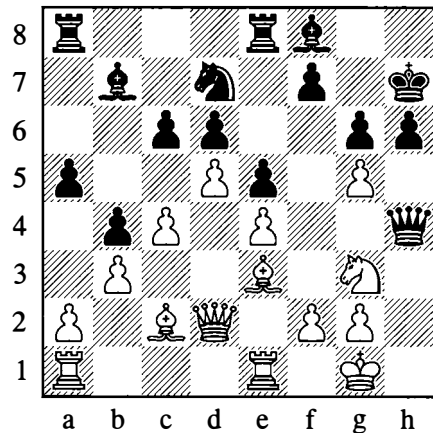
22...♟g8 is quite passive, which allows me to open the centre and the queenside under favourable circumstances: 23.dxc6 ♟xc6 24.a3. This was what I was planning to play during the game, but in my diary I found the comment that 23.a3 would also have been interesting.

23.hxg4

White's attacking plan is quite simple: f2-f3 followed by ♜f2 and ♜h1. Spassky played his next move without thinking, having most surely planned it when taking on g4.

23...♞h4 24.g5!

I did not mind changing plans at all; in fact, I was happy to cut off the queen's retreat.



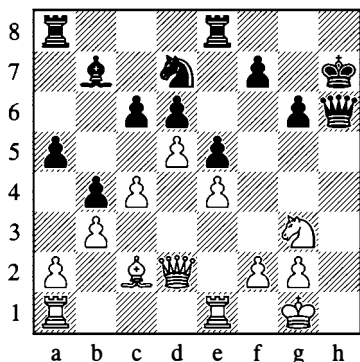
24...c5

Another instant reaction. Spassky stabilizes the queenside in order to create the threat of simplifying with 25...hxg5 26.♟xg5 ♟h6.

During the game, I planned to meet 24...hxg5 with 25.dxc6 ♟xc6 26.♟xg5, but after 26...♞g4 the queen can safely retreat to e6 if

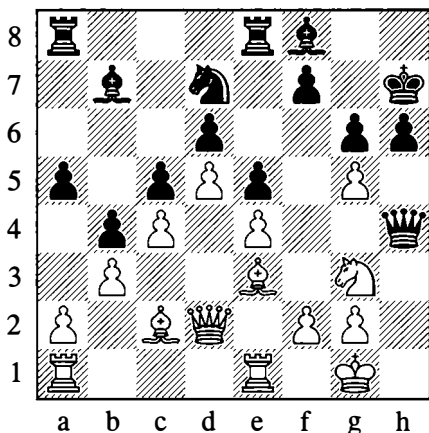
needed, and Black would retain a perfectly playable position.

25.♔xg5! is much stronger, as I discovered when analysing the game anew for this book. The point will be revealed a little later. 25...♕h6!? 26.♕xh6 ♖xh6



It may seem that White has missed the right moment to play dxc6 followed by ♖xd6, but 27.♞e3! renews this threat, while adding that of 28.♘f5 gxf5 29.♞h3 with a decisive attack.

The insertion of 24...cxd5 would help if White had to play 25.cxd5, when the same simplifying trick mentioned above would work out well. However, after 25.exd5! the difference between the light-squared bishops' activities would be a telling factor. For instance, 25...hxg5 26.♔xg5 ♕h6 27.♕xh6 ♖xh6 28.♞e3 with threats such as ♘e4 followed by ♞h3, but also a2-a3, keeping Black under pressure on both wings.



After the game move, I spent ten minutes designing a plan that caught Spassky completely unawares. I believe he realized what was cooking for him quite late.

25.♘f1!!

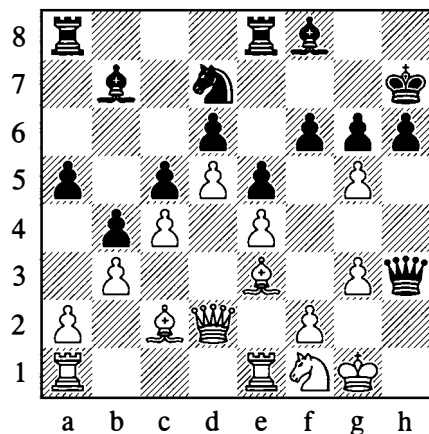
A strong move, combining prophylaxis with attacking ideas. By defending the queen, I prevent the ...♕f8-h6 idea, and by clearing a path for my pawns, I get ready to start a massive offensive against the black queen.

25...f6

The only way to avoid immediate problems with the queen.

25...♖g4 would only speed up my plan: 26.♕d1 ♖h4 27.♘h2+— with inevitable material losses for Black.

26.g3 ♖h3



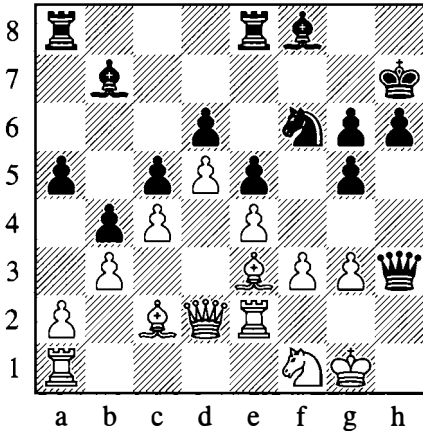
27.f3!!

This is the core of my idea. It looks like a consolidating move, but my real intention is to trap the queen with ♞e1-e2-h2! Although this looks slow, Black cannot find an adequate way to meet the threat.

27...fxg5 28.♞e2 ♘f6

After this forced sequence, I took 11 minutes

(apparently too little) to decide between the available continuations of the attack.



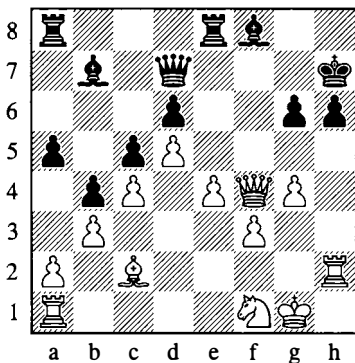
29.g4

During the game I thought this was a great move, but it has a flaw, which remained unnoticed by Spassky.

In my old notes, I indicated the stronger choice: 29.♙xg5! ♜h5 30.♞h2 ♝d7 31.g4!

More ambitious than 31.♜e3 hxg5 32.g4 ♙h6 33.gxh5 with a lot of play on the light squares.

31...♜f4 32.♙xf4 exf4 33.♞xf4

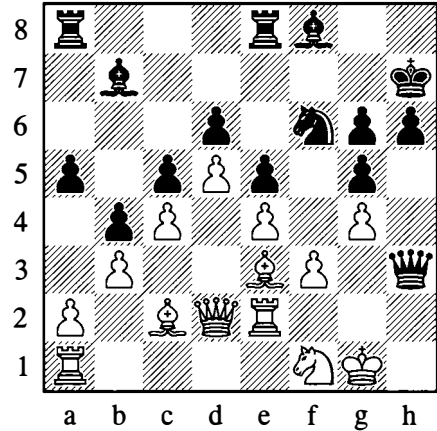


I stopped my line here, concluding that White has a clear advantage. I could not agree more now, for instance:

33...♙g7 34.♞e1 ♞f8 35.♞g5 ♝d8 36.♞d2 ♞xf3 37.e5!

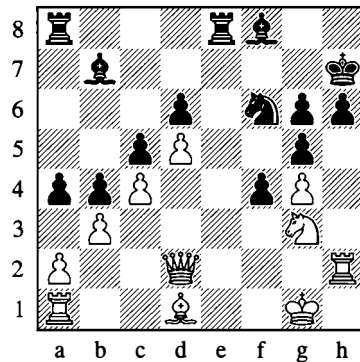
With a strong attack. The b7-bishop will have a hard time returning to the action.

29.♞h2 ♝d7 30.♙xg5 would be just another possible move order, transposing above.



29...♞xf3

During the 14 minutes he thought on this move, I was entertaining myself calculating the following amazing variation: 29...a4 30.♞h2 ♞xf3 31.♙d1 ♝xe4 32.♜g3 ♞f4 33.♙xf4 exf4

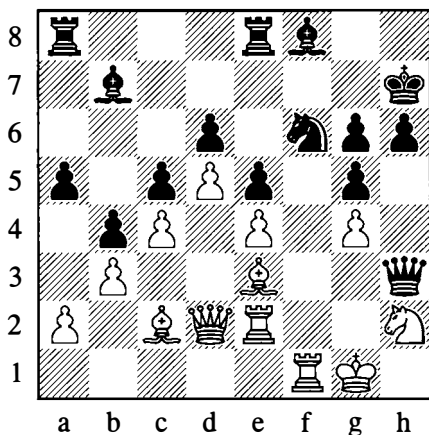


Black has great compensation for the huge material deficit.

In my old notes, I have 30.bxa4 as better, but the best move is 30.♙d1! defending the d1-g4 diagonal in advance and preparing to trap the queen with ♞h2. If 30...♞xf3 then 31.♞f2 followed by ♞xf6.

30. ♖h2 ♜h3

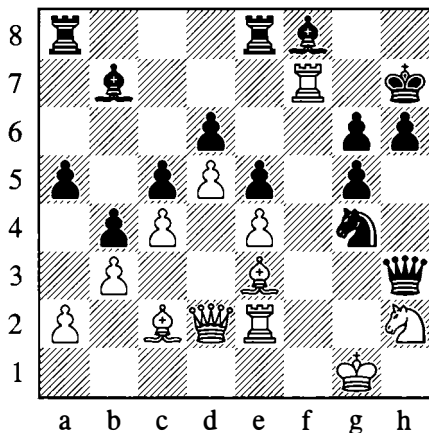
30... ♜g3? would lose a decisive tempo:
31. ♜g2 ♜h3 32. ♜f1 followed by ♜f3.

31. ♜f1

The net is tightening around the black queen, but for Spassky the following positional piece sacrifice must have been the most natural thing in the world.

31... ♖xg4!

Black saves the queen and gets a compact mass of three pawns for the sacrificed piece.

32. ♜f7†**32... ♜g7?**

Boris spent less than a minute on this decisive mistake; there was no need to hurry in such a complicated situation, since he had 27 minutes left, not counting the extra minute per move...

It was essential to attack the rook with: 32... ♜g8! During the game, I thought I was sure to have a clear advantage, but the more I analyse now, the more questionable this evaluation becomes. The following is just one possible continuation: 33. ♜xb7 ♖xe3 34. ♜xe3 ♜c8 35. ♜b6 ♜d8 36. ♜c6 h5 My minor pieces are hard to activate, while Black threatens ... ♜h6 followed by ... g5-g4 with active play.

33. ♖xg4!

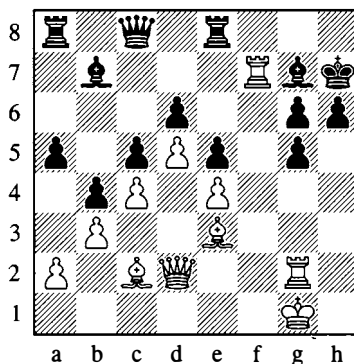
Spassky obviously overlooked this zwischenzug, which would not have been possible after 32... ♜g8. On the next two moves he spent almost all his remaining time, going down to two minutes to reach move 40.

I played relatively quickly after this point, using about one minute for each move; I felt very much in my element!

33... ♜xg4† 34. ♜g2 ♜h3

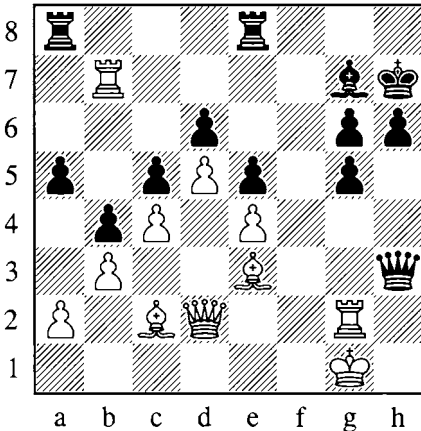
A sad necessity.

Black cannot afford to defend his bishop with 34... ♜c8.



35. ♖xg5!! with a decisive attack: 35... ♖g8 (35... hxc5 36. ♗xg5 leads to mate) 36. ♗xg7+ ♖xg7 37. ♖xh6+ ♖h7 38. ♗g5 The black king is helpless.

35. ♗xb7



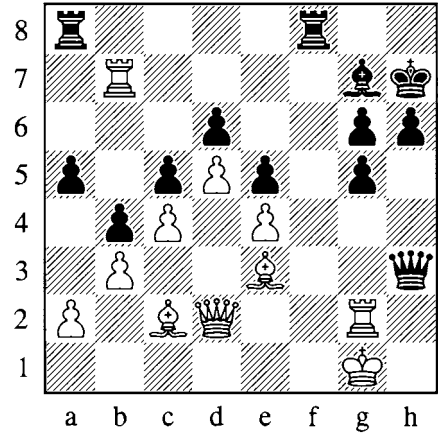
The material is approximately equal for the time being, but I retain a strong attack.

35... ♗f8?

Already short of time, Boris thought that

36. ♖xg5 would not work because after 36... hxc5 37. ♗h2 he would have 37... ♗f1 mate.

He should have tried 35... ♖g8!± or 35... ♗c8±.

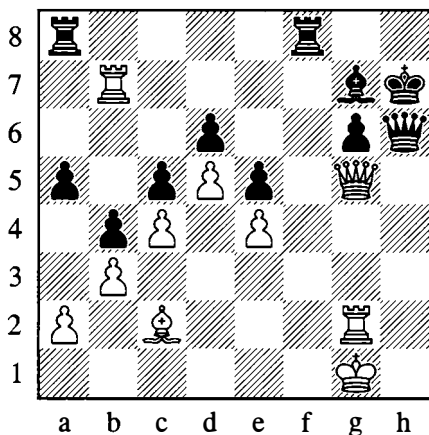


36. ♖xg5!

This is a real sacrifice, since White cannot win the queen, but at the same time a lethal one, destroying the defences of the black king.

36... hxc5 37. ♗xg5 ♗h6





38. ♖xh6†!

Avoiding the last trap: 38. ♖h2? ♜f1†! 39. ♜xf1 ♖xh2 and suddenly it is Black who must win. It is never too late to spoil things in a well-played game!

38... ♜xh6 39. ♖h2† ♜g5 40. ♖xg7 ♜f3

While Boris was making this move, his flag fell and he resigned.

I felt this was the perfect situation: I took the lead in the match just before the first day off, so I had some time to calm down and adapt to the new situation. I understood that every draw from now on would be part of the final victory, but of course I did not underestimate Boris's resoluteness and his ambition to get back in the match.

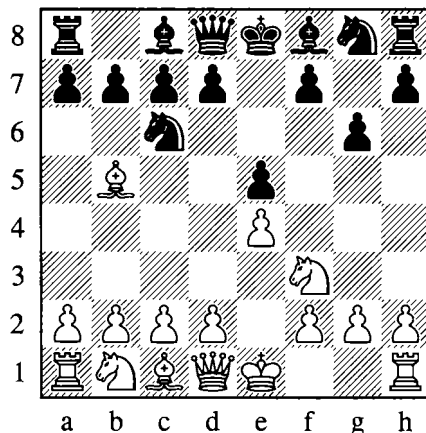
I was also flirting with the idea of keeping playing actively, since a second victory would almost seal the final result. But above all, there was this wonderful thought: "Wow, am I really going to win the match?!"

Unfortunately, things did not go my way in the third game. I sacrificed a pawn in the opening, but did not get enough compensation. When we sat down for the fourth game, the score was level once again.

Judit Polgar – Boris Spassky

Budapest (4) 1993

1. e4 e5 2. ♖f3 ♜c6 3. ♖b5 g6



This way of transposing to the Steinitz Defence Deferred enjoyed some popularity in the 1980s. Spassky and Salov were the main defenders of Black's point of view.

Understandably, Spassky was not at all keen to repeat the Breyer so soon after his previous defeat. He chose another strategically complex system, hoping to outplay me in the ensuing closed position.

It seemed that this was in accordance with his entire match strategy, designed together with his seconds. The theoretical duel was presumably going to take place in just two openings – the King's Indian and the Ruy Lopez – but changing the specific systems from one game to another would supposedly favour the more experienced player.

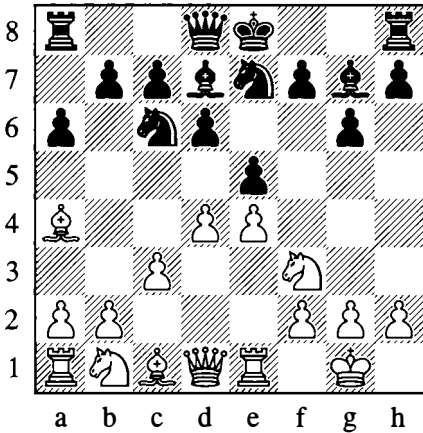
4.0–0 ♖g7 5. c3 a6 6. ♖a4 d6 7. d4 ♖d7 8. ♜e1

A flexible move.

In principle, I wanted to block the centre, but 8.d5 was premature in view of 8... ♜ce7 followed by ...f7-f5. Before playing d4-d5, I invited my opponent to make a commitment,

by either occupying the e7-square with the other knight, or else blocking the f7-pawn with ...♖f6.

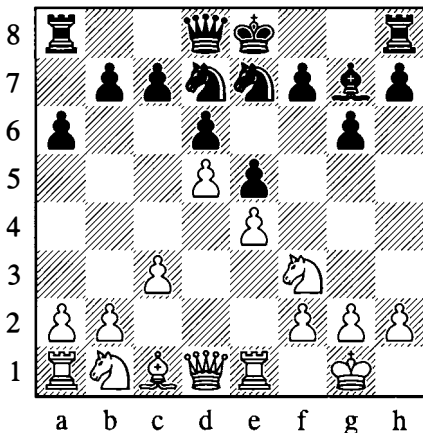
8...♖ge7



9.d5

The structure now acquires the contours of the King's Indian. In some cases, playing against one's own favourite schemes may cause some psychological problems. However, I had played these structures with White before taking up the King's Indian with Black, so I did not feel uncomfortable in any way.

9...♖b8 10.♗xd7† ♖xd7



Strategically, the exchange of light-squared bishops favours White, who has the central pawns on light squares. On the other hand, Black has solved most of his problems of coordination and development, since his minor pieces do not stand in each other's way.

11.♗e3!

The most accurate move order, preparing to regroup in time with ♖fd2 and f2-f3. I knew this plan from my King's Indian games, and I always found it useful to "steal" ideas from other openings.

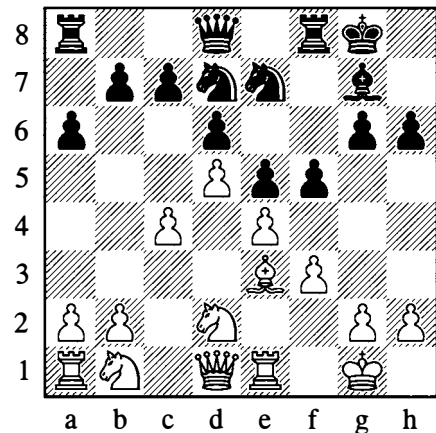
After his previous move, Boris had gone away from the board and seemed to have fallen asleep in a chair. He noticed that I had moved only after 18 minutes and looked greatly surprised about the incident.

11...h6

Preparing ...f7-f5.

11...f5? would be premature: 12.♗g5 ♖f8 13.exf5 The opening of the kingside under these concrete circumstances only favours White.

12.♖fd2 0-0 13.c4 f5 14.f3

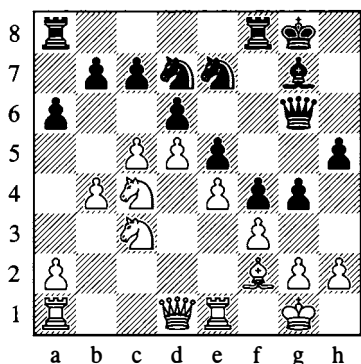


14...c5

Boris took this important decision after only three minutes. It is always a good question if ...c7-c5 consolidates the queenside or rather offers White the simple plan of opening the b-file with b2-b4xc5.

I assume Boris did not trust his kingside attack in the absence of the c8-bishop. Here is an illustrative line with mutual attacks on the opposing wings:

14...f4 15.♙f2 h5 16.♘c3 g5 17.b4 ♖e8 18.c5 ♜g6 19.♘c4 g4

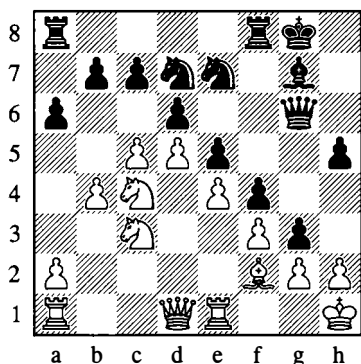


So far, both sides have played natural moves. It may seem that the threat of ...g4-g3 is annoying, but the next move proves this an illusion.

20.♙h1!

Clearing the g1-square for the bishop.

20...g3

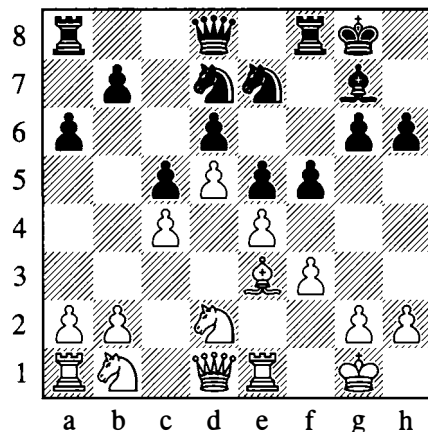


21.♙g1

If White manages to avoid h2xg3, which would clear the f4-square and open the h6-c1 diagonal, the advance of Black's g-pawn remains harmless. With the c8-bishop off the board, h2-h3 is a threat, as there is now no chance of ...♙xh3.

21...gxh2 22.♙f2!

Keeping the bishop active and the h2-pawn as a shield for the king.



15.♘c3 ♜c7

Offering a clear hint that Black will focus on defending his queenside.

16.♙b1 ♙fb8

Confirming the impression of the previous move.

17.♜e2

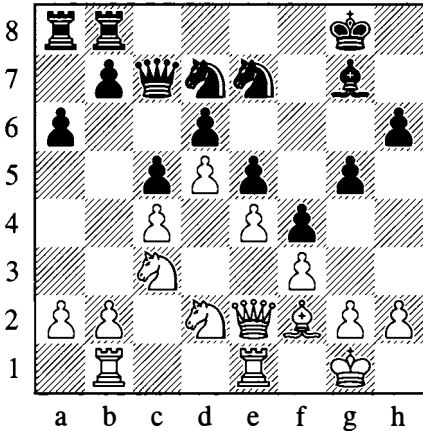
When planning an attack, one has to consider the opponent's attempts at counterplay. Before carrying out my plan based on b2-b4, I wanted to make sure that Black will not play ...b7-b5.

17...f4 18.♙f2 g5

As mentioned in the previous chapter, 18...h5 would be the more restrictive way of gaining kingside space, by avoiding my g2-g4. And yet, Black's kingside attack would not be dangerous after the exchange of the light-squared bishops and with all his pieces massed

on the queenside. The character of the position would not change that much with respect to the game.

In fact, there followed a long sequence during which we ignored the kingside, refraining from g2-g4 and ...h6-h5.



19.b4!

Not wasting time with a2-a3, which would also take the a3-square away from my pieces.

19...b6

Black would not be able to keep a knight on c5 for long after 19...cxb4?! 20.♞xb4 ♠c5, in view of ♠d2-b3. The attempted counterplay with 20...b5 would backfire after 21.♞c1. With two open queenside files, White's attack has every chance of success.

20.♞b2

The most effective way of doubling rooks, keeping the possibility of activating the queen with ♞e2-d1-a4.

I remember I felt very comfortable at this point; this is a dream position for White, who can manoeuvre at her leisure, while all Black can do is wait passively.

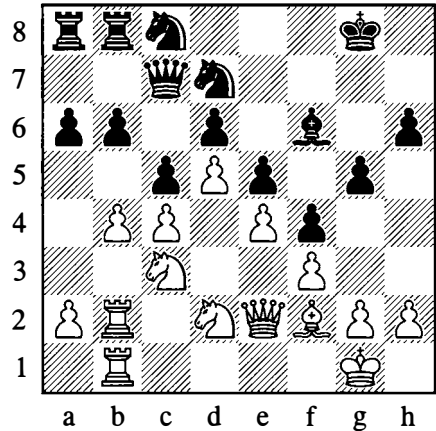
I believe Boris did not mind this position either, probably sharing most people's opinion that I was mainly a tactical player, without special strategic skills...

20...♞f6

Bringing the last reserves into the defence. The plan is ...♠c8 followed by ...♞d8.

21.♞eb1 ♠c8

This was the last moment when he could have retained a kingside space advantage with 21...h5!?



22.g4!

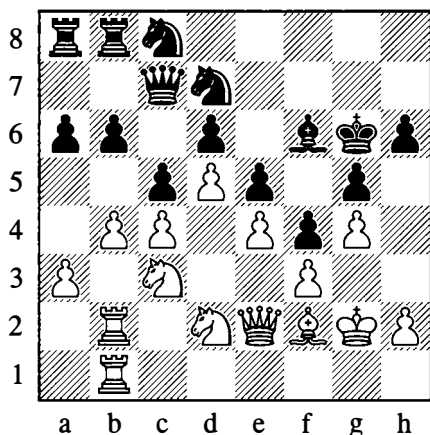
Since there was nothing concrete happening on the queenside, I finally decided to freeze the kingside with this typical move.

22...♠g7 23.♠g2

Both players are trying to anticipate the opening of the queenside by placing their king on the safest square. For me, the usefulness of the previous move will be revealed much later, when the king will have the possibility of escaping perpetual check with a well-timed ♠g2-h3. I would have faced bigger problems finding such a refuge had Black played ...h6-h5 earlier.

For Black, things are less clear, since his king does not have an equivalent square; rather soon, it will appear that by moving his king, Boris was just marking time.

23...♠g6 24.a3



I had failed to find a regrouping that required the a3-square for my pieces, so I finally decided to consolidate my queenside space advantage before transferring the queen to a4.

24...♔g7

During the game I was not entirely sure whether Boris was looking for the best regrouping or if he simply intended to provoke me into premature action.

I considered two possible set-ups for him. One of them would have the king on f7, ready to step to e7 and defend the d6-pawn if needed. Or instead, transferring the c8-knight to f7 would over-protect the d6-, e5- and g5-pawns, insuring Black against all kinds of positional piece sacrifices. The latter plan is rather time consuming and would weaken the defence of the b6-square.

The importance of all these elements was hard to evaluate during the game; it may seem that one has time for everything, but the main thing is to have a clear vision of what he or she wants in the long run.

25.♞d1 ♔f7

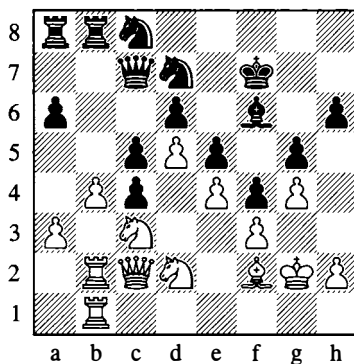
By now I understood that Boris had no clear plan at all. He spent less than 15 minutes on moves 21 to 25. Was it superficiality or excessive faith in his position?!

26.♞a4

The only weak square in Black's camp is c6. I was not sure whether ♞a4-c6 was such an effective threat, but I wanted to find out Boris's opinion about this. From his answer, I could infer that he disliked the idea.

26...♘e7

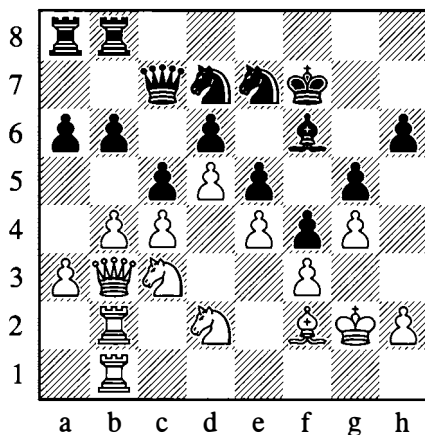
I had secretly hoped to provoke Boris out of his fortress with 26...b5, which would only open lines for my attack. 27.♞c2 bxc4



The simple 28.bxc5 would yield White a clear advantage, but with the king on f7 there are some additional tactical ideas: 28.♘xc4 cxb4? 29.♘b5! White wins the d6-pawn since 29...axb5? 30.♘xe5† drops the queen.

This is the first hint that the black king's placement can influence play a lot.

27.♞b3



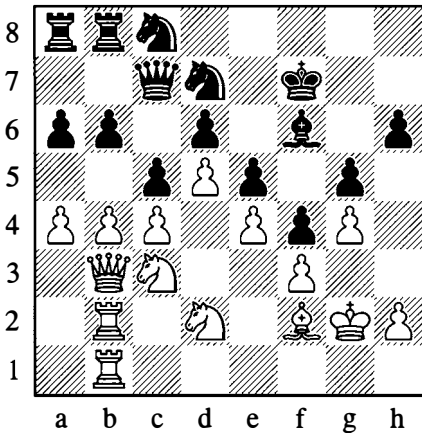
I actually knew that I wanted to play a3-a4, but was not sure about the concrete circumstances yet.

27...♖c8

Played without thinking. Boris probably did not believe that anything bad could happen to him in this blocked position.

Indeed, many times an overwhelming space advantage is not enough for a win. There was also a psychological side involving the uncertainty about how real my winning chances were. A victory would not only give me the lead in the match, but also weaken Boris's confidence in his ability to defend passive positions. On the contrary, a draw would be a small moral victory for him, meaning that I had spent a lot of time and energy without any reward, and so he could feel safe enough during the rest of the match.

28.a4



Creating the threat of breaking up Black's pawn chain with a4-a5. Black needs to decide whether to allow this.

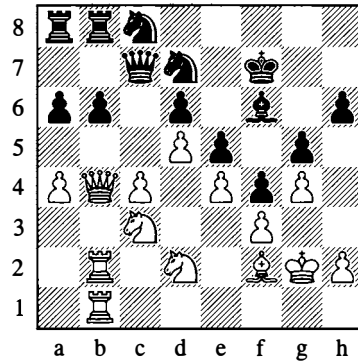
28...a5

Boris took this important decision after only nine minutes. Once again, it is a good question whether he trusted his position too

much or did not have the patience to ponder the long-term consequences of placing another pawn on a dark square.

Black could aim for a different type of fortress with:

28...cxb4 29.♖xb4



The natural

29...♖c5

occupying a good square and threatening the fork ...♖d3, would fail to:

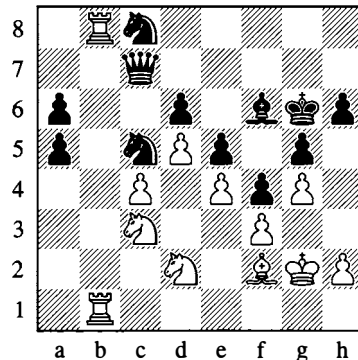
30.a5!

The strategic achievements of this move are more important than any small material losses that are possible.

30...bxa5

If 30...♖d3 then 31.axb6 ♖b7 32.♖a5 ♖xb2 33.♖xb2 ♖d8 34.♖a4± safely defending the b6-pawn and practically paralysing Black.

31.♖xb8 ♖xb8 32.♖xb8 ♖g6



Apparently there is no way to make progress, but White has a spectacular punch:

33. ♖a4!!

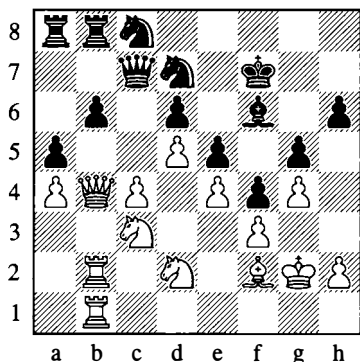
Removing the main defender of the b7-square:

33... ♖xa4 34. ♖b7 ♖d8 35. ♖a8!

Followed by ♖bb8.

Instead of 29... ♖c5, Black could try:

29... a5



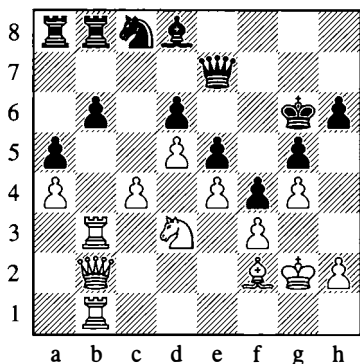
This would offer more stability in the short term, but in the long run I doubt Black could defend all his weak spots. Here is an illustrative line:

30. ♖a3 ♖c5 31. ♖b5 ♖d7 32. ♖b3 ♖xb3

33. ♖xb3 ♖g6 34. ♖b2 ♖d8 35. ♖a3

The knight is heading for d3.

35... ♖e7 36. ♖c2 ♖c7 37. ♖e1 ♖d8 38. ♖d3

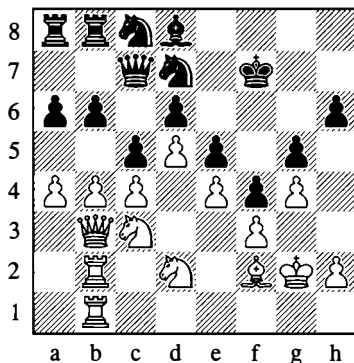


It is not easy to prove a forced win, but White has many ideas. I could open the h-file

with h2-h4 and ♖h1, prepare a piece sacrifice on e5 by transferring the bishop to c3, or break up the centre with c4-c5.

28... ♖d8!?

This may be the best defence, but the bishop would not contribute to the fight for the c5-square in any way.

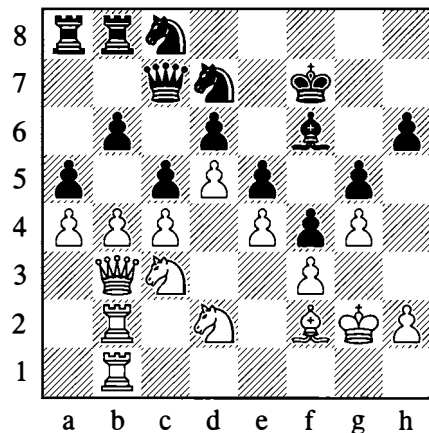


29. ♖c2

Defending the d3-square before the d7-knight attacks it from c5.

29... ♖g7 30. a5 bxa5 31. bxc5 ♖xc5 32. ♖a4

Black's fortress has lost its solidity since he cannot defend the c5-knight with another minor piece.



29. ♖b5 ♖d8 30. bxa5 ♖xa5?!

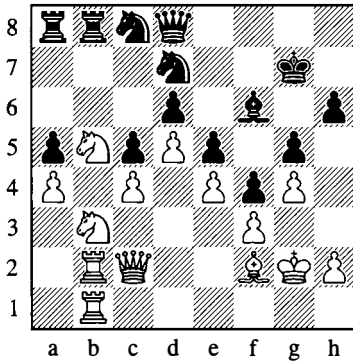
Another important decision after just five minutes. It allows me to open a second

queenside file, thus depriving Black of any chance of building a passive fortress.

Boris might have been reluctant to get another permanent weakness on a dark square with:
30...bxa5!?

I felt that I could make his life miserable, with good possibilities of breaking through, but proving a forced win is practically impossible. Here is a possible regrouping:

31.♖c2 ♔g7 32.♘b3



32...♙e7

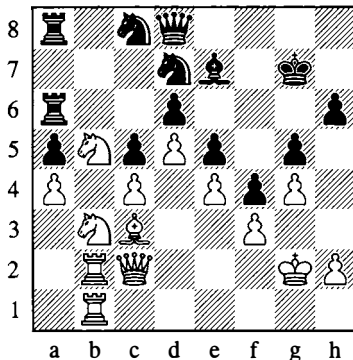
An essential defensive move.

32...♞a6? would allow the positional piece sacrifice 33.♘xd6, when the advance of the c- and d-pawns will crush Black.

33.♙e1 ♞a6 34.♙c3

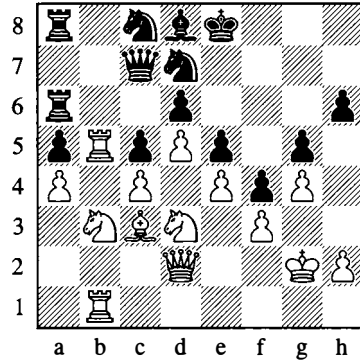
Taking the e5- and a5-pawns as targets.

34...♞ba8



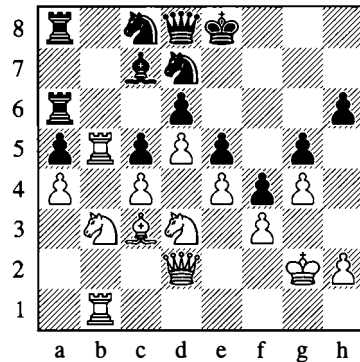
For the time being, Black keeps everything defended. Things would become more

complicated after a further regrouping by White. Below is an optimal situation I have created, in which all my pieces would take part in the pressure against Black's pawn chain:



The black queen's lack of mobility allows White a simple combination: 1.♙xa5 This wins a pawn since 1...♞xa5? 2.♘xa5 ♞xa5? 3.♞b7 traps the queen.

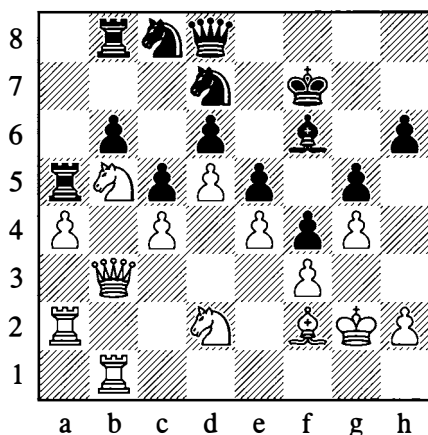
Switching places with the bishop when setting up the defensive battery leaves the queen rather passive.



White could carry out a thematic positional sacrifice in a favourable form: 1.♙xe5 dxe5 2.♘bxc5 ♘xc5 3.♘xc5 with a decisive initiative.

31.♞a2!

The structure has changed and I had to adapt my plans. The main idea in the next phase of the game is opening another file with a4-a5.

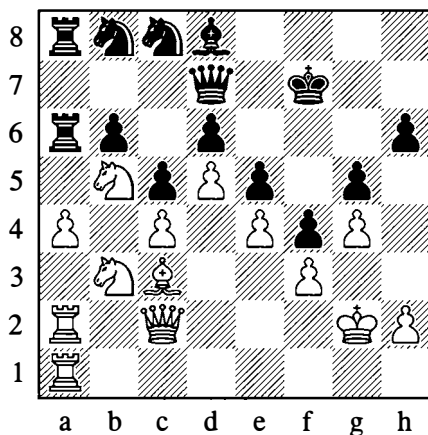
**31...Ba8**

And of course Boris understands my intentions and does his best to anticipate the pawn break.

32.♖c2 ♜a6 33.♞ba1 ♞b8 34.♞b3 ♜d7 35.♙e1 ♙d8

A key move in Black's defensive concept. It may seem that a4-a5 would lead to the inevitable exchange of Black's passive bishop, but things are not as simple as they appear.

First of all, the exchange will take place in a rather unusual form, and secondly it will not solve Black's strategic problems at all!

36.♙c3

As we will see, it is useful to keep an eye on the e5-pawn before breaking through.

36...♞e7 37.a5

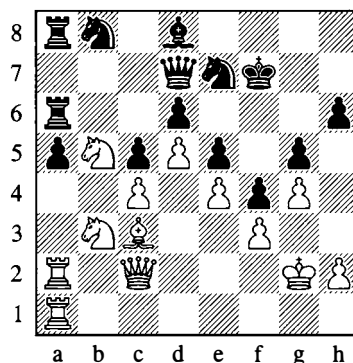
A player of Karpov's style and temperament might have kept manoeuvring for a while, aiming to confuse the opponent and make him tired, but I did not see any objective reason to delay concrete action. All my pieces are placed optimally and, as shown below, Black cannot release the tension!

37...♞g6

Boris stays alert, despite the closed character of the position. It is essential to keep the c5-pawn well defended. If axb6, the bishop would arrive on b6 to replace the pawn.

37...bxa5?

This would allow the destruction of the centre.

**38.♙xe5! dxe5**

The intermediate 38...a4, hoping to drive the knight far from the c5-square, would run into 39.♞xd6† ♜xd6 40.♞xc5 with similar effects as in the main line.

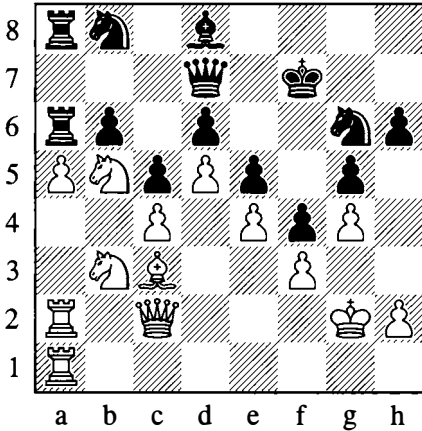
39.♞xc5 ♜e8 40.♞xa6 ♜xa6

Material is about level, but my passed pawns are very threatening, and Black is passive. The immediate advance:

41.c5!?

is possible, since 41...♜xb5 42.♞b1 wins back the knight with a decisive infiltration.

With his last move, Boris over-protects the e5-pawn, making ...bxa5 possible.



38.♔f2

In my old notes I found 38.♔f1, hoping for 38...♖h4 39.♔f2, when the e5-pawn would become vulnerable again. I also wrote that I carefully avoided h2-h3, already planning to use this square for my king!

A simpler solution would have been 38.axb6 ♗xb6 39.♖a5 with a possible transposition to the game.

38...♗e7

Black could have tried 38...bxa5, although things would not have changed dramatically compared to the game.

39.axb6 ♗xb6 40.♖a5 ♔f8?!

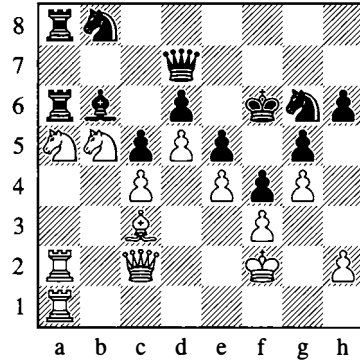
The long-awaited moment when Black could exchange his bishop for my knight has arrived, but Boris wisely refrains from it!

If 40...♗xa5 41.♗xa5, followed by either ♗c7 or ♖c7, White's invasion would be decisive.

It appears that the potentially bad bishop is a useful defensive piece. In the next phase of the game, it will be me who will look for a way to eliminate it!

However, the waiting move chosen by Boris offers me some unexpected tactical possibilities.

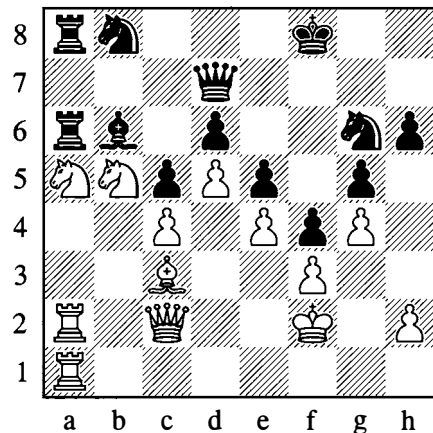
From this point of view, 40...♔f6 would have been safer.



During the game I calculated 41.♖c6 ♗xa2 42.♗xa2 ♗xa2 43.♗xa2 ♖xc6 44.♗a6 ♖a5 45.♖xd6, which was just a hallucination, since 45...♗xd6 46.♗xa5 ♗c7 retains a material advantage. Maybe I had a latent image with Black's king on f7, in which 47.♗b7 would win?

In any case, 45.♗xa5 ♗xa5 46.♗xa5 offers White the initiative, although Black is less cramped than in the game.

Or else, I could postpone concrete action with, say, 41.♗a4.



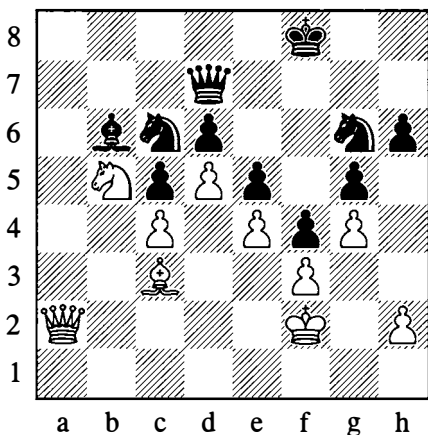
41.♖c6!

I hesitated for 14 minutes before playing this strong move, initiating my queenside invasion.

After a series of more or less forced exchanges, my queen will become very active along the eighth rank.

My main question to myself was whether I should keep manoeuvring for a while, preparing an even more favourable moment for the knight jump, or strike at once. It eventually came to my mind that I had spoiled quite a few good games by refraining from my first intention and looking for something even better. And I concluded with the rhetorical question: why would I need "better" if "good enough" is in sight?

41...♖xa2 42.♖xa2 ♖xa2 43.♙xa2 ♘xc6



44.♙a8†!

The king's presence on f8 allows me to gain an essential tempo to activate my queen, compared to the line starting with 40...♗f6 above, although this implies a piece sacrifice!

44...♘d8 45.♙b8!

I remember how proud I was of myself when I found this idea in my previous calculation.

45...h5

I did not expect this move at all, but I can understand it now. All his life, Boris was an enterprising player and at this stage of the game he probably just felt like playing an active

move. Its effects will actually be the opposite, dooming him to passive defence for the rest of the game.

The crucial move was

45...♙b7

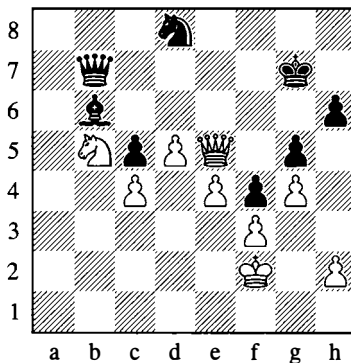
keeping the extra piece.

Apart from the aspect mentioned above, there could be additional reasons that led Boris to avoid this move. First of all, in his best years he frequently carried out similar positional piece sacrifices aimed at destroying the enemy centre. Moreover, after a forced sequence he would have to spot the only surviving move:

46.♙xd6† ♔g7

Only not 46...♗f7? 47.♙xd8! ♔xd8 48.♘d6† with an extra pawn and an overwhelming positional advantage.

47.♔xe5† ♘xe5 48.♙xe5†



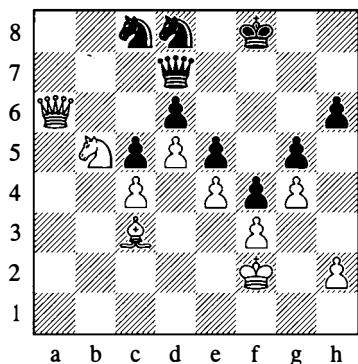
48...♗g8!

The only move that does not allow immediate tactics. However, after:

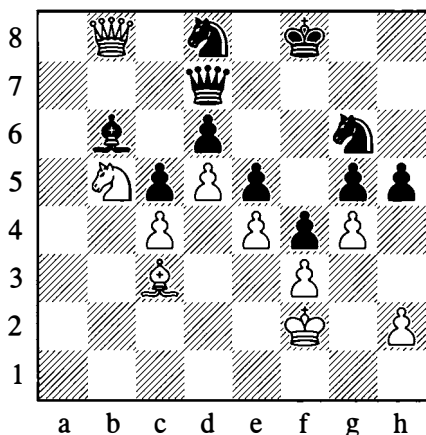
49.♙f6

White threatens ♙xh6 and e4-e5; the position remains frightening for Black, while after the game move it was far from clear yet whether I could win.

In my old notes I mentioned 45...♘e7 46.♙xb6 ♘c8 47.♙a6 with the question: "I am much better but can I win?"



But if he had played this way, I would probably have attached the same question to the game continuation...



46. ♖xb6

I spent nine minutes on this move.

I did not like 46.gxh5 d4 47.♖xb6 d7 threatening ...♖h3 with some counterplay.

If 46.h3 hxg4 47.hxg4 it would be too late to keep the extra piece: 47...♖b7?! 48.♖xd6† ♔g7 49.♗xe5† ♕xe5 50.♖xe5† Black's g5-pawn is doomed and its colleague on f4 is not in good shape either.

And yet, I tried to avoid occupying the h3-square, an idea I had had for a long time already.

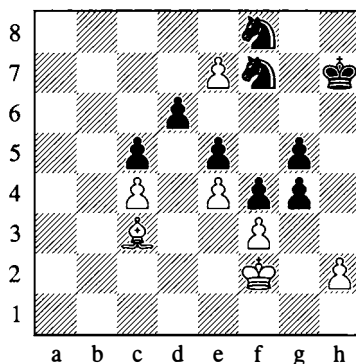
46... ♕f7

Black has no time for counterplay: 46...hxg4? 47.♕xd6 gxf3 48.♕f5! ♔f7 49.♗a5+– White wins the knight.

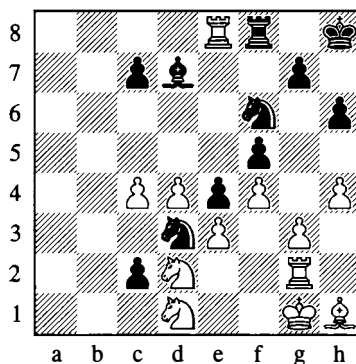
47. ♖b8† ♔g7 48.h3

Finally I could no longer avoid advancing my h-pawn.

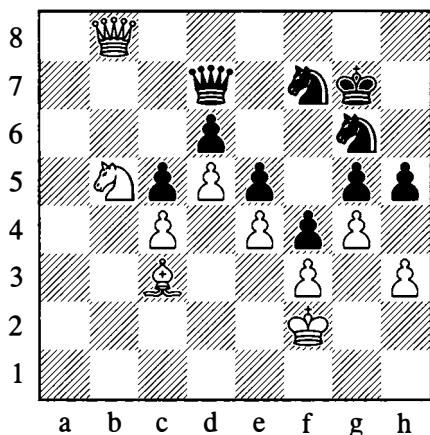
48.♕c7 was my original plan with a beautiful fairytale line following: 48...hxg4 49.♕e6† ♔h7 50.♖f8 ♖xe6 51.dxe6 ♕xf8 52.e7



The helplessness of the black knights is reminiscent of the position after 31...c2 in the famous game Bogoljubow – Alekhine, Hastings 1922.



Of course, my line is not really sound (the refutation comes right at the beginning: 48...♖a4), but it shows how much I used to let my thoughts wander in the search for beauty.

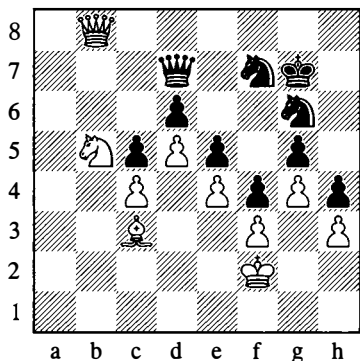


48...hgx4?!

This somewhat prematurely releases the tension, immediately allowing me to clear the h3-square for my king. Boris was approaching time trouble (15 minutes to reach move 60) so he spent only one minute on his last move.

48...h4

This would have prevented my hidden idea for good, but closing the h-file and occupying the h4-square would prevent any form of counterplay for Black such as ...♖h4 or ...♜h6xg4.



This would allow me to bring my king into the attack – a long manoeuvre with decisive effects. Below are some illustrative lines:

49.♗e2 ♕f6 50.♙a5 ♜e7 51.♗d3 ♜c8 52.♗c3 ♜h6

Aiming to improve the knight's placement.

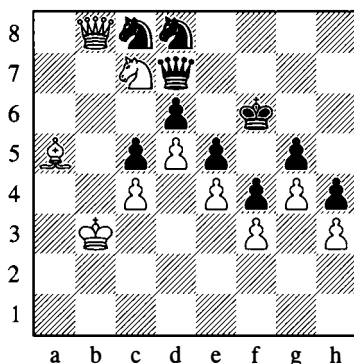
If Black keeps the same set-up, play could continue: 52...♗g7 53.♗b3 ♗g6 54.♙c7 ♗f6 55.♗a4 ♗g7 56.♗a5 ♗f6 57.♗a6 ♗e7 58.♗b7 ♜d8† 59.♗a8 ♜f7 60.♖b7

Followed by ♗b8.

53.♗b3 ♜f7

In this line Black is better prepared against the king invasion. However, the previous manoeuvre has been very useful in preventing Black's drawing counterplay with ...♖a4 after the next move.

54.♜c7 ♜d8



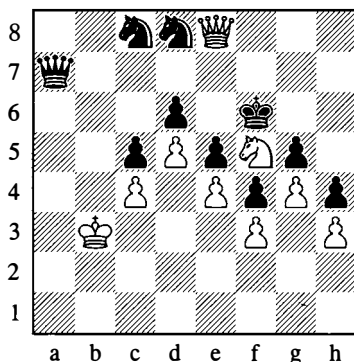
55.♜e8†! ♗e7

55...♖xe8 56.♖xc8 ♗e7 57.♖xd8†! leads to a won pawn ending.

56.♜g7 ♜f7 57.♜f5† ♗f6 58.♖b5 ♖a7

White's advantage is overwhelming and it does not surprise me that there is now a spectacular forced win:

59.♙d8† ♜xd8 60.♖e8



Black cannot save his extra knight. 60...♖f7 allows mate in one with 61.♜e6, and 60...♜c7 loses the queen to 61.♜f8+ ♔g6 62.♜h6+ ♔f7 63.♜g7+ followed by mate anyway.

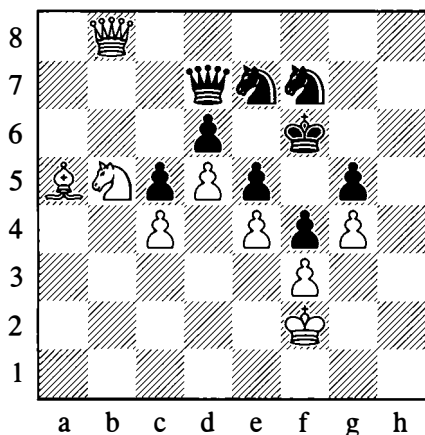
Black could have delayed the exchange on g4, but not avoided it forever, as the following line proves: 48...♔f6 49.♙a5 ♖e7 50.♜f8 ♖g6 51.♜g8 ♖e7 52.♜h7 and the attack on the h5-pawn cannot be ignored.

49.hxg4 ♔f6

Planning to defend everything safely with ...♖e7-c8. If he manages that, he could well be out of danger, but I remained alert.

49...♖e7? would lose on the spot to 50.♖xd6!

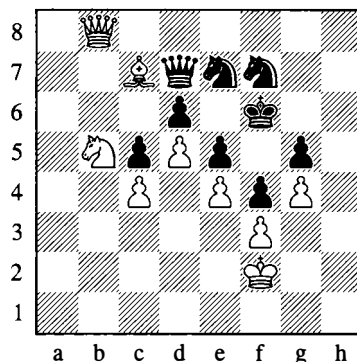
50.♙a5 ♖e7



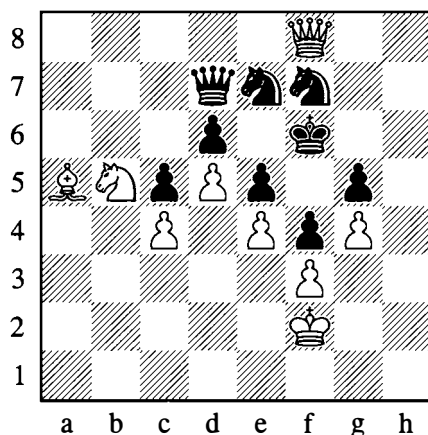
51.♜f8!

I took this essential decision after only four minutes. After my queen's invasion, the defensive set-up based on ...♖c8 is not as effective as with the queen on b8.

After the careless 51.♙c7? Black could probably have saved the game.



51...♖c8 52.♙e2 A familiar plan, which does not work out well now. 52...♙e7 53.♙d3 ♖h6 54.♙c3 ♖f7 55.♙b3 ♖h6 56.♙a4 ♖xg4! 57.fxg4 f3 The f-pawn is very dangerous and the time has come for White to look for a perpetual check.

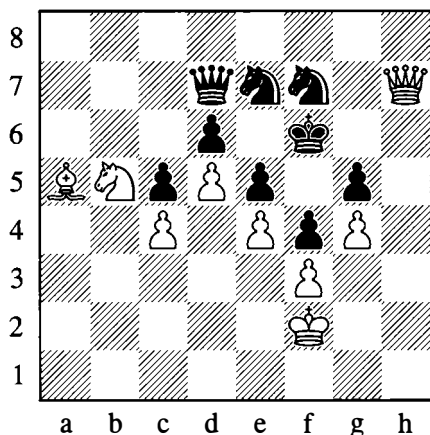


51...♖g6 52.♜g8

Apart from facing the threats of ♙c7 and ♖c7, Black has problems finding viable moves, which places him in the neighbourhood of zugzwang.

52...♖e7 53.♜h7

My position looks impressive, but we should not forget one important thing. My overwhelming piece activity and space advantage may well *not* have sufficed for a win if the “bad” black bishop was not missing. The way it is, with all his pawns exposed to attacks by my bishop, Black cannot hold his position for long.



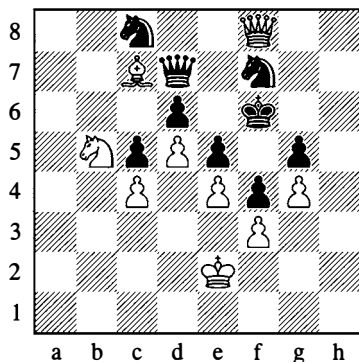
53...♔e8

Boris was short of time, so seeking counterplay was understandable, but the counterplay is just an illusion.

He could not have held his position with passive defence either:

53...♖c8 54.♙c7 ♖e7 55.♗e2 ♖c8 56.♚g8 ♖e7 57.♚f8 ♖c8

Abandoning the set-up based on having a knight on c8 makes things easy for me: 57...♖g6 58.♚b8 The purpose of the queen manoeuvre was to keep Black busy until I reach the c7-square with my bishop. The queen can safely return now. 58...♗e7 59.♚b7 ♗f6 60.♚b6 ♗e7 61.♚c6 ♖f8 62.♖a7 ♖g6 63.♙b6 ♗e8 64.♚a8† ♗e7 65.♖c8† ♗f6 66.♚c6 Black cannot avoid material losses.

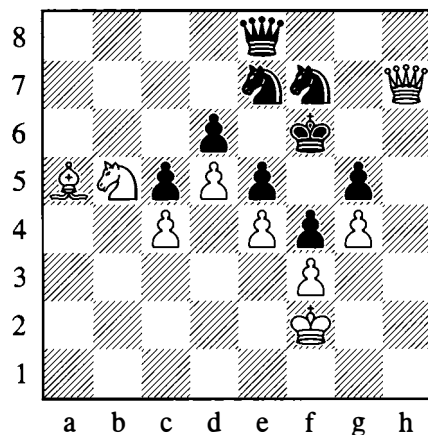


58.♗f2!

Hurrying closer to the h3-square.

58...♗g6 59.♗g2 ♗f6 60.♙a5 ♗g6 61.♖c7!

Now that ...♚a4 does not offer chances for a perpetual, this wins quickly.



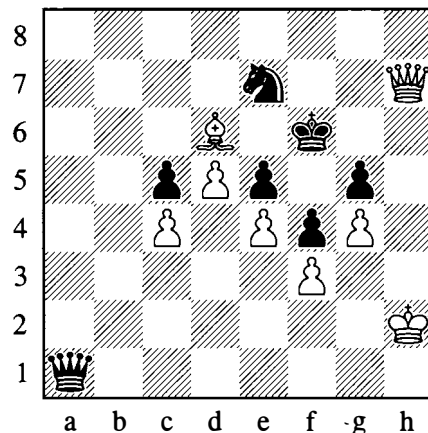
54.♙c7!

Correctly evaluating the consequences of Black's counterplay.

54...♚a8 55.♖xd6

I played this instantly, having seen everything until the end.

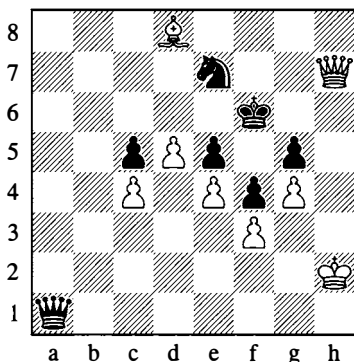
55...♖xd6 56.♙xd6 ♚a2† 57.♗g1 ♚a1† 58.♗h2



As we know already, finding refuge on h3 was more than pure luck! I had been playing for this idea from the early middlegame.

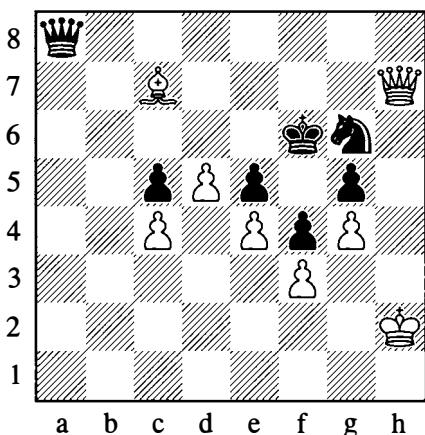
58...♖g6 59.♗c7 ♜a8

In his place, I could not have resisted playing 59...♖e7, with the following funny line in mind: 60.♗d8?



60...♜h1 ♖! 61.♖xh1 with a draw by stalemate.

Unfortunately for Black, 60.♗xe5† followed by ♜h8† wins the queen.



60.♗xe5†!

I failed to notice that 60.♜d7 is mate in 13, but I find my move good enough anyway. Black will soon lose all his pawns.

60...♖xe5

Or if 60...♖xe5 61.♜g7† ♖d6 62.♜xg6† wins.

61.♜f5† ♖g7 62.♜xe5† ♖g6 63.♜f5† ♖h6 64.♜f6† ♖h7 65.♜f7†

In view of 65...♖h8 66.♜h5† ♖g7 67.♜xg5† Boris resigned.

The game lasted for more than six hours and both of us were quite tired, of course. At the same time, the favourable outcome supplied me with some additional energy, while the losing player feels the burden of tiredness more severely. To me, the game was also proof that I could win in good positional style.

After this crucial game we had two free days, which allowed me to enjoy and get used to the role of match leader, but also I could relax and prepare for the next games.

The fifth and sixth games were sharp and hard fought but ended in draws. Thus, I maintained my lead before the next game we are going to examine (the seventh in the match), which had a similar course and end.

Boris Spassky – Judit Polgar

Budapest (7) 1993

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 g6 3.♖c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3

Boris is faithful to his general opening strategy, by alternating his systems of development without changing the opening. In the third game he was successful with the Averbakh system, but in the fifth he only achieved a draw with the 5.h3 variation, which is often named after Makagonov. In this game, he switches back to the Sämisch, which he had used in the first game.

As a general observation, in all these systems White is aiming for a massive space advantage, sometimes at the cost of slightly delaying his piece development.

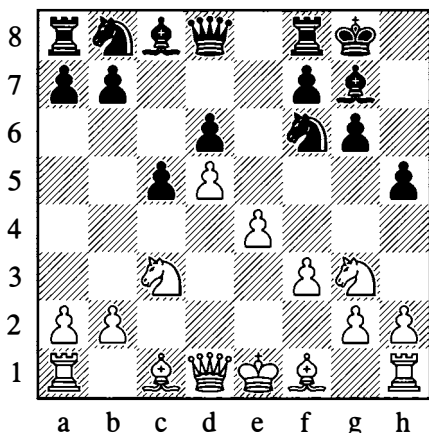
5...0-0

6.♟ge2

But now he deviates from 6.♟e3, as he played in the first game. By keeping the bishop on c1, White gains a tempo for his kingside development and retains the possibility of choosing between ♟e3 and ♟g5 at a later stage.

6...c5

This used to be my favourite way of attacking the centre in the Sämisch; it usually transposes to a Benoni.

7.d5 e6 8.♟g3 exd5 9.cxd5 h5

The typical way to challenge the knight's stability. Although it will take a few more moves before I play ...h5-h4, I considered it useful to create the threat as early as possible, in order to be able to choose the best moment for executing it.

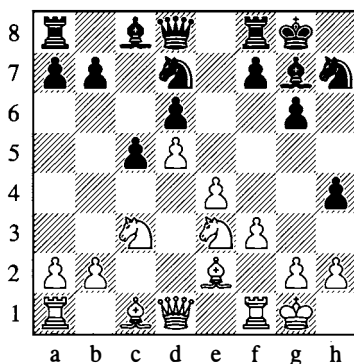
10.♟e2

The main alternative is 10.♟g5, which would partly justify the bishop's delay in developing. Yet, since White has not had time to play ♖d2 yet, I could react with 10...♜b6, unpinning the f6-knight with gain of time. 11.♜d2 ♟h7 12.♟h4 Otherwise, the g3-knight will lack good squares after ...h5-h4. 12...♟d7 Black's development looks more harmonious since the h4-bishop is awkwardly placed.

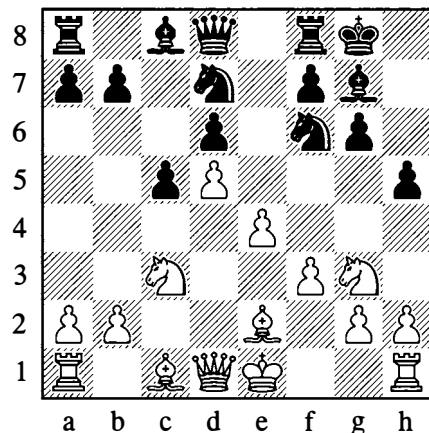
10...♟bd7!

According to a basic rule in the Sämisch Benoni, it is better to attack the knight before it has the possibility of regrouping with ♟g3-h1-f2, since the f2-square is optimal.

However, with the e3-square available, 10...h4 allows White a harmonious regrouping with: 11.♟f1 ♟h7 (11...♟h5?! is strongly met with 12.g4! when 12...hxg3 13.hxg3 opens the h-file for a typical Sämisch attack) 12.♟e3 ♟d7 13.0-0



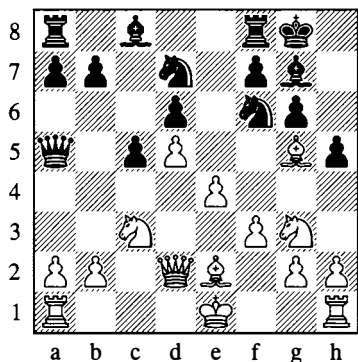
Later, the knight could jump to c4, or in some cases to g4, putting pressure on either wing.

**11.0-0**

In my notes made right after the game, I mentioned that I planned to meet 11.♟g5

with 11...♖a5 with the follow-up 12.0-0?! c4 in mind, when the c4-pawn would be taboo in view of ...♖c5†.

I followed my own recommendation in the ninth game, but instead of castling, Boris played 12.♖d2, crossing my plans.



I soon found myself in a bad position...

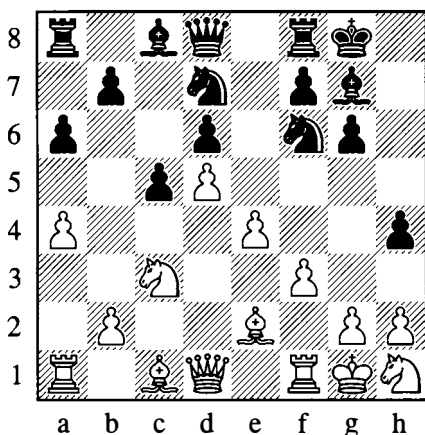
11...a6

In most cases, Black cannot do without this move. The chance of playing ...b7-b5 is not realistic yet, but controlling the b5-square is important when launching a kingside counterattack.

12.a4 h4

Alternating pawn moves on the opposite wings is also typical for the Benoni.

13.♠h1



White is close to reaching the perfect regrouping: ♠f2, ♙e3, ♖d2, with good control in the centre. Still, having deviated from the usual ♙g5 move order, he will lack one tempo to transpose to the favourable regrouping.

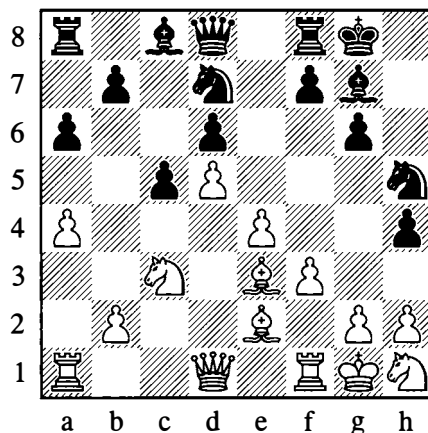
13...♠h5!

A direct move with a concrete purpose: invading on the dark squares, especially d4 and f4. This apparently provocative approach is justified by White's slight lag in development.

14.♙e3

Moving one step closer to the optimal regrouping, and also creating the threat of ...f3-f4.

14.f4? would be premature: 14...♙d4† 15.♠f2 ♠g3! Of course, Boris did not want such things to happen...



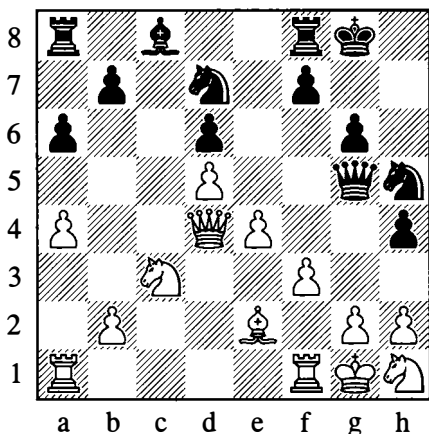
14...♙d4!

I only spent ten minutes on this daring pawn sacrifice, aiming to get the f4-square for my knight. This shows that I had become quite self-confident and had kept my good form throughout the match.

Even today, Lev remembers how glad he felt that I was playing bravely and making frequent pawn sacrifices in order to neutralize Spassky's positional pressure.

15. ♖xd4

Played after seven minutes. Boris might have been surprised by my last move, but there was little he could do to reject the sacrifice.

15...cxd4 16. ♖xd4 ♖g5

The readers of the first volume probably know by now that I treasure piece activity, even more so than material. Sometimes, this pushed me into hazardous actions, but here Black has full compensation for the pawn.

17. ♖ad1

Boris spent 11 minutes on this move, which completes his development, but fails to activate the problem knight.

If 17. ♖f2 ♖f4 18. ♖g4 I would have a fantastic choice between 18...f5 or 18...♖e5 with full control on the dark squares (please refer also to my Buenos Aires game with Shirov on page 375, in which the e5-knight played the starring role in a Sicilian).

The subjective merit of White's last move was that it left me with a difficult choice between no fewer than three tempting continuations...

17...f5

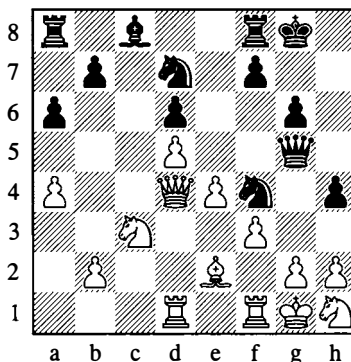
Played after 12 minutes. I remember I was full of energy and was playing for more than

just a draw. I simply considered that White's position was more dangerous than mine, despite his extra pawn.

Initially, I considered the obvious

17...♖f4

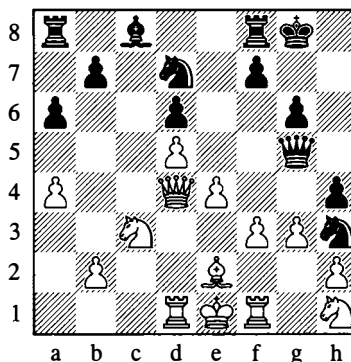
which has the drawback of *forcing* White to play the best move.

**18. g3!**

Paradoxically, the knight is now well placed on h1!

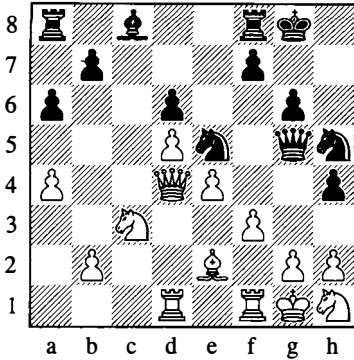
18...♖h3† 19. ♖g2 ♖f4† 20. ♖f2

Apparently White can go for more than a draw. 20...♖h3† 21. ♖e1±



White's coordination is far from perfect, but his king has escaped from the danger area and the central pawns may start to advance.

With hindsight, the neutral 17...♖e5 might have offered better possibilities to keep the game complicated.



My next moves would be ...♖f4 and ...f5, in either order.

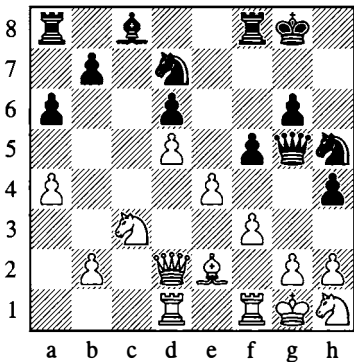
18.exf5

I had the feeling that when playing this (after another 11 minutes) Boris underestimated my reply.

18.♖f2? was still not possible as after 18...♖f4 the defence g2-g3 is now not available.

The only way to keep the tension was 18.♙d2!

But retreating the queen in this way is not an easy decision to take.



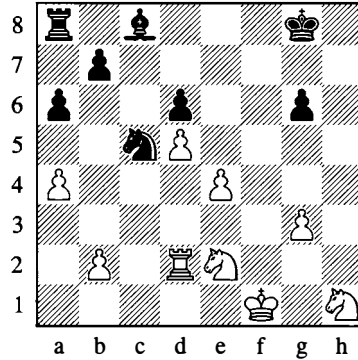
18...♖f4

18...f4 19.♖f2 ♖e5 also comes into consideration. Black's perfect blockade on the dark squares promises at least some compensation and hidden tactical threats such as ...♖h5-g3.

19.g3 hxg3 20.hxg3 ♖xe2† 21.♖xe2

21.♙xe2 f4 22.g4 ♖e5 leaves the kingside vulnerable, in a similar way as in my King's Indian games with g2-g4.

21...♙xd2 22.♙xd2 fxe4 23.fxe4 ♙xf1† 24.♖xf1 ♖c5



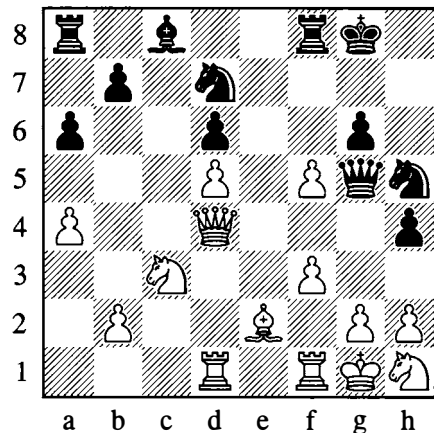
White has kept his extra pawn, but his coordination is poor and his pawns are vulnerable. The following is a possible continuation:

25.♖c3 ♙d7 26.♙d4

If 26.a5 then 26...♖b3 regains the pawn at once.

26...a5 27.♖f2 ♖b3 28.♙d1 ♖c5 29.♙a1 ♙a6

With a continuing initiative, which allows Black to hold the balance.



18...♖f4

I played this move without thinking.

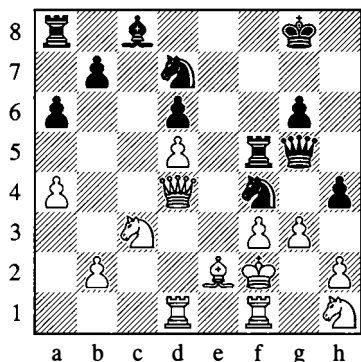
19.g3 ♖xf5 20.♔d3

Equivalent to a draw offer.

The extravagant

20.♔f2

would avoid the perpetual, but there is little wonder that it did not appeal to Boris.

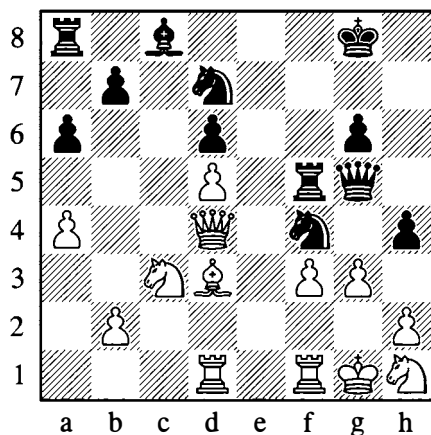


20...♖xe2

20...♖h3† 21.♔e1 neutralizes Black's counterplay.

21.♔xe2 ♖e5

With full compensation for the pawn. White's knight has stayed in the corner since move 13 and his king has returned to the centre; a rather dangerous situation!



20...♖h3† 21.♔g2 ♖f4† 22.♔g1

22.♔f2? would be a serious mistake:
22...♖xd3† 23.♖xd3 ♖e5 There is no

adequate way to keep the f3-pawn defended since 24.♖e3 drops the exchange to 24...♖g4†.

22...♖h3† 23.♔g2 ♖f4†

1/2-1/2

I was happy with this game, which I considered interesting and correctly played by both sides. I was proud of my original idea, based on a pawn sacrifice in a virtually unknown position.

Despite the favourable score, Lev's feeling was that things had not quite gone my way in the match. With Black, I was exposed to Spassky's wide choice of positional systems against the King's Indian, while with White I had lost the initiative. It was symptomatic that in the sixth game I had played 6.♖e2 (the Worrall Attack) in the Spanish, not having found anything concrete in the ...d6-d5 line of the Breyer.

When the seventh game ended, Lev told me in a mysterious way that the next day I would win. I do not know whether this was purely a premonition, or if he already had in his mind the germ of the idea for the sensational novelty in Game 8.

Judit Polgar – Boris Spassky

Budapest (8) 1993

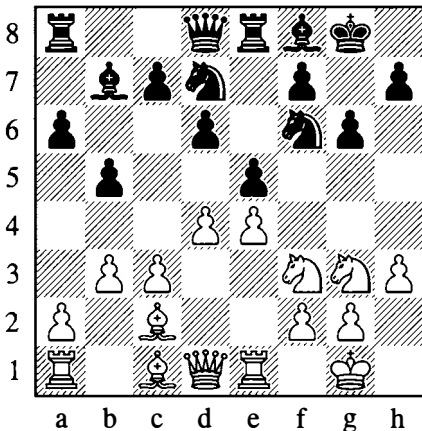
During the match, part of my daily routine was that Lev would knock on my door around 10 a.m. to help me prepare for the game in the afternoon. On this specific day, when I opened the door he entered almost without saying hello, as he was in a hurry to show me his new idea. I understood rather quickly that it was something very concrete, and there were good chances the final position of Lev's analysis would appear on the board...

1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♖c6 3.♔b5 a6 4.♔a4 ♖f6
5.0-0 ♔e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♔b3 d6 8:c3 0-0 9.h3
♖b8

Although Boris alternated his opening variations, the Breyer was clearly his main weapon for this match, as it also was in his match against Fischer. The same applies to the Sämisch Variation against the King's Indian.

**10.d4 ♖bd7 11.♟bd2 ♜b7 12.♞c2 ♝e8
13.♟f1 ♜f8 14.♟g3 g6 15.b3**

We had this position in Game 2, but also later in Game 10.



15...d5!?

This typical reaction in the centre aims to prove that White cannot afford to spend a tempo on a move such as b2-b3, which also weakens the c3-square. It also runs right into Lev's new idea!

Lev remembers that one of Spassky's seconds, Balashov, was sick that day and could not participate in the preparation. According to Lev, Balashov would not have allowed Boris to enter the ensuing complications. You see, luck and timing are important factors in chess, and in real life too!

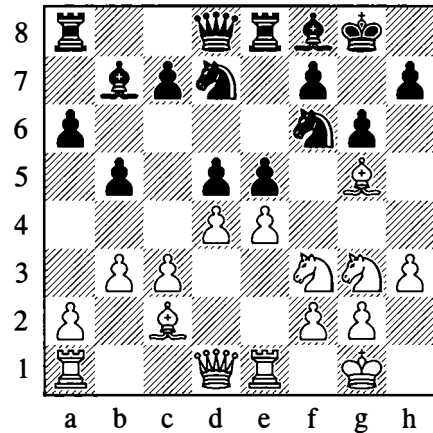
16.♞g5!

This is the first step towards Lev's revolutionary idea. It is widely known that keeping the tension is advisable in such situations, but concretely it depends on whether there are useful strengthening moves

available. My last move fits this description well, but it implies a piece sacrifice.

Two years earlier, I had reacted with 16.exd5 ♟xd5 17.dxe5 ♟xc3. Here it really shows that b2-b3 has weakened the c3-square! 18.♞d3 ♟d5 Black was doing fine and I suffered a painful loss against Beliavsky in Munich 1991.

If 16.dxe5 the simplest way is 16...dxe4 17.♟xe4 ♟xe4 18.♞xe4 ♞xe4 19.♝xe4 and now 19...♟xe5!. This is based on the intermediate check on f3; Black wins back the pawn with a great position.



16...h6

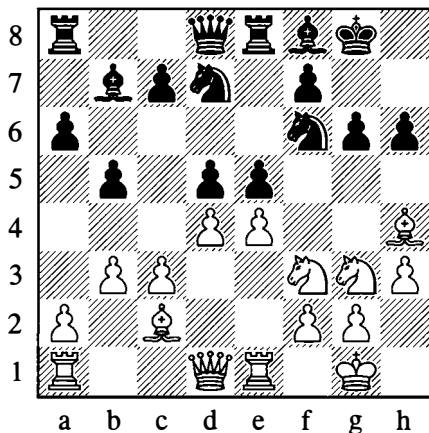
Up to this point, we had both played practically without spending any time. Actually, the Fischer clock allowed us to increase our time from the initial 1 hour and 50 minutes to 2 hours and 3 minutes!

17.♞h4!?

This is the core of Lev's idea. Instead, exchanges such as 17.♞xf6 ♞xf6 18.exd5 exd4 would lead nowhere.

The last move keeps the tension and invites Black to win a piece at the cost of weakening his kingside. Of course such ideas were something I was always looking for myself; sacrificing material suited me just fine.

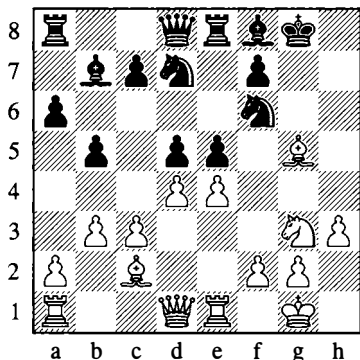
At this point Boris spent 14 minutes. He was once a wonderful attacking player himself, and he instinctively avoided checking our analysis in a position where his king would be surrounded by dangers.



17...dxe4?

The critical continuation is:

17...g5!? 18. ♖xg5 hxg5 19. ♙xg5

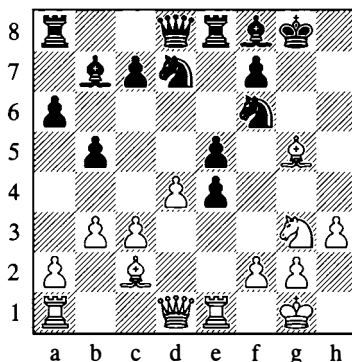


In those days, a common evaluation of such positions would be “this looks too dangerous for Black”. When analysis engines became an important part of the preparation process, such general comments became out of place. With the help of computers, one can work out long defensive lines, eventually ending in a draw.

Actually, 17. ♙h4 was not entirely new: Lev knew it from a game played in his

former hometown of Novosibirsk, which ended in a win for Black. The night before the game Lev had managed to find an improvement for White and this is how it all started.

19...dxe4?!



20. ♙xe4!

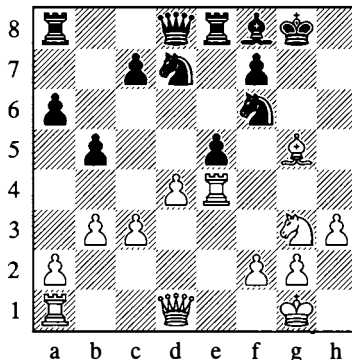
This is the prepared novelty.

The aforementioned game Klovans – Bandza, Novosibirsk 1986, continued 20. ♙xe4.

20... ♙xe4 21. ♖xe4

This elegant rook lift strengthens White's attack.

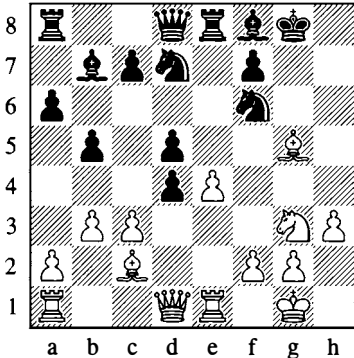
This line was tested in practice soon after my game. During the match, my good friend Alex Sherzer from the USA, a former World Under-20 silver medallist, travelled to Hungary and offered me his support. Just a few months later, he had the chance to use the fruit of our joint analysis.



21...♗c8 22.♖h4 exd4 23.cxd4 ♕g7 24.♟f5
♟f8 25.♗f3±

With a strong attack, Sherzer – Lesiege, Biel 1993.

Many years later, Mamedyarov managed to revive the variation in a game against me:
19...exd4!



The only move that can stand up to computer scrutiny. 20.e5 ♖xe5 21.♖xe5 ♟xe5 22.cxd4 ♟c6

In Polgar – Mamedyarov, Hoogeveen 2006, I played 23.♟f5 and eventually lost.

The critical move is 23.♗d3 when the position keeps “looking dangerous” for Black, but later practice suggests that a draw is the most probable result.

18.♟xe4

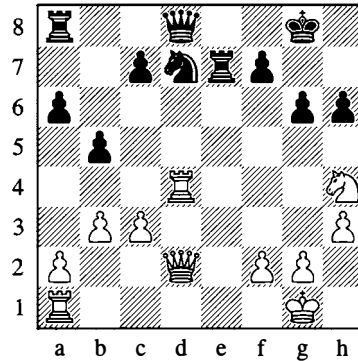
One mistake was enough to put Black in trouble. This is typical for such tense situations, and it is remarkable that Spassky’s intuition failed to discern the real dangers from the imaginary ones.

18...g5?!

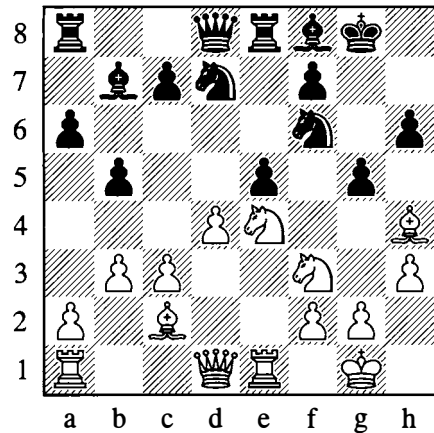
Curiously, Boris did not spend any time on this move, which makes things even worse for him. Now that the knight is far from the f5-square, the sacrifice on g5 is less dangerous, but the bishop has the g3-square for a retreat, so I can switch back to normal play.

18...exd4? would lose a piece to 19.♟xf6+ ♟xf6 20.♖xe8 ♗xe8 21.♕xf6.

The best way to limit the damage was 18...♕e7, releasing the pin and keeping material equality: 19.dxe5 ♟xe4 20.♕xe4 ♕xe4 21.♖xe4 ♕xe4 22.♟xh4 ♖xe5 23.♞d4 ♞e7 24.♗d2



Despite the symmetrical character of the position, White has a clear advantage.



19.dxe5!

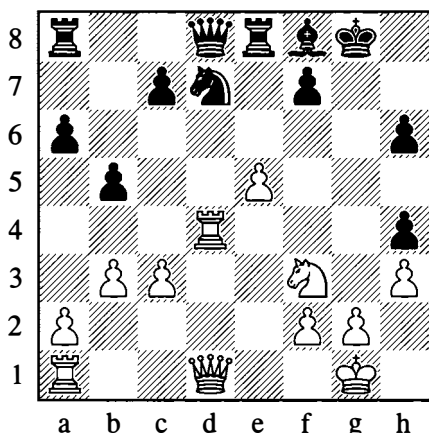
I spent three minutes on this strong intermediate move, although I already knew what I was going to do for several more moves. Indeed, Boris could not avoid what he probably feared most – falling into our home preparation!

Now he finally took some time (13 minutes) before answering, but it was already too late. Black has a very bad position.

19...♟xe4

19...♟xe4? loses material to 20.♞xd8 ♟xf3† 21.gxf3 ♞exd8 22.♟xf6† ♟g7 and now 23.♟h5† followed by ♞g3 saves the extra piece.

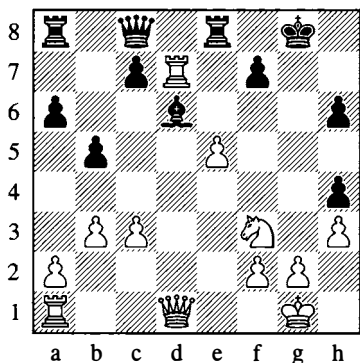
If 19...gxh4 then 20.exf6 or even 20.♟xf6† leads to a threatening space advantage and an extra pawn for White.

20.♞xe4 ♟xe4 21.♞xe4 gxh4 22.♞d4

This pin is more dangerous than Boris might have expected.

22...♞e7

The alternative was 22...♞c8!? 23.♞xd7 ♟d6!? trapping my rook.



In view of Black's ruined structure, this would bring very little relief: 24.♞xf7! ♟xf7

25.exd6 cxd6 26.♞d3 White has a pawn for the exchange and the black king is very exposed. In addition, most of Black's pawns are doomed.

23.e6!

The culminating point of our analysis. I remember that in the morning Lev had enthusiastically recited the whole variation before we even sat down at the chessboard!

During a recent conversation, Lev told me that catching the opponent in such analysis once in ten games is a very good "score". I have to admit that in my whole life only a very few times has my home preparation gone so extraordinarily well!

23...fxe6

Played without thinking, although there was an alternative.

23...♞xe6 24.♞xd7 ♞e8 would not give me the time to take the h4-pawn yet, since...♟d6 is threatened. There are probably several good moves, but I planned 25.♞d4 ♟g7 26.♞g4 when White will inevitably win a pawn, while retaining attacking chances.

24.♟e5 ♞g7

It is curious that Boris had not spent any time on some crucial decisions, but now took 25 minutes for a move that could not change anything.

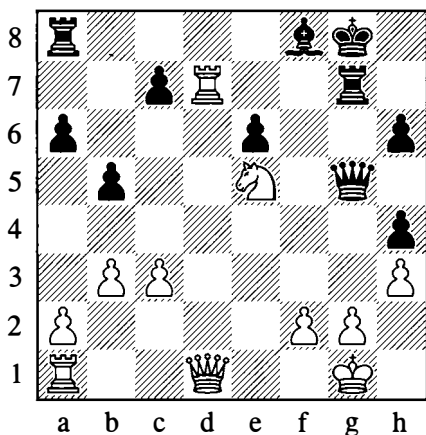
25.♞xd7

This is the point where we stopped our analysis. It was important to avoid the trap 25.♟xd7? ♟d6! with sudden counterplay.

After the game move, White has a big advantage in view of Black's chronic weaknesses.

25...♞g5

Hoping for some counterplay, but...

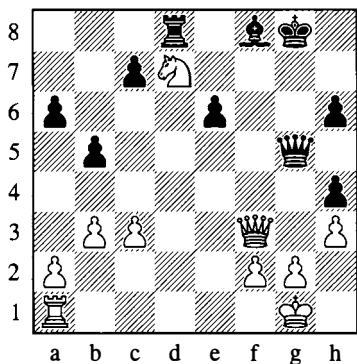
**26. ♖f3!**

A great multipurpose move, attacking and defending at the same time.

26...♖d8?!

Allowing me to achieve a perfect regrouping.

26...♖xd7 27.♗xd7 ♖d8 would have been a better practical chance.



I intended to play 28.♗f6† ♔g7 29.♗e4 maintaining the positional pressure.

I did not even consider giving up my beautiful knight with 28.♗xf8 ♖xf8 29.♖c6 ♗f5 30.♖f1, but objectively this would have been at least as good, since Black's pawns would start falling.

27. ♖xg7† ♗xg7

In principle, activating the bishop would be

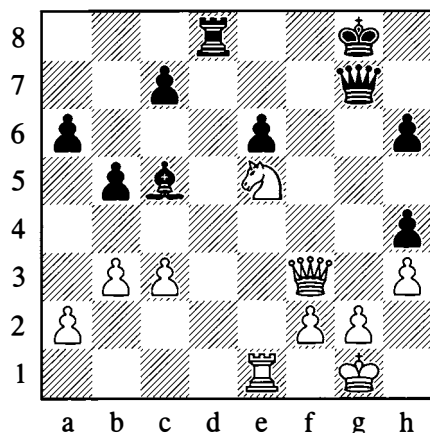
the only chance for counterplay, but 27...♗xg7? drops an exchange to 28.♗f7.

28. ♖e1

As often happens, a strong attack leads to a strategic advantage, with the prospect of a better ending. But here the attack is still going, more than I would expect! All my pieces are very active (with a special mention for the knight) and the immediate threat is ♖e4-g4.

28...♗c5

Attacking the knight with 28...♗d6 would not prevent 29.♖e4 threatening to win the queen. An important detail is that my active queen also keeps an eye on the defence. If 29...♗xe5 30.♖g4 there is no mate on d1 available.

**29. ♗g4**

I definitely was in my element and in particular I remember how happy I was about the last move!

29...♗g6

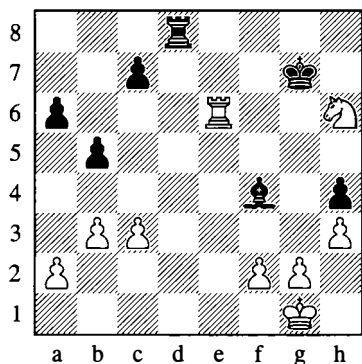
I had calculated 29...♖f8 30.♖e4 h5 31.♖xe6† ♔h7 32.♖e5, when my attack is one tempo faster than Black's counterplay.

30. ♗f4

The queen is 'looking' in two different directions: h6 and c7. From this moment, I felt that the win should be a matter of technique, but one can always go wrong, even in the technical phase. From my practice I remember, for instance, the game against Anand in Munich 1991, as analysed in Volume 1.

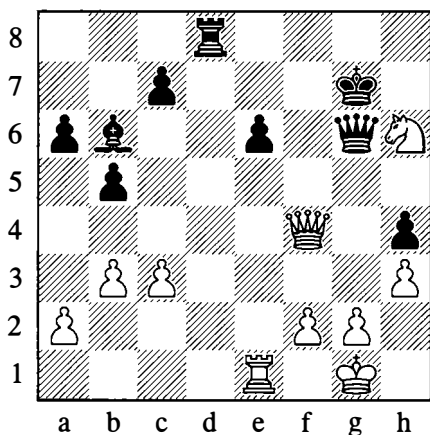
30...♙b6

Black could try to create the latent threat of a back-rank mate with 30...♙d6, but White can avoid any problems with accurate play: 31.♙xh6 ♜xh6 32.♞xh6† ♔g7 33.♞xe6 ♙f4



34.♞f5† An important intermediate move, allowing me to save the knight and defend the back rank. 34...♔f7 35.♞e1 With a won ending.

31.♞xh6† ♔g7



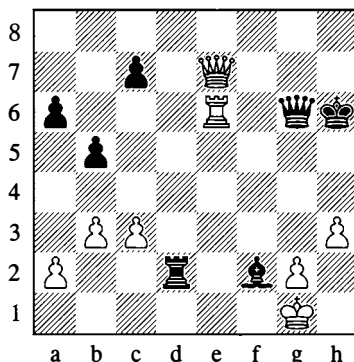
32.♙xh4!

Grabbing a second pawn without endangering any of my pieces: the black king is too vulnerable for that.

32...♙f6

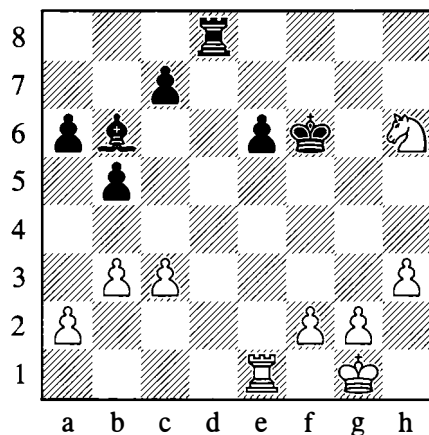
The pinning 32...♞h8 does not work: 33.♙e7† ♔xh6 34.♞xe6 wins the queen.

Or if: 32...♞d2 33.♙e7† ♔xh6 34.♞xe6 ♙xf2†



Rather than self-destructing with 35.♔h1? ♞d1† 36.♔h2 ♙g3 mate, I could win the queen and the game with 35.♔f1.

33.♙xf6† ♔xf6



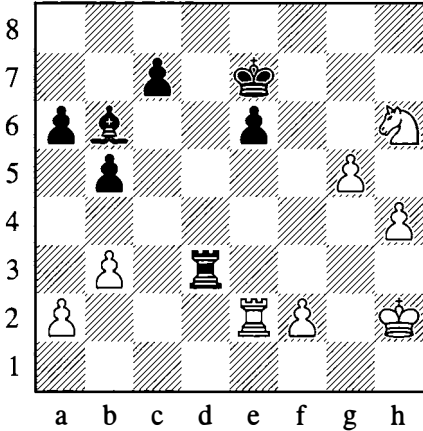
34.♞e2

Of course I would not let the enemy rook occupy the second rank if I could avoid it.

34...♖d1† 35.♙h2 ♖c1 36.g4

There are many ways to win, but I was ready to advance my pawns as far as possible and, why not, promote them!

36...♖xc3 37.h4 ♖d3 38.g5† ♙e7



The weakness of the e6-pawn keeps the king busy, giving me a free hand to carry out my little plan.

39.g6 ♙f8

If 39...♙f6 40.♘g4† the g6-pawn is taboo in view of the fork ♘e5†.

40.♖xc6 ♖f3 41.♘g4 ♖f5

Or if 41...♙xf2 42.h5 and the pawns are unstoppable.

42.♙g3
1-0

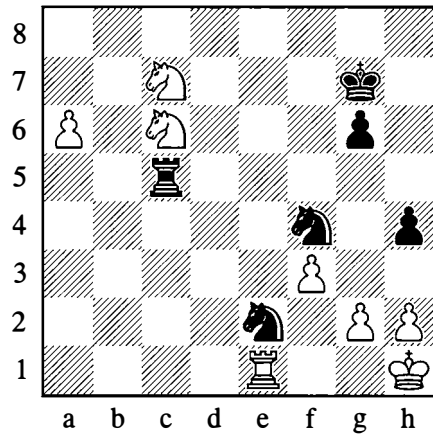
The situation had become very rosy – I was leading by two points with just two games to go! I only needed a draw to defeat a former World Champion and achieve my best ever result!

As happy as I might have felt, I knew the job was not yet complete. As I suspected and was soon to find out with certainty, Boris had not given up the fight!

Once again, I was helped by the fact that we had a free day right after the eighth game. So I had some time to relax, but the next game, the ninth, in general did not go my way. We will examine only the final fragment, which features a nice save.

Boris Spassky – Judit Polgar

Budapest (9) 1993



I did not play well in this game and found myself in a bad position right after the opening. In the middlegame I managed to create some complications, but Boris had a practically winning position all the way.

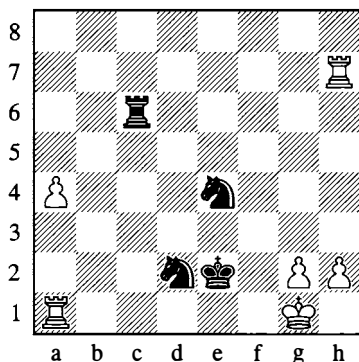
The position above arose in the seventh hour of play. Boris had just advanced his passed pawn to a6, and perhaps he thought he was clearly winning at last.

48...♖xc6

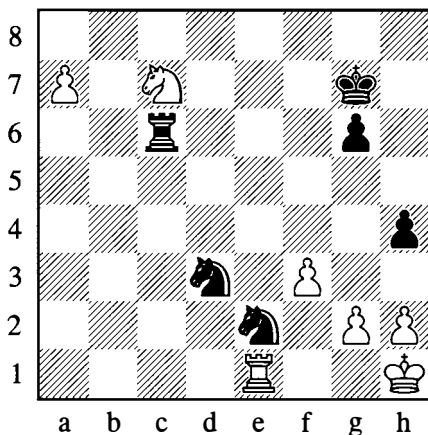
This looks like a desperate move.

49.a7 ♘d3!

Threatening ...♘f2 mate! Two well-coordinated knights can cause a lot of trouble, which is easy to overlook in advance. Take for instance the following fragment from a dramatic world title match:



White was playing for a win, but in time trouble he was hit by the upsetting 39...♖f3! which forced mate in Korchnoi – Karpov, Baguio (17) 1978.



50.h3

The only move.

50.g4? would clear the g2-square for only an instant: 50...h3 and White cannot prevent mate.

And the back-rank weakness makes 50.♖f1? ineffective against 50...♖f2!.

50...♖xc7 51.a8=♖ ♖xe1

I have even obtained a small material advantage, but my pieces are vulnerable and I knew I had to expect to lose a knight. However,

the favourable kingside structure made me confident I could build a reliable fortress.

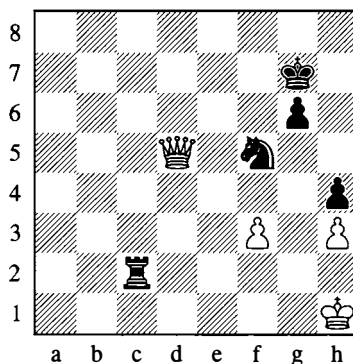
52.♖h2!?

52.♖a1† does not promise much since the e1-knight is taboo in view of ...♖c1.

52...♖d4 53.♖e4

This exposes the queen, allowing me to force a draw by perpetual.

However, White would not have any winning chances after 53.♖d5 either: 53...♖exf3† 54.gxf3 ♖c2† 55.♖h1 ♖f5



Black's position is too solid.

53...♖exf3† 54.gxf3 ♖c2† 55.♖g1 ♖c1† 56.♖f2 ♖c2† ½-½

You can imagine my happiness at the end of the game! I had just won a ten-game match against a former World Champion, irrespective of the result of the last game, which we had to play anyway, according to the initial agreement!

I did not have much time to enjoy the success, since the tenth game was scheduled for the next day. Despite its complete lack of sporting significance (or maybe precisely because of it) this game featured the most dramatic and paradoxical moment of the entire match.

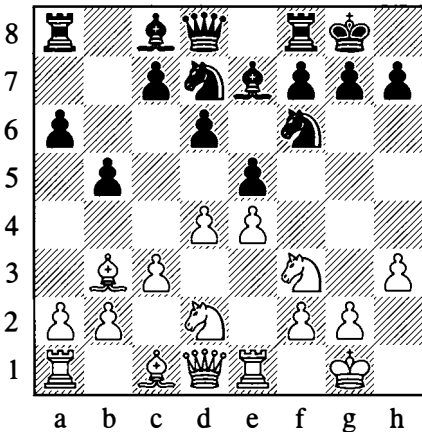
Judit Polgar – Boris Spassky

Budapest (10) 1993

We played the game at a different location than usual: at the Beke Hotel (now the Beke Radisson), near to the Nyugati train station. It was a smaller playing hall, allowing inside only a few hundred chess lovers.

Even before the game, I noticed that I was more nervous than usual, which was not a good sign.

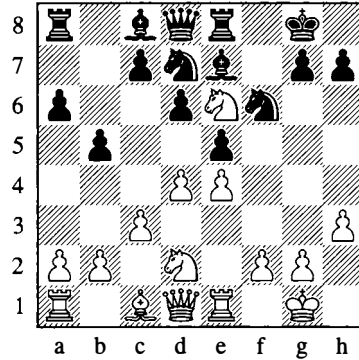
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6
5.0-0 ♙e7 6.♞e1 b5 7.♙b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3
♘b8 10.d4 ♘bd7 11.♘bd2



Since this was far from the first time we had had the Breyer variation on the board, we played our moves automatically and at lightning speed. We were too busy heading for our main tabiya to pay attention to details...

11...♞e8??

Allowing the simple combination: 12.♙xf7+ ♘xf7 13.♘g5+ ♔g8 14.♘e6



Trapping the queen. Boris might have thought that he had already played ...♙c8-b7, which would free the queen from its cage.

12.♘f1??

I played this without hesitation. It was as if I was coming home from the grocery store on the same road I had travelled so many times before, without noticing there was a new traffic sign forbidding my access...

I believe Boris realized that he had blundered right away. This is a common situation, but I am very surprised that I was not aware of the missed opportunity until the end of the game!

12...♙b7

The game transposed to our main line and soon became quite interesting. Boris sacrificed a knight for my two central pawns and eventually won, although later analysis showed that I could have held a draw.

Immediately after I resigned, Alex Sherzer approached and told me that I could have ended the game on move 12. After nearly eight hours of tough defence, you can imagine the shock produced by the news that it could have lasted only three minutes, and ended with the opposite result.

Regardless of this small incident, I did not expect to lose the last game with White. It was fascinating to see Boris fighting so hard, even though the match was lost. After all, he had not become a World Champion by chance...

My rapid match with Karpov

This match took place in Budapest in the summer of 1998 and was named the Mol Cup.

This was one of the happiest periods of my life. A few months earlier, in May, I had met my future husband Gusztav for the first time. My dog, a female Hungarian Vizsla, had some health problems, so I took her to a veterinary clinic situated only 100 metres from my apartment. She was looked after by Gusztav, and soon we started going out together...

The match was played at the Helia Hotel, where my trusted second Lev Psakhis was staying. It consisted of eight rapid games in four days, with a time control of 30 minutes with no increments.

I prepared for the match at my summer house in Nagymaros, a small town about a one-hour drive from Budapest. As in the match with Spassky, I dedicated special attention to my general opening strategy.

With White, I needed some effective ideas against Karpov's rock-solid Caro-Kann. Following Lev's advice, I asked his good friend and Caro-Kann expert Boris Gulko to be my trainer on this matter.

When choosing my opening with Black, we took into account one important practical aspect: Karpov was known for his tendency of getting into time trouble, which was especially important in the absence of any bonus seconds on each move. From this point of view, the bigger the opening surprise, the better!



With my beloved Babi, who brought Gusztav and me together

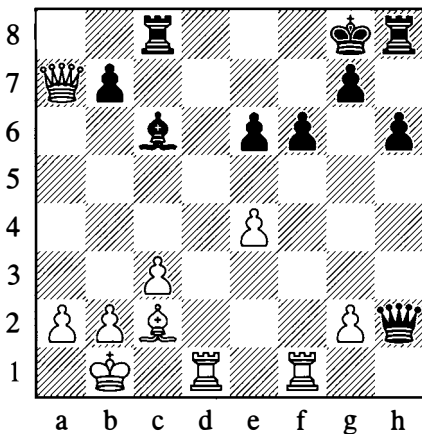
We picked the Benoni, an opening that I had never played before, but which suited my style perfectly. Moreover, I had some experience with Benoni structures, to which I frequently transposed from my King's Indian.

On the first day, there was huge interest in the match. Chess lovers still remembered my win against Spassky, five years earlier, and were eager to find out whether I could win this match as well. The mass media was also full of excitement: a World Champion visiting Hungary was always regarded as a special occasion.

I had Black in the first game and my first ever proper Benoni worked out quite well. We followed a long theoretical line leading to a draw. In the second game, our preparation against the Caro-Kann paid off.

Judit Polgar – Anatoly Karpov

Budapest (2) 1998



We played a line in which Karpov willingly gave up the right to castle with 11...♖f8, something he did quite frequently and not without success.

Later, I had two normal time control games against Karpov with the same line. I also analysed it for hundreds of hours, without

reaching a definitive conclusion, but in general I liked that the black king spoils the rooks' coordination and that the king has to struggle a bit before reaching absolute safety.

From a strategic point of view, Black has some reasons for satisfaction. His pawn structure is more compact and if he blocks my e4-pawn with ...♞e5 (or in some cases ...e6-e5), he could try to play against my "bad" bishop. In light of all this, my next move is natural.

25.e5!

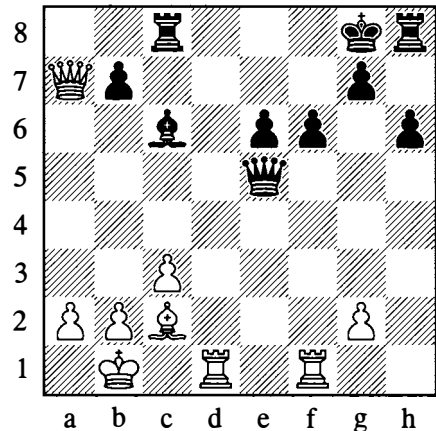
Opening the b1-h7 diagonal and the e-file for my pieces.

25...♞xe5

Black would fail to keep the position closed after 25...f5 26.g4 fxg4 27.♞d4 threatening both ♞d8† followed by mate, and ♞xg4. The queen's mobility is stunning in such situations.

If 25...fxe5 I planned 26.♞a5, a move I was very proud of. It threatens mate starting with ♞d8† and attacks the e5-pawn. 26...♞h5 parries both threats, but White keeps the initiative with 27.♞de1.

According to the engines, 26.♞c5 is even stronger than my planned move.



26.♞fe1

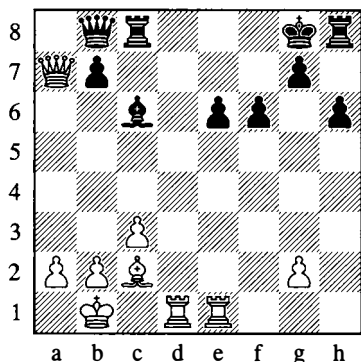
“At this moment Karpov had something like one and a half minutes left on his clock, Judit had nine or ten and a tremendous initiative. I was sure that Judit would win the game very easily and quickly, but unfortunately she started looking more at Karpov’s clock than at the position.” This is a quote from Lev’s comments to the game for ChessBase.

26...♖c7?!

Returning the pawn too easily.

26...♗b8

This would win a tempo for organizing the defence, since I would hardly consider exchanging queens.



Still, I could have retained a strong initiative:
27.♗d4!

Other queen retreats are also effective, but this one looks strongest.

27...♕d5

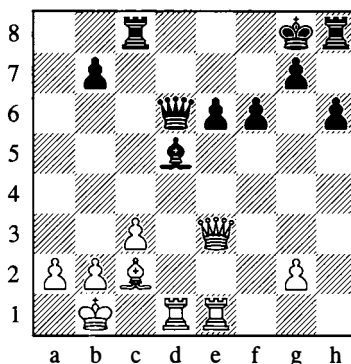
It would be naive to think that Black can keep his extra pawn: 27...e5 28.♖c4† ♕f8 29.♗b4† ♕g8 30.♗b3† ♕f8 31.♕g6 offers White a decisive attack, since, for instance, 31...♗c7 can be met with 32.♗xe5! opening another file.

28.♗e3

This is not a loss of tempo, since the bishop is exposed on d5. The immediate threat is 29.♗xd5 exd5 30.♗e6† ♕f8 31.♗e7† ♕g8 32.♕g6 with mate in sight.

28...♗d6

Or if 28...♗e5 then 29.♗b6. As long as Black’s king is between his rooks, the chances are obviously uneven. 29...♗c7 30.♗xc7 ♗xc7 31.♗xd5! With such a king, there are always some tactics around...



29.c4!

Weakening the defence of the back rank.

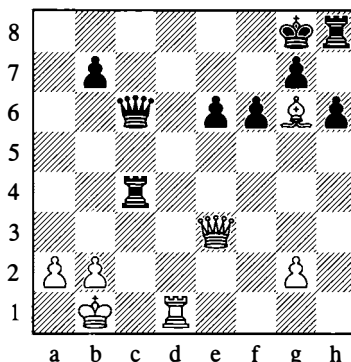
29...♗xc4 30.♗xd5!

Removing the main defender of Black’s central position.

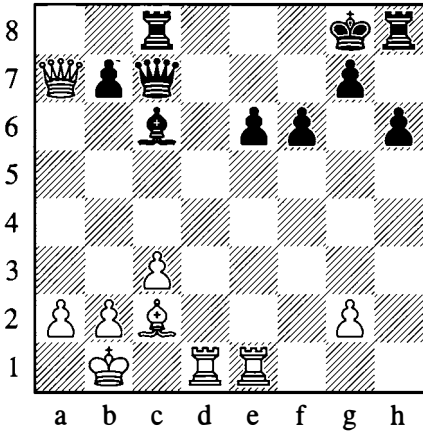
30...♗xd5 31.♗d1 ♗c6

In order to avoid losing the h8-rook at once to ♗d8†, Black has to attack the c2-bishop.

32.♕g6



Black cannot prevent ♗d8† in any adequate way. If 32...♗c8 then 33.♗xe6† ♗xe6 34.♗d8† leads to mate. By the way, this is the kind of combination where one can change the move order with 33.♗d8† ♗xd8 34.♗xe6†, without changing the result.



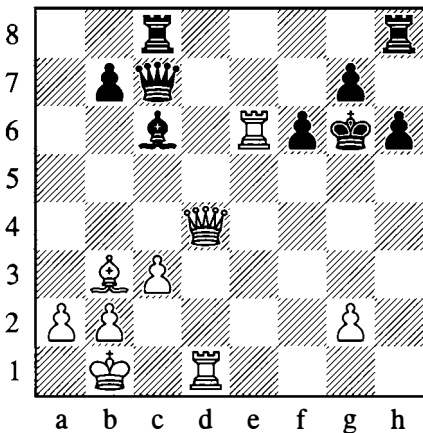
27. Bxc6

I have regained the sacrificed pawn effortlessly, while Black has not solved any of his coordination problems.

27... Og7

Quite an artificial way of trying to get castled.

28. Bb3 Og6 29. Qd4



The queen returns to the action, threatening Qd3+ , which would force the king to advance even further.

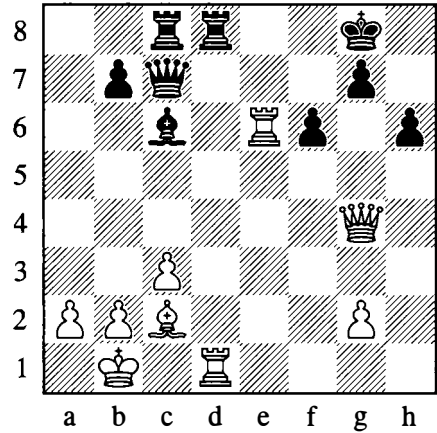
29... Bhd8 30. Qg4+ Og7 31. Bc2+!

Here I started losing the thread slightly; there was no need to hurry with this check.

31. Bh1 with Bc2+ and/or Qf5+ to follow would have ended the game quickly.

31... Og8

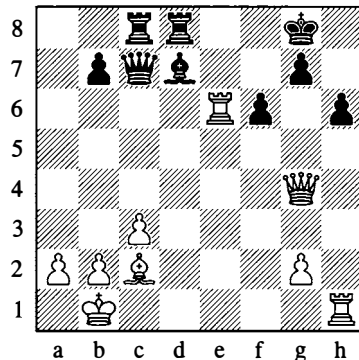
Now I realized that ... Bd7 is a threat and I became confused.



32. Bxd8+?

It is so easy to ruin a winning position in just one move! And Karpov used to be so good at sneaking out of really bad positions. But, as pointed out by Lev, my eyes were focused on Karpov's clock (he had less than a minute) rather than on looking for the best continuation.

With a bit of lucidity, I would have discovered that 32. Bh1 Bd7 does not work for Black.

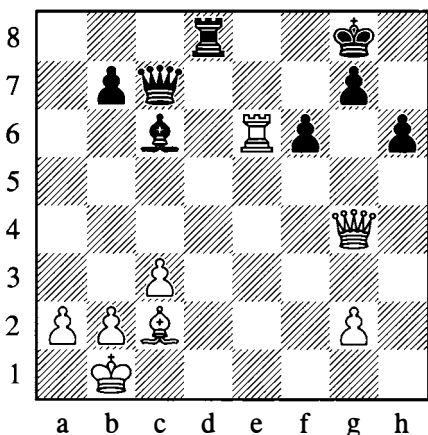


33. Bxh6! The only move, but a winning one

and not such a hard one to spot. 33...♙xe6
34.♚xe6† ♚f7 35.♞h8† wins the queen.

Even the simpler 32.♞xf6!? would win a pawn without allowing a trace of compensation.

32...♞xd8



33.♞e1?

Once again, I could win a pawn: 33.♞xf6!

33...♙f8±

Suddenly, Black is almost okay; his position is anything but pleasant, but he is by no means losing. I remember how unhappy I felt about having practically won the game once but, after the series of unfortunate moves, having to win it for a second time! It is also true that the time factor was on my side...

34.♙g6

The e8-square is over-protected (if ♚b4† then Black can defend with ...♚d6) so this move creates more of an optical discomfort than a real problem.

34...♚d6 35.♚c4 ♚d5 36.♚e2

The only thing I could think of was delivering mate, but this was not so simple any more.

36...♚d7

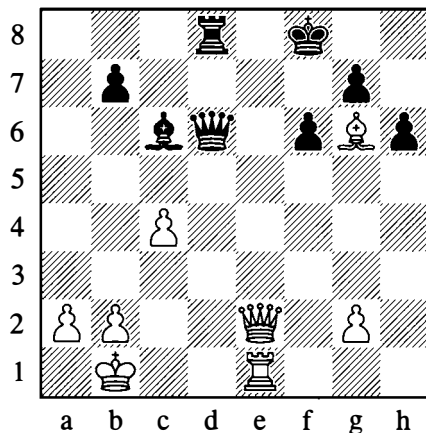
A logical move when you have only seconds left. One needs a bit more time to realize that the check on e7 is not lethal.

Black could instead try to take over the initiative: 36...♞a8!? removes the rook from the exposed d8-square, while gaining a tempo by attacking a2 and allowing ...♚xg2 on the next move!

37.c4 ♚d6

According to Lev, Karpov played this safe move with 30 seconds on his clock.

Once again, the plan of activating the rook via the corner came into consideration: 37...♞a8 possibly followed by ...♞a5-e5.



Not much happened in the next phase of the game, with the exception that I became terribly annoyed by Karpov's rapidity and accuracy with just seconds on his clock. And of course, I could hardly stay focused...

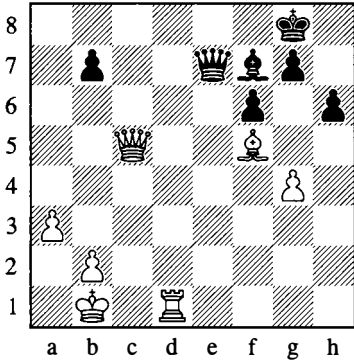
38.a3 ♚d7 39.g4 ♙g8 40.♙f5 ♚d6 41.♚c2
♞e8 42.♞d1 ♚c5 43.♙g6 ♞a8 44.♚d3 ♚e7
45.♚d4 ♙e8 46.♙e4 ♙f7 47.c5 ♞c8 48.♙f5?

Setting a trap in which I could have caught myself. After 15 moves, it was my turn to go wrong again; in Karpov's extreme time trouble I could not focus at all!

48.b4! was necessary.

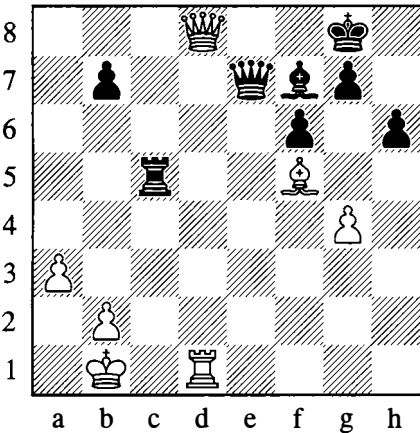
48...♞xc5 49.♞d8†

Another false trap would be: 49.♞xc5?



Hoping for 49...♞xc5? 50.♞d8† ♕e8 51.♕g6 winning.

The bug is that Black could clear the f7-square with gain of time with 49...♕a2†! and only then capture the queen.



49...♞f8??

Kindly following my “main line”.

When I played 48.♕f5? I completely overlooked:

49...♞e8!

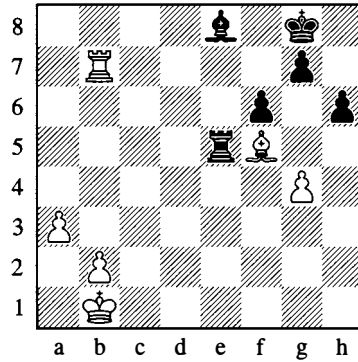
White is a pawn down with no obvious threats in sight.

50.♞d7

Threatening to add some more spice with ♕f5-e6!

If 50.♕e6 ♖h7! Black keeps his pawn and a safe position.

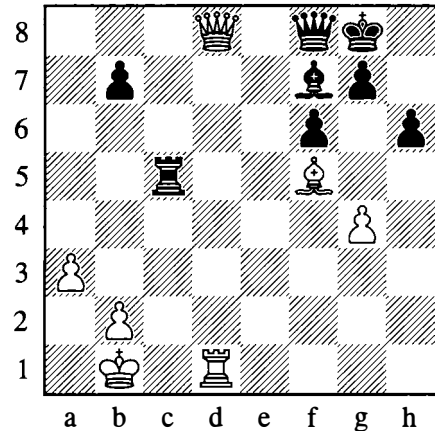
50...♞e5! 51.♞xe8† ♕xe8 52.♞xb7



White has won back the pawn, but Black retains the initiative with:

52...h5!

The h-pawn is very annoying.



50.♕h7†!

A simple trick, winning the queen.

1–0

I must admit I have mixed feelings about this game. I feel rather frustrated that I ruined a completely winning position to such an extent that I even got the worse of it. On the other hand, this was my first ever win against Karpov, so what difference does it make how many mistakes I made on the way?

Right after the game, I was assaulted by a mass of people asking for autographs or interviews, or simply asking questions. This created a very enjoyable atmosphere for me, but after a few minutes Lev managed to get my feet back on the ground. He warned me that if I did not leave the playing hall with him at once, he would leave the next day on the first available flight.

I remember the scene very well and I know that he was speaking seriously. Lev understood the psychological dangers of the favourable match situation: I was enjoying myself too much, as if I could win the match just by being happy! He knew that in a match with Karpov, winning one game was not enough; I had to stay focused for the rest of the games!

Shortly after this incident, we were sitting in the hotel's Jacuzzi, combining relaxing with enjoying the recent win and making plans for the next day's games.

It was clear that after the unfavourable start Karpov would change his strategy. First of all, we expected he would prepare a bit against my Benoni. True, he did not have much time for that, as we had no free days.

In any case, the third game proved difficult for me, as Karpov outplayed me in the endgame. I fought back and managed to get enough counterplay to save it. A draw was in

sight, but when Karpov offered it, he had only one second left on the clock; I rejected and won on time. The second day ended with a peaceful draw in the fourth game.

The third day was equally if not even more dramatic and to some extent following a similar pattern. I managed to hold my own for 30 moves in the fifth game, but then Karpov gained a decisive advantage. Encouraged by the fact that he was playing too slowly and getting short of time again, I admit that I kept playing in a position where I should have resigned.

At some point Karpov looked into my eyes and said: "It is not nice to play on!" I was so irritated by this breach of the rules (one should not talk to the opponent during the game, unless he offers a draw) that I had no option other than playing on! With only seconds on his clock and obviously angry at my stubbornness, Karpov stalemated me! He was so upset that he left the board without shaking hands.

I am not proud of this way of saving the game, but the reader may understand that it is not a pleasant feeling when your opponent invites you to resign.

The sixth game ended in a solid and uneventful draw. Thus, I kept my advantage of two points before the last day.

Karpov outplayed me in the seventh game, but excellent fighting spirit allowed me to



save it and win the match with one game to go! Under these circumstances, I switched to the sharp Panov Attack in the last game, had a much better position, but the game also ended peacefully.

I had no reason to be proud of the quality of my chess in the match, and I was aware of having won it partly because I knew how to create practical chances under a time control which favoured me. On the other hand, I also knew that I must have done something good in the match, otherwise how could I have beaten a World Champion twice without losing a single game?

In those years we had the curious situation that the time control could change at least slightly from one tournament to another. Some readers may ask: could the time control really make a difference in the final result? Well, it does! It is not the same thing if you run 100 or 200 metres, you have to focus and spend (or save) energy differently; in each concrete case, other specific nuances may be important.

The closing ceremony was hosted at an equestrian club in Budapest. It was all very well done. After receiving the winner's trophy, I gave a simul together with Karpov and then we played a good doubles tennis match!

Bobby Fischer versus Judit Polgar: The match that never happened

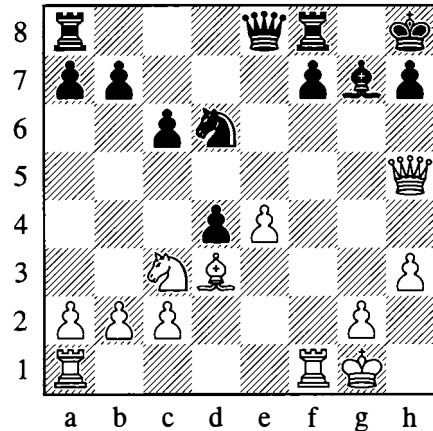
Several generations of players have grown up with the imposing image of Bobby Fischer – one of the titans in chess history. To some, developing under his shadow may have been inhibiting, but I am sure that most found Fischer's legacy inspiring.

I certainly belong to the latter category. During my long years of study, I inevitably came across Fischer's games. I had several of his openings in my repertoire, for instance the Sicilian (with both colours), the Ruy Lopez and the Austrian Attack against the Pirc Defence.

Speaking of the latter, the first position that springs to my mind when thinking of Fischer is the following:

Robert Fischer – Paul Benko

US Championship, New York 1963



Fischer played 19. Bf6!! blocking the f-pawn and making e4-e5 a decisive threat.

In addition to Fischer's opening ideas, I was familiar with some of his clear-cut middlegame plans, brilliant combinations and accurately-played endings. Put alongside his outstanding results, all these elements drew the contours of a true giant.

These were only some of my thoughts on a hot autumn day in 1992 during a two-hour car trip to meet Fischer. After his controversial 1992 match with Spassky, Fischer was accused by the US government of breaking the embargo against Yugoslavia. He chose the small town of Kanjiza, close to the border with Hungary, as his refuge. One day, he had the unexpected inspiration of suggesting to Kubat, the organizer of the 1992 match, to invite us, the whole Polgar family, to his place.

We accepted the invitation with great excitement, with the only disappointment being that Susan was out of Hungary, playing in a tournament. At that point we all thought

it would be a one-off chance to meet Fischer, and poor Susan felt very unhappy about not being able to join us.

The first sight of Fischer could not have confirmed the image of a giant any better: he really was physically huge! I was very impressed then and even later, after I got to know him better, I frequently had the feeling that he was unusually *big*. For instance, he had very large feet, size 48 or 49, and he had to order his slippers and shoes from some special supplier in Germany!

At the same time, his behaviour was rather childish. He used to laugh a lot and tried to make jokes all the time. This is the reason why we never took him too seriously when he expressed anti-Jewish views or accused the Soviets of pre-arranging games at the highest level. Somehow, his words did not seem to match the way in which he said them, neither did they fit with the general ambience.

Fischer's idea to invite us to his place had been anything but typical, since he used to

live almost in seclusion, surrounded only by a few people he trusted. Towards the end of our visit, he made another atypical move, by not objecting to a group picture! He was famous for hating being immortalized in photos and carefully avoiding cameramen. Somehow, the atmosphere was so relaxed and friendly that my father dared to suggest that rather than hiding in a small town in Yugoslavia, Fischer would do better by moving to Budapest.

Bobby did not give a clear answer that day, but a few months later he followed my father's suggestion and ended up spending eight years in our country! This way, he could regularly meet his old chess friends, Lajos Portisch, Andor Lilienthal and Pal Benko. The latter had returned to his homeland in 1990, after decades of living in the States. Fischer also made new acquaintances from the younger generations, with Peter Leko being one of them.

I believe that Fischer liked Budapest a lot. At first, he stayed at the famous Gellert Thermal



Our first meeting with Fischer at Kanjiza

Bath Hotel. Later, he moved to a smaller hotel, but continued visiting the thermal baths, which had become one of his hobbies.

We had regular contact with Fischer in Budapest and he frequently dined at our place. We had great fun, occasionally played ping-pong, and my sisters and I showed him the city. He started feeling very much at home with us. I remember that on one occasion he ate everything he found in the refrigerator! In his years as an active player, he was known to eat a lot. In those times, he was reported to have a preference for big steaks. When we met him, Japanese food had become his favourite, but he also grew to like some traditional Hungarian fish soup called *Halaszle*.

At some point Fischer spent a whole week at our summer house in Nagymaros, a small city by the Danube. My father unfortunately let this information slip to some TV people. One morning, while Bobby was walking in the garden with his bodyguards, he noticed the television crews trying to film him. He

immediately sent a bodyguard to confiscate their video cassette.

After the mission was accomplished, Fischer asked for a hammer and my father brought him one, without suspecting the looming disaster. Fischer tossed the cassette down on the new tiling and started smashing it with the hammer. We had just finished a complete renovation of the house and I will never forget the scene with my father yelling: “My tiles! My brand-new tiles!” It somehow looked very funny...

Our chess activity together was rather limited. We *sort of* played a little, analysed some games and I remember that on one occasion we played some Fischer-random chess. Sofia and I played against Fischer and Susan, with alternating moves rather than consultation; we beat them 1½-½! With hindsight, it may not have been such a great idea to win, as with a different result we might have got another chance to play with him.

We never played one-on-one chess, though.



At our summer house in Nagymaros with Fischer, Torre and Kaplan

The reason was one of principle. Encouraged by the success of the Fischer – Spassky return match, Kubat was trying to find a sponsor for a match between Fischer and me. This would have been billed as *Judit Polgar plays Bobby Fischer for the First Time!* Fischer said that meant we could not even play friendly games of rapid chess, because then the line wouldn't be true. This was how Bobby was made...

Fischer demanded the same purse as for the match with Spassky: five million dollars! On his first attempt, Kubat had been fortunate. When he handed the match contract to the sponsor, the latter kneeled down and kissed the page. "I've already saved five million, because I would have paid ten million to make this happen," he said.

Nothing came of our planned match, though. Kubat failed to find another sponsor willing to cover the huge purse. There were some rumours that Fischer demanded so much money because he knew he would be turned down. Somewhere deep down, he might have dreaded losing against a female player, especially as in the 1960s he had stated that he would win a match against the Women's World Champion, Nona Gaprindashvili, even if he gave her the odds of one piece in every game! Obviously, he did not have a high opinion of women's chess. On the same occasion, he had claimed that he would beat the World Champion, Botvinnik, even if he offered him the odds of 2-0.

These ideas may be more than pure speculation. 15 years later, Benko finally managed to find a sponsor willing to give five million dollars for the long-planned match. Bobby said he would love to play against me – but only for ten million. Benko's answer was:

"Bobby, isn't five million dollars enough for you to push chess pieces around on the board?"

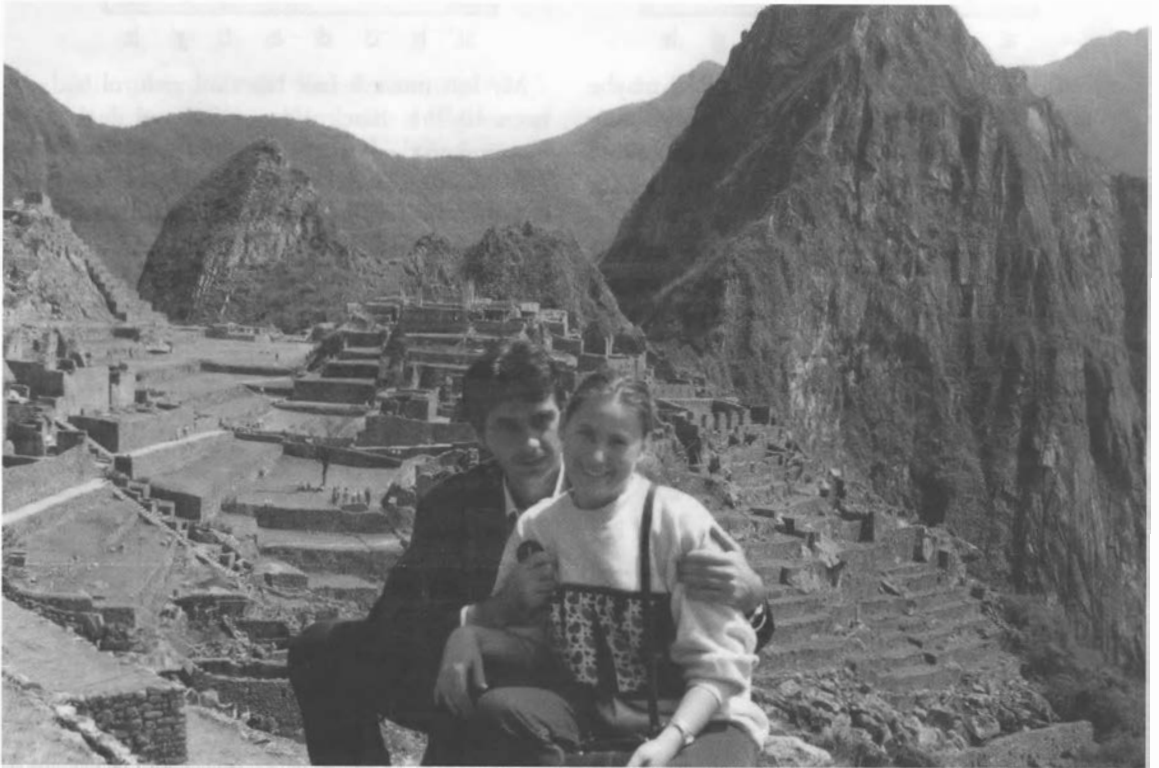
Despite his colossal chess strength, Fischer was known for being unsure of himself before major events and even during the first rounds. This is the most probable reason why he did not play the match against his 1975 challenger, Anatoly Karpov, despite the unprecedented prize fund.

In fact, even at the culminating point of his career, the 1972 match, he was on the verge of letting everything go. The match had started badly and Spassky was leading 2-0. Bobby was walking on the beach, considering going home, when a passerby yelled at him: "What's the matter Bobby – can't you give Spassky a two-point handicap?" The next day, he won the third game in good style. Several weeks later, he became World Champion. Thus, his extravagant statement regarding offering 2-0 odds against Botvinnik seemed prophetic, but somehow in 1992 Bobby might not have felt ready to defend his point of view regarding women's chess.

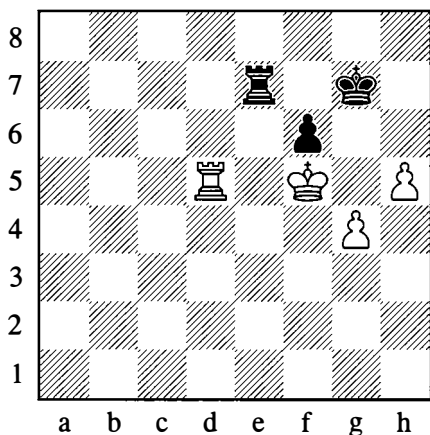
In January 2008, I was playing in Wijk aan Zee, accompanied by Gusztav, my husband. I remember that we arrived a bit late for my game against Carlsen. There was an unusual silence, broken only by the clicking of our shoes on the tile. Although the doors stood open, not a sound was coming from the great hall in which more than a thousand people waited for the start of the round. At the sound of our approach, one of the guards turned to us and held his finger to his lips to bid us to be silent. When we came closer, he whispered, "Bobby Fischer has died." We had arrived for the final seconds of the minute of silence.

Chapter 11

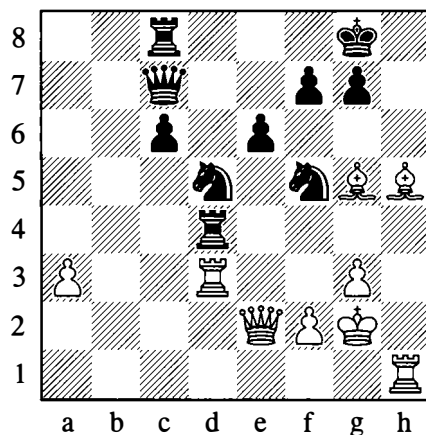
Solving 3



Gusztav proposed to me at Machu Picchu

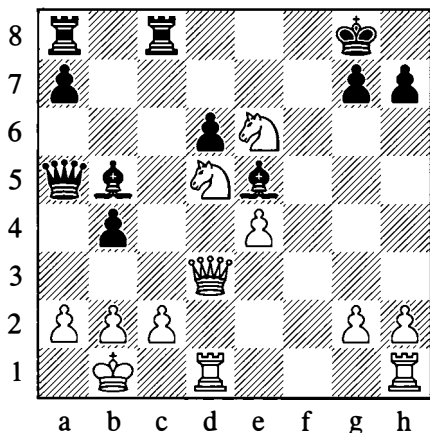
1. Polgar – Short, Monte Carlo 1993

This was a blindfold rapid game so maybe it is not proper to say that when playing 61...♙e7? Nigel did not *see* what was cooking for him. Can you see it?

3. Polgar – Rogers, Biel 1993

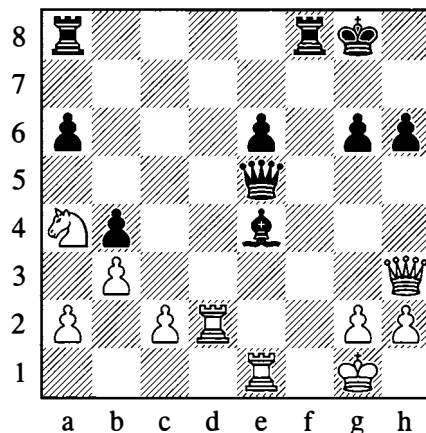
My last move before the time control had been 40.♙h1. Black did not feel any danger looming on the h-file and answered 40...♜xd4.

My bishops stand nicely next to each other, but this does *not* look like an attacking set-up. It will take just one move to correct this feeling. Can you find it?

2. Polgar – Shirov, Las Palmas 1994

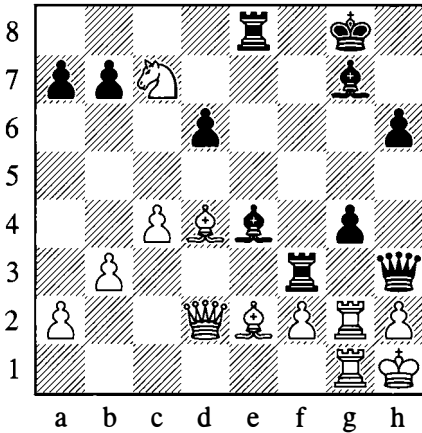
I played the opening well and forced Black to sacrifice his e6-pawn in search of counterplay. It may seem that his bishop pair should offer him some compensation, but my active knights allow me to take advantage of the vulnerability of the black king.

Can you find my attacking plan?

4. J. Polgar – So. Polgar, Honolulu 1998

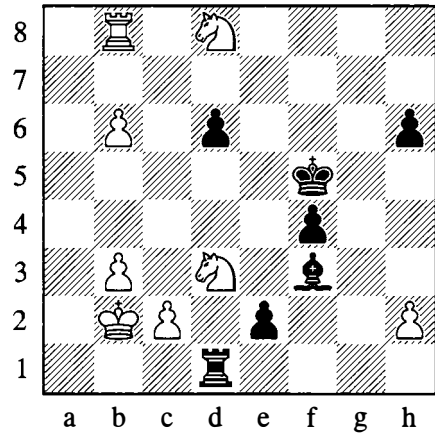
I have played thousands of training blitz games with my sister Sofia. When we met in normal tournaments, we usually made short non-combat draws, but in blitz tournaments we did not avoid a real fight.

Sofia is quite good at tactics, too. Can you find her combination?

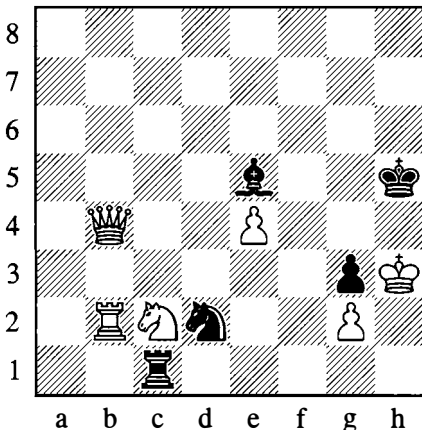
5. Granda Zuniga – Polgar, Aruba 1992

Julio played a solid line against my King's Indian, but I managed to steer the game on a tactical course. With so many black pieces hanging, Julio might have thought that I did not have enough compensation for the piece.

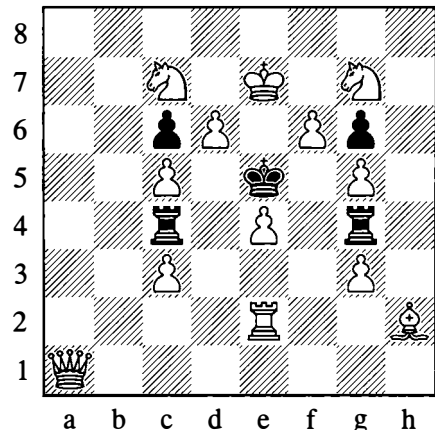
Please find the only way to keep my attack going.

7. Yudasin – Polgar, Groningen 1993

I had obtained a big advantage in the middlegame, but then I committed a few slips that offered my opponent some saving chances. In the position above, I thought that the job was finally done in view of the threat of ... $\text{\textcircled{R}}\text{xd3}$. Can you find a defence for White?

6. Susan Polgar, 1988

Despite his huge material advantage, White has no simple way of dealing with the threat of ... $\text{\textcircled{R}}\text{h1}$ mate. Can you find a saving idea?

8. Sofia Polgar, 1981

White to move and mate in two. As a hint, I recommend discovering the shape drawn by the pieces; only one piece is missing from the puzzle in order to make the shape perfect. So please fix this imperfection!

Solutions

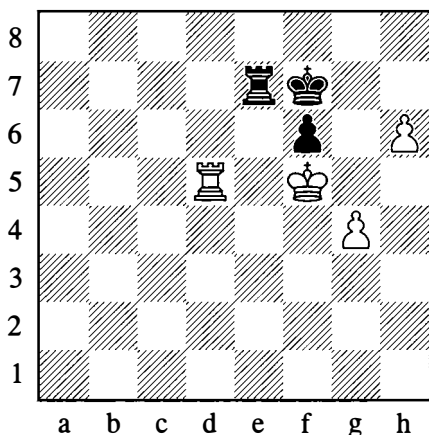
1 Judit Polgar – Nigel Short

Monte Carlo 1993

62.h6†!

The first shock. 62...♔xh6? 63.♕xf6 leaves Black helpless against the double threat of ♕xe7 and ♖h5 mate.

62...♕f7



Despite my partial success on the previous move, things did not look clear yet. I was happy to discover an idea I had never seen before, despite my intense study of rook endings.

63.g5!

Undermining Black's control over the e5-square is essential as will become clear after the next move.

63...fxg5 64.♖d8

Since Black cannot react with ...♖e7-e5†, he has no way of stopping my h-pawn.

64...♖e1 65.h7 ♖f1† 66.♕xg5 ♖g1† 67.♕f4 1-0

2 Judit Polgar – Alexei Shirov

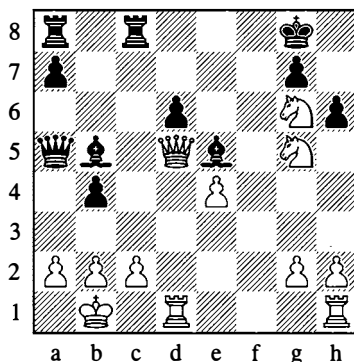
Las Palmas 1994

19.♘e7†!

The knight bravely jumps forward, allowing the next double attack.

19...♕f7

The corner is not as safe as it may look: 19...♕h8 20.♘g5! Threatening ♘f7 mate. 20...h6 21.♘g6† ♕g8 22.♖d5 mate.



A rather unusual mating construction. It is interesting that in our Buenos Aires game I also used the knights to create a mating net!

20.♖d5!

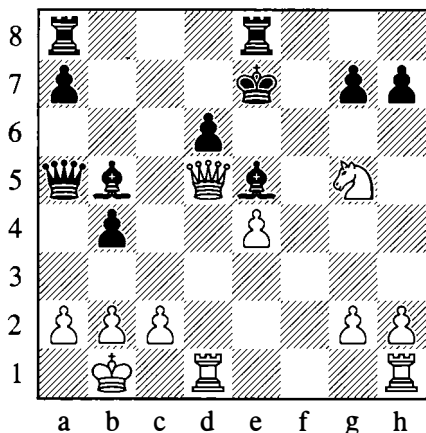
20.♘g5†! would be just as good, transposing to the game.

20...♕xe7 21.♘g5!

The main threat is 22.♖f7† ♕d8 23.♘e6 mate, but if Black clears the c8-square with, say, 21...♖c6, then 22.♖e6† ♕d8 23.♖xe5 would win anyway.

21...♖e8

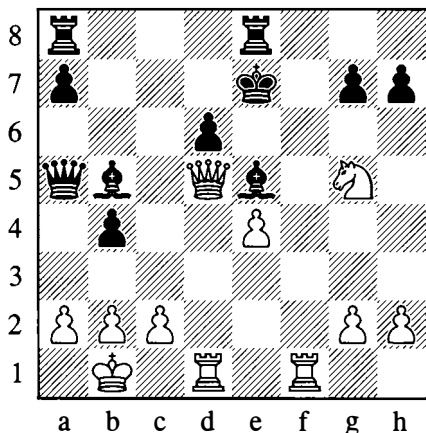
21...♕f6 would be the start of a fatal journey: 22.♖e6† ♕xg5 23.h4† ♕f4 24.♖f5† ♕e3 25.♖f3 mate.



It may seem that the last move more or less neutralized my initiative, but I had more ideas.

22.♖hf1!

The key move of my attack. The obvious threat of 23.♖f7† ♕d8 24.♗xa8 mate is easy to parry with, say, 22...♖ab8, but there is a hidden and even stronger threat: 23.♗xe5†!! dxe5 24.♖f7 mate.



22...♗xf1

The only defence.

23.♗xa5

And Black resigned on move 35.

3 Judit Polgar – Ian Rogers

Biel Interzonal 1993

41.♗g6!

The bishop is taboo due to 42.♗xe6† and the main threat is 42.♗h7† ♕f8 43.♗xf5, threatening ♗h8 mate.

41...♖xd3

The point is that after 41...♗de3† 42.♗xe3 the rook is hanging. 42...♖xd3 (White's pieces defend each other well after 42...♗xe3† 43.♗xe3 ♖xd3 44.♗d3 and White keeps the extra bishop.) 43.♗h7† White gains a tempo to get the bishop off the attacked square, and wins material, while maintaining the mating attack.

42.♗h7†

Once again, this zwischenzug makes my combination work. If 42...♕f8 43.♗xf5 the simultaneous threats of ♖h8 mate and ♗xd3 win material.

1–0

4 Judit Polgar – Sofia Polgar

Honolulu (blitz) 1998

We were on our way to Kona, where I won the US Open championship. On this trip I had one of the nicest experiences of my life, swimming with dolphins! The euphoria of this experience lasted for months...

25...♗xg2!

This is the less spectacular of the two moves that make up the combination.

26.♗h4

For a moment, I thought I was winning, since Sofia's pieces are hanging.

26...♗h3!!–+



In Honolulu with Sofia in 1998

What an unexpected move. Threats such as 27...♖e3† or 27...♗f5 make my position hopeless.

By coincidence, I found this game in my old archives in May 2013, just before picking up Sofia from Budapest airport. Readers of the first volume may be familiar with my habit of writing down *all* my games, regardless of the time control used or whether the games were official or friendly.

5 Julio Granda Zuniga – Judit Polgar

Aruba 1992

25...♞e5!!

The obvious threat is 26...♞h5, but after 27.♙xf3 the fight may still be on, depending on White's next move. So, the threat has to be prepared somehow.

The *real* winning threats are 26...♞g3!!! 27.fxg3 ♜xh2†! and the simpler 26...g3.

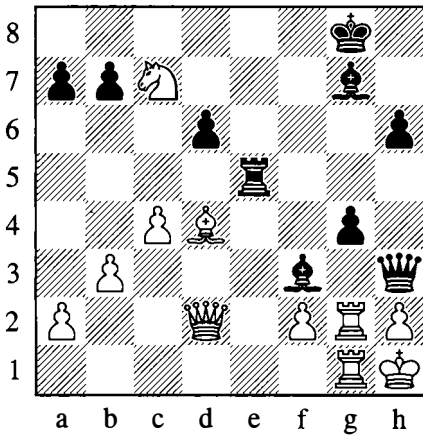
White now spent 40 minutes, but failed to find the best move, missing my last move of the game.

26.♙xf3?

26.♙xe5? (awarded an “!!” in my old notes) loses to 26...♞xf2!.

White had to bring his knight into play: 26.♖d5! Sometimes, it can jump to f4, other times it can harass the king with ♖e7+. 26...g3! (In my old notes I have 26...♙g3 but it is ineffective due to: 27.♖f4!! I also analysed 26...♙xd5 27.cxd5 ♙f2, but White can do better: 27.♙xf3 ♙xd4 28.♙xd4 ♙xd4 29.♙xg4+) 27.fxg3 ♙xg3 28.♖f4 ♙xg2 29.♙xg2 ♙xg2+ 30.♖xg2 ♙g5 31.♙f1 ♙xd4 32.♙xd4 ♙f3= My activity offers me adequate compensation, but the most likely outcome of the game is a draw.

26...♙xf3



27.♙xe5

27.♙f4 leads to mate: 27...♙xg2+ 28.♙xg2 ♙e1

The knight centralization would arrive too late: 27.♖d5 g3! Threatening ...♙xh2 mate. 28.fxg3 ♙xh2+ 29.♖xh2 ♙h5 mate.

27...♙xe5 28.♙d5+

Julio thought I had to take his queen, which would free his position.

28...♖h8!

But he overlooked this move, which forces immediate resignation.

6 Susan Polgar

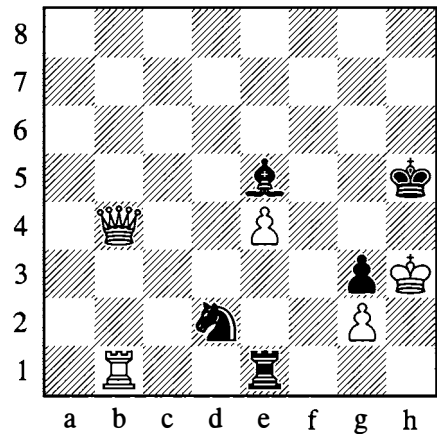
1988

Susan really liked stalemate ideas, which sometimes inspired her to compose studies.

1.♖e1!

In order to start playing for stalemate, White has to get rid of the superfluous pieces. 1.♙b1 ♙xb1 is curtains.

1...♙xe1 2.♙b1



2...♖xe4!

Threatening mate with either ...♖g5 or ...♖f2.

2...♙xb1? 3.♙xb1! ♖xb1 leads to an immediate draw.

3.♙xe4 ♙xe4

The threat of mate has moved onto the fourth rank, but so will the stalemate idea!

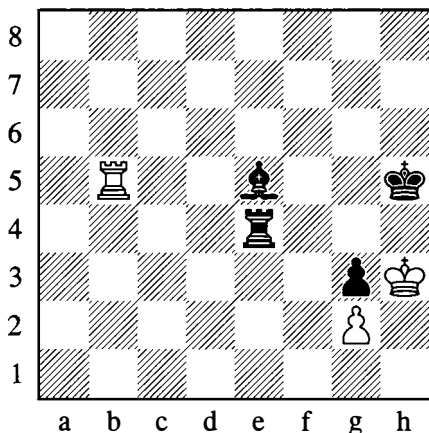
4.♙b4 ♙d4

Just trying.

5.♙b5+ ♙e5

Avoiding 6.♖xg3 with a draw.

If 5...♙e5 then 6.♙xe5 ♙xe5 is stalemate.

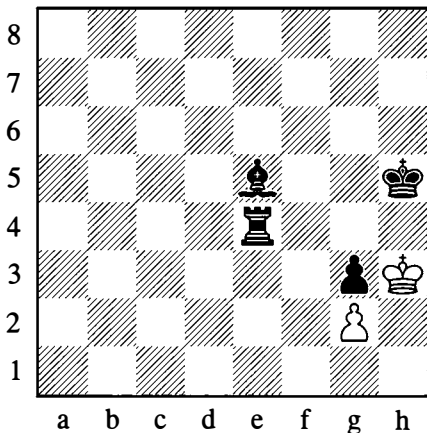


6...Bb4 Re2

On the second rank, there is no way to attack the rook from the b-file, but in the absence of a mating threat, the attack on the e-file saves the game.

6...Re1 would expose the rook to 7.Bb1. And if 7...Re2 8.Re1 with the same result as in the main line.

7.Re4! Re4



½-½

7 Leonid Yudasin – Judit Polgar

Groningen PCA 1993

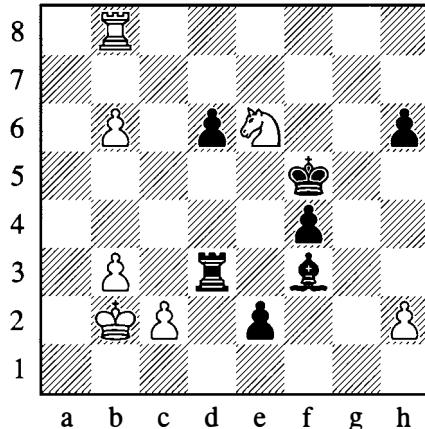
51.♟e6!

The first of two moves which set up a mechanism for stopping my pawn. Jumping with the knight to an indirectly-defended square already suggests using the term “study-like”.

51...♞xd3

It took me some time to understand my opponent's idea; but even when I did, I could not find any way to cross it.

51...♞xe6? would be an open invitation to trouble: 52.♟xf4 ♜d7 53.♟xe2 My pawn has disappeared and finally the b6-pawn becomes threatening. 53...♞xe2 54.b7 ♜c7 55.♞e8 ♜xb7 56.♞xe2+ With an extra pawn and a very promising ending for White.



52.♞e8!

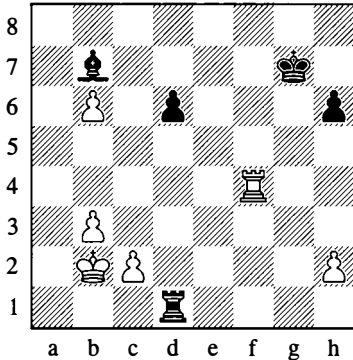
The second subtle move in a row. White plays as if he had not noticed that I had just captured one of his knights.

52...♞e4?!

This leads to a draw by force. .

52...♖e3? was even worse, and could have landed me in trouble: 53.♘d4† ♜g4 54.♞xe3 fxe3 55.♘e2 The knight is taboo because the b6-pawn needs permanent surveillance. Only White can be better.

The only way to retain some practical chances was: 52...♞d1! 53.♘g7† ♜g6 54.♞xe2 ♜xg7 55.♞f2 ♜b7 56.♞xf4



White has two pawns for the bishop and the b6-pawn restricts my possibilities. Also, my remaining pawns are weak. In principle, a draw would be the most probable result, but I could try to play on for a while.

53.cxd3

Black had a choice. 53.♘g7† also leads to a draw by perpetual: 53...♜g6 54.♞xe4 ♞e3 55.♞xe3 fxe3 56.b7 e1=♞ 57.b8=♞

53...e1=♞ 54.dxe4† ♜f6 55.b7

After having stayed in the background for a long time, this pawn becomes threatening. I have nothing better than a draw by perpetual check!

55...♞e2† 56.♜c3 ♞e3† 57.♜b2

White cannot push his luck too much either; advancing the king would lose the b7-pawn.

57...♞d2†

With a draw.

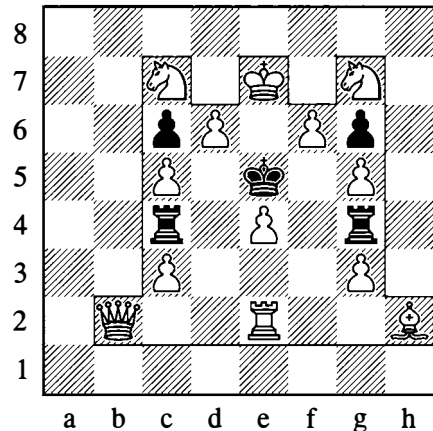
8 Sofia Polgar

1981

Sofia composed this puzzle at the age of seven. As I mentioned in the first volume, we used to play a lot of blitz games and solve all kinds of problems and studies. This is how we got into the “chess mood”. It inspired Sofia, who has had artistic inclinations since she was a kid, to compose problems with the pieces displayed in the shape of a rook.

1.♞b2!

The solution is the move that completes the rook shape.



Whatever move Black makes, he will be mated on the next move.



Novgorod 1996

Chapter 12

My Memorable Games



Novgorod 1996

I was tempted to choose the title *Perfect Games* for this chapter, even though computer-assisted analysis revealed some inaccuracies in my play. The term *perfect* would have referred to my perception during and immediately after the games, a point of view sometimes shared by the spectators and commentators.

The games in this chapter are especially memorable for reasons including their competitive significance, the strength of my opponents, the originality of ideas and the sharpness of my attacks. More than one of these elements applies to each game. The reader will find frequent links to other games from the same chapter, but he may find additional ones on his own.

There is little doubt that I could have classified any of the following games thematically, but the strongest link between them was that I could never have dreamed of allowing any of them not to appear in this book! I hope you will enjoy my collection of *perfect* or at least *memorable* games.

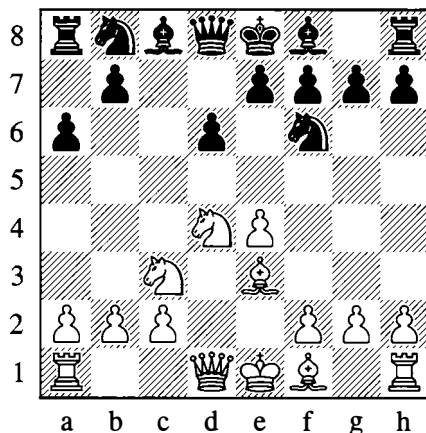
Novgorod 1996 was one of my first super-tournaments, the other players being Kramnik, Topalov, Gelfand, Short and Ivanchuk. I had a bad start with one point out of the first four rounds. There followed a free day, on the 24th of July, which I dedicated not only to recovering from the bad sequence of results, but also to preparing for the next two games.

In the fifth round I won against Ivanchuk. In the sixth round I had White again, which added to my renewed optimism.

Judit Polgar – Boris Gelfand

Novgorod 1996

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6
5.♘c3 a6 6.♙e3



I had little doubt that Gelfand would play his favourite Najdorf Sicilian. His repertoire in those years was rather limited, but he used to analyse it in fantastic depth. Later he added the Sveshnikov Sicilian and the Petroff to his repertoire, a solid approach that helped him become a challenger to Anand's crown.

At the time of this game, my main weapon against the Najdorf was 6.f4 but I also played 6.♙c4 occasionally. During the rest day, while looking through Gelfand's games, I found a novelty in a variation of the 6.♙e3 system that I thought he might repeat against me. Of course, switching to such a complicated system without thorough preparation is risky, but on this occasion my decision proved inspired.

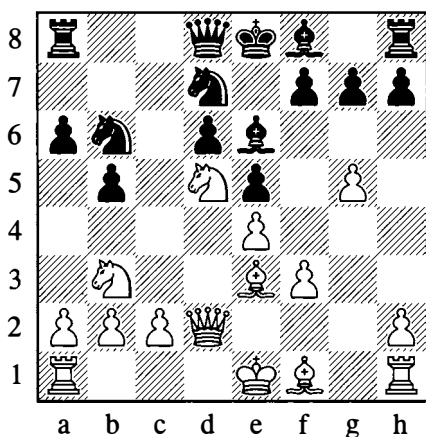
A few days later, during our joint flight back from Novgorod, Nigel Short explained to me that before starting to play the 6.♙e3 variation I should know what I was doing. I cannot agree more. Encouraged by the favourable result of this game, I switched to this modern continuation and analysed it for hundreds and hundreds of hours.

6...e5

Boris had been playing this move invariably in recent months. He seldom played 6...e6 and only switched to 6...d4 about a year after our game.

7. d3 e6 8. f3 d7 9. d2 b5 10. g4 b6 11. g5 fd7 12. d5

So far we had been following a game between Shirov and Gelfand from about three months before. At this point, however, Boris thought for fifteen minutes before deviating.

**12...c8!**

12...c8 13. exd5 c8 14. a5 occurred in Shirov – Gelfand, Madrid 1996. The point behind White's last move is that 14...d5 runs into 15. b7 followed by d5.

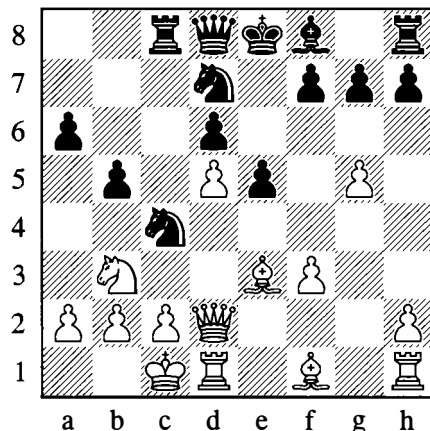
Boris chose a different continuation and won in just 27 moves. I do not know if he lacked confidence in the line he played against Shirov, or if he simply smelled the danger of concrete preparation on my part.

The point of the rook move is that by delaying the inevitable exchange on d5, Black discourages 13. a5, since after 13...d5 14. exd5 c8 15. the knight cannot go to b7. True, after 15. d5 c8 16. c3 White has some positional compensation, but it is enough for equality at best.

Having been taken out of my preparation, I also spent fifteen minutes on my next move.

13.0-0-0 cxd5

Having avoided d3-a5, Black had no reason to delay this exchange anymore.

14. exd5 d4**15. f2**

15. c4 bxc4 did not tempt me at all. If 16. a5? c3 wins a piece, while 16. a1 c3 destroys my structure and offers Black an excellent game.

With my move I aimed to increase the pressure on the b6-square, which might soon be transited by the reserve knight on its way to a4.

In principle, the exchange on e3 favours Black strategically, but the bishop is not running away, so Black can wait for the right moment. The delay of his kingside development gives him reason to be cautious, and Gelfand spent ten minutes pondering his next move.

15...e7

One of the ideas behind putting the queen on f2 was to meet 15...db6 with 16. a5!? dxe3 17. dxe3 dxd5 18. cxd5 cxa5 19. b1 with compensation on the light squares.

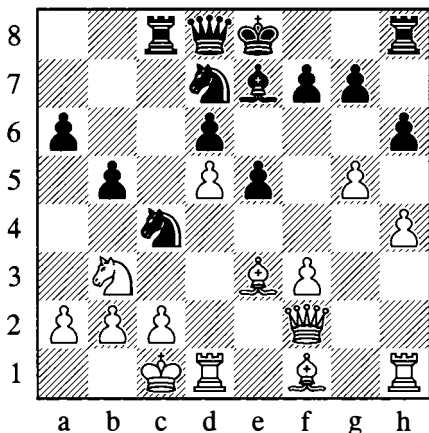
16.h4

In view of the possibility of ...h7-h6, it might seem tempting to try 16.♖g1!?, which avoids exposing the h4-pawn and puts indirect pressure on the g-file. However, there was a good reason for avoiding the rook move, as after 16...♙xe3! 17.♚xe3 ♚b6 I would have been unable to avoid the queen exchange, which would deprive me of any attacking chances and leave Black with an excellent position.

16...h6!

Played after seventeen minutes. In principle, the idea to attack my pawn chain before my attack has even started is correct, but Black should have inserted 16...♙xe3! 17.♚xe3 before proceeding with 17...h6.

Since 18.gxh6 ♜xh6 would be equivalent to strategic surrender, I would have had to take my chances with 18.g6!? followed by the bishop's activation via h3.

**17.gxh6**

I spent seven minutes on this practically forced move.

17.g6? does not work here due to 17...♙xh4!. Black not only captures a pawn, but also attacks the queen and wins material in view of the threat of ...♙xe3 followed by ...♙g5.

17...gxh6

Played after just one minute. This may mean that Boris had planned it in advance, which would be a bit surprising since his kingside loses its compactness and the f5-square becomes weak.

He may have discovered only while I was pondering my last move that the exchange 17...♙xe3? would arrive too late: 18.hxg7 ♜xc2† 19.♚xc2 ♜g8 20.♚c6 ♙xd1 21.♙xd1 ♜xg7 22.♙h3 with a deadly pin.

Black had a significant alternative in 17...g6!?, maintaining the integrity of his pawn structure.

18.♙b1!

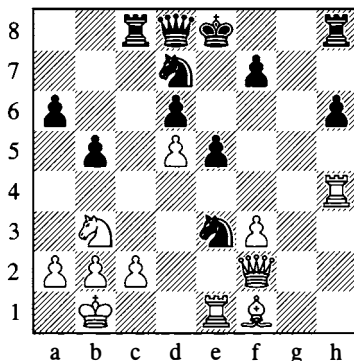
Despite the eight minutes spent, I failed to find 18.f4!? which speeds up my attack while blocking the c1-h6 diagonal. 18...♙xh4 is then met by 19.♚e2 as suggested by Boris.

18...♙xh4 19.♚e2

I played this almost without thinking.

19.♜xh4!?

This interesting alternative did not seriously enter my mind.

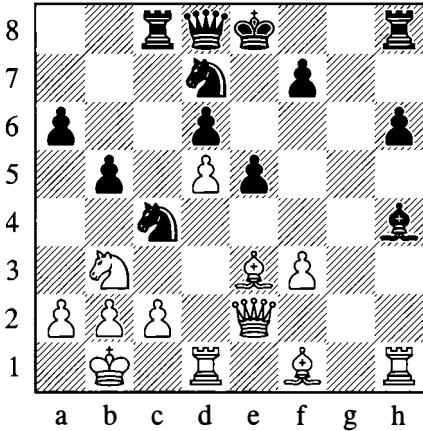
19...♙xe3 20.♚e1**20...♙xf1**

If 20...♙xd5 the not-too-obvious 21.♜d4! ♙b6 22.♚d2 creates nasty pressure along the d-file.

20...♖xc2 21.♞e2 also gives Black some difficulties.

21.♞xf1

The black king's vulnerability offers White adequate compensation for the pawn.



19...♖xe3?!

So far, Black has consistently refrained from this exchange, but now he carries it out under rather unfavourable circumstances – and after sixteen minutes of thought! With opposite-coloured bishops and a weakened black kingside, I will have excellent attacking chances.

19...♗g5! was stronger, fighting for the dark squares without giving away the strong knight. White can retain some compensation for the pawn after 20.♗xg5 ♜xg5 21.♗h3!, but after 21...♞c7 Black is objectively slightly better.

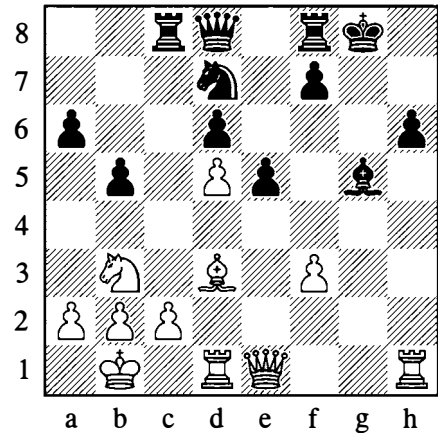
20.♜xe3 ♗g5 21.♜e1!

The queen is excellently placed on this square. It supports not only ♖b3-a5-c6, but also ♖b3-d4 followed by either ♖f5 or ♖c6. It is interesting to compare this moment with the 35.♜e1 move from my game against Tiviakov, which can be found on page 53.

21...0-0

Revealing Gelfand's idea. His kingside fortress on the dark squares seems impossible to breach, precisely because of the opposite-coloured bishops.

22.♗d3



22...f5?

Gelfand made this important mistake after just one minute. Optically, it seems to make sense to gain space and prevent ♗d3-f5. Black has indeed created a barrier in front of White's attack, but he has also weakened the e6- and g6-squares, which I was soon able to exploit.

22...♖c5 23.♗f5 ♞c7 would have been better. White still has fantastic compensation and Black's extra pawn does not count at all, but his king is still relatively safe.

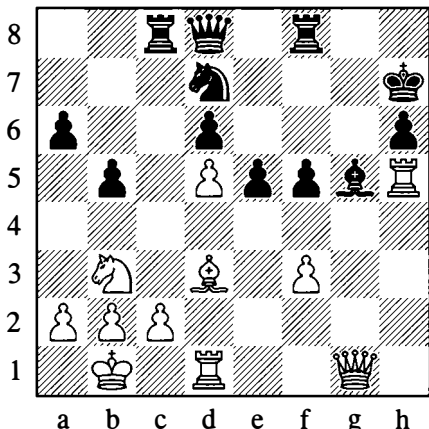
23.♜g1!

I spent 22 minutes on this regrouping move. The idea behind it is to prepare f3-f4 at a moment when only ...exf4 would be possible, opening the path for my knight towards e6.

The immediate 23.f4!? was also worth considering: 23...♗xf4 24.♜g1† ♖h7 25.♞f1 Black is under pressure as the bishop cannot defend both the f- and g-files at the same time. Still, I was and still am happy with my choice.

23...♔h7

Defending against ♖xh6. Boris played this natural move after seven minutes and offered a draw. Since I had my plan clear in my mind and believed in my chances, I declined the offer after only three minutes.

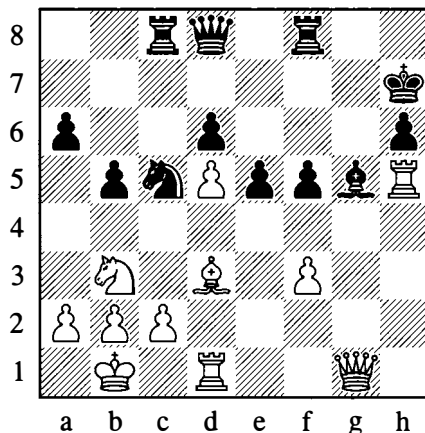
24.♞h5!

Pinning the bishop in view of the indirect pressure on f5.

24...♜c5?!

Black's desire to avoid major troubles by exchanging my knight is understandable, but he will not be in time to accomplish that!

The best defence was 24...♔g6!. It is not easy to decide upon using the king as an active defensive piece in the middlegame. Indeed, my games against Shirov at the Donner Memorial in 1995 and Wijk aan Zee 1998 both highlight the perils of such a strategy (both games can be found later in the chapter, on pages 361 and 367 respectively). Here the king over-protects the f5-pawn and questions the position of my rook. Nevertheless, after 25.♞g4! followed by ♖dh1 White maintains a powerful attack.

**25.f4!!**

Right in time to destroy Black's defence!

25...exf4

Black has to open the path for my knight. 25...♜xf4? is no good as 26.♜xf5† wins.

There is also no time for the intermediate 25...♜xd3? due to 26.fxg5 ♜f4 27.♞xh6† followed by ♞h2 with a decisive attack.

26.♜d4 ♔g6

Black had to advance with his king anyway in order to defend the f5-pawn.

Once again, there was no time for exchanging the dangerous bishop: 26...♜xd3? allows 27.♜e6 followed by ♜xg5†.

27.♞h2

Preparing ♖g1 and ♜f3, with unbearable pressure against the g5- and h6-squares.

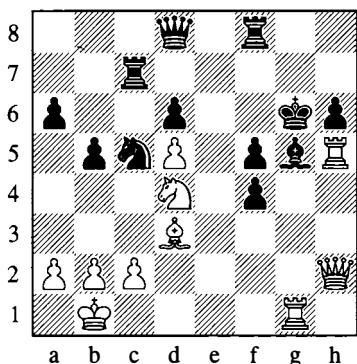
27...♞f6?

Gelfand spent five out of his remaining twenty minutes on this move, which hastens the end.

Transferring the queen's rook to the kingside would also fail to consolidate the fortress:

27...♞c7? 28.♞g1!

Pinning the bishop and threatening ♞xh6†.



28...Rf7 29. Qf3!

Threatening Qxg5.

29...Rhh8 30. Wh4!→

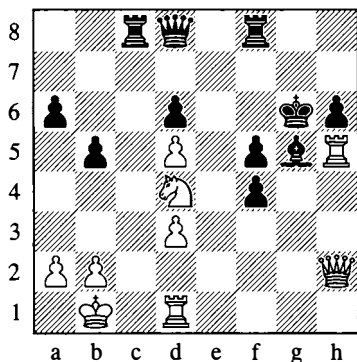
There is no good defence against Qxg5.

The issue of exchanging my bishops was not a fortunate one for Boris. Earlier in the game he mistimed the ...Qc4xe3 exchange, and now he misses the right moment to eliminate my other bishop:

27...Qxd3!

This may not be enough to save the game against perfect play from White, but it would have offered tough resistance. The lines below are fascinating.

28.cxd3

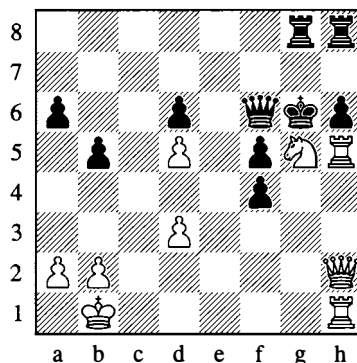


28...Wf6 29. Qe6

Gelfand probably did not want to allow me to invade on e6 so easily, which would explain why he kept his knight.

29...Rf8 30. Rf1 Rf8 31. Qxg5

It may seem that Black can resign, but there is play left!



31...Wxg5!

An unbelievable resource!

If 31...hxg5 then 32. Rf7 leads to mate.

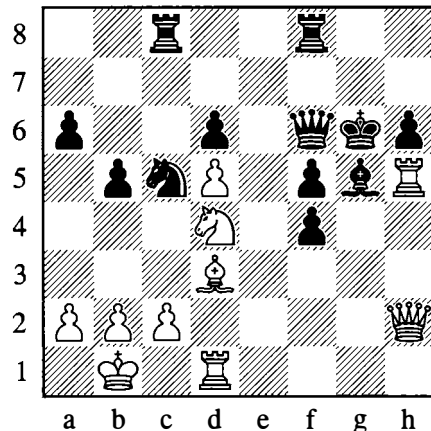
32. Qc2!

32. Rf7+ hxg5 would offer Black strong counterplay due to his pawns.

The last move brings the king one step closer to the kingside, threatening 33. Rf7+ hxg5 34. Wxh8 Rf8 35. Rf8 winning.

32...Wf7 33. Rf1+ Qf7 34. Rf5+ Qe8 35. Rf1!

Followed by returning the king to b1 and continuing the attack against the vulnerable black king.

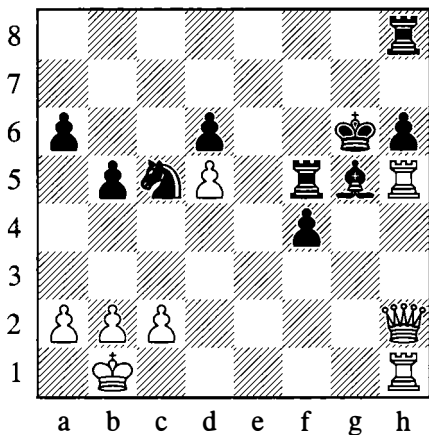


28. Qxf5+ Wxf5

28...Qf7 29. Qxc8 Rxc8 30. Wh3 followed by Qf5 wins.

29. ♖xf5 ♜xf5 30. ♜h1 ♜h8

There are situations where sacrificing one's queen for two minor pieces may offer chances to build a fortress. In this case, there is a tactical way to simplify to an easily won position.



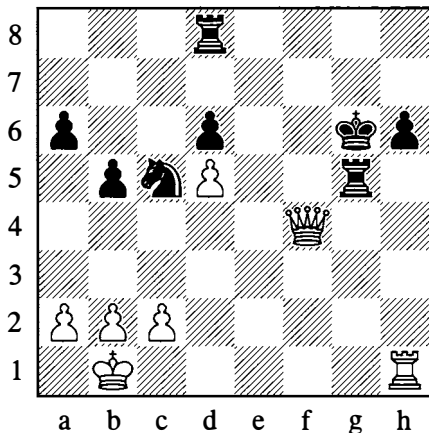
31. ♜xg5†!

Destroying Black's blockade on the dark squares.

31... ♜xg5

31... ♜xg5 32. ♜h4† ♜g6 33. ♜g4† ♜f6 34. ♜g1 ♜g5 35. ♜xf4† ♜e7 36. ♜e1† gives White a winning attack.

32. ♜xf4 ♜d8



33. a3?

It is a pity that I missed 33. b4! followed by ♜e4† with an immediate win. My move does not spoil anything essential though.

33... ♜g7 34. ♜f1 ♜h7 35. b4

Better late than never!

35... ♖a4 36. ♜e4† ♜h8 37. ♜e7 ♜dg8 38. ♜xd6 ♜h7 39. ♜e7† ♜g7 40. ♜e4† ♜g8 41. ♜e8† ♜h7 42. d6

1-0

After this difficult tournament I realized that I had to work a lot to catch up in opening preparation with my mighty opponents. Nevertheless, the above game gave me a lot of pleasure. Thirteen years later, I won another memorable game against Boris in 2009; it was precisely after the latter game that I thought it was about time to write a book about my games and career.

Judit Polgar – Viswanathan Anand

Wijk aan Zee 1998

Over my career, I have played a lot of games against Anand. After a favourable start (two wins which can be found in the first volume) I started losing lots of games, with just some rare draws in between.

Our last meeting prior to this game had been at Dortmund 1997. I had White, which allowed me to adopt a special strategy. In a supposedly sharp Dragon, I exchanged as many pieces as I could, achieving a quick draw. Psychologically, I felt it was important to break the series of losses by any means possible. It surely helped me and I sat down for this game with increased confidence.

1. e4 c5 2. ♖f3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♖xd4 ♖f6 5. ♖c3 a6

Just one of Vishy's numerous openings.

6.♟e3

After the game against Gelfand, this became an important part of my repertoire.

6...e5 7.♘f3

With such a disastrous score against Anand, I preferred this solid line over the sharp 7.♘b3. I somehow was sure that he would take risks himself, in order to create winning chances.

7...♟e7 8.♟c4 0–0 9.0–0 ♟e6

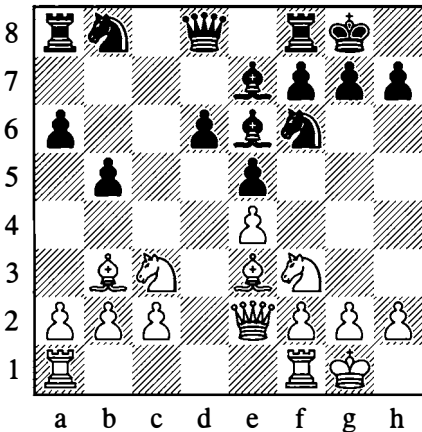
The other main line is 9...♘c6 planning ...♘a5.

10.♞e2

I thought for eleven minutes on this move, and Anand invested eight minutes before responding.

10...b5

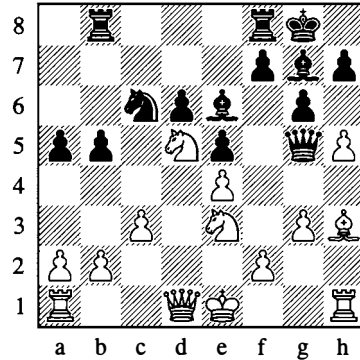
This is not a real mistake yet, but I prefer the less committal 10...♘c6.

11.♟b3**11...♟xb3?**

I was surprised when Vishy made this obvious concession after only two minutes. White now gets the d5-square for nothing.

Usually in such cases it is White who must

actively seek out a way to convince Black to release the tension. Here is a simple example from my practice, Judit Polgar – Miguel Illescas, Leon 1996. Black's last move was 18...♞d8-g5, carelessly leaving the c7-square undefended.



18.♘c7! There is no favourable way to keep the tension, since 18...♞e7 19.♘xe6 fxe6 20.hxg6 hxg6 21.♞g4 leaves Black badly off on the light squares.

Miguel therefore played 18...♟xh3 19.♞xh3 with a clear positional advantage for White.

Returning to the game against Anand, a more natural course for Black is 11...h6 12.♞fd1 ♘bd7 as played in Short – Kasparov, Horgen 1995.

12.axb3

Developing the rook without moving it from its starting square.

12...♘bd7 13.♞fd1

I spent eight minutes on this natural move, completing White's development. The other rook obviously belongs on the half-open a-file, but I was mainly thinking about what would be my best plan for the middlegame. Eventually I decided on the scheme of ♟g5xf6 followed by ♘e1-d3-b4 aiming for absolute control over the d5-square. The plan is logical but slightly time-consuming.

13...♖c7

After five minutes Anand decided not to provoke any major changes in the position.

If 13...b4?! 14.♘d5 ♘xe4 15.♙xa6 Black is underdeveloped and the b4-pawn is doomed.

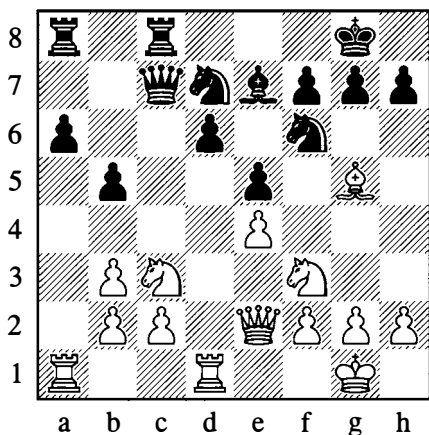
Preventing ♔g5 with 13...h6 would weaken the kingside, inviting me to change my knight's route: 14.♘h4!? b4 15.♘a2 a5 16.♘f5 with strong pressure.

14.♔g5

This is the correct move order since 14.♘e1?! can be met by 14...b4 15.♘d5 ♘xd5 16.♙xd5 ♘f6 followed by ...♘xe4.

14...♙fc8

With this move Black also completes his development. The last move threatens ...b5-b4 winning the c2-pawn.

**15.♘e1!**

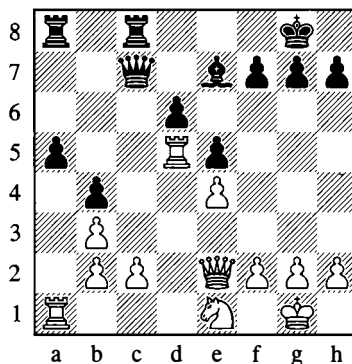
Defending the pawn while starting the planned manoeuvre.

15.♙ac1 would release the pressure along the a-file and leave the f3-knight too far from the d5-square. Black can respond with 15...b4 16.♙xf6 ♘xf6 17.♘d5 ♘xd5 18.♙xd5 a5 followed by ...a5-a4 with counterplay.

15...♖b7

Anand only spent one minute on this move. He has always been known for playing at a fast pace, but here I felt there was a bit of nervousness involved. He surely felt uncomfortable about his position, and this was definitely not what he had expected in a game against me!

15...b4 was a slight improvement, when play continues: 16.♙xf6 ♘xf6 17.♘d5 ♘xd5 18.♙xd5 a5 There are many black pawns on dark squares, creating the danger of an ending with a bad bishop against a strong knight, but in the middlegame White's technical task is not that easy. First of all, it will take some effort to send the knight to d5.



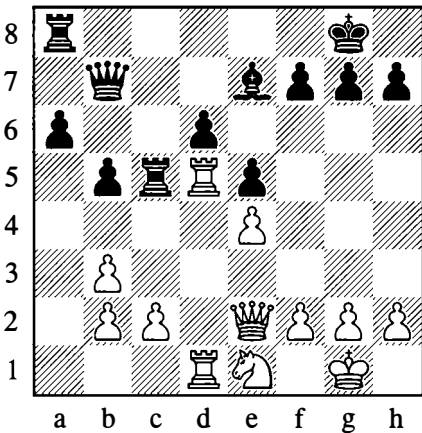
The best plan I see is 19.g3 followed by h2-h4 (preventing ...♔g5), ♙d2 (over-protecting the c2-pawn) followed by ♘g2-e3-d5. If White can achieve all this then it will be a dream position, but the plan is rather time-consuming and Black may try to cross it somehow.

16.♙xf6 ♘xf6 17.♘d5 ♘xd5 18.♙xd5

White has a slightly better version of the position from the previous note. There is no pressure against the c2-pawn and Black does not have the same space advantage on the queenside. My main problem remains the same, though: how to activate my knight?

19...♞c5

The exchange planned by this move does not necessarily make Black's life easier. In fact, it absolves me of any worries about counterplay along the c-file.

19.♞ad1**19...♞xd5?!**

The same kind of concession as 11...♞xb3. By releasing the tension Black allows me to coordinate my pieces more easily.

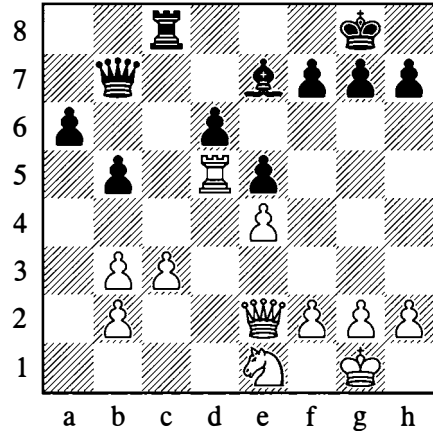
He should have looked for some counterplay with 19...a5. Perhaps Vishy was concerned about 20.♞xc5 dxc5 21.♞d5, but after 21...f6 22.♞d3 ♞c6 Black's position should be defensible. At some point he may even be able to centralize his king to help cover the invasion square on d7.

20.♞xd5 ♞c8

A normal move which was played with a wrong idea.

In principle, Black should aim for some form of kingside counterplay based on ...g6 and ...f5. In fact, 20...f5 would be possible. This would somewhat restrict my active possibilities, admittedly without generating any concrete threats. After, say, 21.♞d3,

releasing the pressure with either ...fxe4 or ...f4 would lead to a strategic disaster on the light squares. Black would therefore have to sit and defend for a long time.

21.c3**21...b4?**

A curious and bad decision, handing me control over the d5-square forever. When placing another pawn on a dark square, Anand relied too heavily on the closed character of the position. To a certain extent, this is the same type of mistake as Spassky's in our fourth match game (see page 270). In both games, after everything was prepared, I broke through by exchanging precisely one of those pawns restricting the enemy bishop.

Another idea is: 21...♞c5 22.♞d1 a5 (Black cannot play 22...d5? on account of 23.b4 winning a pawn.) 23.♞d3! Preventing ...d5 and preparing ♞c2-e3, with a big advantage for White.

21...f5 would still have been the best chance for some activity.

22.c4 g6

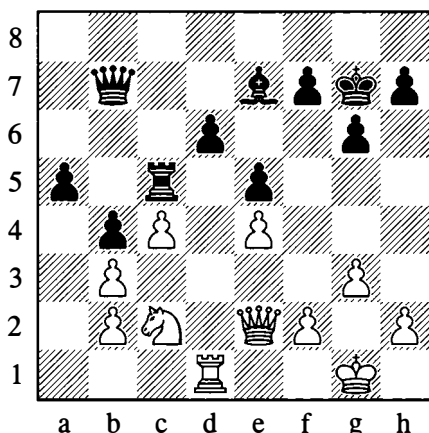
After the latest structural modifications, the saying "better late than never" does not apply to

the plan based on ...f7-f5. With the permanent possibility of c4-c5 in the air, opening the king's position would be too dangerous.

23.g3

Preparing the familiar knight manoeuvre. Given my central control, Black can do little to prevent it.

23...♞c5 24.♞d1 a5 25.♟c2 ♟g7



26.♞d3

Preparing ♟e3 without leaving the e4-pawn undefended. In view of the weakness of the d6-pawn, Black cannot play the typical ...♟g5 move which is often seen in the Sveshnikov Sicilian, which would offer him the possibility of exchanging the strong knight on its way to d5.

26...♞c6

A neutral retreat, accepting the reality that Black has no counterplay and can only aspire to a draw.

27.♟e3 ♞c8 28.♟g2

Postponing the knight jump to d5, as if to savour the fact that Black is helpless to prevent it.

28...♞e6

Although the game had gone smoothly up to this point, converting my advantage was far from simple. I knew how great my position was, but this only added to the pressure, as I knew how disappointed I would be if I failed to win.

29.♞e2

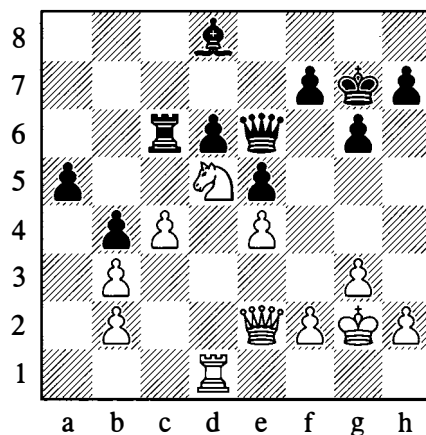
There was some temptation to exchange queens with 29.♞d5, giving the position a purely technical character. However, after ten minutes I decided that keeping the queens on would offer me better chances to increase my advantage.

29...♟d8

Creating the possibility of activating the bishop with ...♟b6.

30.♟d5

Finally!



30...♞c5

30...♟b6 offers White a choice of promising plans.

31.♞d3 is one strong idea, intending ♞f3 to highlight the weakness of the f6-square.

White could even consider 31.♟xb6!? ♞xb6 32.♞d5 ♞a6 33.♞d1 followed by ♞b5, ♞d5 and ♞b7, perhaps in conjunction with c4-c5 at some point, leading to a dangerous initiative.

31. ♖e3

I was not entirely sure about how to continue, so I played some neutral moves in order to get closer to the time control. In one-sided positions, such quiet manoeuvring often has the added benefit of confusing the opponent and making him tired. In any case, my last move is not completely without a plan. If Black moves his rook, the queen may go to a7.

31... ♖e7 32. ♖d3

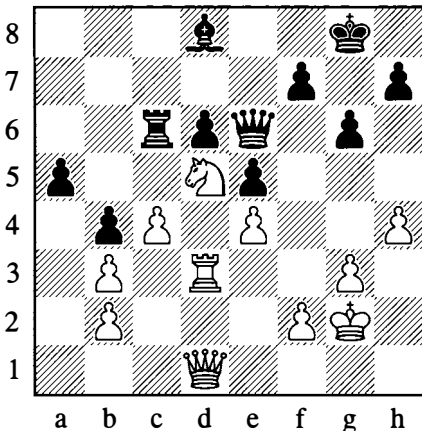
Regarding batteries, it is said that the queen belongs in front of a bishop, but behind the rooks. My last move prepares ♖d2, setting up the classical battery along the d-file. When thinking of this pattern, the game Alekhine – Nimzowitsch, San Remo 1930, comes to my mind, when Alekhine made wonderful use of the major-piece battery.

32... ♖d8 33. ♖d2 ♖c6 34. ♖d1 ♔g8

I would think that the king was better placed on g7, but Anand seems to have switched to neutral moves too. My last moves might have offered him a false sense of safety.

35. h4

Finally a move with a clear purpose.

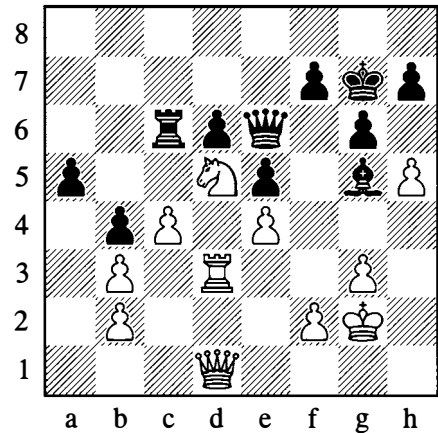
**35... ♔g7?**

Anand made this serious mistake almost instantly. He probably thought that h4-h5 would not create any major problems for him, but failed to appreciate that I would be able to force him to meet my hxg6 with ...fxg6, which will not only weaken Black's light squares, but also his king's defences.

35...h5! was absolutely necessary. There are many possible plans for White, but my favourite regrouping involves switching the positions of the rook and knight on d5 and d3, which will create the dual threats of c4-c5 and f2-f4. If Black reinforces the e5-pawn with ...f7-f6, the g6-square will become weak, revealing a hidden drawback of ...h7-h5.

36. h5 ♖g5

I felt happy to get my pawn on the fifth rank, but I sensed that Vishy, too, felt happy about getting the g5-square back. In the end, my happiness proved better justified.

**37. ♖f3**

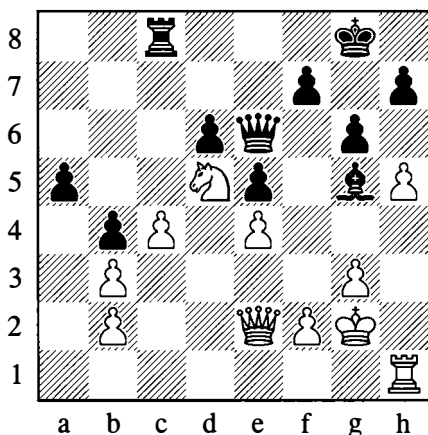
The start of a long regrouping aimed at creating threats along the h-file. This is essential in order to provoke a future ...fxg6.

37... ♖c8 38. ♖d1 ♖c6 39. ♖e2

I still had twelve minutes to reach move 40, but did not want to rush in yet.

39...♖c8 40.♜h1 ♘g8

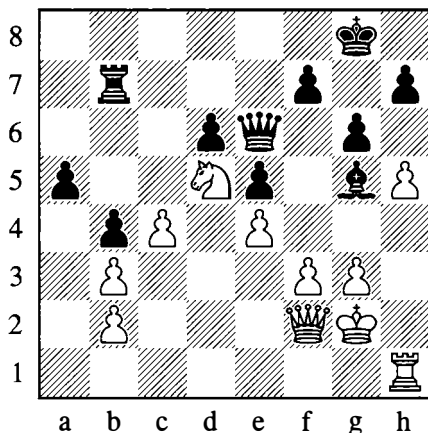
One of Anand's favourite waiting moves in this game, as we know already.

**41.f3!**

An important move, connected with two main ideas. First the queen will go to f2, forcing Black to look out for a queenside invasion. The second idea is to prepare a queen manoeuvre to h2, either with ♖f1 or with ♜f2-g1-h2. It is difficult for Black to deal with the combined threats on both flanks.

41...♜b8

Vishy decided to defend the queenside with ...♜b7, but this makes a future c4-c5 possible.

42.♜f2 ♜b7**43.hxg6!**

Provoking a structural concession.

43...fxg6

Capturing away from the centre is a sad necessity, as 43...hxg6? allows 44.♜g1 followed by ♜h2 with a decisive attack.

44.c5!

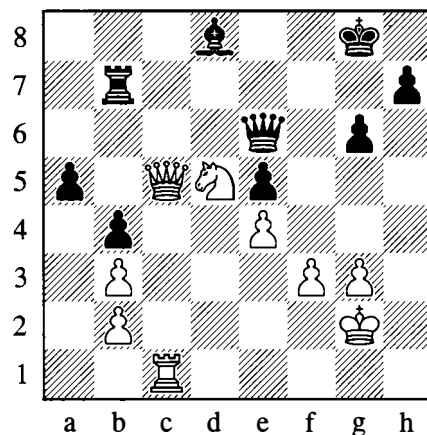
I felt that I had made a lot of progress over the past ten to fifteen moves, so I did not hesitate to open the centre.

44...dxc5 45.♜xc5 ♔d8

Black has to resort to such passive moves in order to keep his queenside pawns.

46.♜c1

The rook has done a wonderful job on the h-file. Now the time has come for it to switch to the open c-file.

**46...♖f7**

This led to the loss of a tempo although, for Black, time ceased being an important factor many moves ago.

If 46...♖g7 I could proceed with the same plan as in the game, though 47.♜c6! is a tempting alternative, exchanging queens at a moment when the black king is far from the centre.

47. ♖e3

By threatening ♖h6, I win a tempo for regrouping. As commented in the note to move 32, the queen belongs behind the rook on the open file.

47... ♖g7 48. ♖c4 ♖d7

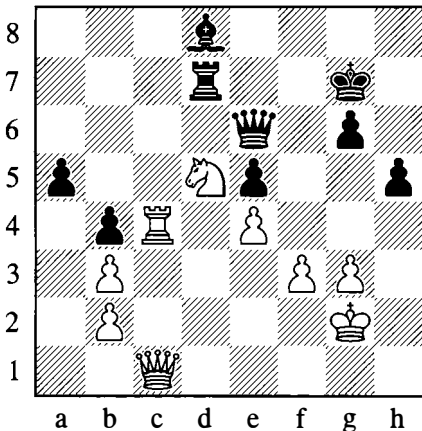
This apparently innocent move contains a hidden idea. Since a second-rank check would be highly annoying for me, this move practically pins the knight, preparing ...♕b6 in some lines.

49. ♖c1

The battery has been established, and Black has to reckon with ideas of ♖c6 and ♖c8 at every turn. The queen is especially useful on c1 as she prevents the enemy king from running to h6. This may be of vital importance in the event that I deliver a check along the seventh rank.

49... h5

Hoping to get some counterplay with ...h5-h4, while also creating a shield for the king should the h6-square become available.

**50. ♖c6**

Wasting a tempo. 50. ♖c8! ♖d6 51. ♖b8 would have been stronger.

50... ♖d6 51. ♖c8

The position remains precarious for Black, despite my indecision on the previous move.

51... ♖d7 52. ♖c5

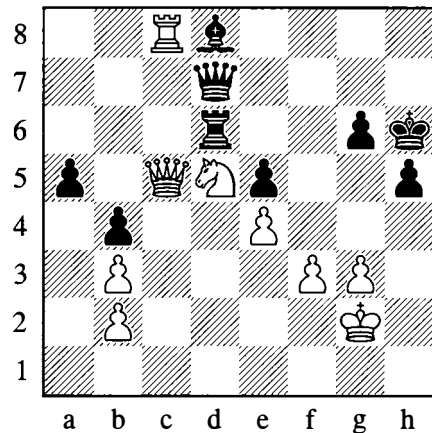
Even in such dominating positions, a constant level of tactical alertness is required. Here, for instance, 52. ♖b8? would allow 52... ♖c6! with the point that 53. ♖xd8 is met by 53... ♖xd5! and Black solves all his problems.

52... ♖h6

Offering me an additional possibility, which I failed to seize.

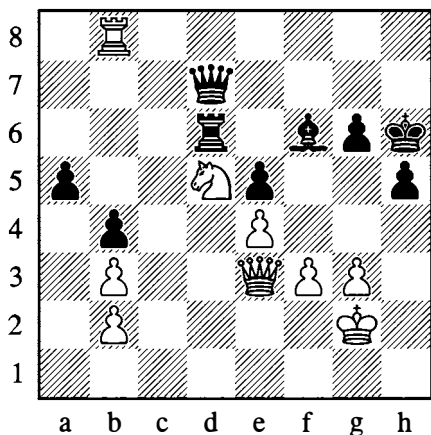
52... ♕b6! was somewhat more restrictive, based on 53. ♖xb6? ♖d2† 54. ♖g1 ♖d1† and Black forces a draw.

Instead I could play 53. ♖c4 ♕d8, at which point 54. ♖b8 is entirely possible since, with my queen on c4, 54... ♖c6? loses to 55. ♖xd8!.

**53. ♖b8**

53. ♖a8! is more active and better. I did not want to allow the bishop to come to b6, but it transpires that White can exploit the position of the king on h6 with: 53... ♕b6? 54. ♖c1† ♖g7 55. ♖g5 With his bishop hanging, Black loses a pawn and the game.

53... ♕f6 54. ♖e3†



54...Bg5?

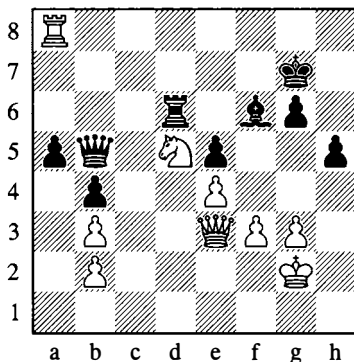
Allowing me to finish the game at once.

54...Bg7

This would have demanded some accuracy.
The way forward is:

55.Ba8! Bb5

If 55...Bc6? 56.Ba7+ Bb7 57.Bb6 wins. As we see, there are tactical tricks available on the whole board.



56.Bc7! Bb3

Forced, as White was threatening Bc8+ in addition to hitting the queen.

57.Bb2 Bb7 58.Bb5

White picks up the a5-pawn.

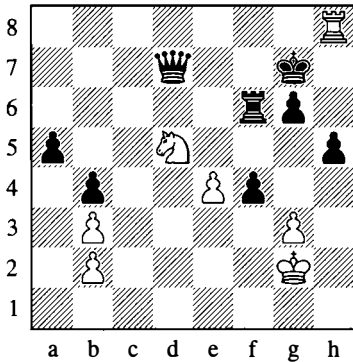
55.f4

Funnily enough, the decisive blow means removing what would otherwise be considered a badly-placed black pawn from the way of my pieces.

55...exf4 56.Bh8+



Here Anand resigned in view of: 56...♔g7
57.♚d4† ♕f6 58.♚xf6† ♚xf6



59.♚h7† ♔xh7 60.♕xf6† ♔g7 61.♕xd7 and wins. After so many years of poor results against Anand, I was especially happy to experience the sweet taste of victory once again.

1–0

Judit Polgar – Viswanathan Anand

Dos Hermanas 1999

The 1999 Dos Hermanas tournament featured one of the strongest fields ever assembled at that event. Playing in good company is appealing in principle, but does not always end in a positive final result. Take for instance the final score table of this tournament: Adams 6/9; Kramnik 5½; Topalov and Illescas 5; Gelfand and Karpov 4½; Korchnoi 4; Anand, Svidler and Polgar 3½.

During the tournament I came to understand that at this level, no matter how badly things are going, they can always get worse. Still, I kept fighting until the end and scored two wins, the present game being the more spectacular of them.

1.e4 c5 2.♖f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♕xd4 ♕f6
5.♕c3 a6 6.♗e3

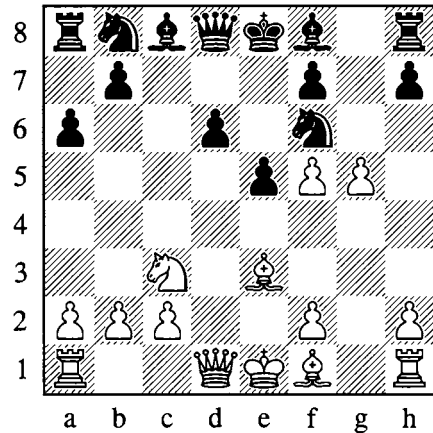
After the previous game I had no reasons to deviate from this move.

6...e6 7.g4

I had analysed this system for quite a while with Jan Timman, and was looking forward to an appropriate occasion to try it out.

7...e5 8.♕f5 g6 9.g5 gxf5 10.exf5

This neo-romantic position is where theory is only about to start.



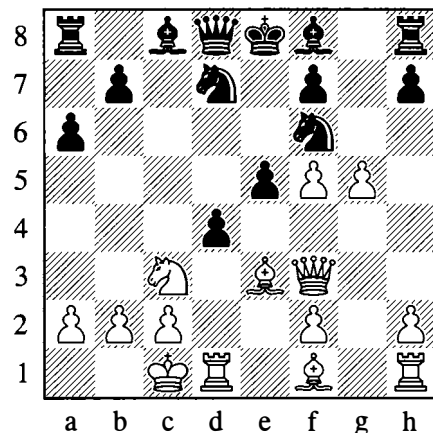
10...d5

Avoiding a blockade on d5 is more important than keeping the f6-knight.

11.♚f3

In Dortmund 1996 Shirov had played 11.gxf6 against me. The ending of that game is analysed on page 133.

11...d4 12.0–0–0 ♖bd7



13.♙d2!?

This was the move on which Timman and I had focused our analysis. It had only been tested in five games, and we thought that it could prove as good as a novelty if analysed properly.

The main continuation was the developing 13.♙c4, but we also found an interesting game with 13.♞xd4!?

At the San Luis 2005 World Championship I once again displayed an opening surprise with 13.♙d4. My opponent, Kasimdzhanov, could not cope with the over-the-board problems and I eventually won. This game will be presented in Volume 3.

Up to this point I had played relatively quickly, spending ten minutes so far. This must have given Anand a warning that he was about to walk into my preparation. In such sharp positions, this is an uncomfortable situation. Even if you are the stronger player, it is a great handicap when the opponent is able to play several strong moves in a row almost effortlessly.

13...dxc3

Anand spent twelve minutes on this move, which informed me that even if he had analysed my last move at all, he surely did not look at it recently.

14.♙xc3

The evaluation of the position is anything but clear, but one thing is certain: it is difficult to handle it with Black, since his king cannot easily find a safe shelter.

14...♙g7

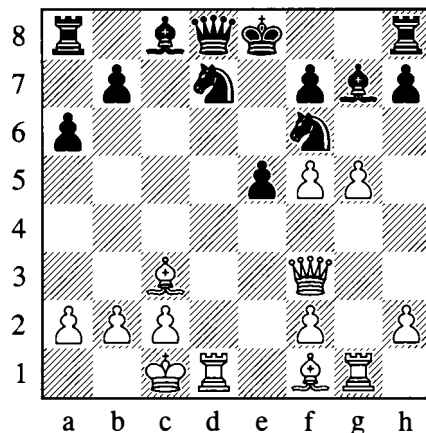
This move came fast, after just a few minutes. Timman and I had not analysed this move at all, so I was now on my own just two moves after unleashing my opening surprise.

14...♞c7 had been played in the stem game Chiburdanidze – Cserna, Pristina 1983.

14...♘g8 is not a move I would consider seriously. Khalifman recommends: 15.f6 ♘gxf6 16.♙xe5 ♞b6 17.♙c3 ♙g7 18.♙c4+ This is not entirely forced, but it illustrates the dangers facing Black.

15.♞g1

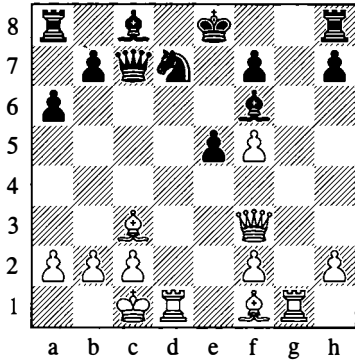
I spent seventeen minutes on this move. Black has a wide choice, with candidates including 15...♞c7, 15...♞b6 and 15...h6, making thorough calculation virtually impossible. It was partly by intuition that I chose my move, which I would characterize as prophylactic; it anticipates Black's short castling, as well as being generally useful in most circumstances.

**15...0-0?**

Anand played this overly provocative move after eleven minutes. Putting the king in the line of fire is asking for trouble.

Once again, I would not have minded seeing the knight retreat to its initial square, and after 15...♘g8 Khalifman gives 16.♙c4 ♞c7 17.♙d5! with a strong attacking position.

The critical continuation is: 15...♞c7 16.gxf6 ♙xf6

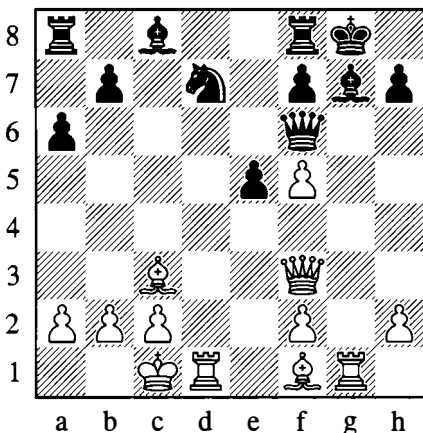


The last move highlights another effect of the rook's presence on g1. The g7-bishop was hanging, preventing the otherwise desirable 16...Qxf6, which would have facilitated the development of Black's queenside. My plan from here consisted of ♖g4, ♗c4, ♕e2 and f2-f4, possibly with ♗b4 included at some point, depending on circumstances.

16.gxf6

I took this important decision after eighteen minutes. I liked the idea of opening the g-file while reducing the material deficit to only one piece, but wanted to make sure Black would not obtain too much freedom of action.

16...♗xf6

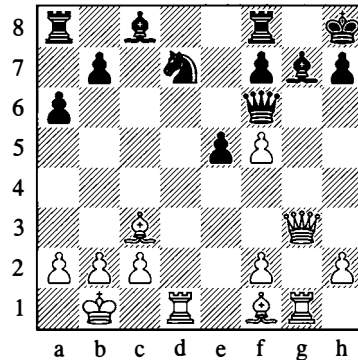


After this forced move I spent another fourteen minutes on my answer. I understood

well enough that one false step or one missed tempo would make the difference between a win and a loss. The other thing I knew for sure was that I wanted to play f2-f4 as soon as possible.

17.♕e3

17.♕g3 was equally tempting, but I preferred the text move for two reasons. I was keen to cover the c1-h6 diagonal, thus avoiding a tempo loss with ♖c1-b1, and also wanted to retain the possibility of a sacrifice on g7. However, the way I see it now, moving the queen to g3 would have been even stronger. Play may continue: 17...♖h8! 18.♖b1!



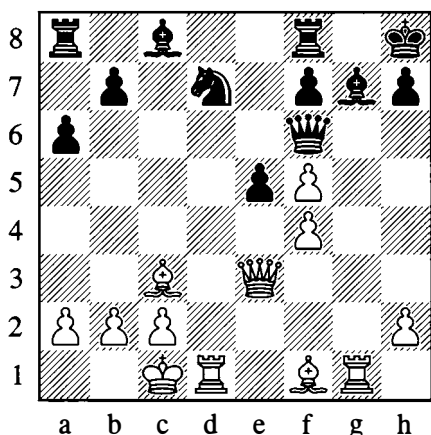
Black has nothing better than 18...♗c5, when 19.♖e1 ♖e8 20.f4 gives White strong pressure.

17...♖h8

Black unpins the bishop in order to free the knight from the burden of defending the e5-pawn.

18.f4

Played without thinking. Black is in a dangerous situation in view of the combined pressure against e5 and g7. His main problem is how to continue the queenside development, since the knight cannot move away from the defence of the e5-pawn. His choice is wide, but not too pleasant.

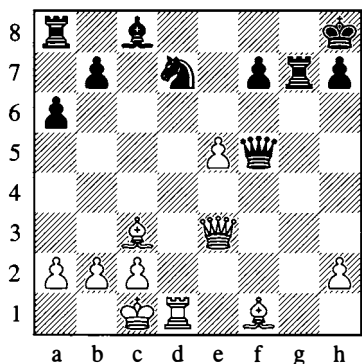


18...♙b6?

Practically losing a tempo in a position where time is as valuable as gold. Black's choice consisted of better but also worse moves:

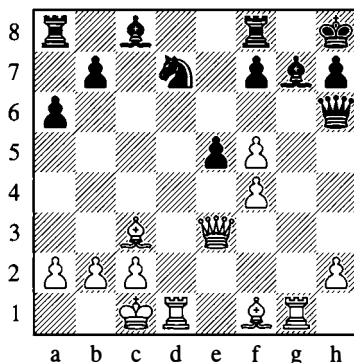
18...♙h6?? loses on the spot to 19.♖xd7! followed by ♙xe5.

18...♖g8? fails to strengthen the defence: 19.♖xg7! Removing an important defender of the e5-square and rival to my c3-bishop. 19...♖xg7 20.fxe5 ♙xf5 Despite being a rook up, Black is about to be crushed.



21.♙h3 ♙g6 22.e6 ♙f6 23.♖f1 and White wins.

18...♙h6!? would save a tempo over the game continuation. Black pins my f4-pawn and prepares the ugly-looking yet solid ...f7-f6.



Still, after 19.♙c4! my position would remain extremely active.

The best defence was:

18...♖e8!

Activating a new defensive piece and creating the threat of ...♙h6.

19.♙c4!?

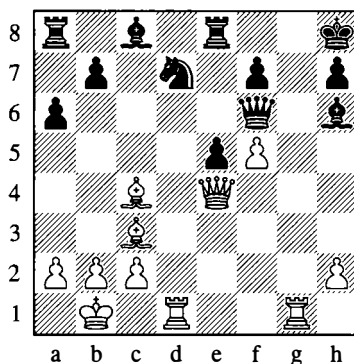
An active developing move.

19.♖xg7?! ♙xg7 20.fxe5 ♙xe5 21.f6 ♙g6 is unconvincing.

19.♙b1!? is a safe continuation, intending to meet 19...♙h6 with 20.♖g4. Now we can see that the ...♖f8-e8 move had some drawbacks, as the e5-pawn stays in a double pin.

19...♙h6 20.♙b1 ♙xf4 21.♙e4 ♙h6

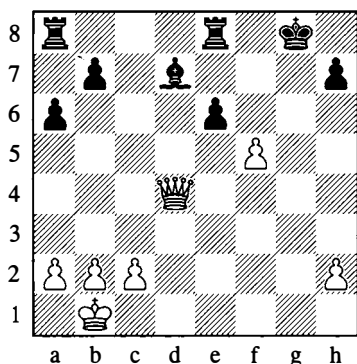
Avoiding ♖xd7 followed by ♙xf4.



22.♙e6!

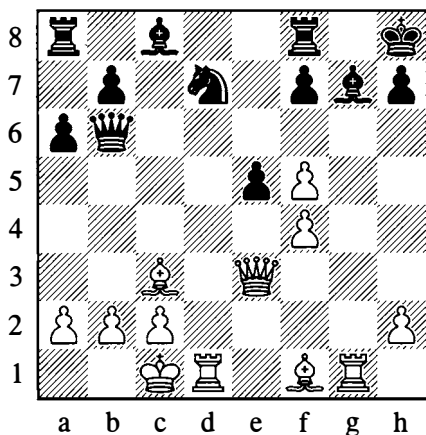
An elegant interference along the e-file.

22...fxe6 23.♖xd7 ♙xd7 24.♙xe5 ♙g7 25.♖xg7 ♙xg7 26.♙xg7† ♙xg7 27.♙d4† ♙g8



28.f6! ♕f7 29.♖xd7+ ♕xf6 30.♖xb7 e5

This is similar to the ending I reached against Shirov at Wijk aan Zee 1998 (the complete game can be found later in the chapter, beginning on page 367). White stands better, although in the present position Black has more of a chance to create counterplay with his passed e-pawn.



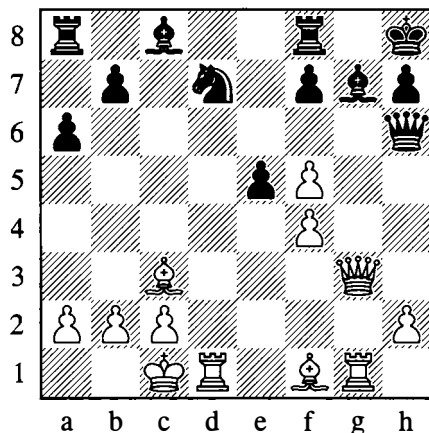
19.♗g3

Finally I was forced to put my queen on the right square, and now it comes with even greater force than on move 17.

19...♖h6

Anand needed eleven minutes to re-adapt himself to the position and, possibly, come to terms with the realization that he was doing badly. There was nothing better than the

text move, since 19...♗g8 leaves the f7-pawn vulnerable after 20.♗c4.



20.♗d6!

I spent twelve minutes on this precise move, forcing the black f-pawn to take a step forwards.

If 20.♖b1? ♖c5! Black threatens not only ...♗e4 but also ...♗xf5, which would justify the decision to drive my queen away from e3.

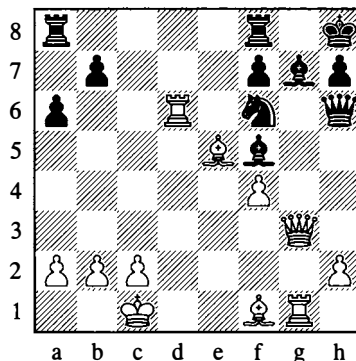
20...f6

Played instantly. The alternatives fail to offer much resistance:

20...♗f6?!

This move would allow my c3-bishop to display its full strength.

21.♗xe5 ♗xf5



22. ♖xg7+!

A familiar pattern; after the elimination of the g7-bishop Black's position crumbles.

22... ♖xg7 23. ♕xf6 ♖xf6 24. ♖xf6

With an extra pawn and a dominating position.

20... ♕f6?

This is even worse, as Black fatally exposes the bishop to the other rook.

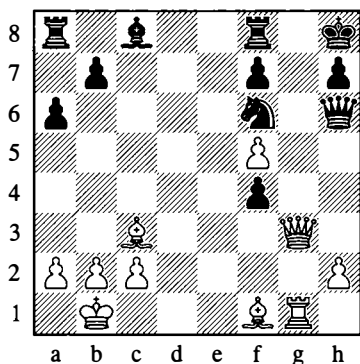
21. ♖b1!

Unpinning the f-pawn in order to threaten fxe5, which might be played with or without a preliminary ♖xf6.

21... exf4

The only sensible defence, but it allows a pretty finish.

22. ♖xf6! ♖xf6



23. ♖xf4!

The queen is taboo because of mate in one.

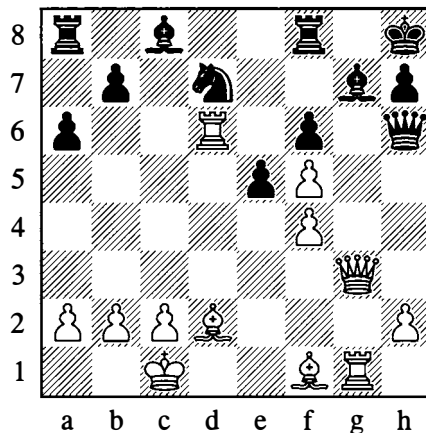
23... ♖d8 24. ♕d3

White prevents the back-rank mate and Black can resign.

21. ♕d2!

I foresaw this strong move when I played 20. ♖d6. Black's last move has consolidated the long diagonal but left the queen stranded on h6, so my bishop immediately adapts to the new circumstances. We can see that the white king is not at all badly placed on c1, and even offers a bit of extra protection to the bishop, just in case the rook is required to leave the d-file.

I believe that my last move came as a surprise to Anand. If so, it is the second time in the game that he has been caught unaware by the bishop retreating to d2.



21... e4

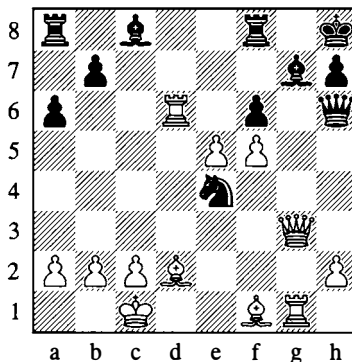
A logical defence, keeping the diagonal closed.

21... ♖c5!?

This move leads to amazing tactical play. I must confess that I did not even consider it as an option. In principle, I should have done so, but in a practical game one's resources are limited. I had spent considerable time on a series of important moves, and had to start relying a bit on my intuition.

22. fxe5! ♖e4!

This intermediate move would be winning, were it not for my next intermediate move!



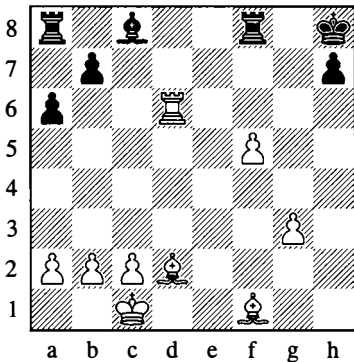
23.exf6!!

I invite the reader to stop and contemplate the position for a moment. There are so many attacked pieces on both sides that it would be difficult even for an experienced grandmaster to understand what is going on.

23...♖xg3 24.fxg7† ♜xg7 25.♞xg3

White has sacrificed the queen for just a bishop and two pawns, but the deadly threat of ♕c3 forces Black to return the queen at once.

25...♜xg3 26.hxg3



Now White has two pawns for the exchange plus an advantage in development. The immediate threat is 27.♕c3† ♖g8 28.♕c4†.

26...h5

Clearing the h7-square for the king and preventing the paralyzing g3-g4.

26...♞xf5 would leave the back rank at White's mercy. 27.♕c4! Threatening ♕c3† and mate. 27...h5 28.♞d8† ♖h7 29.♕d3+–

27.♕h6!?

Forcing simplifications.

27.f6 is an alternative, leading to a clear advantage with a few more pieces on the board.

27...♕xf5

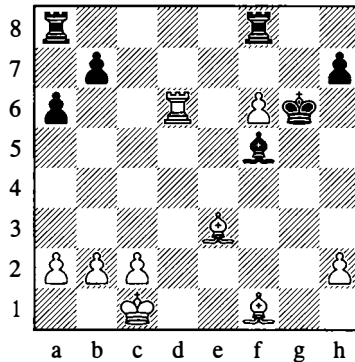
There is nothing else. The rook cannot leave the back rank, while abandoning the f-file would make my pawn unstoppable, for instance 27...♞e8 28.♕d3 followed by f5-f6.

28.♕xf8 ♞xf8 29.♕g2

White is a pawn up and the black queenside is doomed. Nevertheless, Black can still try to organize an attack against the g-pawn, so his position is not yet completely hopeless.

22.♕c4!

The straightforward 22.♜g4 planning ♞g3-h3 would allow Black some activity: 22...e3! 23.♕xe3 ♖e5! 24.♜xg7† ♜xg7 25.♞xg7 ♖xg7 26.fxe5 ♕xf5 27.exf6† ♖g6

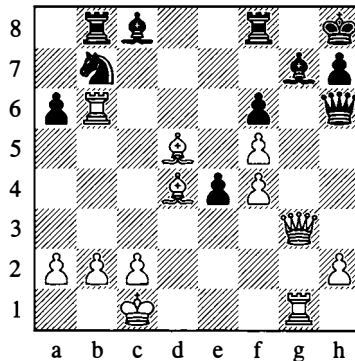


White is better, but Black is still kicking.

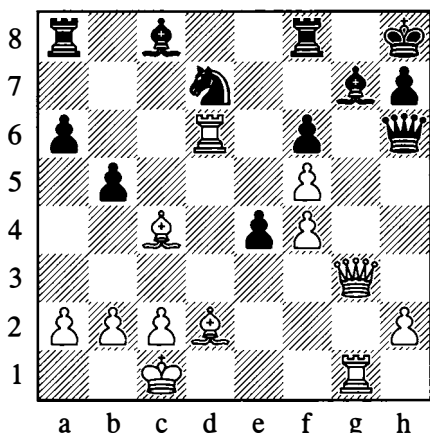
My chosen move develops another piece and increases the pressure still further. Black is virtually lost.

22...b5

Played almost instantly. 22...♖c5 23.♕e3 leaves the knight with nowhere to go, so Black is forced down the following miserable path: 23...b6 24.♞xb6 ♖b7 25.♕d5 ♞b8 26.♕d4 What a dominating position!



26...♙xf5 (Black is almost in zugzwang, and a 'nothing' move such as 26...a5 can be refuted by, among others, 27.♖xf6 ♖xf6 28.♜xg7† ♜xg7 29.♙xf6 with mate in sight.) 27.♖xb7 ♖xb7 28.♙xb7+– White regains the knight, while keeping an extra pawn as well as a positional advantage.



23.♙e6

Computer analysis demonstrates that 23.♙d5! would have been more precise, but my chosen move is good enough. To convert a winning position you have to find a sequence of moves that makes sense to you. For a human player, when you have found one winning continuation, there is limited value in searching for a 'more winning' one.

23...♖a7

This neutral move was played after only two minutes.

23...♘c5!?

This might have offered better practical chances. I was planning:

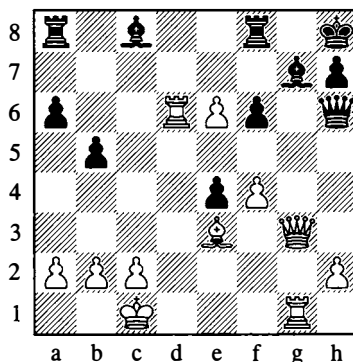
24.♙e3!

This offers White a huge advantage indeed, for instance:

24...♘xe6

24...♘b7 25.♙d2! is strong.

25.fxe6



25...♙g6 26.♜h3 ♜e8 27.f5

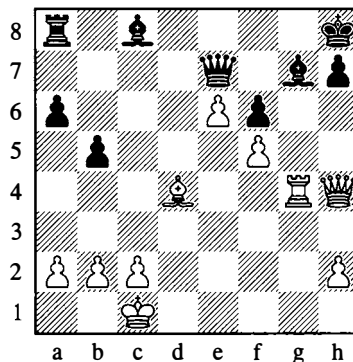
Threatening ♖g4-h4 or ♙d4xe4-h4.

27...♙g8 28.♙d4 ♙f8

Trying to release at least some of the pressure through exchanges.

29.♖xg8† ♘xg8 30.♖xe4 ♘h8 31.♙d4 ♙g7 32.♜h4 ♜e7 33.♖g4

White's pressure has reached an apogee, and Black is not in time to reinforce the f6-square with ...♖f8. The tragedy of one tempo – this is what chess is all about!



33...♙b7 34.♖xg7!

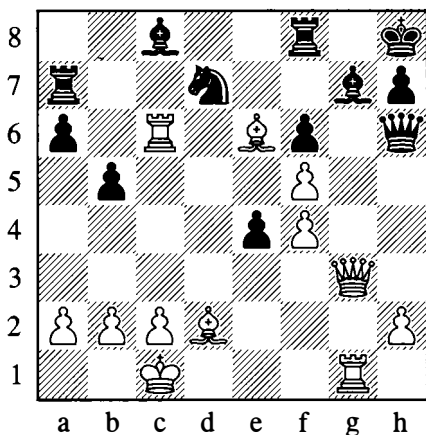
We have already seen this sacrifice too many times to comment on it.

34...♘xg7 35.♜g5† ♘f8 36.♙xf6

White has a winning attack.

24.♖c6!

A multipurpose move, restricting the a7-rook, putting pressure on the c8-bishop and preparing a major regrouping with ♖c3, ♜g2 and ♖h3.



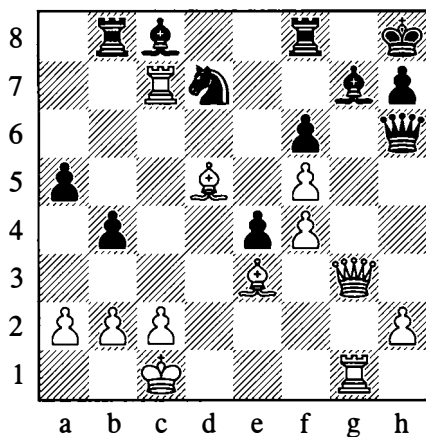
24...a5 25.♙e3 ♜b7 26.♙d5

The threat ♜xc8 forces the black rook to vacate the seventh rank.

26...♜b8 27.♜c7

By this moment I was fully enjoying Black's paralysis.

27...b4



28.b3!

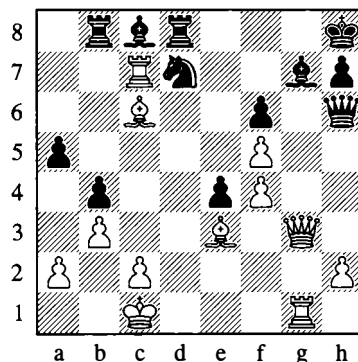
This move, underlining Black's utter helplessness, made me exceedingly happy. Defeating a world-class player in such a way is quite an achievement. During the game, I sensed it was precisely at this point that Anand lost all real hope of saving the game. Later I heard that his second, Elizbar Ubilava, was

most impressed by my last move, although he was less than happy when it appeared on the board.

28...♜b5

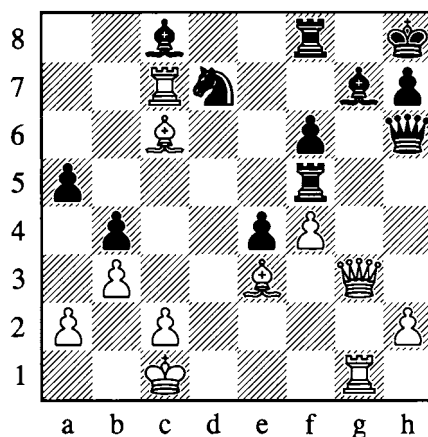
Played after nine minutes.

28...♜d8 29.♙c6! reaches a position that deserves a diagram:



Black is completely paralysed. Virtually all moves would cost him material, and meanwhile White intends ♙a7 next.

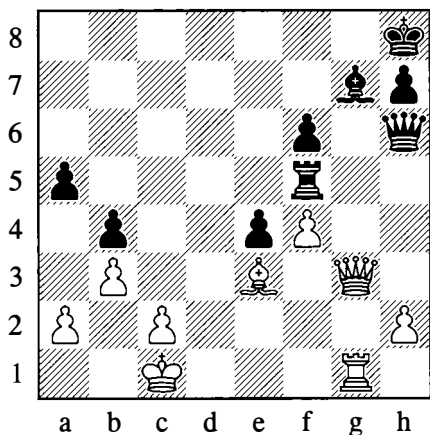
29.♙c6 ♜xf5



30.♜xc8!?

30.♙xd7 wins too, of course.

30...♜xc8 31.♙xd7 ♜cc5 32.♙xf5 ♜xf5

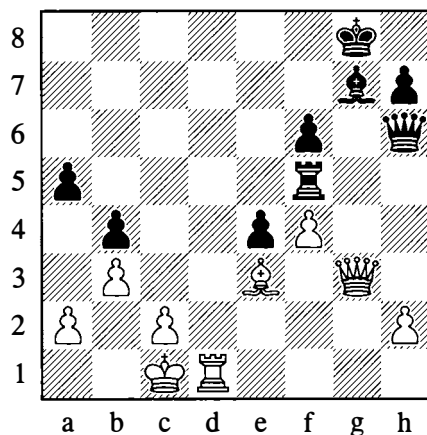


33.♞d1

The rook had done its work on the g-file and now switches to the poorly defended d-file.

33...♜g8

The following line underlines the black rook's lack of mobility, and reminds me of some studies by Rinck. 33...♜f8 34.♞d8 ♞g7 35.♞h3 ♜b5 36.♞c8 ♜g8 37.♞c4† wins the rook.



34.♞g2

The best among several winning moves.

1-0

There are two main points of interest connected with this game. First of all, the game itself was a high-quality win against an elite opponent. The second point, which was apparently no less intriguing for the spectators and the media, was the ring I was wearing. "Did it mean anything?" they were asking themselves. At that time, it had no clear meaning yet, but a few months later it had...



Analysing with Illescas and Anand

Judit Polgar – Ilya Smirin

Istanbul Olympiad 2000

This game was played in the eighth round and marked the start of my excellent finish.

1.e4 g6

A small surprise. I was rather expecting the ...e6 and ...a6 Sicilian and not completely in vain: Smirin played it against me ten years later, at the Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad!

2.d4 ♟g7 3.♟c3 d6 4.f4 ♟f6 5.♟f3 0-0 6.♟e3

In earlier games I had played 6.♟d3, but in the meantime I had prepared the system chosen in the game. It may have come as a surprise for my opponent.

6...b6

Just one of Black's many possible continuations. It is a multipurpose move, preparing both ...c7-c5 and ...♟c8-b7, while somewhat restricting my e3-bishop. It also has a major drawback, which will be revealed later.

7.♞d2 c5

7...♟b7 is the main continuation.

8.0-0-0

The reader may understand already why I had switched to this system. After castling long, White gets strong pressure on the d-file and chances for a kingside attack in the spirit of the Sicilian Dragon.

8...cxd4

Played after nine minutes, this move is a small concession.

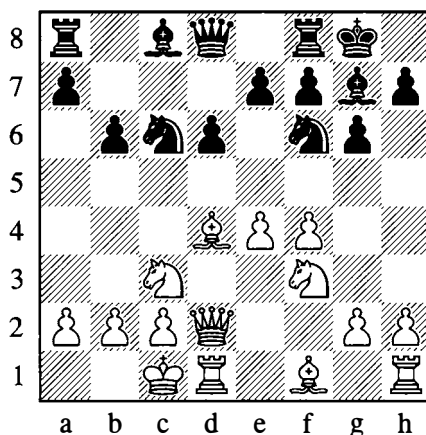
It was worth considering 8...♟c6, maintaining the tension, although then Black must take into account the possibility of 9.d5.

9.♟xd4

This is the best way to maintain pressure in the centre. White strengthens the control over the e5-square, making e4-e5 a permanent threat. By this moment I was already 'out of book' and convinced that the position had never been played by grandmasters, which was not entirely correct.

9...♟c6

My previous move was practically asking for this response. In the Dragon, Black would be only too happy to exchange one of his knights for the dark-squared bishop.



10.♟xf6!

I took this radical decision after only four minutes. In the Dragon, White usually tries to exchange the g7-bishop with ♟e3-h6. Since this is not possible here, I quickly understood that eliminating another important defender of the black kingside, the f6-knight, was just as useful an achievement.

10...♟xf6 11.h4

Actually only this move is new; 11.e5 had been played before, but it proved premature in Gomez Jurado – Efimov, Andorra 1993.

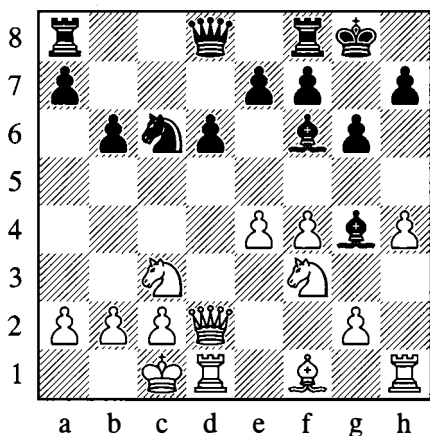
My last move is the start of a simple attacking plan, and has the goal of opening a file on the kingside as soon as possible. For Black, things

are less straightforward on the queenside. One essential detail is that the b6-pawn prevents the natural ... Wd8-a5 , which would otherwise have put immediate pressure on my castled position. This is one of the drawbacks of Black's system of development involving ...b7-b6.

11... Ag4

Black tries to prevent my plan without weakening his king's position. 11...h5 was more solid, and provides a faint echo of the position after White's 35th move in my Wijk aan Zee 1998 game against Anand (see page 333 for the position in question). True, in the present case I could continue my attack with 12.f5, weakening the light squares around Black's king.

After the last move I thought for fifteen minutes before carrying out the idea I had immediately fallen in love with.



12.h5! Axh5

Played without thinking, and not without reason.

12...gxh5 would weaken the kingside structure without forcing me to sacrifice the exchange. I did not even consider this possibility.

13. Bxh5!

Played instantly. Black will soon have lots of troubles along the h-file.

13...gxh5 14. Wd5!

Highlighting a further drawback of the earlier ...b7-b6. By attacking the undefended knight, I gain an important tempo for the queen's transfer to the kingside.

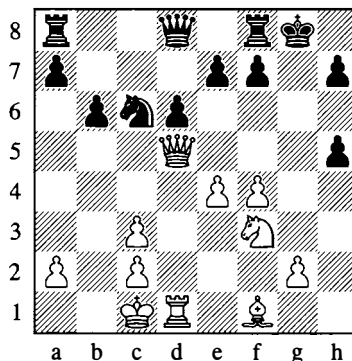
14... Bc8

Smirin played this after only one minute. He would have done well to invest a bit more time, since he has now missed the only chance for survival.

14... Qxc3!

This would have been better, although detailed analysis shows that I could still have kept an advantage.

15.bxc3

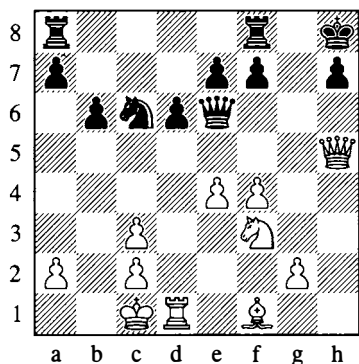


15... Wc8

Defending the knight and hoping to defend the kingside with the queen.

15... Qa5 fails after: 16. Wxh5 f6 17.e5! Clearing the d3-h7 diagonal for my bishop. 17... We8 18. Wh4 Wf7 19. Ad3 fxe5 It may seem that Black has some chances on account of the threat ... Wxf4+ , but either the human 20. Qb1 or the engine's suggestion 20.g3 leave him helpless against the threats on h7.

16. Wg5+ Qh8 17. Wxh5 We6



18.♔b5?!

Before landing on d3, the bishop invites the knight to move to an unfavourable square, while also clearing the first rank to enable ♖d1-h1. White's pieces are optimally placed for the attack, while Black suffers from a lack of communication between the two wings.

18...♘a5

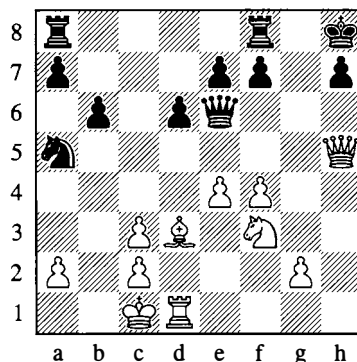
18...♘d8 is too passive. 19.f5 ♖f6 20.e5! A typical break, preparing to involve the knight. 20...dxe5 21.♖h1 ♖g7 22.♘xe5 with a strong attack.

18...♞ac8 would only bring relief in the event that White responded with the materialistic 19.♙xc6 ♞xc6 20.♘d4 ♖xe4 21.♘xc6 ♖xc6, as Black can defend after 22.♖h1

♖e4 23.f5 ♖e3† followed by 24...h6 with approximate equality. Instead, I could play 19.♖h1 ♖g6 20.♖h4 f6 21.g4 with a massive attack.

19.♙d3!

Now that the knight has stepped away from its best square, the bishop belongs on this diagonal.



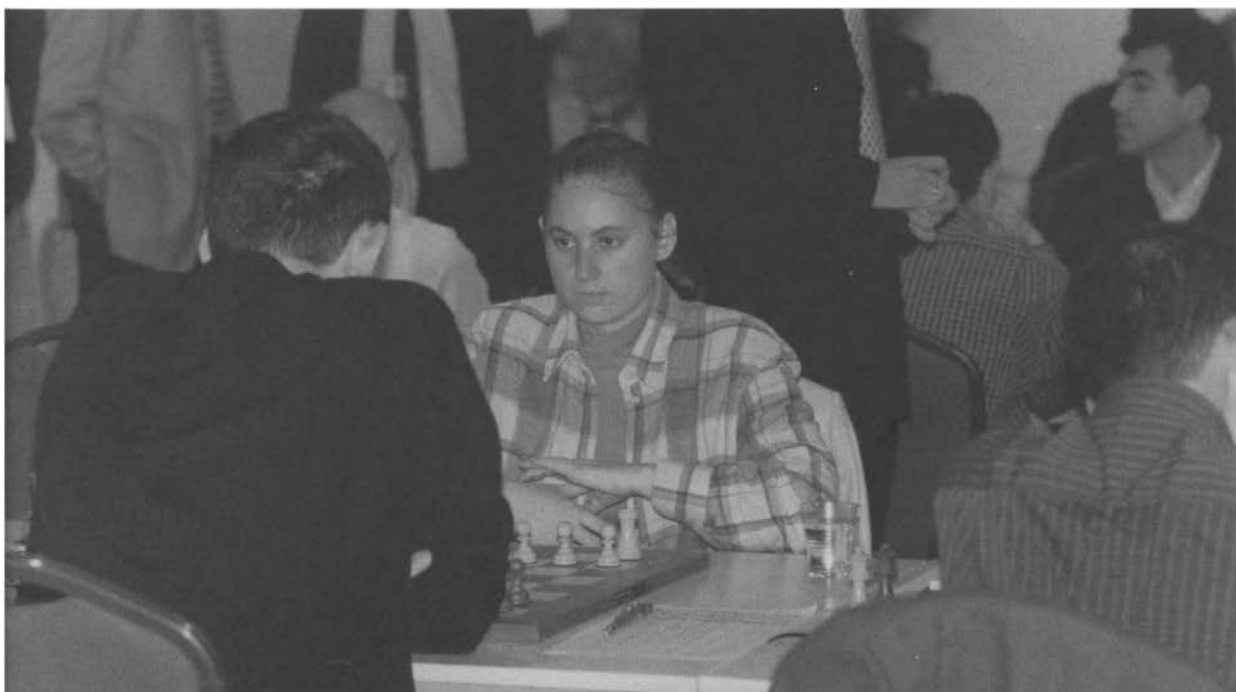
19...♙g6

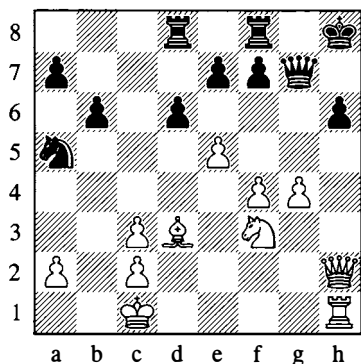
If 19...f6 20.e5 ♖f7 21.♖h1 the h7-pawn will fall, and so will the king.

20.♖h4

20.♖h2 is also possible.

20...♖f6 21.♖h2 ♖g7 22.♖h1 h6 23.e5 ♞ad8 24.g4



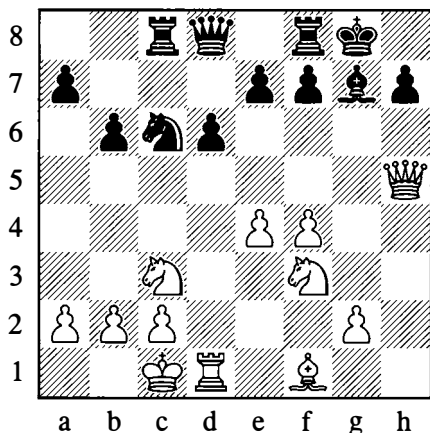


White attacks with natural moves, increasing the pressure step by step. Black cannot do much to improve his position.

15. ♖xh5 ♗g7

This move, too, was played instantly.

The counterattacking 15...♘b4 would fail to 16.e5 ♗g7 17.a3 followed by ♗d3.



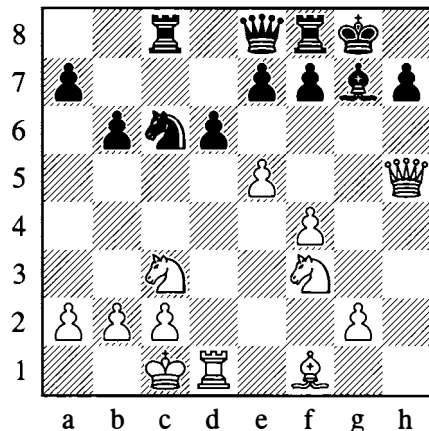
16.e5

After seven minutes I finally played this thematic advance. I not only restricted Black's bishop, but also cleared the d3-h7 diagonal for my bishop and the e4-square for my knight.

16... ♖e8

I believe that Smirin was getting nervous, since he played this move instantly, too. The idea of the last move is to play ...f7-f5 without

giving me the option of capturing en passant. 16...h6 17.g4 ♖e8 would have offered slightly better practical chances, although White should still be winning after: 18.g5 f6 19.♗g4! The threat of gxh6 means that Black has no time to open the path for his bishop with ...fxe5. 19...f5 20.♗h3 The kingside attack should decide the game.



17. ♖h3!

I remember how proud I was of this move. Since the black queen has blocked the possible king escape with ...♖f8-e8 and ...♗g8-f8, I create the threat of 18.♘g5 h6 19.♗f5! hxg5 20.♗d3 followed by mate.

I was not entirely satisfied with 17.♗b5 f5 18.♗xe8 ♖fxe8 19.exd6 exd6 20.♖xd6±, being convinced that I should win by delivering mate.

17...h6

Played after eleven minutes.

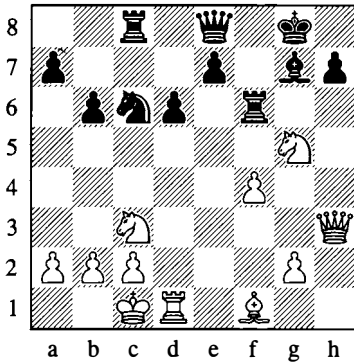
17...f5!?

This would have offered better practical chances by giving me a choice between several tempting continuations.

18.exf6

Best, although 18.♗c4+ and 18.♘g5 are strong as well.

18... ♖xf6 19.♘g5



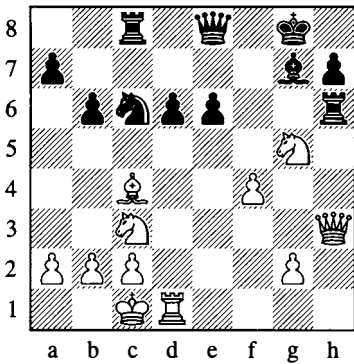
19...h6

19...e6 is easy to meet: 20.♖xh7† ♕f8 21.♗d3! Apart from the ♕h7† fork, I threaten ♗xd6† or simply ♕ce4. The e6-pawn is not any safer than its colleague on d6.

19...h6 allows all my pieces to join the attack: 20.♙c4† ♕h8 21.♘d5 ♗g6 22.♕f7†! Based on Black's hanging pieces on c8 and c6. 22...♕h7 23.♙d3 And White wins.

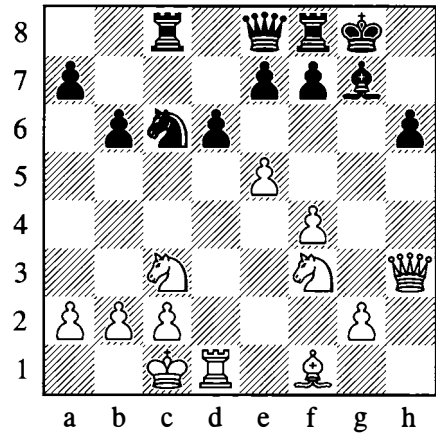
20.♙c4† e6

The only way to avoid immediate disaster.



21.♙e6† ♗xe6 22.♗xe6† ♗xe6 23.♕xe6 ♙xc3 24.bxc3

With an extra pawn and ongoing chances for a kingside attack, the endgame should be a relatively easy win for White.



18...d3

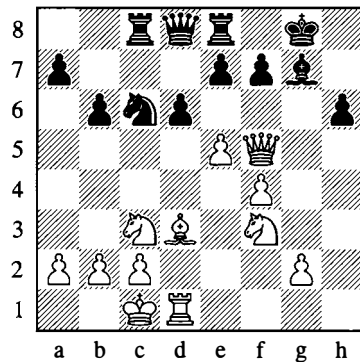
Threatening ♗f5 and mate on h7.

18...♕b4

Hoping to neutralize one of my key attacking pieces.

Black does not have time to clear an escape route for the king:

18...♗d8 19.♗f5 ♗e8



20.e6!

Crushing Black's last hopes.

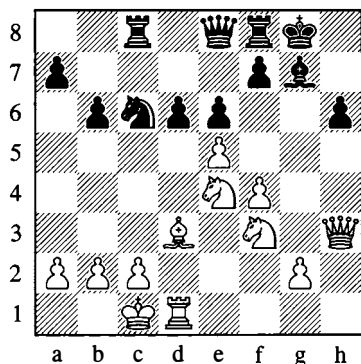
20...fxe6 21.♗xe6† ♕h8 22.♗h1

Followed by ♗xh6† and mate. With the exception of the bishop, Black's entire army is completely cut off from the kingside.

The other defensive try is:

18...e6 19.♕e4

This is the move I was planning, although the computer likes 19.♘d5 even more.



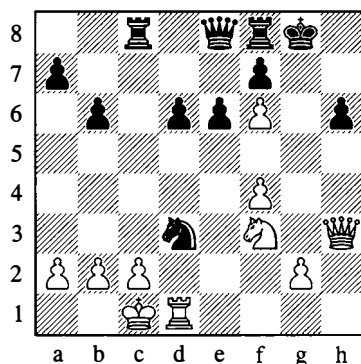
19...♘b4

If 19...dxe5 20.♘f6† ♕xf6 21.♖xh6 mates.

20.♘f6† ♕xf6 21.exf6

I ended my calculations here, evaluating that Black was lost. How could I have known that it was mate in eight?

21...♘xd3†



22.♖b1!!

Not allowing the rook to be lured away from the first rank.

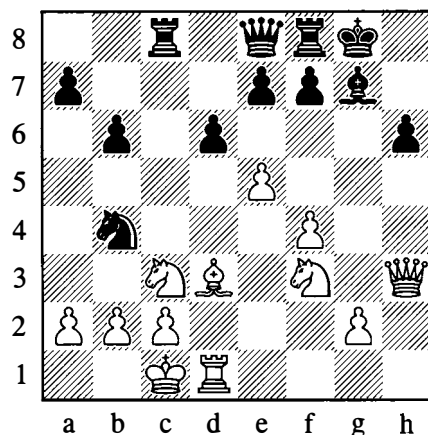
22...♗xd3? ♖h7 allows Black to fight on.

22...♖h7 23.f5 exf5

23...♗a4 24.♖xh6†! is a nice finish.

24.♖xh6† ♖h8 25.♘g5

With mate to follow shortly.



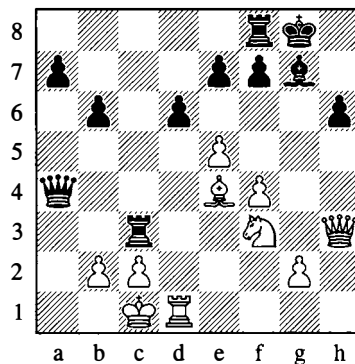
19...♗e4!

Preserving the bishop and renewing all the threats.

19...e6

If Smirin had hoped to survive this way, he was completely wrong.

19...♘xa2†!? 20.♘xa2 ♗a4 is a good try, but it would not save Black: 21.♘c3 ♗xc3



22.♖f5! Defending the bishop with gain of time. 22...♗fc8 23.bxc3 Black has avoided being mated for the moment, but White has a decisive material advantage.

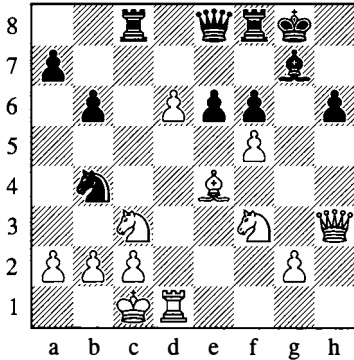
20.f5!

This was presumably overlooked by Ilya, who now sank into his first really long think: 28 minutes. It was much too late for thinking, though.

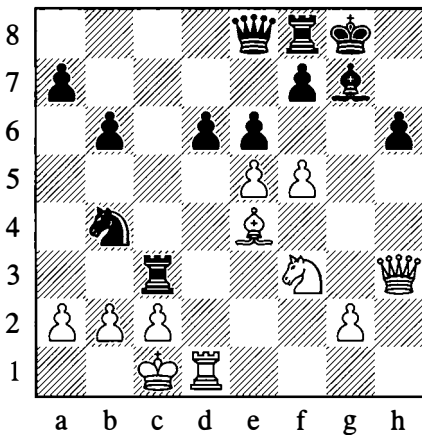
20...♞xc3

After 20...♞xa2† 21.♞xa2 ♖a4 22.♞d4! ♜xa2 23.f6 ♖a1† 24.♞d2 Black has no threats left and will soon be mated on g7.

20...f6 weakens Black too much, and after 21.exd6 he is faced with both d6-d7 and fxe6:



21...♞xc3 What else? 22.bxc3 ♞xa2† 23.♞b2 ♖b5† 24.♞xa2 ♖c4† 25.♞b2 ♖xe4 Black's micro-initiative has been extinguished and White wins by executing both of the aforementioned threats: 26.d7 ♞d8 27.fxe6+–

**21.f6!**

As mentioned previously, on this day I was in the mood for delivering mate!

21...♜b5?!

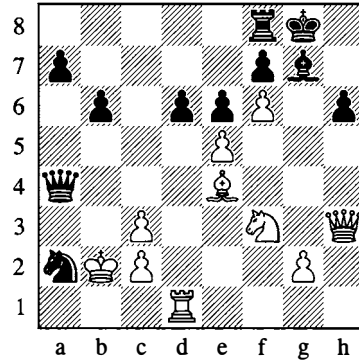
This was the result of a ten-minute think, but it loses immediately.

21...♜a4

This was the best try, albeit not enough to change the final outcome.

22.bxc3 ♞xa2† 23.♞b2

Black's queen and knight achieve nothing, despite their proximity to my king.

**23...♞xc3**

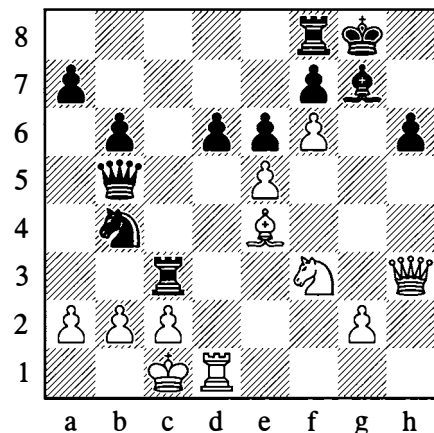
The only way to keep some tension, as 23...♖xe4 leads to a lost endgame: 24.♜g3 ♜g6 25.♜xg6 fxg6 26.fxg7 ♞xg7 27.♞xd6 followed by picking up the trapped knight.

24.♞d4!

This final accurate move ensures a quick victory.

24...♞d1† 25.♞xd1 ♖xe4 26.♞d4+–

Followed by ♞g4 and mate.

**22.♜g3!**

After 22...♙xc2† 23.♙xc2 ♖xa2† 24.♙d2! the king easily escapes the checks, so Smirin resigned.

1–0

I was in a real state of euphoria after this game, and I felt it was a perfect achievement.

One round later I had White again and scored another fine attacking win. The reader may have noticed that I played most of my games from this chapter with the white pieces. Indeed, the advantage of the first move helped me greatly in developing my initiative and attacks.

Judit Polgar – Laurent Fressinet

Istanbul Olympiad 2000

At Olympiads, thorough preparation against a specific opponent is not always possible. The team pairings are made available in the evening, but the board pairings for each individual match are only published at around 10–11 a.m. on the morning of the round.

In Istanbul, things were rather slow from this point of view; before our match with France I was preparing against Degraeve until midday, at which point I found out I would actually be facing Fressinet. This left me with just one hour to prepare against both the Najdorf Sicilian and the Scandinavian.

Fressinet was young and talented, one of the biggest hopes of his country. We played this game just before his 19th birthday!

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♖f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.f3

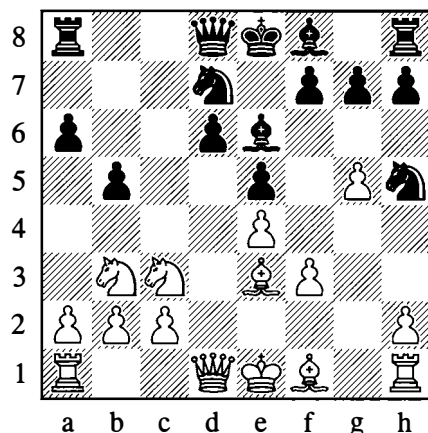
This move order aims at transposing to the 6.♙e3 lines without allowing the modern 6...♘g4. On the other hand, Black gets the opportunity to deviate with 6...♙b6, as I played in a rapid match against Anand in 2003. More about this in Volume 3.

6...e5

This was Fressinet's automatic answer; he had never played 6...♙b6.

7.♘b3 ♙e6 8.♙e3 ♘bd7 9.g4 b5 10.g5 ♘h5

This was Fressinet's pet line and had been the focal point of my Najdorf preparation.

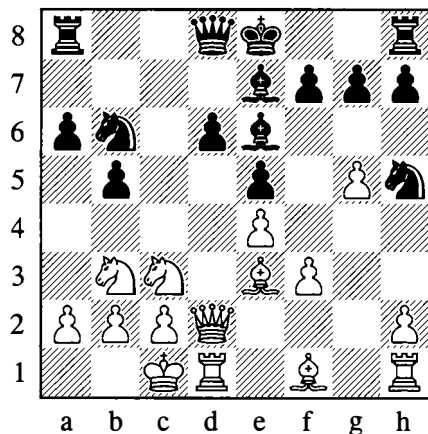


11.♙d2 ♙e7

11...♘b6 is the other main move.

12.0–0–0 ♘b6

Up to this point we had almost blitzed out our moves. Now I stopped for three minutes before continuing to follow my preparation.

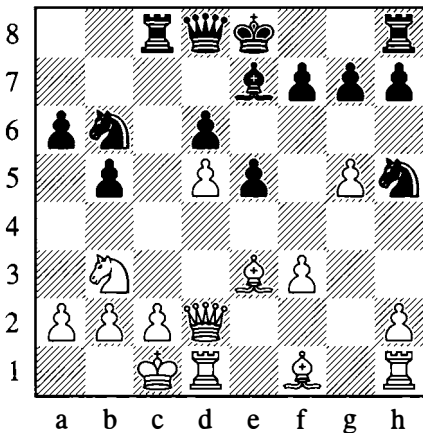


13.♘d5 ♙xd5

This was the first grandmaster game in which Black captured this way, but there were annotations by other players available and we had both analysed it quite a bit.

Half a year earlier, Fressinet had played 13...♖xd5 14.exd5 ♔d7 15.♖a5 and eventually lost in Grischuk – Fressinet, Lausanne 2000.

14.exd5 ♜c8



15.♖a5

Although I was still following my analysis, I spent six minutes on this move. A pawn sacrifice is a committal decision and worth double-checking.

15...♖xd5

Otherwise Black would have no compensation for the weakness of the c6-square.

16.♜xd5 ♜xa5 17.♔h3

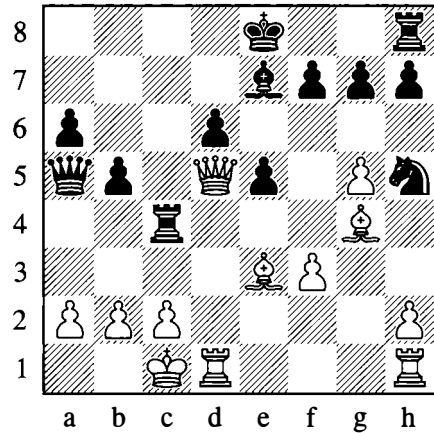
The play has a forcing character. The manoeuvre initiated with this move activates the bishop and aims to harass the black knight.

17...♜c4

Attacking the a2-pawn and setting up some control over the fourth rank.

18.♔g4

As Laurent was still playing quickly, I thought he must really have known what he was doing. Therefore, I played my last move after sixteen minutes, double-checking the forced lines of my pre-game analysis.

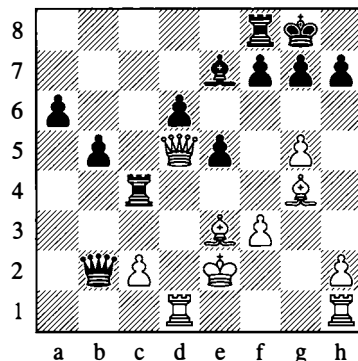


18...♖f4

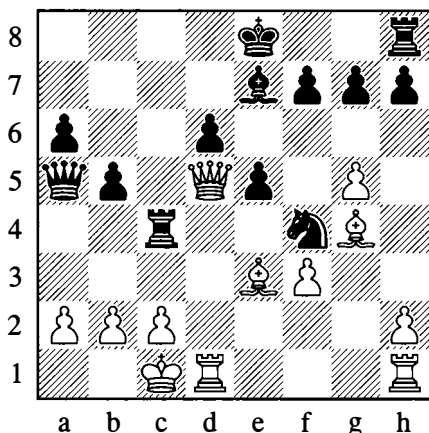
During my preparation, I did not consider this move seriously. It leads to a position with opposite-coloured bishops where one can feel that my attacking chances are more significant than the missing pawn.

18...g6?! leads to a simply worse position after 19.♔xh5 gxh5 20.♖b1 ♜c7 21.f4. Black has many weaknesses and his king cannot find a safe place.

My main line was: 18...0-0! 19.♔xh5 ♜xa2 20.♔g4! (Covering the c8-square in order to prevent 20...♜xc2+! 21.♖xc2 ♜c8+ winning the queen.) 20...♜a1+ 21.♖d2 ♜xb2 22.♖e2



This is where the line starts becoming really interesting. The position is complicated and requires further analysis before a conclusion can be reached. I did not have time to make a proper evaluation before the game, but I was ready to try it and felt confident in my chances to outplay my opponent from an unclear position.



19. ♖xf4 ♗xf4

This leaves the c6-square undefended but 19...exf4? would allow 20. ♖he1 with a troublesome pin.

20. ♗c6† ♕f8 21. ♖xd6

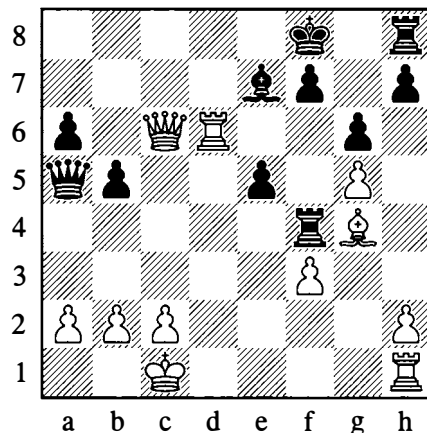
I played this after six minutes and immediately went to the bathroom. At the Olympiads, toilets are usually situated far away from the playing area, which requires careful planning of such expeditions, especially in time trouble.

21...g6

My last move was not really a sacrifice, since 21...♖xd6?? 22. ♗xd6† ♕e8 23. ♖d7† leads to mate.

Fressinet's answer is the only reasonable way to meet the threat of 22. ♗a8† and he played it long before I returned to the board. I did not lose all this time in vain, though. On the

way back from the ladies' room I managed to conceive a paradoxical idea...



22. ♗c5!

Entering into a pin does not seem to make sense, but after double-checking everything I concluded that it works!

What are the concrete ideas of this move? First of all, the rook remains taboo: 22...♖xd6? 23. ♗xd6† ♕g8 24. ♗b8† ♕g7 25. ♗xe5† regains the material with heavy interest.

The main threat is ♗xe5, attacking both rooks. If the black queen moves away from a5, for instance after 22...♗xa2?, the pin actually works in White's favour as 23. ♖d8† ♕g7 24. ♗xe5† wins. This line also helps us to highlight a second deadly threat of ♖hd1, bringing the last piece into play and preparing ♖d8†.

22...♕g8?

Fressinet played this losing move after 34 minutes, which revealed that he had analysed 18...♕f4 superficially and that my self-pinning manoeuvre had caught him by surprise.

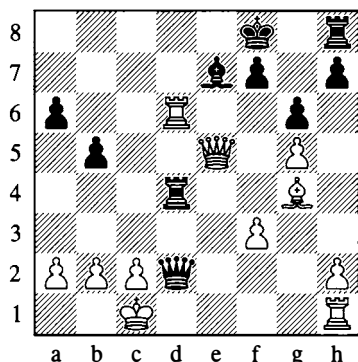
22...♗b4? is the weakest of the plausible defensive ideas: 23. ♗xe5 f6 24. ♖xf6†! ♖xf6 25. gxf6+— White has a multitude of deadly threats, including ♖e6 with a mating net,

♖b8† winning the h8-rook, and simply bringing in the last piece with ♖d1.

22...♖d4!

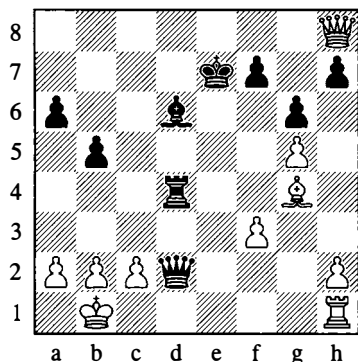
This was the correct defence, based on the following line:

23.♗xe5 ♗d2†



24.♕b1 ♕xd6 25.♗xh8† ♕e7

Both Fressinet and I considered this possibility, but neither of us realized that the black king is actually much safer than it appears at first sight. Black's exceptionally active pieces prevent my rook from joining the attack, and the weakness of the g5-pawn means that Black can withstand being a pawn down in a subsequent endgame. Here is a possible line allowing Black to display an unexpected defence:



26.a3

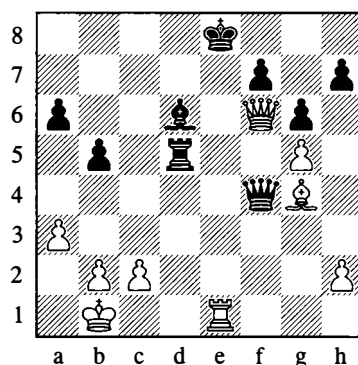
Parrying the threatened mate on the first rank.

26...♖d5 27.♗f6† ♕e8 28.f4

Threatening ♖d1.

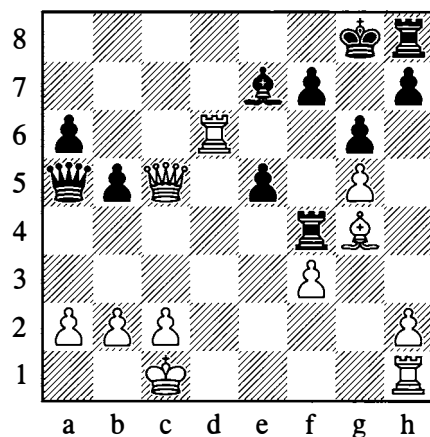
28...♗xf4 29.♖e1†

It may seem that the black king is doomed, but...



29...♖e5!

Material is equal and White has no advantage at all. The black queen is not really hanging due to the discovered attack ...♖xe1†.



23.♗xe5 ♕xd6 24.♗xd6

Black has a small material advantage, but his major pieces exhibit a complete lack of coordination, being scattered in completely different areas of the board.

24...♖c4

The best try, hoping to restore Black's coordination with ...♗c7.

24...♖xa2? loses quickly after: 25.♗b8†! ♕g7 26.♗e5† ♕g8 (26...f6 27.♗c7†+–) 27.♞d1 ♗a1† 28.♕d2 ♗a5† 29.♕e2 and the checks run out.

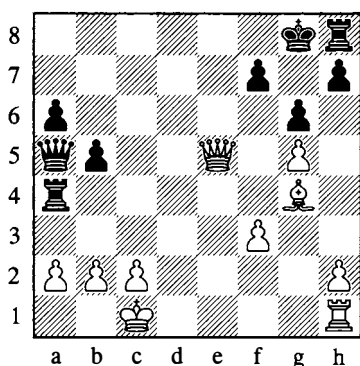
Black's counterplay would fail by one tempo after:

24...♞a4 25.♗b8†!

White's key attacking idea is ♕g4-e6, but first I need to improve the placement of my queen.

If 25.♕e6? ♗b4! Black parries the threats.

25...♕g7 26.♗e5† ♕g8



27.♕e6!

Combining an attack on the black kingside with defence of the a2-pawn.

27...♗b4

After 27...fxe6 28.♗xe6† ♕f8 29.♞d1 Black is helpless against the threat of 30.♗f6† ♕g8 31.♞d8†.

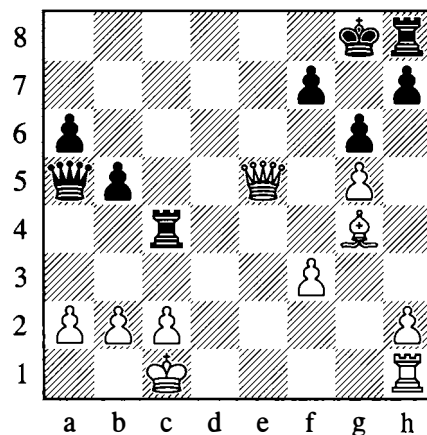
28.♕xf7† ♕xf7 29.♗xh8+–

Black will either be mated or forced to simplify to a hopeless rook endgame three pawns down.

After the game move I was upset for a while, since I could not find more than a draw. I wanted to bring in my rook with either ♞e1 or ♞d1, but Black seemed to have defences in both cases. I needed 32 minutes to spot the correct idea.

25.♗b8† ♕g7 26.♗e5† ♕g8

Many players thought that the game was about to end in a draw, but I gave these checks only for the sake of moving closer to move 40 and avoiding time trouble after my long think.



27.♗f6!!

At first, my opponent did not understand what I had in mind. The best way to explain it is by showing the problems with the two natural alternatives.

If 27.♞d1? ♗c7 28.♗f6 ♗f4† 29.♕b1 ♗xf6! Black wins, the crucial point being that the queen covers the d8-square, preventing an intermediate check on the back rank.

This made me check 27.♞e1, hoping for a similar line ending with a winning check on e8. However, I realized that this fails to 27...♞c5! driving my queen away from her optimal square on account of my hanging rook.

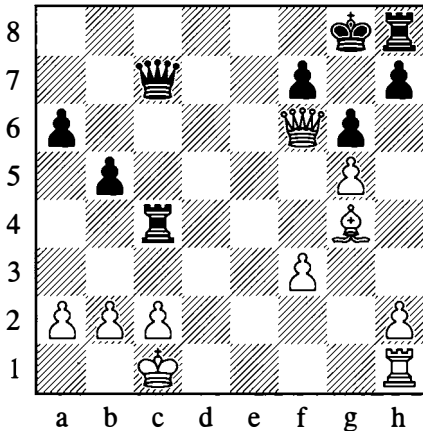
Since Black was prepared against both ♞d1 and ♞e1 and my queen belonged on f6 anyway, I decided to change the move order, intending to choose the right square for the rook depending on Black's answer. One important element is that neither of Black's developed major pieces can return to the back rank, and can only try to cover the important squares from further afield.

27...♖c7

The most natural defence, threatening ...♖f4†.

27...♖xa2?! is refuted by 28.♞d1 ♖a1† 29.♔d2 ♖a5† 30.♔e3 when the checks are over and Black cannot prevent ♞d8†.

Black also has no time for 27...h5 28.gxh6 ♞xh6 due to 29.♞d1 followed by ♞d8†.

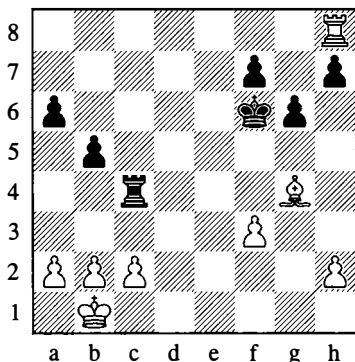


28.♞e1!

In light of the comments to my previous move, it is obvious why the rook should go here rather than to d1.

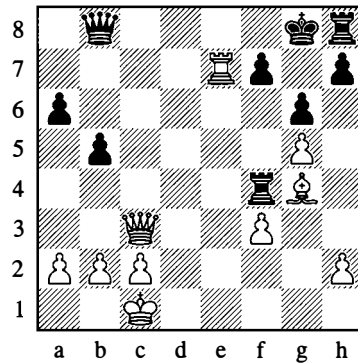
28...♖c6

Here 28...♖f4† does not work due to: 29.♔b1 ♖xf6 30.♞e8† ♔g7 31.gxf6† ♔xf6 32.♞xh8 White has won a piece and Black cannot take advantage of the weakness of the first rank, for instance:

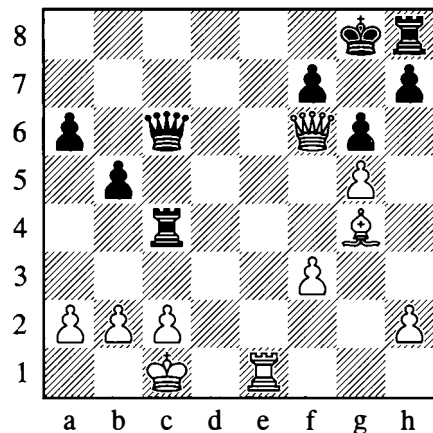


32...h5 33.♞c8!+ Black cannot win a tempo by attacking the bishop, as would happen after 33.♞d7? ♞d4 or 33.♞h3?! ♞h4.

The other attempt to defend the e8-square is 28...♖b8 29.♞e7 ♖f4, but here I would win with: 30.♖c6 ♔g7 31.♖c3† ♔g8



32.♞c8!! Black's coordination is so poor that he has no good defence against ♞e8 mate, as 32...♔f8 loses trivially to either 33.♞d7 or 33.♞b7.



29.♞e6!

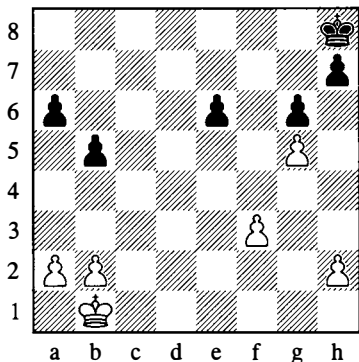
In principle, my position is so dominant that even the calm 29.c3 would win, but I focused on concrete calculation.

29...fxe6

Played after seventeen minutes, but by this

stage no amount of thinking could change the result.

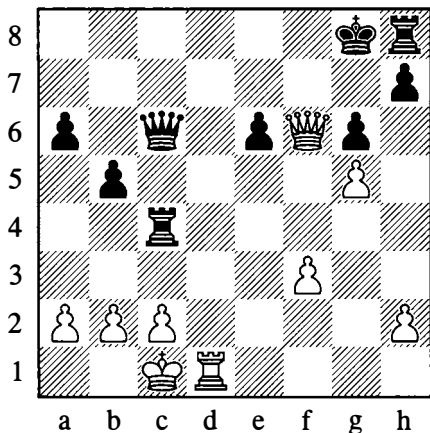
The simplifying variation 29...♞xc2† 30.♟b1 ♞c1† 31.♞xc1 ♞xe6 32.♞xe6 fxe6 33.♞c8† ♟g7 34.♞xh8 ♟xh8 leads to a won pawn ending for White:



35.♟c2 ♟g7 36.♟d3 ♟f7 37.♟d4 ♟e7 38.♟e5 I have plenty of reserve tempos, so my king would get to either f6 or d6 soon.

If 29...♞e8 30.♞d1! fxe6 31.♞d8 ♞c8 Black is dreaming of defending an unpleasant ending with two rooks against a queen, but White can exploit the pin of the enemy queen with 32.♞xe6† ♟g7 33.♞d7† when Black will also lose his c8-rook.

30.♞d1



Fressinet understood the hopelessness of his position and resigned. The finish might have been:

30...♞e8

If 30...♞xc2† 31.♟b1 ♞c1† 32.♞xc1 ♞d7 I could put him in zugzwang with virtually any pawn move. Moreover, 33.h4 creates the threat of 34.h5 gxh5 35.g6 with a decisive attack.

31.♞d8 ♞xd8

31...♞c8 32.♞xe6† transposes to 29...♞e8 in the previous note.

32.♞xd8† ♟g7 33.♞f6† ♟g8 34.♞xe6† ♟g7 35.♞f6† ♟g8 36.♞xa6

The b-pawn will soon fall, leaving me with a big material advantage and three connected passed pawns: a considerably improved version of my ending against Shirov from Wijk aan Zee 1998, as featured below.

1-0

After these two consecutive wins against Smirin and Fressinet, I finally felt that it had been worth coming to the Olympiad, and these successes gave me the psychological boost I needed for the upcoming games. For more about the way this Olympiad ended, both for me personally and for the Hungarian team, see the comments to the game against Anastasian on page 129.

My duels with Shirov

Of all the opponents I met regularly over the years, Alexei Shirov stands apart. His fearlessness, creativity, enthusiasm and energy, together with his ability to create and control chaos on the board make his style similar to mine. It was not only for living in Riga that they used to consider him a second Tal. As for me, the reader may recall from the first volume that Smyslov once called me "Tal in a skirt".

As a result of our uncompromising styles, our games were usually hard-fought and

colourful. I have often told my friends that I could write a whole book just on my games against Shirov! While this might be a slight overstatement, I feel that at least a subchapter would be welcome.

My pleasant memories about the games with Shirov may be partly due to their results. True, in absolute terms the score of $+9 = 14 - 13$ favours Shirov, but five of his wins can be grouped together from a match in Prague 1999, which I lost by the disastrous score of $5\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2}$. With that event taken out of the equation, the results are much more balanced, and even slightly in my favour.

There are several games between us spread throughout the book; we will now examine a few of the finest ones which did not fit into a thematic section.

Judit Polgar – Alexei Shirov

Donner Memorial, Amsterdam 1995

I travelled to Amsterdam together with my sister Sofia, who played in the open section, and my father. At the big press conference before the first round, one journalist made the following intriguing assertion: “However painful it may be, we must not shrink from the truth: women cannot play chess... they cannot paint either, or write, or philosophize... the fact is that women are much more stupid than men.”

Indeed, Donner himself was known for not thinking too highly about women in general. I did my best to prove him wrong at his own memorial tournament, by winning the first two games. The next six games were much less successful, though: I only scored two points, without a win. I recovered to record a perfect finish, with three wins from the last three games. This allowed me to finish third with 7/11, half a point behind the joint winners, Julio Granda and Jan Timman. The field also included Salov, Khalifman, Morozevich,

Huzman, Van Wely, Piket, Seirawan, Nunn and Shirov.

This game was played in the last round, scheduled to start at 11 a.m. Like many other chess players, Shirov disliked playing in the morning, as this necessitates waking up earlier than usual. I had no problem with that aspect, but was still not a big fan of early games, because they leave you too little time to prepare and recover from the previous round.

I felt optimistic and full of strength, having defeated Van Wely and Salov in the previous rounds.

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.♘c3 c6

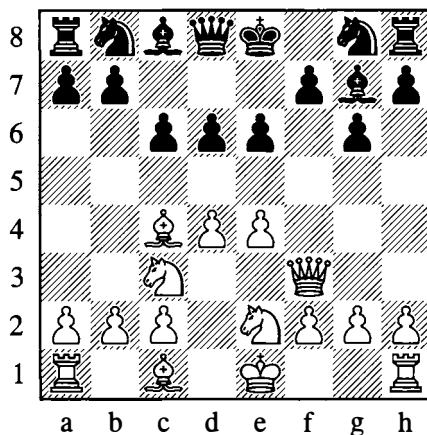
This was not the first time Alexei tried this system against me. He had been successful with it at Linares the year before, but this time things were going to be different.

4.♗c4

I had prepared this line starting the evening before and continuing in the morning, hoping to take my opponent out of the usual paths. I remember how enthusiastic I became about the game Zulfugarli – Bologan (see below) played earlier that year, and took it as a model.

In Linares I had played 4.♘f3.

4...d6 5.♖f3 e6 6.♘ge2



6...b5

A straightforward move, typical for the way Shirov used to play in those years. He was an excellent attacking player, striving for the initiative and space at any cost. Later, he refined his style and became a formidable positional player, without losing his attacking skills.

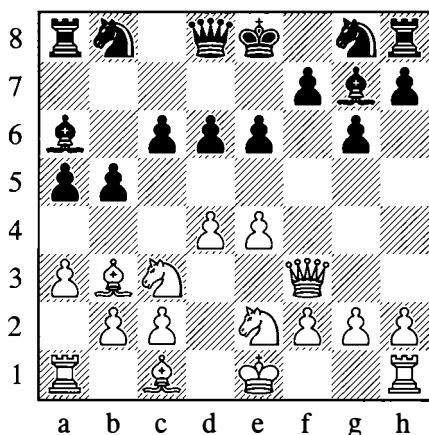
Before displaying territorial ambitions, Black should make some developing moves, starting with 6...♘d7.

7.♙b3 a5

Shirov continues the same strategy. Once again, developing with 7...♘d7 was a more solid alternative.

8.a3 ♖a6

Up to this moment Shirov had spend fifteen minutes. It is possible that he had not analysed any concrete lines and was basing his play on general plans. In any case, I was glad we reached this position and even now I consider this system too dangerous for Black.

**9.d5!**

I was confidently following my preparation, but needed a bit of time to double-check things, since I had spent seven minutes prior to this point and four minutes on the last move.

The idea of the resolute pawn advance is to use the latent power of the b3-bishop to gain space and establish some control over the light squares. It may appear that the bishop is destined to remain blocked by the pawn on d5, but the course of the game proves that this is not the case.

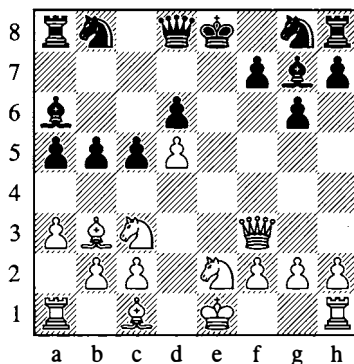
My last move seems to have caught Shirov completely unaware, since he now spent 38 minutes on his answer.

9...cxd5

The main alternative was:

9...exd5!? 10.exd5 c5

I planned to develop my initiative with:

**11.♘e4 c4**

Black has to neutralize the b3-bishop.

11...♘e7? is a blunder allowing 12.♘xc5, as occurred in a later game N. Pedersen – Mortensen, Greve 2002. The point is 12...dxc5 13.d6, attacking e7, a8 and f7 at the same time.

12.♙f4!

There is no need to spend a tempo retreating the other bishop, as it would stand miserably anyway.

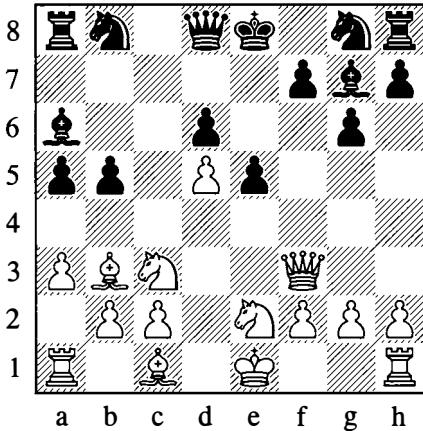
12...cxb3 13.♘xd6† ♔f8 14.♙xb3

White has a huge attack.

10.exd5 e5

From a structural point of view Black's position looks great, but his delay in

development prevents him from taking advantage of his achievements.



11. ♖e4

Preventing Black's three most desirable moves by a single stroke! The hanging d6-pawn makes ...♖b8-d7 impossible, ...f7-f5 would allow ♖g5 followed by the invasion of the e6-square, and ...♖g8-f6 would run into ♔g5.

11... ♔c7

After four minutes, Shirov decided to prepare ...♖b8-d7, which finally took me out of my preparation.

Inserting 11...a4 12. ♔a2 would avoid the subsequent activation of the white bishop on a4, but it leave Black's structure immobile and the a6-bishop out of play.

11...h6

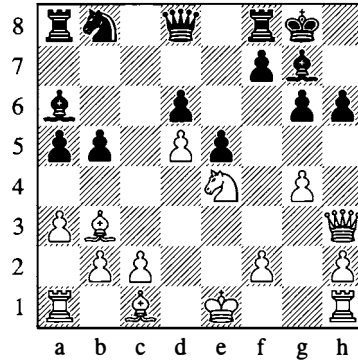
This move was seen in the model game on which my preparation for Shirov was based. Half a year after our game, Shirov turned to this move in an attempt to rehabilitate Black's system against Anand, but he eventually lost that game too.

Black's last move prepares either ...f7-f5 or ...♖g8-f6. Still, it is yet another pawn move, adding to Black's development only indirectly.

12.g4!

During my preparation I remember being impressed by this move, which stabilizes the knight on e4.

12... ♖f6 13. ♖2g3 ♖xe4 14. ♖xe4 0-0 15. ♔h3



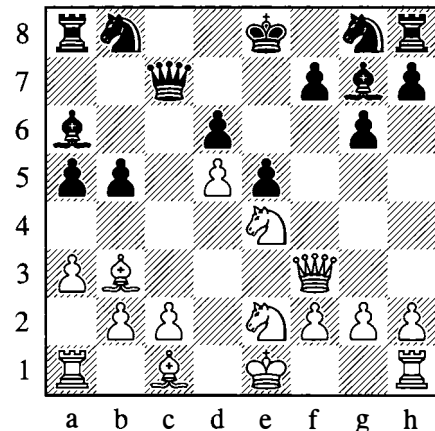
15...f5

The aforementioned model game went: 15... ♖d7 16. ♔xh6 ♖c5 17. ♖g5 ♔f6 18. ♔g7! 1-0 Black resigned just before getting mated in Zulfugarli – Bologan, Nikolaev 1995.

16.gxf5 ♔c8 17. ♖g3 ♔xf5!?

With big complications, Anand – Shirov, Linares 1996.

Returning to the game continuation, I will quote my own comment from my annotations published in *New In Chess* magazine eighteen years ago: "Black would be okay if he had time to develop with ...♖d7 and ...♖e7, but..."

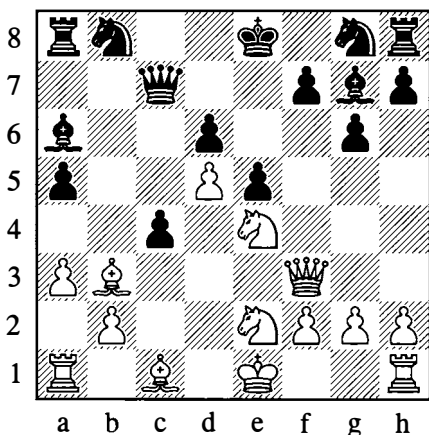


12.c4!

Aiming to get the a4-e8 diagonal for my bishop and a stable square on c3 for my second knight. Shirov answered after nine minutes.

12...bxc4

Since I was threatening c4-c5, the only alternative he could have considered was 12...a4. I planned to meet this with the double-zwischenzug 13.cxb5 ♖xb5 14.♘2c3 ♗d7, after which I could have moved the attacked bishop to a2, c2 or even c4, relying on the potential fork on d6. In each case White's development has been accelerated while Black has only succeeded in relocating his bishop to a square that might otherwise have been used by his knight.

**13.♗a4† ♘d7**

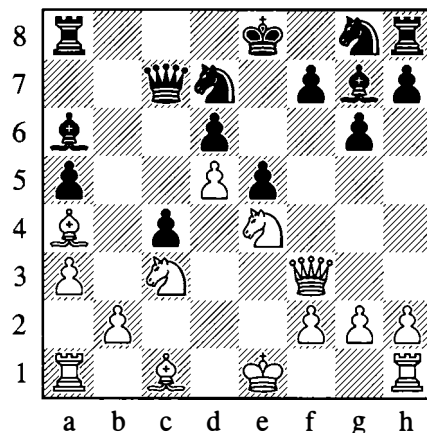
Played without thinking.

13...♗f8!? does not look great, but at least it avoids the nasty pin. I would maintain at least full compensation after 14.♘2c3.

14.♘2c3

My minor pieces have become extremely active. The a4-bishop pins the knight and can get to c6 at any moment; the e4-knight puts pressure on d6, preventing Black's natural kingside development; and finally, the c3-

knight blockades the c4-pawn and supports its colleague on e4.

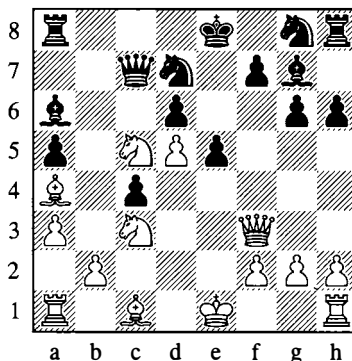
**14...♔e7?**

Alexei spent 22 minutes on this losing move. His intention is clear, to include his king in a defensive role, but it is curious that such a brilliant attacking player failed to spot the tactical dangers when sitting in the defender's chair.

It is true that Black faced a difficult choice; for instance, 14...♘e7? is simply bad due to 15.♘f6† ♗xf6 16.♗xf6± taking full advantage of the pin along the a4-e8 diagonal.

14...h6?!

Preparing ...f7-f5 looks consistent, but it runs into tactical fireworks.

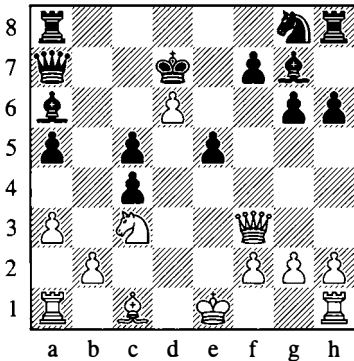
15.♘c5!!

15...dxc5

15...♖xc5 16.♔xd7† makes things easier:
16...♕e7 17.♔c6 threatens to trap the queen
with ♔e3, while 16...♕xd7 17.♖xf7† ♕e7
18.♖xg7 gives White a continuing attack
with equal material.

16.d6 ♖a7 17.♔xd7† ♕xd7

The queen has to keep the rook defended.



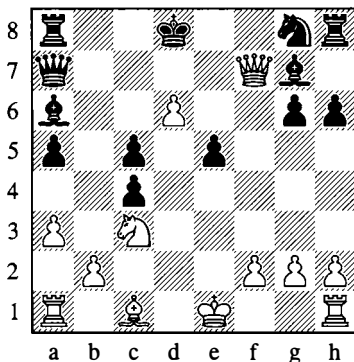
18.♖xf7† ♕d8

The most stubborn defence.

18...♕c6? loses to 19.♖d5† ♕d7 20.♕e4
followed by ♕xc5†.

In the event of 18...♕c8 19.♖e8† ♕b7
20.♖xg6 ♔f6 21.♔e3 followed by ♔d1
Black's coordination is poor.

After the last move it may seem that Black
is resisting the attack, but White has a
remarkable resource.



19.♔g5†!!

A spectacular way of speeding up the
queenside development.

19...hgx5 20.d7!

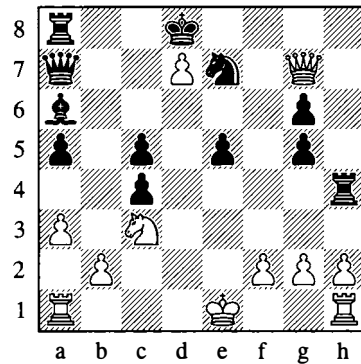
Cutting off the communication between the
enemy flanks.

20...♕e7

20...♖xd7 allows 21.♔d1 of course.

21.♖xg7 ♔h4

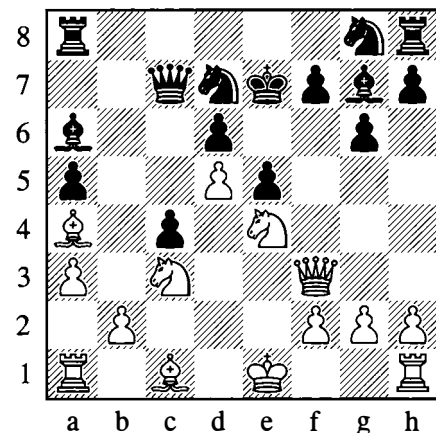
21...♔g8 22.♖f6 leaves Black awfully tied up.



22.0-0-0 ♔d4 23.♔he1

White has tremendous activity and a decisive
attack. Would I have found the difficult moves
15.♕c5!! and 19.♔g5†!! over the board? We'll
never know.

In view of the problems experienced by Black
both in the above line and the game itself,
his best approach would have been to take
precautions against my tactical blows on d6
and c5, with either 14...♖b8!? or 14...♕f8!?.
In both cases I believe in White's chances, but
there is no direct breakthrough as yet.

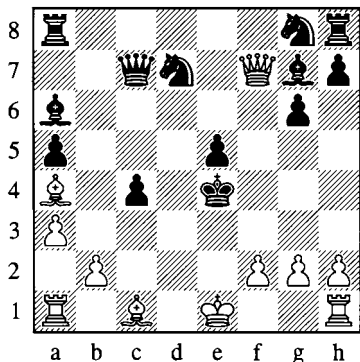


15. ♖xd6!

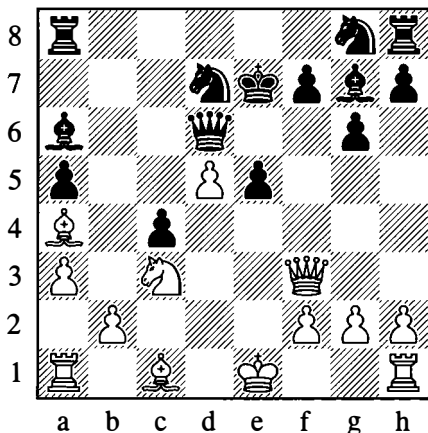
It took me just eleven minutes to decide on this combination, which leads to a winning position by force. Black will pay the price for 'developing' his king before several of the other pieces.

15... ♜xd6

15... ♖xd6? is even worse: 16. ♖e4† ♖xd5 (16... ♖e7 17.d6† forks the Royal Family.) 17. ♜xf7† ♖xe4



18. ♖c2† ♖d4 19. ♖e3 mate!

**16. ♖e4 ♜xd5**

16... ♜b6 is met by 17.d6† ♖f8 (18... ♖e8 18. ♖xd7†+-) 18. ♖g5 winning easily.

17. ♖g5† ♖df6

Black needs to remove the knight from the d7-square.

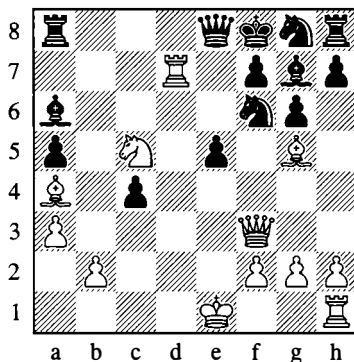
If 17... ♖f6 18. ♖d1 ♜xd1† 19. ♜xd1 the threats of ♜xd7† and ♜d6† are killing.

18. ♖d1

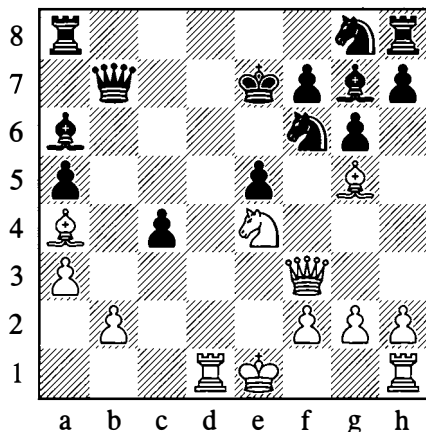
The queen has only two escape squares available, and both are bad.

18... ♜b7

18... ♜e6 would not make any difference: 19. ♖d7† ♖f8 (19... ♜xd7 transposes to the game.) 20. ♖c5 ♜e8



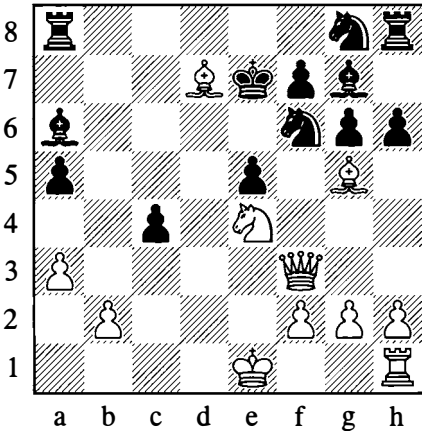
21. ♖xf7†! A natural sacrifice, since Black's pieces are hanging all the way. 21... ♖xf7 (21... ♜xf7 drops the a8-rook followed by the bishop on a6.) 22. ♖xe8† ♖xe8 23. ♖xa6 With both a material and a positional advantage, White is easily winning.



19. ♖d7† ♜xd7 20. ♖xd7 h6?!

Overlooking my answer.

20...♙b7 would have been more stubborn. White has several strong continuations, but the one I like most is 21.a4!!, preparing to meet 21...♖f8 with 22.♗a3†!. It is interesting that the final two moves of this short line both have an ‘unpinning’ character.



21.♗d1!

This well-timed switch to the d-file forced Shirov to resign.

It is not often that the queen's return to its initial square has such a powerful effect, but here the line 21...hxg5 22.♗d6† ♖d8 23.♙b5† offers Black no chances at all.

1–0

Judit Polgar – Alexei Shirov

Wijk aan Zee 1998

There are several factors making the Wijk aan Zee chess festival in January one of the highlights of the calendar. It is an event involving a huge number of participants, usually over a thousand, playing in several groups hosted by the enormous Pavilion de Moriaan.

During the tournament and especially over the weekends, chess lovers flock to this traditionally summer resort, to watch some of

the most famous players in the world do battle. The festival is well known at the local level, too. In restaurants, bars or shops, it is quite common for waiters, bartenders and sellers to recognize the players and ask them about their result; in some cases, they even guess it from a player's expression.

Last but not least, the A-group is one of the strongest and most prestigious tournaments of the year. It is also the longest of all elite tournaments in terms of the number of games contested. Most top-class events follow the ten-player round robin format, whereas in Wijk aan Zee there have always been fourteen players, meaning thirteen rounds instead of the usual nine. Summing up, every January at Wijk aan Zee there is chess, chess and more chess...

I played for the first time in Wijk aan Zee in 1990, but only in the B-group. The reader may recall my games against Hellers and Van der Sterren from Volume 1. Eight years later, I came back as a participant of the A-group. The field included Karpov, Kramnik, Adams, Anand, Shirov, Topalov, Salov, Timman, Gelfand, myself, and the Dutch players Van Wely, Piket, Van der Sterren and Nijboer. The present game against Shirov took place in the second round.

1.e4 c5

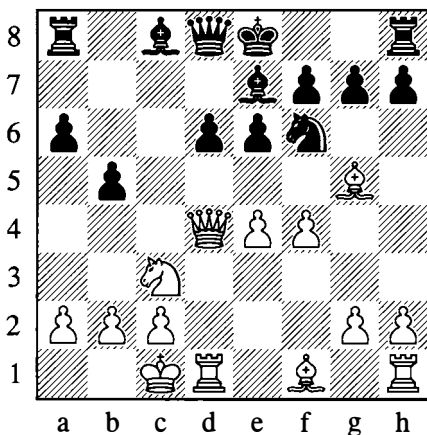
Shirov's main weapon in those years used to be 1...e5, but the Sicilian was also a part of his repertoire. I could not be happier about his opening choice in this game; already in Volume 1 I have expressed my positive feelings about this opening.

2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘c3 cxd4 5.♘xd4 ♘c6 6.♙g5

The aggressive Rauzer Attack suits my style best.

6...e6 7.♖d2 a6 8.0-0-0 ♜xd4 9.♞xd4 ♙e7 10.f4 b5

Up to this moment, we had been playing quickly; I had spent seven minutes and Alexei only five. My next move was intended as a surprise.



11.♙e2!?

The usual continuation was 11.♙xf6 gxf6, after which White had tried 12.♙e2, 12.f5 and even 12.e5.

There were only a few games with my move at that time, but now there are over 200! This is often how an old move can come into fashion: a strong player uses it with success and then players at all levels start analysing and playing it.

Shirov spent twenty minutes before answering, so I understood that he had no preparation against my move.

11...♙b7

There were times when the information transfer was relatively slow. One had to wait for the next issue of magazines like the Russian *64*, the German *Schach*, the American *Inside Chess* or the Yugoslav *Chess Informant* to get acquainted with the latest games and discoveries.

When I played this game, the use of the

Internet and chess databases was already common among serious players. Thus it was little wonder that just a few days later the following game was played: 11...0-0 12.♙f3 ♙b7 13.♙xf6 gxf6 14.e5 d5 15.f5 ♖h8 Black was okay and went on to win in G. Garcia – Epishin, Linares (open) 1998.

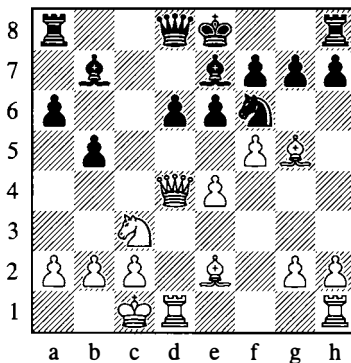
12.♙f3

Looking back, I find it interesting that, immediately after delivering my prepared opening surprise, I spent eleven minutes. As you can tell, I did not like to play too fast even when I was following my preparation.

Besides, it could be that I had also analysed 12.f5

without determining which move was best.

By the way, I tried the latter in the blitz tournament organized on the first free day at Wijk aan Zee.



12...e5?!

Too committal. 12...0-0 is better.

13.♞d3 b4

Kramnik relied on the sequence initiated by this move, preventing my simple plan of occupying the d5-square with ♙xf6 followed by ♜d5. The tactical skirmish works out well for White though.

14.♙xf6 bxc3 15.♙xg7 ♜g8 16.f6 cxb2+ 17.♖b1 ♙xf6 18.♙xf6 ♞xf6 19.♞hf1+

Polgar – Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee (blitz) 1998.

12...♖c8

Played after only two minutes. Alexei did not wish to spend time getting castled, and hurried to create queenside counterplay. His last move is a logical reaction to ♕e2-f3, since the c4-square has become available.

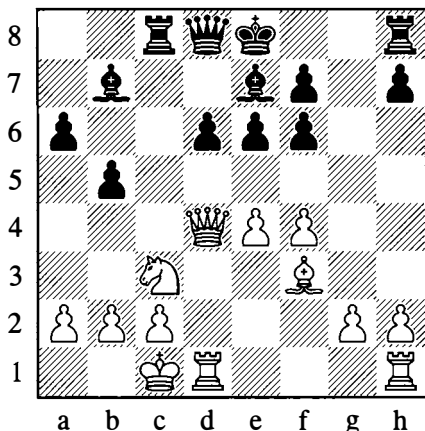
13.♕xf6

I spent 22 minutes trying to make the resolute 13.e5? work, but this is impossible: 13...♕xf3 14.exf6 (Only this intermediate move can possibly cause Black problems; 14.gxf3 dxe5 is absolutely fine for him.) 14...gxf6 15.gxf3 ♖c4! Targeting the kingside weaknesses. 16.♖a7 fxg5 17.♖xa6 ♖xf4 18.♘xb5 d5 Black's structure is better and the active rook on f4 safeguards his king against any troubles.

13...gxf6!?

Such a pawn structure is typical for the Rauzer, and practically guarantees a complicated strategic struggle.

13...♕xf6! would have been simpler, leading to equality: 14.♖xd6 ♖xd6 15.♖xd6 ♕xc3 16.bxc3 ♖xc3 17.♖hd1 0-0 White's activity compensates for the pawn weaknesses, but does not give much hope of an advantage.

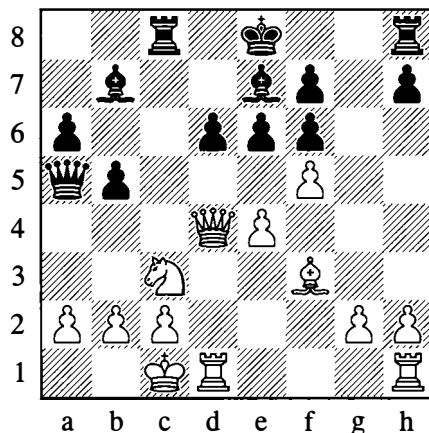
**14.f5**

A typical move. White attacks the e6-square, hoping to provoke either ...exf5 or ...e5, both weakening the d5-square. Black gets the e5-square in return, but his main problem is finding a safe place for his king.

14...♖a5?!

Shirov spent nineteen minutes on this straightforward move. His obvious intention was to speed up ...b5-b4, after which he could block the centre with ...e6-e5 without fearing a knight intrusion to d5. This plan is easy to cross, though, and the queen will soon find herself misplaced on a5.

A more flexible and better continuation would be 14...♖c4 15.♖d3 ♖c7, threatening ...b5-b4 without placing the queen so far from the centre.

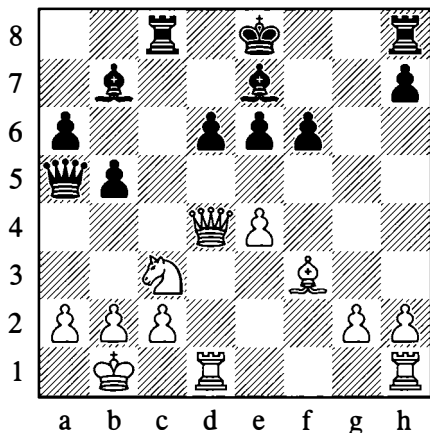
**15.fxe6!**

Following the pawn exchange, Black will no longer be able to contemplate ...e6-e5, as this would severely weaken the f5-square.

15...fxe6 16.♖b1!

Six minutes were enough to convince me that I should not hurry with the check on h5: 16.♕h5+! ♖d7 17.e5 and now Black has more than one way to achieve a good position, for instance 17...♖c4 or even 17...♖xc3!.

After my quiet but purposeful last move, Shirov must have realized that I had maintained all my potential threats, including ♖h5†, while he still needed to take a decision regarding his king's permanent residence.

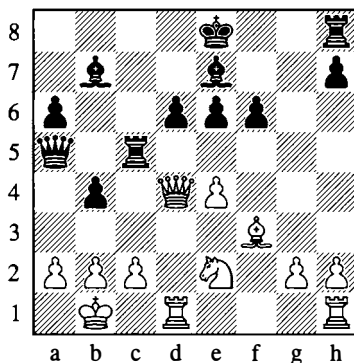


16...♔d7?

Stepping right into the line of fire after sixteen minutes of thought. In a curious echo of the previous game, Shirov voluntarily moves his king forward in the centre, immediately leading him to a lost position! Once again, the decision must have been motivated by his desire to use the king as a defensive piece, covering e6, but he obviously underestimated my attack.

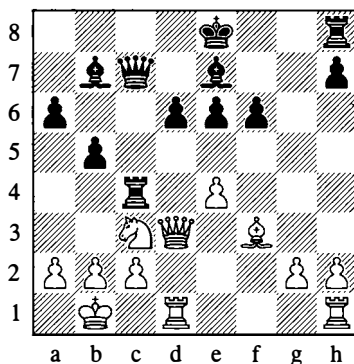
In principle, the king belongs on the kingside, but 16...0-0? allows the forced continuation: 17.e5! ♕xf3 18.gxf3 dxe5 19.♖g4† ♔h8 20.♖hg1 ♖g8 21.♖xe6 with an overwhelming position.

Before taking a final decision regarding his king, Black should have found a way to return with his queen into play. 16...b4 would clear the fifth rank, but would not be entirely logical: after all, my last move defended the a2-pawn, anticipated precisely this move. 17.♕e2 ♖c5



Black can fight on, but is likely to suffer for the rest of the game. His control over the e5-square would not be too important, since I could always expel the rook with ♕f4-d3 at the right time.

16...♖c4 17.♖d3 ♖c7 looks best, regrouping the pieces without weakening the queenside.



Here too, though, I would keep the better chances with 18.♕e2! intending ♕f4.

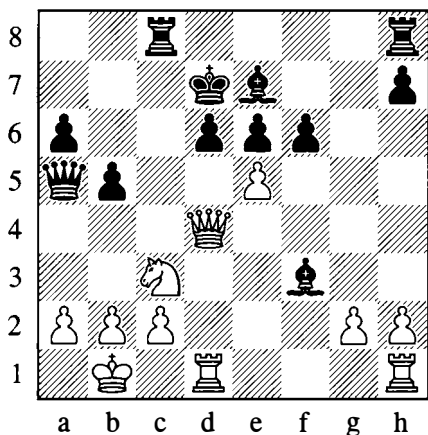
17.e5!

After only thirteen minutes of checking the lines after this resolute attacking move, I went for it with great enthusiasm! Judging from the expression on his face, Shirov must have been surprised. Still, he answered after only five minutes.

17...♕xf3

If 17...fxe5 18.♖xe5 ♕xf3 19.gxf3 ♖hg8

20.♖h1 ♜g6 21.f4+– White's attack develops naturally, without the need to sacrifice anything.



18.exd6!

The evaluation of this move is rather subjective. If engines could talk, they would ask the legitimate question: "Why would you sacrifice a rook when the simple 18.gxf3 is winning?" Indeed, after 18...♞c4 19.♞e3 fxe5 20.♞xe5 ♜g8 21.f4 Black's position is about to collapse.

My answer is simple: I sacrificed because I enjoyed doing it and because I saw that in this case it would yield me a decisive attack! Therefore I saw no need to look for alternatives.

18...♙xd1 19.♞xd1

Black is a rook up and has a tempo to organize his defence, but there is no easy way to achieve it. Apart from the king's vulnerability, the queen's offside position weighs heavily.

19...♙f8

Black had a choice between several evils.

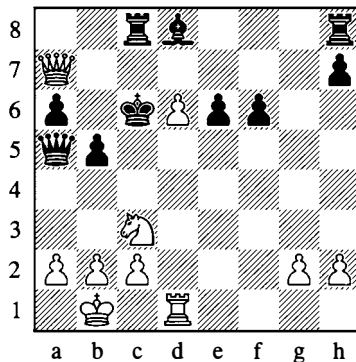
There is no time to get rid of the dangerous knight: 19...♞xc3? 20.dxe7† ♙xe7 21.♞d7† ♙f8 22.♞xe6 wins.

19...♙d8

This move keeps f6 defended, but takes the d8-square away from the king.

20.♞a7† ♙c6

20...♙c7 21.dxc7† ♙e8 is met by 22.♞e3 e5 23.♞h3 followed by ♞e6† or ♞d7†, winning.



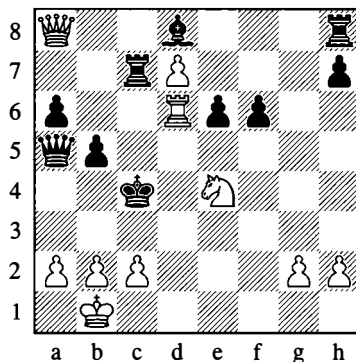
21.d7!

Clearing the d6-square and leading to further chaos in Black's army.

21...♞c7 22.♞a8† ♙b6

If 22...♞b7 23.♙e4 Black cannot defend against the dual threats of ♞d6† and ♞c8†.

23.♞d6† ♙c5 24.♙e4† ♙c4

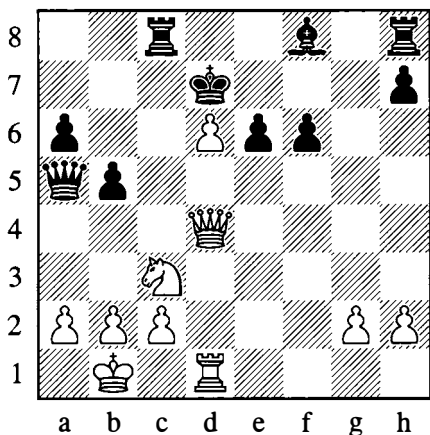


25.c3!

This quiet move seals the fate of the black king.

25...b4 26.b3† ♙b5 27.♞b8†

And mate next move.



20. ♖xf6?

This allows Black a surprising opportunity to prolong the game.

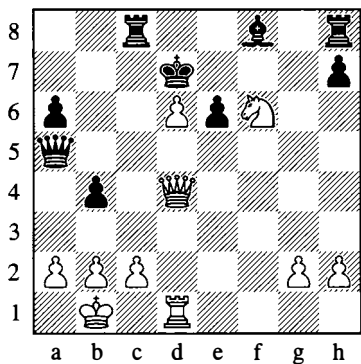
More precise was:

20. ♔e4! b4

Aiming to activate the queen.

21. ♔xf6†

I considered this possibility, but could not find a forced win after either king move; indeed, the lines below are not easy to calculate.

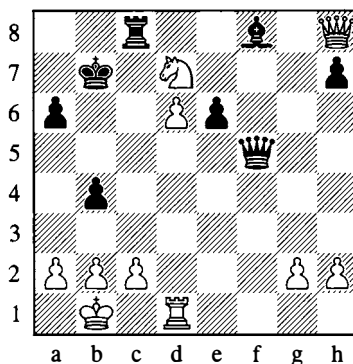


21... ♔c6

Against 21... ♔d8 22. ♔g4! is the key move, attacking the rook and threatening ♖f6†. Black can try 22... ♗f5 but then 23. ♔e3! followed by ♖xh8 wins.

22. ♖e4† ♔b6 23. ♔d7† ♔a7 24. ♖d4† ♔b7 25. ♖xh8 ♖f5

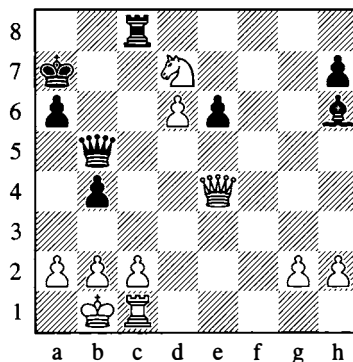
White has regained the rook and is even a pawn up, but Black has achieved some counterplay at least. Indeed, if it were not for the strong reply given below, White would be losing.



26. ♖c1 ♔h6 27. ♖d4!

A vital regrouping move, threatening ♖b6† followed by mate.

27... ♖b5 28. ♖e4† ♔a7



29. ♔e5!

Another crucial detail.

29... ♔xc1 30. d7 ♖f8 31. ♔c6† ♔b6 32. d8=♖† ♖xd8 33. ♔xd8

White should win this ending.

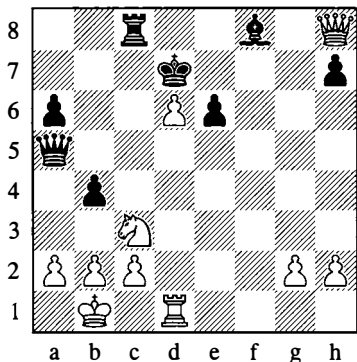
20... ♔xd6?

Shirov played this without thinking. He willingly entered a bad ending without looking for better alternatives. Had he already given up the fight psychologically?

Now was the right time to activate the queen:
20...b4! 21.♖xh8

21.♗e4! ♕h5 22.♞e1! is more precise, and keeps a sizeable advantage.

The text move was my intention, and was presumably also the reason why Alexei dismissed this path so quickly. However, we both overlooked a clever rejoinder that a modern computer will find instantly.



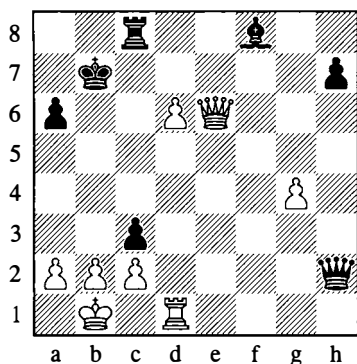
21...♗h5!!

Suddenly, everything works for Black: the h7-pawn is defended and the d1-rook is hanging.

22.g4! ♖xh2!

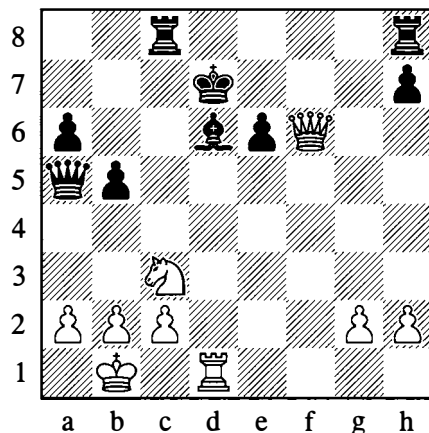
Maintaining the defence of the h7-pawn while attacking c2, thus preventing the knight from moving.

23.♗f6 bxc3 24.♗f7+ ♖c6 25.♗xe6 ♖b7



I would still prefer White's position, but it is not clear if there is any more than a draw against

correct defence. After the game continuation, matters are completely one-sided.

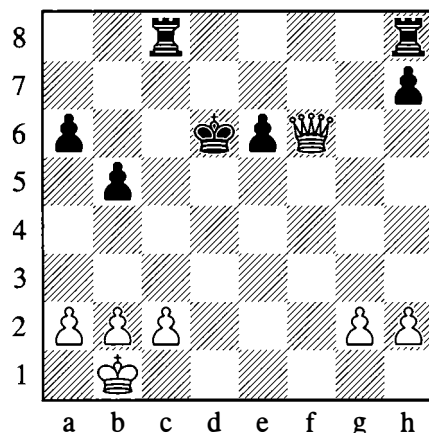


21.♗e4 ♕c7

If 21...♞cd8 the simplest winning line would be 22.♗xd6 ♖c7 23.♗e7+ ♞d7 24.♗e8+! followed by ♗xd7(+).

22.♞xd6+ ♗xd6 23.♗xd6 ♖xd6

Material is about equal, but my queen is extremely active in this open position, while Black's coordination is rather poor. Shirov might have underestimated the dynamic factors, which cause him to lose a pawn by force.



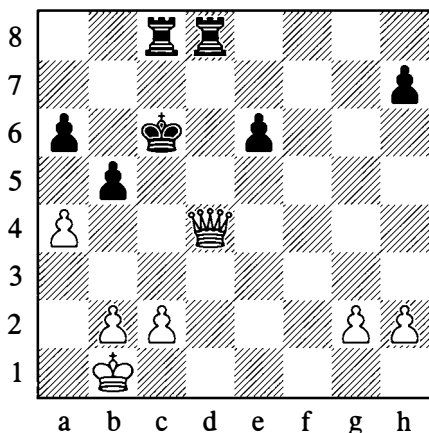
24.♗d4+ ♖c6 25.a4!

Not only shaking Black's queenside structure, but also avoiding any back-rank problems.

25...♖hd8

Shirov decides to keep his passed pawn as a possible source of counterplay, even though this leaves me with two connected passed pawns.

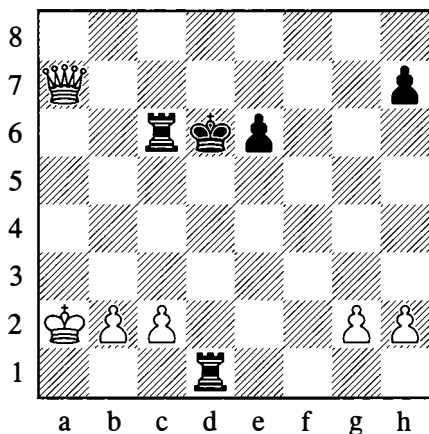
If 25...bxa4 26.♖xa4 ♔b6 27.♖b3 ♔a7 28.♖xe6 the win should be a matter of technique.



26.♖a7 ♖d1†

26...♖a8 27.♖xh7 is not helping Black.

27.♔a2 bxa4 28.♖xa6 ♔d7 29.♖xa4 ♖c6 30.♖a7 ♔d6



31.♖f2!

A solid move, defending both wings before starting the gradual advance of the queenside pawns.

31...♖d5

The optimal placement of the queen is revealed after 31...♖a6† 32.♔b3, when Black has no more checks. If 32...♖d5 33.c4 is virtually hopeless for Black.

32.b3 h5 33.c4 ♖f5 34.♖d4†

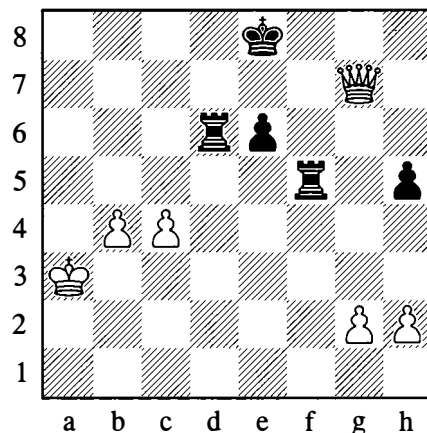
In the endgame, it is always useful to centralize the queen before doing anything else.

34...♔e7 35.♔a3 ♖d6 36.♖g7† ♔e8

If 36...♖f7 37.♖g5† grabs another pawn.

37.b4

There is no way to stop the pawns.



37...♖f7 38.♖h8† ♔e7 39.♖xh5

Why not? It was for free!

39...♖a6† 40.♔b3 ♖f1

Understanding that after 41.b5 he would have no chance to save the game, Shirov resigned.

1-0

My trademark g2-g4/...g7-g5 moves

Many players have their own favourite kind of moves. Some like to fianchetto their queen's bishop, others enjoy long queen moves and so on. For most of my chess career, I have been aware that the resolute advance of my g-pawn was a frequent guest in my games. I have briefly mentioned this matter in my game against Xie Jun in the first volume and the reader has come across more than one such example in the present one.

I do not believe there is any hidden or mysterious reason for this occurrence, and regard it as quite logically connected with my style of play and opening preferences. I started playing the Sicilian (from both sides) at the age of seven, so I feel more at home in the resulting positions than anywhere else. You might even say that, over the years, the Sicilian became a chess equivalent of a mother tongue to me. In many Sicilian systems g2-g4 is a standard attacking move, irrespective of the wing on which White has castled. Take for instance my game against Ree from the first volume (page 316) and my loss to Shirov from this one (page 27).

Later I discovered that the g2-g4 advance may prove strong in some variations of other defences, including the French, Caro-Kann and Pirc. When the King's Indian joined my Black repertoire, I saw the attacking plan of ...g6-g5-g4 almost as part of the basic theory. In one way or another, I proved open-minded enough to venture g2-g4 or ...g7-g5 in non-typical situations, too.

The time has come for me to introduce you to my most memorable ...g7-g5 ever!

Alexei Shirov – Judit Polgar

Buenos Aires (Sicilian theme) 1994

Opening theme tournaments have been out of fashion for more than a century. When Joop van Oosterom (about whom I have spoken in the first volume) invited me to the Buenos Aires Sicilian-themed tournament I could not have been more delighted: I was happy to play this opening with either colour!

We stayed in Buenos Aires for nearly a month. This was an eight-player double round-robin event, with fourteen rounds and five free days, but we were invited to travel to Argentina eight days earlier for acclimatization purposes. As a chess lover, Joop was not only keen for his tournaments to produce entertaining games, but was also concerned about the participants' comfort and wellbeing. All the players flew first-class from Amsterdam and stayed at a great hotel in Buenos Aires. The tournament conditions were excellent not only for the players, but also for the numerous spectators.

Miguel Najdorf was a popular figure in Argentina and he made chess respected in his country. At the time of this tournament he was 84 years old, but still very active and he came to visit the tournament on several occasions.

Any chess player knows that opening ceremonies and drawing of lots can be tedious affairs. They usually take place at the very time when players are trying to focus on the tournament and have no patience for such formalities. This was hardly the case with this tournament, which featured an original way of drawing lots. There was a tango show (what else?) with eight couples of professional dancers. A secret number had been assigned to each couple.

When the show was over, my male colleagues could invite any of the ladies to dance, while I was in the enviable position of taking my pick

from all the male dancers. After the dance, the ladies took the secret numbers out of their décolletage, while my dance partner revealed the number hidden in his wallet. These would be our tournament starting numbers.

The tournament had a surprise winner, Valery Salov, who was invited as a last-minute replacement for Polugaevsky. Unlike the other players (Karpov, Shirov, Kamsky, Anand, Ljubojevic, Ivanchuk and myself) Salov was not an experienced 1.e4 player and had virtually no time to prepare. These apparently unfavourable circumstances seem to have had a positive impact on Valery, allowing him to play free of any pressure.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♙xd4

According to the tournament rules, White's first moves were compulsory, but on the second move Black was free to choose between 2...d6, 2...♘c6 and 2...e6. This way, we could reach any of the main variations such as the Najdorf, Scheveningen, Classical, Paulsen and others.

4...♘c6 5.♘c3 d6

The day before this game had been a rest day. The weather was nice and I had a long walk with my mom, but in the afternoon I sat down to try guessing what might happen on the board the next day.

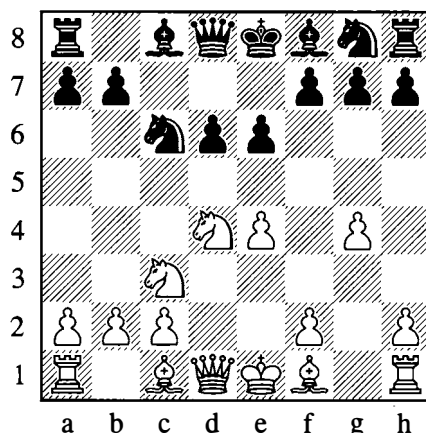
Shirov had the reputation of blindly repeating his lines if he had won or at least obtained good positions in his previous games. He did not fear his opponents' preparation, being confident that he could cope with any unexpected problems over the board.

The move order I used in this game is an attempt to play the Scheveningen Variation without allowing the dangerous Keres Attack. I knew that was unlikely to stop an attacking player like Shirov from playing g4-g5 anyway, and I came across his recent game against

Kasparov in which he adopted this plan. I started analysing the game and found an amazing idea.

6.g4

In principle, we both were happy to play a line without too much theory. Karpov had tried this once against Kasparov, in their second match, back in 1985, but the territory remained relatively unexplored nine years later.

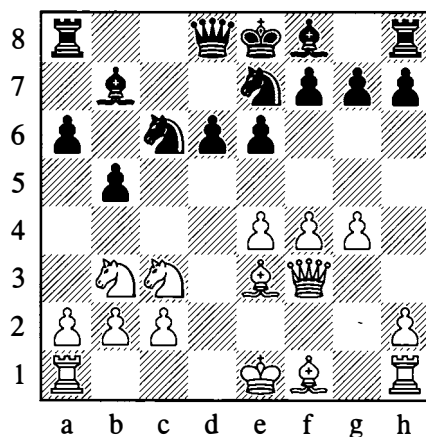


6...a6 7.♙e3 ♘ge7

Reducing the impact of g4-g5 and planning ...♙xd4 followed by ...♘ec6, an idea inspired by the Taimanov Sicilian.

8.♘b3 b5 9.f4 ♙b7 10.♙f3

So far nothing new has appeared on the board, but here I was able to unveil my idea.



10...g5!

The aforementioned recent game continued 10...♖a5 11.0–0–0 ♜xb3† 12.axb3 ♜c8 13.h4 ♜c6 14.g5 ♜a5 15.♙b1 ♜b4 16.♙d4 d5 with big complications and a subsequent draw, Shirov – Kasparov, Novgorod 1994. Shirov undoubtedly had an improvement somewhere (for instance I would fear 12.cxb3) and I could sense that he was happy to get the same variation again. However, when I delivered my prepared surprise he sank into deep thought, and spent more than half an hour contemplating his response.

Abstractly, this daring pawn sacrifice is not difficult to explain. I cross White's attacking plan based on a massive kingside advance, gaining control over the e5-square at the same time. On the other hand, my position also gets weakened. The ultimate verdict depends on dynamic factors and concrete lines as we will see.

11.fxg5

Alexei decides to take the bull by the horns. After all, the first option to consider when faced with a pawn sacrifice is accepting it.

In principle, ...g7-g5 leaves White a choice between fxg5, f4-f5, e4-e5 and any neutral developing move. I believe that 11.0–0–0! would have been best. True, after 11...gxf4 followed by ...♜g6 and ...♜ce5 I would obtain control over the e5-square, thus fulfilling the strategic goal of my novelty at no material cost. However, White's king would be in safety and his development would not suffer at all.

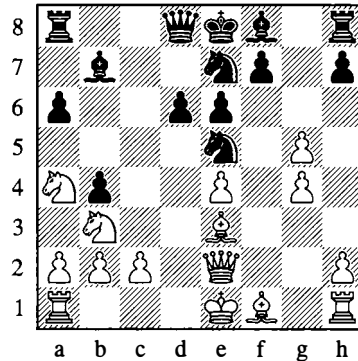
11...♜e5 12.♜g2

Played almost without thinking. It is the only move defending all the important pawns and squares. The following two alternatives allow me to sacrifice an exchange under favourable circumstances:

12.♜f6? ♜xg4 13.♜xh8 ♜xe3 puts White in trouble. Apart from ...♜xc2†, Black is also threatening ...♜g6 followed by ...♜xg5.

12.♜e2?!

This leaves the e4-pawn undefended.

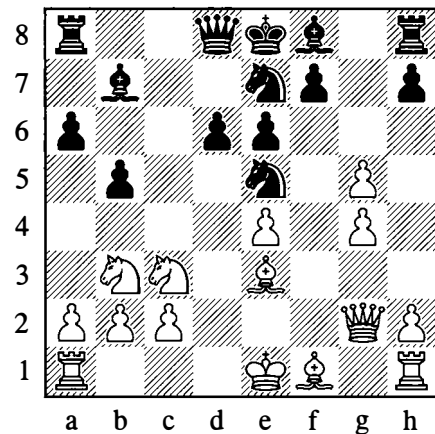
12...b4 13.♜a4**13...♙c6!**

Before taking the pawn, Black forces his opponent to occupy the b6-square.

13...♙xe4? is premature because of 14.♙b6.

14.♜b6 ♙xe4 15.♜xa8 ♜xa8

With great play for Black.

**12...b4 13.♜e2?!**

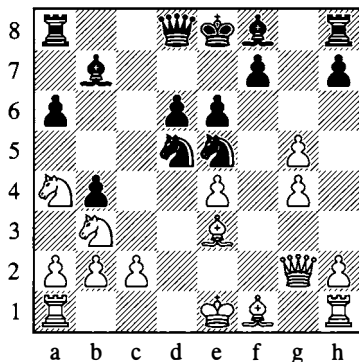
Shirov played this seemingly solid move after nine minutes. My next move must have come as a shock to him.

13. ♖a4!

This offered chances to stay in the game.

Here, too, I had a creative idea in mind.

13... ♖d5!?

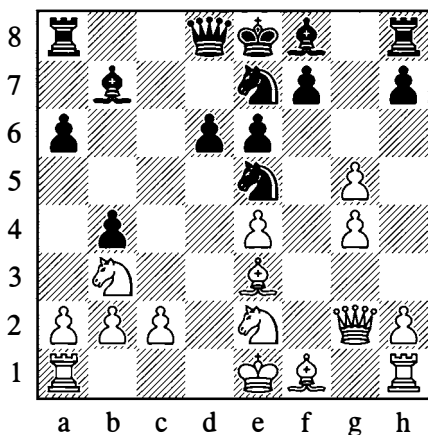


14. ♖d2

If 14.exd5? ♖xd5 White cannot defend the h1-rook with 15. ♖g1 because of 15... ♖f3†.

14... ♖c8

With great complications.



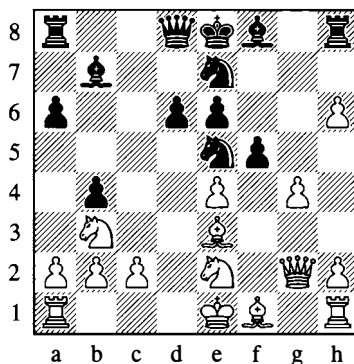
13...h5!!

I was extremely proud of this move. To a certain extent, ...g7-g5 looked natural and thematic, but the thrust of the h-pawn is completely untypical.

14.gxh5?!

It is curious that Shirov spent only four minutes on this crucial decision.

I planned to meet 14.gxh6?! with 14... ♖xh6, with excellent compensation on the dark squares. However, when working on this book I discovered that 14...f5!! would be much stronger.



It is funny how, in the space of a few moves, Black has played ...g5, ...h5 and now ...f5. The first two moves have sacrificed pawns, while the last takes everything back with interest! Chess provides endless amusement when you are on the winning side...

Once again, Shirov should have focused on developing with 14.0-0-0. True, Black has a great position after 14...hxg4, but the rest of the game would lie ahead.

14... ♖f5!

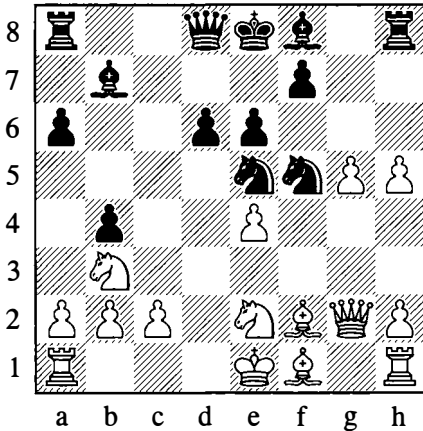
Suddenly there are lots of squares at stake, and the poor white queen cannot defend them all! Up to this point I had spent fifteen minutes double-checking some details of my preparation. Shirov responded after only three minutes – yet another fast move, and another inaccuracy.

15. ♖f2?!

At first glance this appears to keep my knights under control, but there are additional tactical elements in the position.

15. ♖f4? ♖h4 would not help White either.

The best practical chance was to give up the queen with 15.exf5!? ♖xg2 16.♗xg2 ♜c8. Black has a significant material advantage and should win, but White can continue to offer resistance. In the game, his position deteriorates rather abruptly.



15...♗xg5!

Still following my home analysis. It is not an exaggeration to say that this was the best preparation of my life. I worked it out alone, while listening to some nice background music, and was able to put it into practice exactly as I hoped.

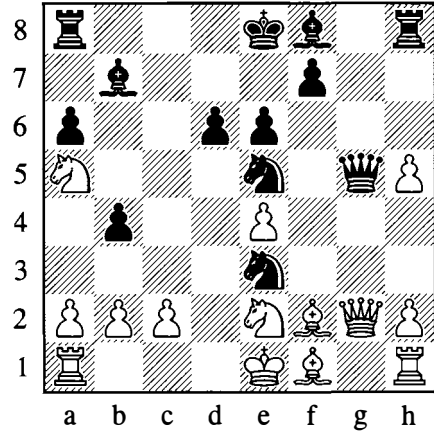
16.♘a5?

Shirov played this after three minutes and then left for the bathroom with a happy smile on his face. He probably thought that Black's initiative was over and that he would win material on account of my hanging pieces.

My analysis ended with 16.♗xg5 ♘f3† 17.♙d1 ♘g5† and White's position is falling apart.

I had not analysed Shirov's move, but I saw its refutation in a second and played it not long after that.

16...♘e3!



A great tactical resource, based on 17.♗xg5 ♘f3 mate!

The playing hall and the route to the bathrooms were such that I could watch Shirov from distance on his way back. He was stretching his neck with curiosity, trying to see my move on the demo board. When he reached our table and sat down, he raised his eyebrows with amazement. Could it be that, a mere seven moves after my novelty, he was lost?

17.♗g3

If 17.♗xe3 ♗xe3 18.♘xb7 then 18...♘f3† wins the queen or mates.

17...♗xg3

The move order starting with 17...♘xc2† is more restrictive by preventing 19.♙d2, but it does not really matter.

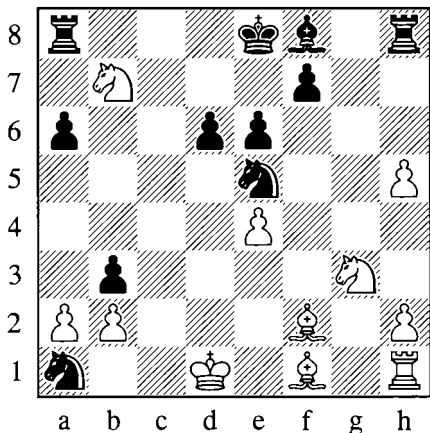
18.♘g3 ♘xc2† 19.♙d1

White would not get any relief from the additional possibility offered by my move order: 19.♙d2 ♘xa1 20.♘xb7 ♗h6† 21.♙e2 ♗e7+ and my knight escapes via c2.

19...♘xa1 20.♘xb7 b3

There was no need to rush with this move, but I wanted my knight out as soon as possible. You may imagine how excited I was and how I

wanted the game to finish as soon as possible. We both played quickly over the next phase of the game, as if knowing that its fate was sealed already.



21. axb3 ♖xb3 22. ♖c2 ♜c5 23. ♜xc5 dxc5
24. ♙e1 ♜f3 25. ♙c3 ♜d4† 26. ♖d3 ♙d6

There is nothing special about these moves; I am close to achieving full coordination of my pieces, and will soon be ready to simplify the position and exploit my material advantage.

27. ♙g2

If White tries to undermine my knight with 27. b4 then his king could get into danger: 27... ♖e7! 28. bxc5 ♙xc5 29. ♖c4 (Or 29. ♙xd4 ♙ad8 30. ♜e2 ♙xd4 31. ♜xd4 e5 regaining the piece with decisive simplifications.) 29... ♙hd8 30. ♖xc5 ♙ac8† 31. ♖b4 a5† followed by ... ♙xc3.

27... ♙e5 28. ♖c4 ♖e7 29. ♙a1 ♜c6

0-1

You may imagine my euphoria after this game and the pleasant memories I retain from the tournament in general. During the event I even became an honorary citizen of Buenos Aires.



Receiving the honorary citizenship of Buenos Aires

Records and Results

Records

Rated number one on the Women's Rating list since January 1989

Named "Woman Chess Player of the 20th Century" by ICWA

Broke Bobby Fischer's record, by becoming the youngest grandmaster in history in 1991

Eight times winner of the Chess Oscar

First and so far only girl to win twice the World Youth Chess Championship for boys

First and so far only woman to enter the top ten of the World Rankings

First and so far only woman to win a medal at the Open Individual European Championship

World Chess Champions I Have Defeated

Smyslov (1957-1958)

Spassky (1969-1972)

Karpov (1975-1985)

Kasparov (1985-2000)

Khalifman (1998)

Anand (2000, 2007-present)

Ponomarev (2002)

Kasimdzhanov (2004)

Topalov (2005-2006)

Individual Chess Highlights (covered in this volume)

1992 New York, USA, Reshevsky Memorial, 2nd place

1992/3 Hastings, England, 1st-2nd place

1993 Dos Hermanas, Spain, 2nd place

1993 Oviedo, Spain, 1st place

1994 Madrid, Spain, Super-tournament, 1st place

1995 Isle of Lewis, Scotland, 1st place

1995 Kazakhstan, Unofficial 2-minutes World Championship, 1st place

1996 Vienna, Austria, 2nd place

1996 Leon, Spain, 1st-2nd place

1998 Kona, Hawaii, US Open 1st place

1998 Hoogeveen, Holland, 1st place

1999 Las Vegas, USA, World Championship, quarter-finalist

1999 Hoogeveen, Holland, 1st-2nd place

2000 Bali, Indonesia, 1st place

2000 Malmo, Sweden, 1st place

2000 Buenos Aires, Argentina, Najdorf Memorial, 1st place

2000 Merida, Mexico, 2nd place

Team competitions (covered in this volume)

- 1992 Aruba. The Women's World Team defeated the Men's Veteran World Team.
- 1995 Prague. The Women's World Team defeated the Men's Veteran World Team.
- 1999 Batumi, Georgia, European Team Championship. I won individual gold and team silver medals for the Hungarian "men's" team.

Exhibition matches (covered in this volume)

- 1993 Budapest, Hungary. I defeated world champion Boris Spassky 5½-4½.
- 1995 Aruba. I defeated Dutch champion Jeroen Piket 6-2.
- 1996 Budapest, Hungary. I defeated world champion chess program Junior 4-2.
- 1996 Sao Paulo, Brazil. I defeated Gilberto Milos in a rapid match 2½-1½.
- 1998 Budapest, Hungary. I defeated world champion Anatoly Karpov in a rapid match 5-3.

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Central Park, New York



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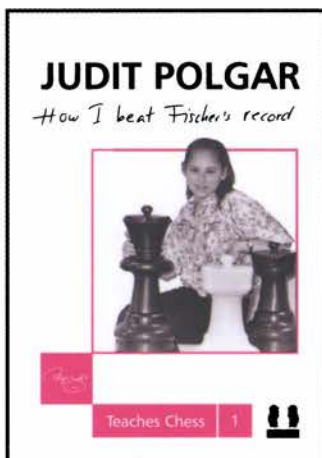
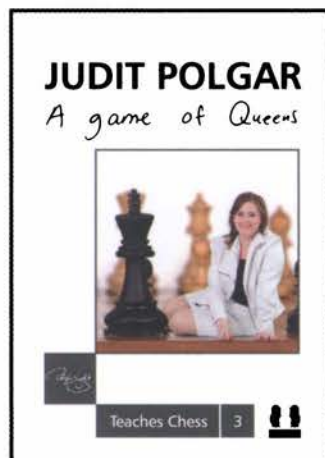
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