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The Washington Chess Federation is pleased to announce the formation of the **Washington State Chess Hall of Fame Committee**. Anyone interested in being a member of the committee should contact Chairman Russell Miller by e-mail: russellmiller22@comcast.net, or US post: 1151 NW 7th Ave., Camas WA 98607-1803.

Please see nwchess.com for further information.

I had so much good material I had to make some tough choices. In addition to posting my own editorial and the articles by two of our most reliable contributors directly to the nwchess.com web site and delaying (again) Mark Ryan's interview with Devon Manber (sorry guys), I reduced the standard font size a bit and combined future events and calendar on the back cover. Coverage of the Washington Class Championships and the 2008 final Grand Prix report should be in the February issue.

If you have an opinion on any of this, drop me an e-mail at *editor@nwchess.com*.

Northwest Chess Knights

Please donate today to help Northwest Chess!

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Address
17517 15 Ave NE
Seattle WA 98155

Infoline
206-417-5405
www.seattlechess.org
kleistcf@aol.com

Address for Entries
SCC Tnmt Dir
2420 S 137 St
Seattle WA 98168

One-Day Events

Jan. 4, Feb. 1 Sunday Tornado

Format: 4-SS. **TC:** G/64. **EF:** \$17 (+\$5 fee for non-SCC). **Prizes:** 1st 35%, 2nd 27%, Bottom Half 1st 22%, 2nd 16% (\$10 from each EF goes to prize fund). **Reg:** 10:30-11:15 a.m. **Rds:** 11:30-1:50-4:10-6:30. **Misc:** USCF, WCF/OCF memb. req'd, OSA, NS, NC.

Jan. 10, Feb. 21 Saturday Quads

Format: 3-RR, 4-plyr sections by rating. **TC:** G/120. **EF:** \$7 (+\$5 fee for non-SCC). **Prizes:** Free entry for future quad. **Reg:** 9:00-9:45 a.m. **Rds:** 10:00-2:15-ASAP. **Misc:** USCF, WCF/OCF memb. req'd, OSA, NS, NC.

Jan. 30 SCC G/15 Championship

Format: 4-6 rds (dependent on num. of entries). Open to all. **TC:** G/15. **EF:** \$6 (+\$3 fee for non-SCC). **Prizes:** At least 70% of EFs. **Reg:** 7-7:45 p.m. **Rds:** 8-8:40-9:20-10-(10:40)-(11:20). **Byes:** One available. **Misc:** USCF memb. req'd. NS, NC.

January 31 SCC Novice

Format: 4-SS. Open to U1200 and unrated. **TC:** G/75. **EF:** \$11 by 1/28, \$16 at site. (\$2 disc. for SCC mem., \$1 for mem. of other dues-req'd CCs in WA, OR, & BC). **Prizes:** Memberships (SCC, WCF, USCF). **Reg:** 9-9:45a.m. **Rds:** 10-12:45-3:30-6. **Byes:** 1 (Rd 3 or 4—commit at reg.). **Misc:** USCF memb. req'd. NS, NC.

March 7 SCC vs. TCC Match

Format: 1-rd, 7-board (class) match. **TC:** G/120. **Prizes:** Win—Tornado EF, Draw—Quad EF. **Rd:** 1:00 p.m. **Misc:** USCF memb. req'd. NS, NC.

Seattle City Championship

January 16-18, 2008

A 2-section, 5-round Swiss chess tournament. Time controls: 40/2 & SD/1. Prize fund: \$1000 based on 50 paid entries, 5 per prize group.

A Harmon Memorial Grand Prix event

City Championship (5SS):
\$225-140, X \$90, A \$70

Reserve (5SS, U1800): \$125-80, C \$60,
D \$50, E & Under \$40, Unr. \$20

Entry Fees: Championship— \$42 (\$33 for SCC members, \$38 for members of other NW dues-req'd CCs) by 1/14, \$50 (\$39 for SCC members, \$44 for members of other NW dues-req'd CCs) at site; GMs, IMs, WGMs free. **Reserve—** \$33 (\$24 for SCC members, \$29 for members of other NW dues-req'd CCs) by 1/16, \$42 (\$33 for SCC members, \$38 for members of other NW dues-req'd CCs) at site. **Unrateds—**free w/purch. 1-yr USCF & WCF. **Two-Day Schedule—**add \$1 if playing first round at 10 a.m. (G/64) on Saturday. *Make checks payable to SCC.*

Registration: Fri. 7-7:45 pm or Sat. 9-9:45 am.

Rounds: Fri. 8 (Rd. 1), Sat. (10 @ G/64 – Rd. 1)-12:30-6:30, Sun. 11-5.

Byes: 2 available. Rounds 4 or 5 must commit at registration.

Miscellaneous: USCF & WCF/OCF required (OSA). No smoking. No computers.

H. G. Pitre's Green Open II!!!

G/90 + 30 sec./move

4-round Swiss

coming May 9-10

Reno 2008

Fun and Games From The Western States Open

by
Keith
Yamanaka

Preliminary Events

The 26th Western States Open was held in mid-October, the weekend of the 17th through the 19th. For the sports fan, that's right smack in the middle of an annual convergence - basketball in its pre-season, baseball in its post-season, football in its prime. Even hockey got in the act, with season openers. For 2008, we add a fifth sport: the World Chess Championship was in full swing.

Preliminary events started early this year, with a clock simul given by Sergey Kudrin on Wednesday. Alex Yermolinsky gave a larger, non-clocked simul on Thursday night. And a speed tournament was held Thursday also. I have only a vague, fuzzy memory of the results: Kudrin undefeated, Yermolinsky dropping only one game, and Jaan Ehvest winning the speed tournament. (Look for corrections next month.)

So ends my report on the events I did not witness. Before Thursday's side events, players were feted to another chess cake and champagne. Last year, players celebrated the silver anniversary of the Western States Open. But what was this year's party for? Just a new tradition? Jerry Weikel, the organizer of every one of these 26 tournaments, did not explain. He left that to John Donaldson. Donaldson congratulated Weikel on winning the USCF's Organizer of the Year award, pointing out the rarity of a Westerner capturing the attention of the larger east coast contingent.

Shortly after, with cake and punch still out, Larry Evans took the podium. His subject was the World Chess Championship being contested in Germany between Viswanathan Anand and Vladimir Kramnik. With new games on hand from rounds one and two, Evans was informal and chatty, taking questions, comments, suggestions, and opinions from the audience.

Evans posed an unanswerable question. Who (in our minds) was the Champion and who was the Challenger? Officially, Anand was the champion with Kramnik the return-match challenger. But (argued Evans) Anand did not win a match over Kramnik. Rather, Anand had won a tournament in which Kramnik also participated. In the

history of chess (all the way back to Steinitz in 1886), every champion earned his title by beating the preceding champion, with only two exceptions (Alekhine's death, and Fischer's withdrawal from chess). Evans suggested that Anand was really the challenger, and Kramnik the champion. I seem to remember someone (perhaps Evans himself) asking what if the match drew - which Evans answered with a slow shrug of his shoulders.

I don't remember the analysis of the two games Evans discussed. We spent much more time on the second match game (being an interesting draw) rather than the first match game (being an un-interesting draw).

The Tournament Begins

Reno usually draws well from the Northwest. I suspect this is because of its easy access - a short 90 minute direct flight from Seattle, even shorter from Portland. Add the low entry fee for a major tournament, an amenable hotel/casino as host, and an experienced, reliable tournament staff.

This year's tournament suffered from the uncertainty of the economy and high gas prices (which, if you remember, topped four dollars a gallon way back then). The net result was about a hundred fewer players than last year. Is this a reflection of the economy? A trend away from over-the-board tournaments? I asked some parents whose children just played at Bryant's Chess Classic in December (Seattle). They assured me the game still draws heavily at the grade school level. Declining attendance? "Absolutely NOT!" quoth one of the coaches.

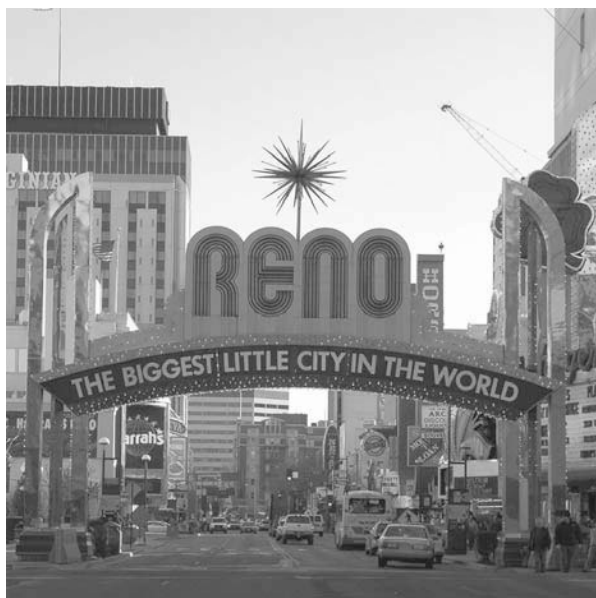
Round Five - Madcap Imbalance

This year, I'm playing in the "A" section, rated right in the middle at 1900. I won my first two rounds, already bettering my score from last year (1 win, 1 draw, and 4 losses). The games were long, grueling, decided by blunders in deteriorating positions. Not the kind of game you want to see nor I want to annotate. Second day, a draw and a loss. Third day led to this fun game.

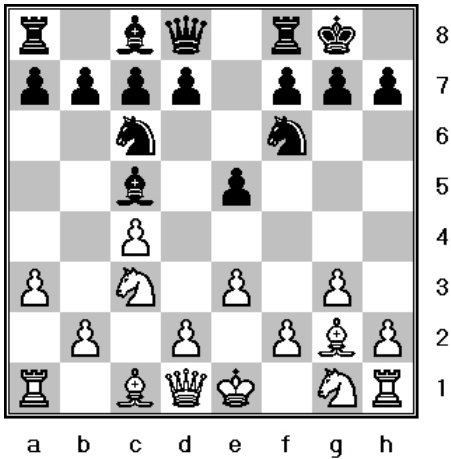
K. Yamanaka - Michael Henebry
Western States Open, Round 5
Reno, October 19, 2008

1. c4 Nf6 2. g3 e5 3. Bg2 Bc5 4. Nc3 0-0 5. e3 Nc6 6. a3

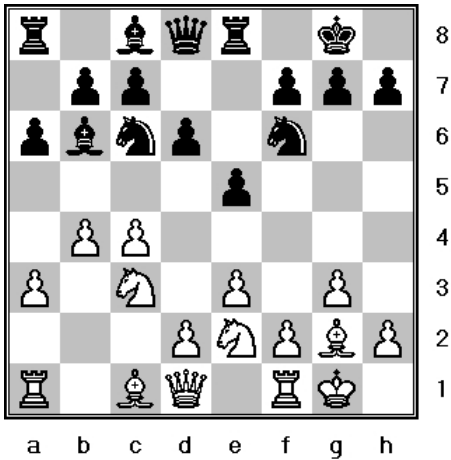
Once upon a time, White could play Nge2, 0-0, d4. But somewhere in the 90's, someone figured out ...d5!, followed by



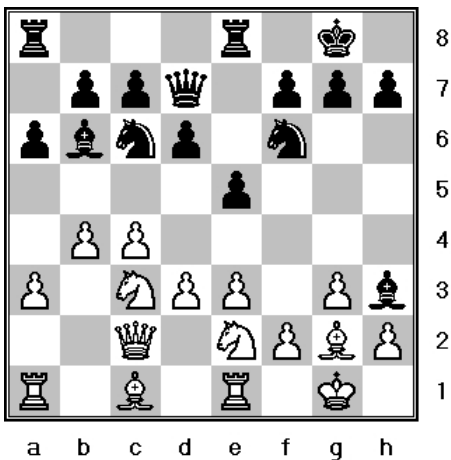
...Nb4, ...Nxd5. If White tries to hold the d-pawn, something very bad happens on d3.



6. ...a6 7. Nge2 d6 8. 0-0 Re8 9. b4 Bb6

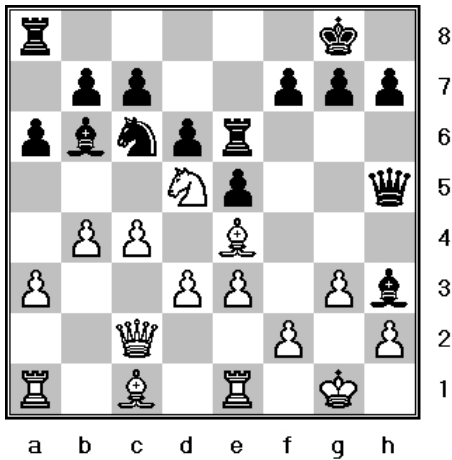


10. d3 Bg4 11. Qc2 Qd7 12. Re1 Bh3



13. Nd5 Nxd5 14. Bxd5 Qf5 15. Be4 Qh5 16. Nc3 Re6 17. Nd5

17. Qe2 seemed the safe move; 17. Nd5 had winning chances. Plan is to defend along the second rank with Ra2 and f4. Black's reply caught me completely by surprise.

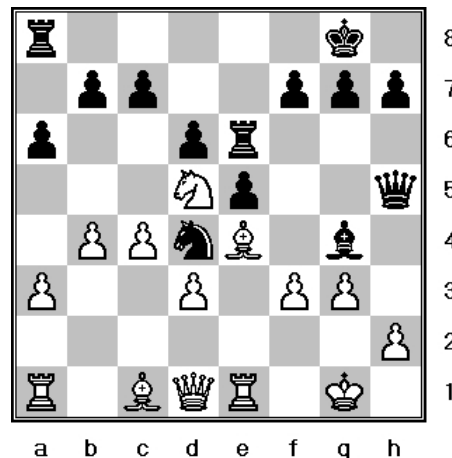


17. ...Bd4!? 18. exd4

I rejected a very messy alternative: 18. Ra2 f5 19. Nxc7 (if 19. exd4 fxe4 20. Nxc7 Nxd4 21. Qd1 Nf3+) fxe4 20. f3!? (Threat is ...Qh5-f3-g2#. Not 20. Qe2? Bg4 21. Qf1 Rh6 22. Qg2 Bf3) Rf8 21. Nxe6 Bxe6 22. exd4 Nxd4 and White's troubles continue. I didn't see all this over the board (I analyzed most of it for this article). Rather, I saw some of the lines. And what I saw was a swarm of pieces near my king and no way to shoo them away. Whereas accepting the sacrifice looked defensible.

18...Nxd4 19. Qd1 Bg4 20. f3

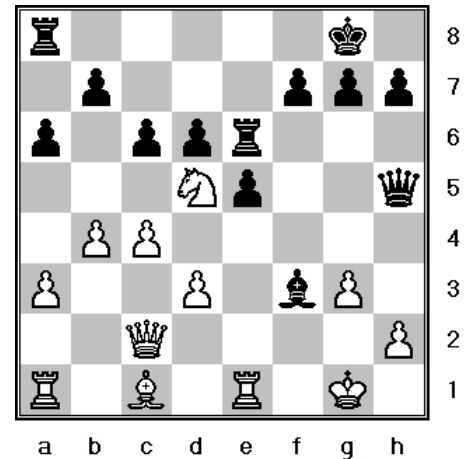
My opponent went into the think tank here, making me wonder if I missed something. I sat down and re-assessed. Problem: 20. ...Bxf3 21. Bxf3 Qxf3!? 22. Qxf3 Nxf3 23. Kf2 Nxe1 24. Nxc7 Nxd3+.



20. ...Nxf3+!

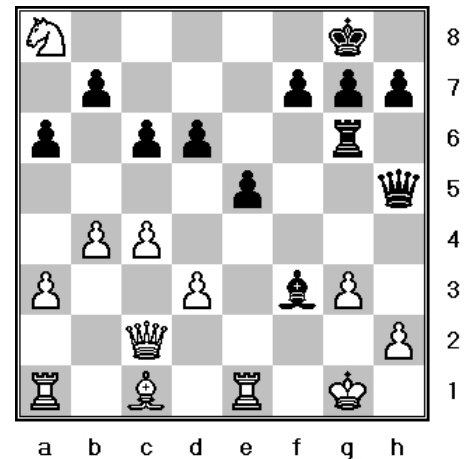
He didn't go for it. Why not? To state the obvious, you don't analyze past moves over the board! After the game, if you're curious (and you should be!) figure it out. In the previous line, 23. Kf1!? Nxe1 24. Nxc7 Nxd3 25. Nxa8 looks like an improvement. 22. Nxc7! is an even better one. 22...Rf6 23. Nxa8 Qf2+ 24. Kh1 Nf3 25. Re2 defends.

21. Bxf3 Bxf3 22. Qc2 c6!?

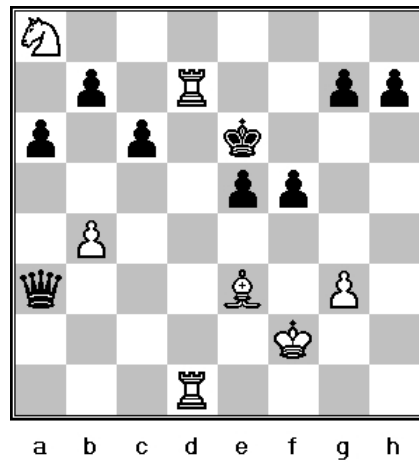
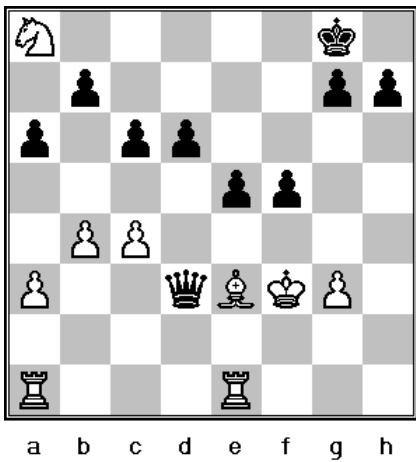


What is this, some incredible blunder? Over the years, I've learned that when my opponent plays a blunder, more often than not it's my blunder. So I settled down to figure out what I missed. I found Black's idea pretty quickly, but I couldn't find anything better than to fall into it.

23. Nc7 Rg6 24. Nxa8



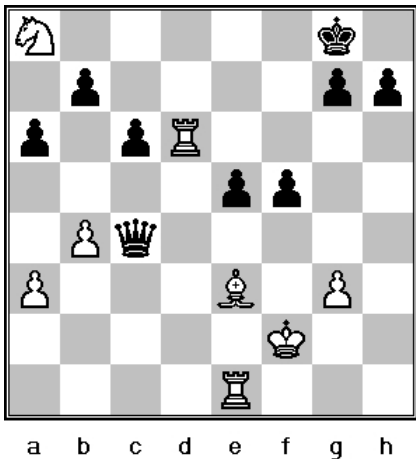
24. ...Rxc3+ 25. hxc3 Qh1+ 26. Kf2 Qg2+ 27. Ke3 Qxc2 28. Kxf3 Qxd3+ 29. Be3 f5?



I think Black is playing for material. When you have a madcap mismatch of pieces and pawns, it's better to play for the imbalances that favor you. Black's positive imbalances are a mobile queen (for perpetual checks or forks) and a full set of pawns (to erect a fortress). My imbalance is an army of pieces (can swarm his king). Black should have played 29...Qxc4 followed by ...e4, ...Q-somewhere, ...d5, and his wall would have been intact. If that happened, my hope was to sac a minor piece to break through, preferably that useless horse in the corner.

30. Rad1 Qe4+ 31. Kf2 Qxc4 32. Rxd6

Now his position falls apart fast. Sometime between now and move 36, ...f4 is probably necessary to provide some kind of escape route for the black king while trying to clear the rest of the white pawns, though the position is still big trouble.



32. ...Qa2+ 33. Rd2 Qxa3 34. Rd8+ Kf7 35. Rd7+ Ke6 36. Red1

36. ...Qxb4 37. Nc7+

The lost horse has the final say!

1-0

Reno Today

A short detour, mostly for other Reno regulars. I've always liked the Reno area. The tourist/casino area is tightly bundled downtown, all walking distance, colored with train lines and the Truckee river. In today's Reno, the lights are even dimmer. The host casino, Sands, is only three blocks from the main downtown drag (and famous Reno arch). But those blocks are littered with huge hulking fossils that were once the Comstock, Sundowner, and Flamingo. Signs promise future condos, but the buildings themselves are dark and still, skeletal or dressed in plywood and soap.

The latest casualty is Fitzgerald's. It was open in October, but shutdown in November. It was a smaller hotel tower, colored green (or course), just behind the Reno arch.

I am pleased to report that the tournament host (Sands) shows signs of continued life. It was purchased recently by Terrible's (as far as I can tell, this parent company name really is a possessive).

During the tournament, the casino/hotel was undergoing a colorful paint job, from beige ("sand" colored, get it?) to a blue/orange/yellow pattern like a huge cabana. I asked an employee outside of the site what he thought of his new employer. His response was cautiously optimistic. So I am also cautiously optimistic that the Western States Open host is good for years to come.

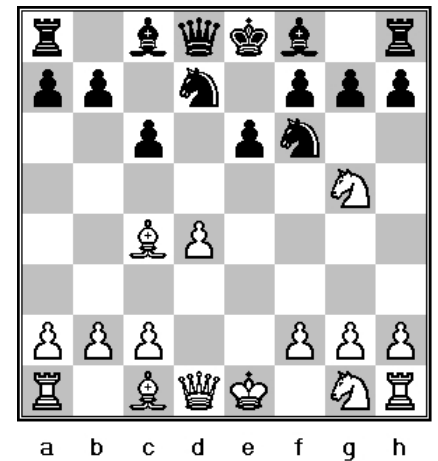
Round Six – Last Stand

Back to the tournament. My results in

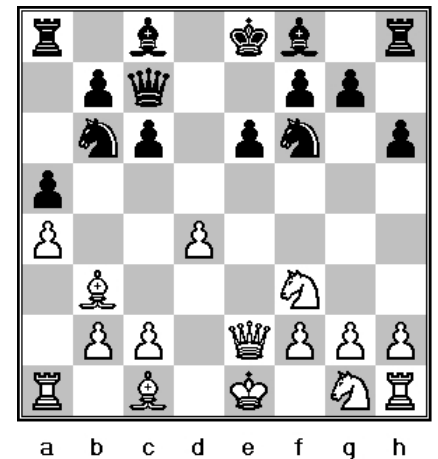
last round games have been decidedly inconsistent. Somewhere in the back of my mind are thoughts of cross-table finish (and sometimes prizes), last-day sights and sounds, travel home, back to work, etc. Furthermore, the last round play and result live longer in the mind and can uplift or taint an entire tournament memory. All of these distract from the business at hand. My opponent is rated 1846.

**Nicholas Karas – K. Yamanaka
Western States Open, Round 6
Reno, October 19, 2008**

1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 dxe4 4. Nxe4 Nd7 5. Bc4 Ngf6 6. Ng5 e6

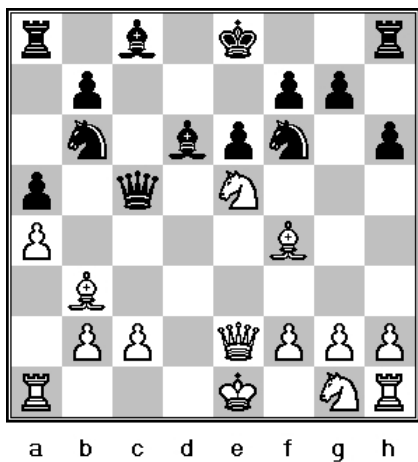


7. Qe2 Nb6 8. Bb3 h6 9. N5f3 a5 10. a4 Qc7?!



Right idea, wrong order. 10. ...c5 is book.

11. Ne5 c5 12. Bf4 Bd6 13. dxc5 Qxc5

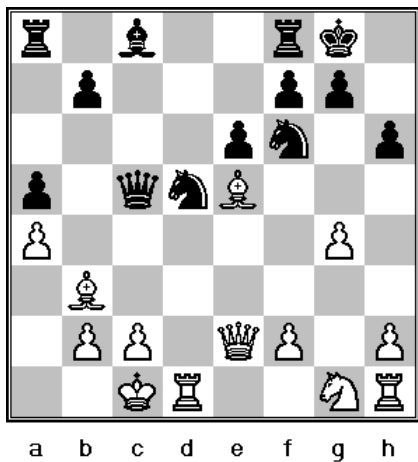


The right idea is to challenge white's occupation of e5. Now my queen is misplaced. Yes, it challenges e5, but it doesn't challenge through to f4 as it would from c7. How subtle is that? Given all that, I don't think the damage from my 10th move is all that bad.

14. 0-0-0 Nbd5 15. Bg3 Bxe5

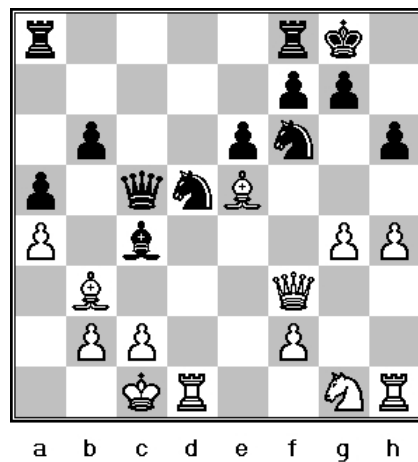
{This exchange looks like a fairly radical decision, parting with the bishop pair and surrendering e5 for awhile. 15. ...0-0 seems solid enough. ~editor}

16. Bxe5 0-0 17. g4

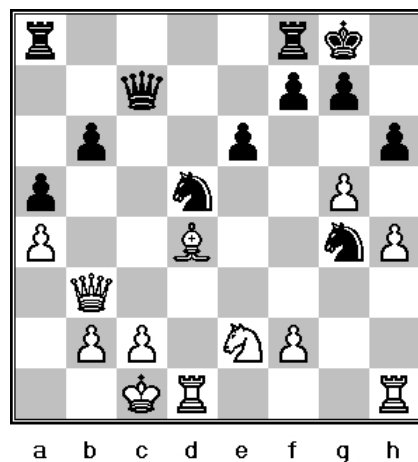


I suppose White can pick his attack, pawn storm or pieces. I can't prove it, but I think the latter is more dangerous starting with 17. Rd3.

17. ...b6 18. h4 Ba6 19. Qf3 Bc4



20. g5 Bxb3 21. Qxb3 Ng4 22. Bd4 Qc7
{22. ...Qb4!, meeting 23. Qxb4 axb4 24. f3? with 24. ...Nge3 (25. Rd3 Nf5) ~editor}
23. Ne2



23. ...e5! {? ~editor}
 Desperate measures. I intended 23. ...h5, but after 24. f3 where does my knight go? Surely not h2.

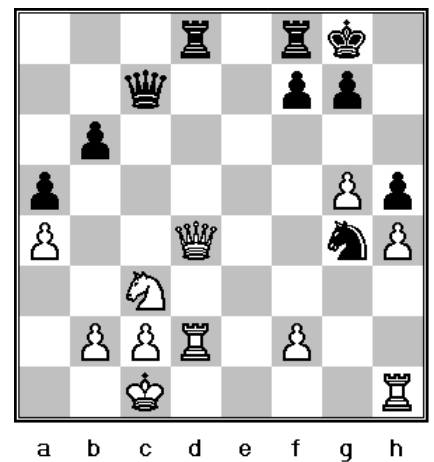
{What's wrong with 23. ...h5 24. f3 Ne5? ~editor}

24. Qxd5 exd4 25. Qxd4

{25. gxh6! is stronger. ~editor}

25. ...Rac8 26. Nc3 h5 27. Rd2 Rcd8

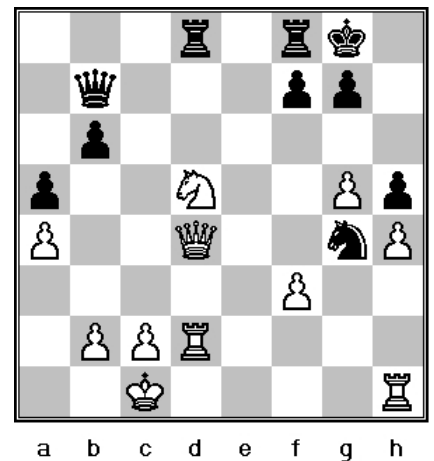
Look at that - his queen is trapped in the middle of the board! At this point, I was rather pleased with myself.



28. Nd5!

Walking right into a pin. But as my clock ticked, I was less and less pleased. I couldn't find a way to take advantage of the pin. And my knight is close to being trapped after f3.

28. ...Qb7 29. f3



29. ...Ne3!

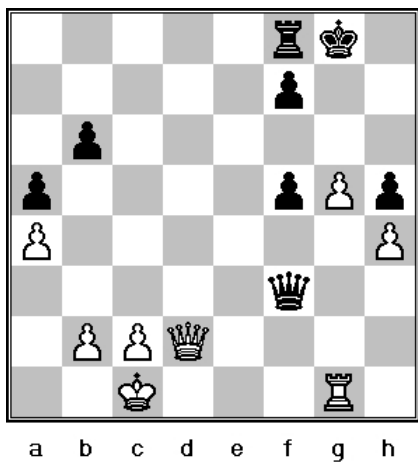
Somehow, this lets me survive to an endgame.

30. Nf6+

{30. Qxb6! ~editor}

30. ...gxf6 31. Qxe3 Rxd2 32. Qxd2 Qxf3 33. Rg1 f5

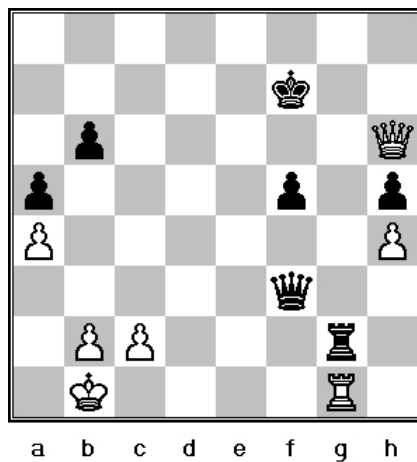
At this point, things were looking up. Got my pawn back, attack pieces traded off, kinglyside in a stable, defensive stance.



34. g6!

Rips open my kingside without even sac'ing a pawn. After 34...f6??, it's hard to find a line that doesn't get me checkmated. Hence the text.

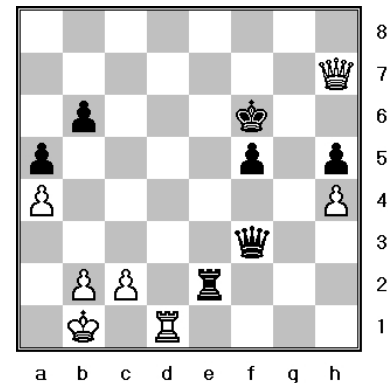
34. ...fxg6 35. Rxf6+ Kf7 36. Rg1 Re8 37. Kb1 Re2 38. Qh6 Rg2



39. Rxf6

I was happy to see this; it means I won't be checkmated.

White has great winning chances starting with 39. Qh7+ Kf6 40. Re1 Re2 (40. ...Rg7? 41. Qh6+ Kf7 42. Qe6+ Kf8 43. Qe8#; 41. ...Rg6 42. Qf8#) 41. Rd1.



Tough decision at time control.

39. ...Qxf6 40. Qxh5+ Kf6 41. Qh6+ Kf7 42. Qh7+ 1/2-1/2

White thought a long time before settling for the perpetual. If he trades off his h pawn, Black would still be a pawn down, but better. Black slowly advances in one of those Check/Interpose/Pawn-push dances.

This last draw was good for a 5th place tie in a field of 40 players.

Party Over, Hale and Farewell

After the party was over, the return flight (like the flight out) was another reminder of the economy. The plane was a smaller propeller plane, decidedly snug. I'll admit, though, there's something retro-romantic about walking across the tarmac, climbing the walkway, and hearing the propellers spin up.

Did I say Reno's appeal is easy access? My travelling companions were David Wagner and Catlan Moser (C and E sections, respectively). Their return flight only started with the Reno-to-Seattle flight. After that, a three-hour layover, a flight to Walla Walla, another wait, then a late bus ride to Milton-Freewater.

And according to them, well worth the effort.



Public domain Reno photos from Wikipedia

Gresham Open is coming!

January 3-4, 2009

Mt. Hood Community College, Jazz Cafe

5-Round Swiss--Time Control:

Rounds 1-3: 40 moves in 90 min, sudden death in 30 min (40/90; SD/30)

Rounds 4-5: 40 moves in 2 hours, sudden death in 1 hour (40/120; SD/60)

Registration: Sat 9-9:45; **Rounds:** Sat 10, 2, ASAP; Sun 10, ASAP

Location: Mt. Hood Community College, Jazz Café and Town & Gown Room;
26000 SE Stark, Gresham

Check www.pdxchess.com for directions to playing site

1/2 **point byes** available for rounds 1-4 if requested at registration, limit 1

\$1,500 (Based on 60 entries)

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Gresham Open (January 3–4, 2009) Entry Form

Name _____

Address _____

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Email _____ Bye Round _____

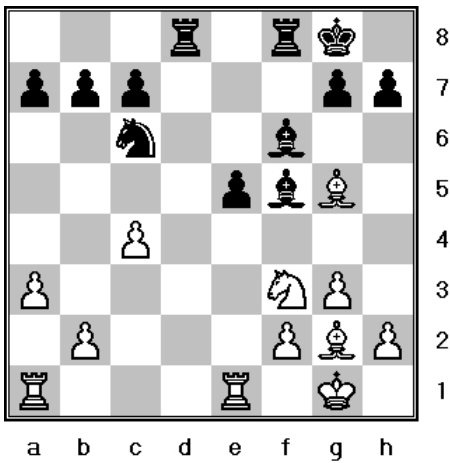
Entries: Payable to Portland Chess Club; mail to Mike Morris, 2344 NE 27th Ave., Portland, OR 97212

And In The End by Dana Muller



This month we look at the consequences of choosing the wrong plan: an exchange of bishops is followed by passive play which leads from a fairly even queenless middle game to an inferior endgame.

Peter Yu – Dana Muller
US Open, Portland
August 1987



The queenless middle game is fairly balanced; Black has weakness in the shape of an isolated e-pawn, but has the more active pieces and control (for the moment) of the d-file. Within ten moves the game becomes a Rook plus Bishop vs. Rook plus same color Bishop endgame which strongly favors Black. The starting position is critical in the sense that White has to tread carefully in trying to neutralize Black's more active pieces. In particular, the bishop on g5 is exposed.

18. Bxf6

This is a highly committal decision, but likely best. Although Black's most obvious weakness is eliminated, there don't seem to be any outstanding alternatives. Moving the Bg5 to a safe square (such as 18. Be3) allows Black active play starting with 18...e4.

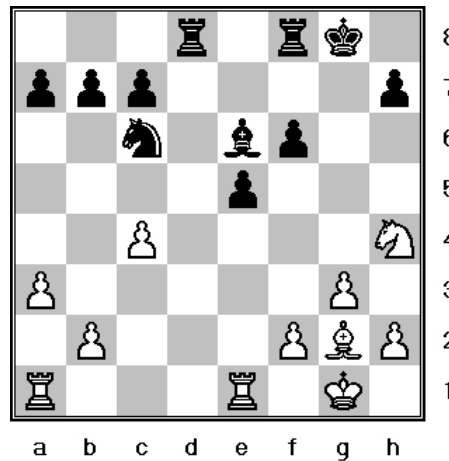
18. ...gxf6 19. Nh4

The correct continuation. There are two plans white has in mind: dominate e4 and f5 with the minor pieces or continue with f4 further weakening black's pawns. Challeng-

ing the d-file with Rad1 or Red1 is less sharp but clearly playable.

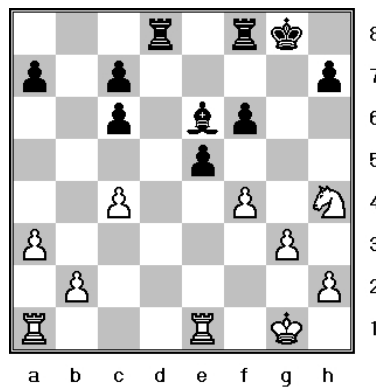
19. ...Be6(?)

During the game I thought I was attacking c4 and gaining a tempo for d-file play. After the game I realized I made a major mistake. 19. ...Bd3 is better; during the game I thought the bishop would interfere with d-file play.

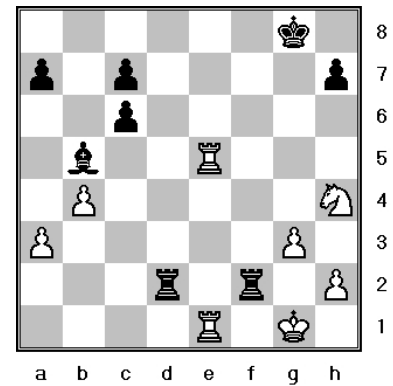


20. b3 (?)

Missing a golden opportunity: 20. Bxc6 bxc6 21. f4! is hard to meet.



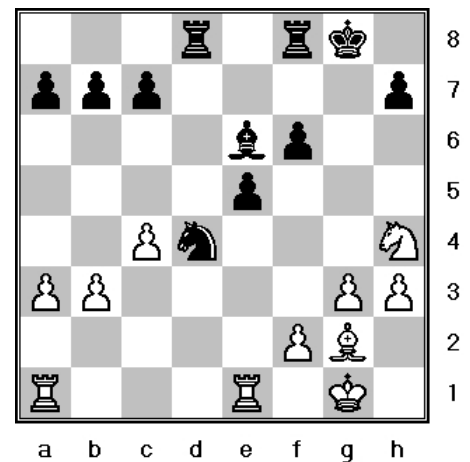
21. ..Bxc4 22. Rac1Bb5 (22. ... Bd5 blocks the d-file) 23. fxe5 fxe5 23. Rxe5 Rd2 24. b4 Rff2 25. Rce1 looks good for White (the idea is Re5-e7xc7 etc.)



Passive continuations as 20. Rac1 / Rfc1 allows 20. ...Nd4 (idea 21. ... Ne2) winning time for 21. ... c6 (controls d5 and eliminates bishop threats against b7) and 20 c5 Bb3 with the idea of Rd2 both look good for Black. The game continuation has it's drawbacks as well.

20. ...Nd4

The Knight, having been spared, becomes a thorn in the side for white.



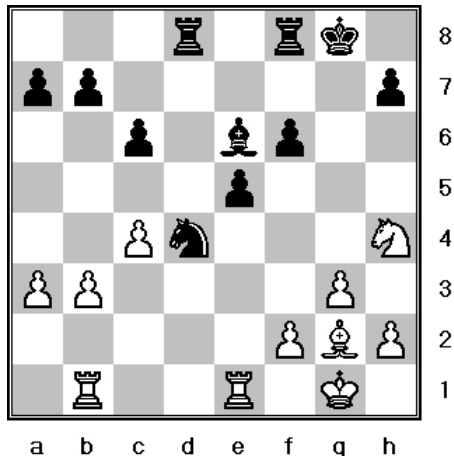
21. Rab1

Looks passive, but 21. Bxb7 Nxb3 wins the c4 pawn. 21. Reb1 c6 followed by dou-

bling on the d-file is similar to the game.

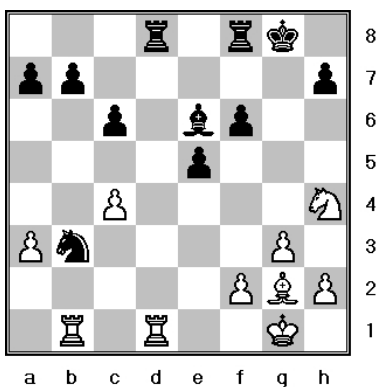
21. ...c6

Both guards the b7 pawn and eliminates potential White tricks of contesting the d-file by placing a piece on d5. It does give White a tempo to try to neutralize Black's pieces.

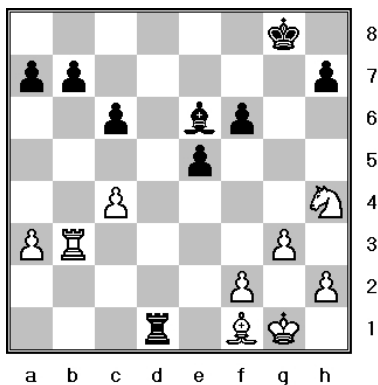


22. Nf3

Understandable. Occupying f5 doesn't seem likely or threaten anything much, and otherwise the Knight looks silly sitting on h4. Although this seems like a time loss, the alternatives are not wonderful-looking either. 22. Rd1 suffers from the tactical shot 22. ...Nxb3 e.g.



23. Rxd8 Rxd8 24. Rxb3 Rd1+ 25. Bf1

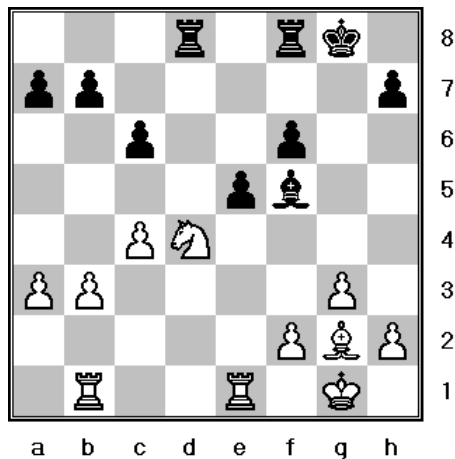


25. ...Bxc4 (or 25. ...Rxf1+) 26. Rxb7 Bxf1 27. Rb8+ Kf7 28. f3 Bh3+ 29. Kf2 Be6 30. Rb7 Rd7 Black is a solid pawn ahead. Perhaps 22. Re3 is best, although doubling rooks with Rd7, Rfd8 should keep Black's edge.

22. ...Bf5

Moving the bishop to greener pastures.

23. Nxd4



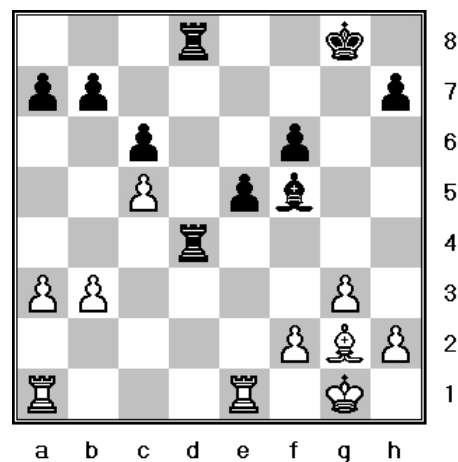
23. ...Rxd4

During the game I thought 23. ...Bxb1 24. Ne6 Bc2 25. b4 (25. Re3 Rd1) Rd3 26. Nxf8 Kxf8 allows White to make the queenside pawns safe. ...Rxd4 keeps the pressure on.

24. Ra1

24. Rb2 Rfd8 looks bad for White. 24. Rbc1 is possible; I was planning ...Rfd8 as in the game.

24. ...Rfd8 25. c5



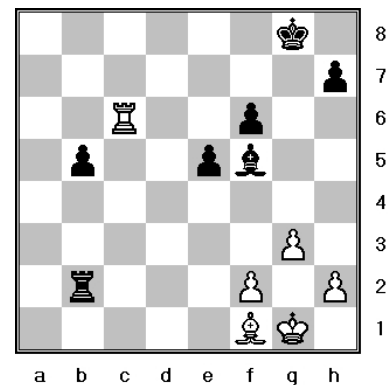
Committal, but the alternatives are passive. 25. Bf3 attempting to contest the d-file may be best, though Black can usually meet Rad1 with ...Bc2, so his control of the d-file is fairly secure, and there is time to bring up the king. With 25. c5 White is trying to secure the queenside with b4. If White can then contest the d-file and exchange all of the rooks he will suddenly have the better endgame. Naturally, Black doesn't have to go along with this.

25. ...a5

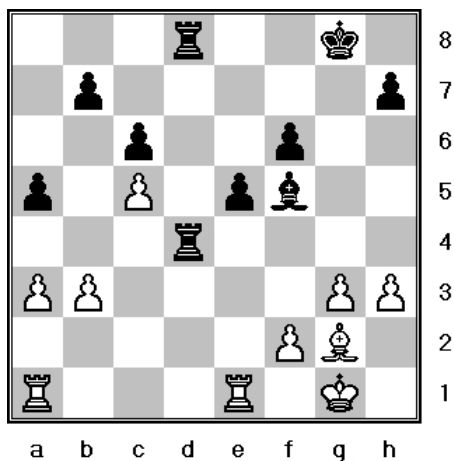
Stopping b4 and trying to prove that the c5 pawn will be a weakness.

26. h3

I'm not sure what White intended. Does he want to continue with g4 driving the bishop from f5, or simply take away the g4 square from the bishop? 26. Rac1 seems more to the point (stops Bc2, guards the c5 pawn). But it still may not be good enough: 26. ... Rd2 27. Bf1 Ra2 28. Red1 Rdd2 29. Rxd2 Rxd2 30. b4 axb4 31. axb4 Rb2 looks pretty strong, since 32. b5 cxb5 33. c6 bxc6 34. Rxc6



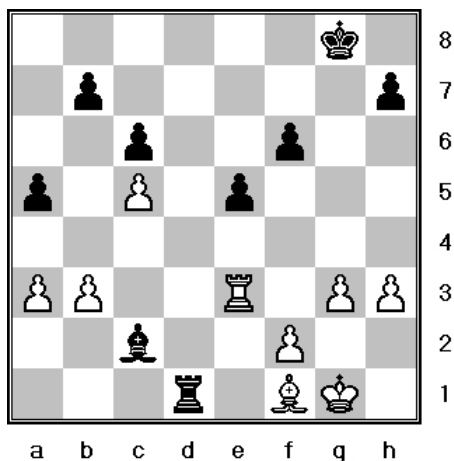
34. ...Rb1! neatly snares a piece with threats of ...Bh3 or ...Bd3, and meeting Kg2 with ...Be4+.



26. ...Bc2

Attacking the queenside. Black seems to win a pawn by force.

27. Re3 Rd1 28.Rxd1 Rxd1+ 29. Bf1



29. ...Bf5

I remember being worried about tricks like 29. ...Rb1 30. Rc3 Bb3 31. Rxb3 Rxb3 32. Bc4+. The game continuation relocates the bishop to e6. This stops some of the tactical tricks White may try in addition to leaving the black rook free to attack the queenside pawns from behind. White's next move is forced.

30. g4 Be6 31. Kg2

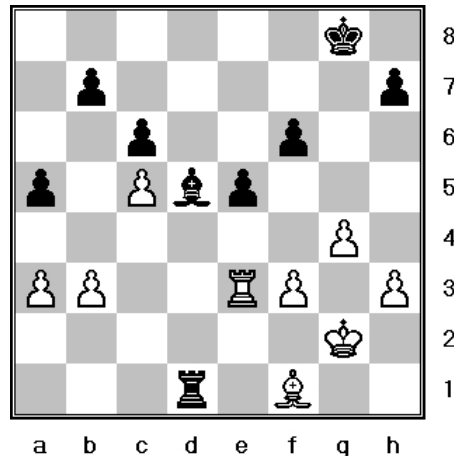
Getting out of the pin; is there anything better?

31. ...Bd5+

Forcing the next move (32. Kg1 walks

back into the pin)

32. f3

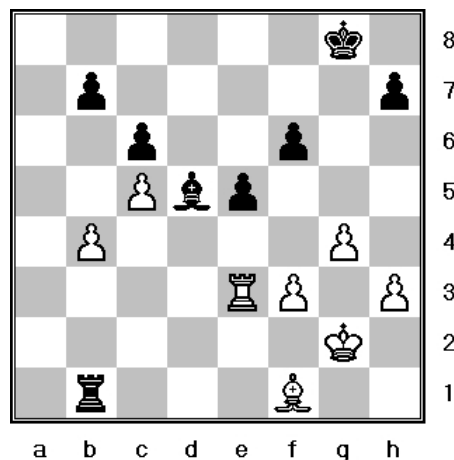


I was quite amused at the sight of a white square bishop with the pawn formation of f3/g4/h3

32. ...Ra1

Finally winning a pawn.

33. b4 axb4 34. axb4 Rb1



35. Rc3

35. b5 Rc1 wins the c-pawn

35. ...Rxb4

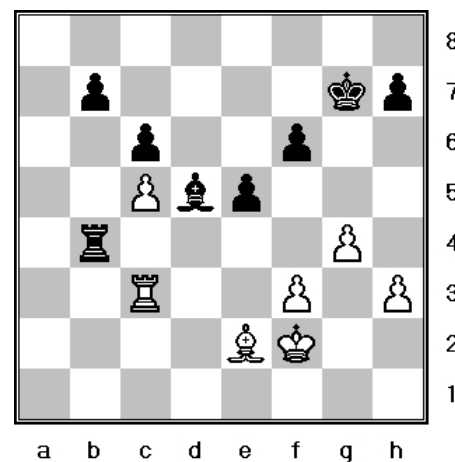
With an extra pawn, a weak white pawn on c5 and the more active pieces Black should win from here.

36. Be2 Kg7

Preparing to advance on the kingside.

37. Kf2

Preparing to centralize with Ke3; 37. Kg3 is a better way to stop Black's kingside intentions.



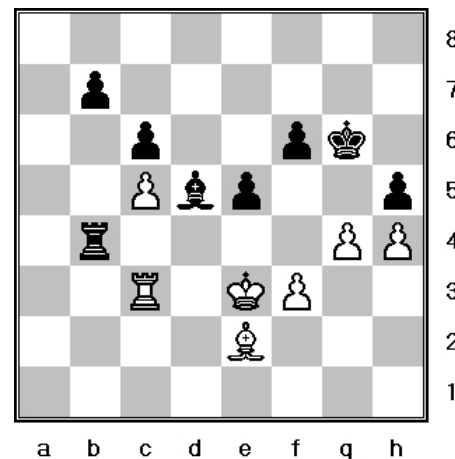
37. ...Kg6 38. h4

Making Black's task easier. 38. Kg3 is more stubborn.

38. ...h5

To expose the g4 and h4 pawns

39. Ke3

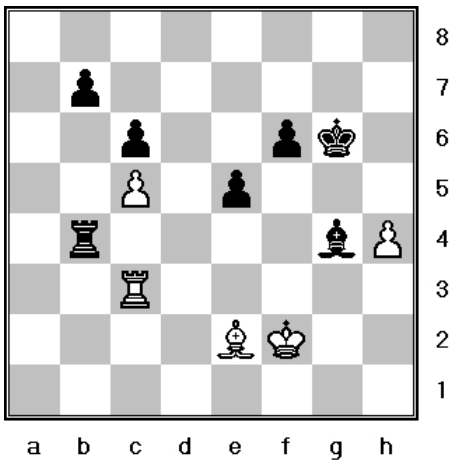


Simply dropping a second pawn, once again Kg3 is better.

39. ...hxg4 40. fxg4 Be6 41. Kf2 Bxg4

At first White's next move may seem a strange choice, since it simplifies into a bishop endgame, whereas 42. Bxg4 simplifies into a rook endgame.

Usually rook endgames are trickier to play, and offer good material-down drawing chances. However in this case it very simple: 42. Bxg4 Rxg4 43. Rb3 Rxh4 44. Rxb7 Rc4 is all too clear.

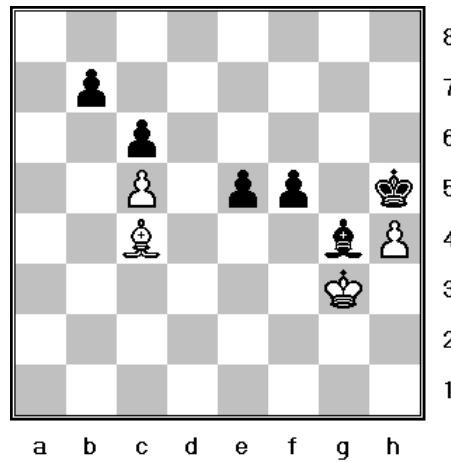


42. Rc4

By going into a bishop endgame White is hoping Black makes a mistake and allows the white bishop to penetrate and attack the b7/c6 structure. Since White is completely lost this may be the best practical chance.

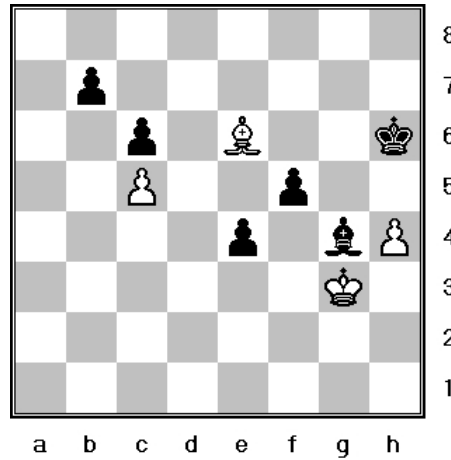
42. ...Rxc4 43. Bxc4 Kh5 44. Kg3 f5

This leads to a tactical finish that is winning for Black. There is an equally good (and a lot less calculation required) alternative in 44. ...Bd7. The white bishop does not penetrate the black queenside (as in the game). Black calmly arranges his pieces to advance the connected passed pawns, and there is no way for white to interfere with this plan. For example 45. Bd3 Kg6 46. Bd1 f5 47. Be2 f4+ 48. Kf3 Bf5 49. Kf2 (otherwise 49. ... Kh5 winning the h4 pawn) 49. ...e4 followed by ...Kf6-e5. There are other lines, but with a modicum of care Black easily advances the passed pawns. That being said, the game continuation is quicker and does win by force.



45. Bf7+ Kh6 46. Be6 e4

White goes after the black queenside pawns, while Black advances his pawns based on specific tactics.



47. Bc8

If 47. Kf4 then 44. ...e3 45. Kxe3 f4+

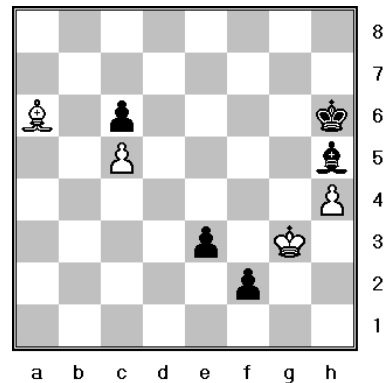
picks up the bishop.

47. ...e3 48. Bxb7 f4+

Another tactic. If 49. Kxf4 or 49. Kxg4 then 49. ... e2 queens. 49. Kh2 e2 also queens; that leaves the game continuation.

49. Kg2 f3+

If now 50. Kh2/Kh1 e2 queens. 50. Kg3 puts up the most resistance. 50.Kg3 f2 51.Ba6 (forced 51. Kg2 Bh3+) Bh5! holding the h4 pawn.



Black swings his king over to e5 and further invades via d4 or f4.

50. Kf1 Bh3+ 0-1

Conclusions:

1. Correctly evaluating a static weakness versus active play is never easy. There are times when a creative plan must be found: in the current game the idea of Bg2xc6 (giving up a bishop in an open position) followed by f4 was atypical and strong.
2. As seen previously in this column there are practical problems in defending a passive position. Giving the defender a series of choices can wear them down.
3. Tactical finishes are fun and they can save time. If there is a simple maneuvering solution that achieves the same aim (albeit more slowly), it may be prudent to forego the spectacular for the mundane.


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Opening Arguments

by Harley Greninger



FIDE has officially announced that the Kamsky (USA) vs. Topalov (Bulgaria) match will indeed take place February 16-28, 2009 (not sure how this will happen as Topalov has contracted to play in Linares during the same time). The winner of this match will become the official challenger of the current World Champion, Viswanathan Anand. Of course we all root for Gata but topping the world's top-ranked Topalov (2791) will be no small feat! Kamsky's lifetime score against Topalov is a dismal +0 -4 =4. Adding to this bleak state of affairs, it appears the match will be played on Topalov's home turf, Sofia, Bulgaria.

That aside, Gata Kamsky is America's top dog and currently ranked number 16 in the world at 2729. Gata has compiled an impressive list of victories since his re-emergence into the chess scene in 2004, following a 7-year sabbatical from serious chess. His convincing win at the 2007 World Cup earned him the right to play Topalov in this Candidates Final.

This month, I'll focus attention on openings we'll likely see while Topalov is playing the White pieces.

For each move, we'll look at **Topalov playing white** and **Kamsky playing black**. We'll see the frequency that each player chose the listed move, his percentage results with it, and the number of games played with that move over the past five years.

1	e4	46%	62%	116
	c5	50%	57%	41
2	Nf3	98%	65%	42
	e6	100%	57%	35
3	d4	100%	58%	12
	cx d4	100%	52%	27
4	Nxd4	100%	58%	12
	a6	93%	50%	25
5	Bd3	66%	75%	2
	g6	40%	67%	6

Player's average performance*: Topalov, 64%; Kamsky, 57%. Database overall score**: 54% to White. GM overall score**: 61% to White. Fritz 11 evaluation: advantage White, +.82. Rybka 2.3 evaluation: ad-

vantage White, +.85. Experience in the resulting position: Topalov, 0 games; Kamsky, 6 games. Overall evaluation: advantage Topalov.

1	e4	46%	62%	116
	e5	35%	52%	28
2	Nf3	100%	59%	56
	Nc6	100%	52%	28
3	Bb5	100%	62%	41
	a6	100%	52%	22
4	Ba4	100%	64%	32
	Nf6	95%	50%	21
5	0-0	97%	66%	31
	Be7	90%	47%	18
6	Re1	88%	70%	23
	b5	100%	47%	15
7	Bb3	100%	74%	21
	0-0	60%	44%	9
8	h3	82%	64%	14
	Bb7	100%	40%	5
9	d3	100%	65%	13
	d6	100%	40%	5
10	a3	67%	75%	6
	Qd7	80%	50%	4
11	Nc3	100%	50%	2
	Nd8	50%	50%	1
12	d4	100%	50%	2
	ex d4	100%	50%	1
13	Nxd4	100%	50%	2
	Re8	100%	50%	1
14	Nf5	100%	50%	2
	Ne6	100%	50%	1

Player's average performance: Topalov, 61%; Kamsky, 45%. Database overall score: even at 50%. GM overall score: even at 50%. Fritz evaluation: advantage to White, +.69. Rybka evaluation: advantage to White, +.39. Experience in the resulting position: Topalov, 2 games; Kamsky, 1 game. Overall evaluation: advantage Topalov.

1	d4	40%	63%	100
	d5	62%	52%	52
2	c4	97%	67%	35
	c6	100%	51%	42

3	Nf3	86%	72%	25
	Nf6	100%	47%	34
4	Nc3	69%	57%	20
	a6	66%	52%	21
5	c5	100%	83%	6
	Bf5	50%	62%	4

Player's average performance: Topalov, 68%; Kamsky, 53%. Database overall score: 59% to White. GM overall score: 55% to White. Fritz evaluation: advantage to White, +.88. Rybka evaluation: advantage to White, +.54. Experience in the resulting position: Topalov, 0 games; Kamsky, 4 games. Overall evaluation: advantage Topalov.

1	d4	40%	63%	100
	Nf6	36%	60%	30
2	c4	98%	62%	61
	e6	64%	50%	14
3	Nf3	63%	62%	30
	b6	73%	50%	8
4	g3	95%	60%	20
	Ba6	100%	50%	8
5	b3	100%	65%	17
	d5	60%	50%	3
6	Bg2	100%	50%	1
	Bb4+	67%	50%	2
7	Bd2	100%	50%	1
	Bxd2+	100%	50%	2
8	Qxd2	100%	50%	1
	c6	100%	50%	1
9	Ne5	100%	50%	1
	Nfd7	100%	50%	1

Player's average performance: Topalov, 57%; Kamsky, 51%. Database overall score: 58% to Black. GM overall score: even at 50%. Fritz evaluation: advantage to White, +.64. Rybka evaluation: advantage to White,

+38. Experience in the resulting position: Topalov, 1 game; Kamsky, 1 game. Overall evaluation: slight advantage to Topalov.

* Average % of each move in the line

** Chessbase 9 Bigbase

*** both players rated 2500+

Conclusion:

Of course in match play, many other

things come into consideration. Chess simply cannot be relegated to a group of figures. However these statistics cannot just be shrugged off.

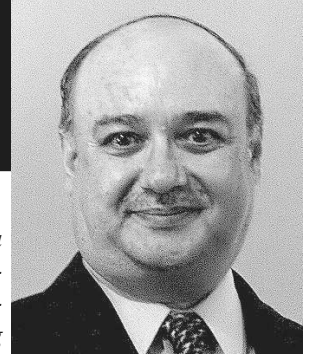
As you can see, Kamsky and his seconds have their work cut out for them when devising a method of play with the black pieces. Their charge will be to find a chink in the armor of the well-prepared Topalov.

Kamsky doesn't really have a 'wet blan-

ket' (i.e. French Defense, Caro-Kann, etc.) to douse Topalov's 1.e4; whereas vs. 1.d4, Kamsky's Slav or Queen's Indian are excellent openings to play against Topalov, as they have a tendency to "calm the savage beast." Next month, we'll switch our focus to possible play while Kamsky is on the White side of the board.

Can Kamsky's play as White make up for his disadvantage as Black? Stay tuned...

Publisher's Desk by Duane Polich



2009. Out with the old, in with the new. And so it goes. Seemingly faster and faster the years go by and now we step into another New Year. Let's take this time to reflect on our successes and failures, building on the successes and learning from our failures. Hmm, might that work for our chess game as well? Nah.

We just came off what can be considered a successful Washington Class tournament, held over the Thanksgiving weekend at the Marriott Hotel in the Redmond Towne Center: 122 players in the one-day scholastic event, a new record. 141 players played in the Class tournament and there were numerous side events. We should be happy with this. But things did not go as smoothly as we would have liked. Registration got bogged down. Registration is always hectic, but in this case we had at times one-person checking entries and memberships and keeping track of money. This eventually caused the event to be submitted late for rating. Some of the rounds did not start on time.

This may not seemed like a big deal, but in this case we failed and we apologize. We want WCF events to be known for being well-run tournaments and we will improve.

It takes people to make that happen. That is where you come in.

Take some time this year to volunteer to help out at a chess event. If you are really ambitious, organize an event on your own. It would be great to have more events to play in and especially having events in different areas of the state. Only this way can tournament chess grow and become healthy and vibrant. We have only to look at the disap-

pointing numbers of members in the Oregon and Washington Chess Federations to know that tournament chess has taken a hit. Oregon's membership is down significantly. Perhaps it is the economy, but whatever it is does not bode well for *Northwest Chess*.

The cash situation – money in the bank – is dangerously low. The board is committed to finding solutions that keep the magazine alive on a monthly basis without an increase in cost. But unless the situation changes, something will have to give.

Encourage your friends to become members. For those former members, we encourage you to renew. To those that volunteer to run chess events, we thank you as that encourages renewals and participation. Every little bit helps; the more members the better. Donations are nice as well. We will continue to do what is necessary to put out a quality magazine and encourage you all to be part of the solution to restore tournament chess and the chess community in general to a healthy state.

We welcome your thoughts on this. Some of you are using the Northwest Chess Forum to offer ideas, like David Badillo, who wrote:

I'm kind of new in the chess community in the Seattle area. I was just humbly brainstorming about what could help us newcomers (and not so newcomers) to increase our interest in chess, and thus, strengthen the NW chess community.

I've always loved stats of many kinds and I was thinking, what if there were some kind of performance tables, maybe published in both the NWchess website and the NWchess magazine, that would keep track all sorts of

leader boards, for example, a table of winning percentages, rating performances, maybe a leader board of points based on the places one finishes on tournaments. I don't know... Some kind of tangible reports based on results that EVERYBODY can see. I think that our human hunger for recognition can be touched this way, and this might increase interest in chess and very likely help to attract new people into the chess community. We all (specially us in the lower levels) love when our name is close to the top of tables and leader boards, and if is not at top, we almost automatically create goals to improve. I don't know, this might somehow create a positive influence... I just thought I should share this.

Cheers, and happy holidays!

David Badillo

Let us know what you think. We would love to hear from you.

Write: publisher@nwchess.com. Let's approach 2009 with gusto.

Play On!

Northwest Grand Prix Administrator

Murlin Varner
13329 208 Ave NE
Woodinville, WA 98072
MEVjr54@yahoo.com
425-882-0102

Transitions

by Pete Prochaska



Combating The Confusion

Student: You know, Pete, there are times when I find chess awfully confusing.

Master: (with a chuckle) Welcome to the club! Even masters get confused on a regular basis. Heck, I've played a gazillion or so games in my life, and there almost always comes a point at which I'm not sure how to proceed.

Student: Really? What do you do about it?

Master: Let's start at the beginning. The thing that makes chess so hard and confusing is the sheer number of possible moves in almost any position.

Student: That's the 160,000 possibilities for the first two moves thing, isn't it? I remember you talking about that at a chess camp. Yet masters do play moves that make sense. How do you sort through all those possibilities?

Master: One can't, of course. So we use three primary tools: patterns, forcing sequences, and strategy.

Student: You mean patterns like a fork or a back row checkmate?

Master: Yep.

Student: And by forcing sequences you mean those checks, captures and big threats you're always talking about?

Master: Uh huh.

Student: Okay, I get that.... but you know what? I really don't get that strategy thing. Everyone talks about it like they understand it, and maybe they do – but I sure don't.

Master: You're not alone; it's a confusing topic. However, here's an idea that might help: *Strong players decide what they want to do before they start worrying about how to do it.* If you have a clear sense of what you want to do, that limits the options you need consider to those that help you achieve your objectives.

Student: That makes sense. Let me see if I'm understanding this right. In the opening, you want to get your pieces out,

control the center and get your king to safety. Moves that don't work to do that can and should be excluded.

Master: Mostly true. Sometimes there's an even more fundamental principle at work. Say the game starts 1. g4 e5 2. f3. What's Black's best move?

Student: 2. ...Qh4 mate, of course. Oh, I see your point. 2. ...Qh4 doesn't control the center, it doesn't promote king safety, and it brings the queen out very early. However, the fact it wins on the spot trumps all that strategy stuff.

Master: Actually it implements the most fundamental strategy of all – checkmating your opponent's king. While general strategic principles are incredibly important – there's no way to play coherent chess without them – remember to look at the position in front of you. The truth is in the variations.

Student: I get that. I see how strategy helps us find our way from the opening position. But that seems like something of a gimme; we always start from the same position, and thousands of trees have been sacrificed to the discussion of how either player should or should not proceed. How do you figure out an appropriate strategy once the game leaves "the book." How do you figure it out when you have to work it out on your own?

Master: That, of course, is the hard part. And, for me at least, that's where the wonder starts. Simply playing someone else's ideas has never appealed to me much. However, working things out for myself, imagining possibilities and finding paths through the wilderness we call a chess position.... that's a remarkable, mind-bending adventure that thrills me to my core. Let's focus on what is normally the first critical phase of the game, the transition from the opening to the middlegame.

Student: I've always thought modern opening theory makes that transition rather a moot point. Often a game is well into the middlegame by the time the players leave theoretical paths.

Master: There is some truth to that,

especially at the elite Super-Grandmaster level. However, most players, including most masters, don't play at that level or with that kind of opening knowledge. And even in elite games, the transition to the middlegame is a crucial phase – even if its been carefully worked out in the quiet of the World Champion's study.

Student: Okay. So why is it so important?

Master: For a bunch of reasons, the first of which is that it's amazingly error prone. That's because this transition is typically the point when players "leave book" and are forced to work things out for themselves. It also tends to be the point at which the central pawn structures start to be clarified, and so this is where the players start defining their initial strategies vis-à-vis the specific position in front of them. As you point out, the game always starts at the same point, and various schemes of development can be – and obviously are – prepared well in advance of the game. So "opening strategy" can be generalized, at least to some extent. However, as the game transitions to the middlegame, the players have to work out specific strategies based on the actual position.

Student: This is where I really get confused. I know you say that "What?" comes before "How?" – but how do you work out what you want to do in a position you've never played, or perhaps never even seen, before?

Master: The simple answer is that you read the board the same way a wilderness guide reads the landscape. A master uses his experience, his knowledge and his understanding of the game to uncover signposts that point towards an appropriate strategy. That is, of course, an extremely easy thing to say, and an amazingly hard

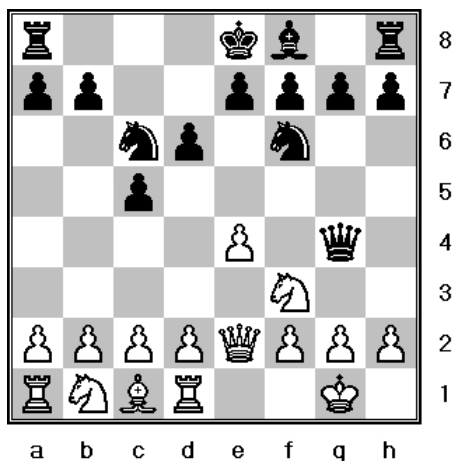
thing to do well, especially under the time constraints and tensions of tournament play.

Student: Can you give me an example?

Master: That I can. This game was played in Moscow, in one of the most important open tournaments in the world. At the time Vladimir Malakhov was a 25-year old Grandmaster from Russia, rated 2664, and Alexander Areshchenko was a 22-year old Grandmaster from the Ukraine, rated 2570.

V. Malakhov – A. Areshchenko
Aeroflot Open, round 6
Moscow, February 20, 2005

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. Bb5+ Bd7 4. Bxd7+ Qxd7 5. 0-0 Nf6 6. Qe2 Nc6 7. Rd1 Qg4?!



Student: That seems risky. Shouldn't he be worrying about developing his pieces and getting castled?

Master: Indeed he should. We could spend time considering Black's various options here, but I don't want to get off on the opening as such. Suffice it to say that 7. ...e6 is both safer and much more common. It's hard to know if Malakhov had prepared for this queen sortie. I'd guess not as there is only one prior game in my 4.3 million game database. So in one sense, this is the start of the transition because White, at least, is now on his own. Does Black have a threat?

Student: To take the e-pawn?

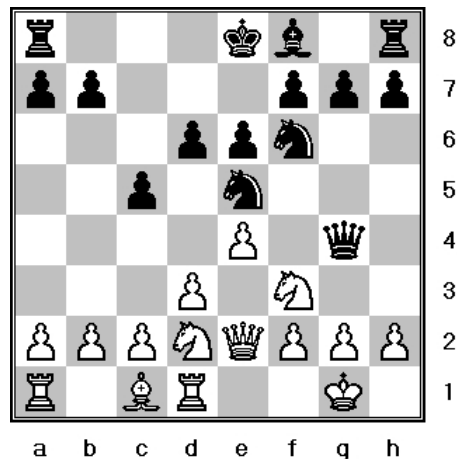
Master: Uh huh. And how did 7. ...Qg4 change the position?

Student: It didn't develop another piece, or get his king to safety.

Master: Good for you. There's also something else that proves quite important

as the game goes along. The sequence 3. Bb5+ Bd7 4. Bxd7 weakened Black's queenside light squares. Now his queen, the last real defender of those light squares, has high-tailed it to the kingside. That's likely to get a master's mind turning over possibilities. But first things first, White clearly doesn't want to give away his e-pawn just yet. So the game continued:

8. d3 Ne5 9. Nbd2 e6



Master: This, it turns out, is too slow; Black has underestimated the danger to his king, a risk that is increased further because the Black queen has no easy way to return to defend those vulnerable light squares. This is why it's already hard for Black to find sensible moves. British IM Richard Palliser suggests 9. ...Nh5 as a possible improvement in his interesting book **The Bb5 Sicilian**. However, I agree with his further assessment: White stands well after either 10. Qf1 or 10. h3. So, did Black's last move make a threat?

Student: Not that I can see.

Master: Okay, then it's time for White to think about improving his own position. What does he have to work with?

Student: Well, he has developed four pieces, while Black has only developed three, and White's king is castled. The black queen out on the kingside, but she doesn't have enough support to start a strong attack yet. So White's king is safer.

Master: Good for you. So White wants to use superior development to take advantage of his safer king. You look like you have a question.

Student: You said a minute ago that the transition from the opening to the

middlegame is where the central structure begins to clarify. And isn't the central pawn structure a key strategic signpost?

Master: That I have. It is.

Student: Okay, this is the kind of stuff that confuses me. Isn't the central structure already clear? We have a closed center, and as a result, that lead in development isn't all that important, is it?

Master: Actually, you'd be surprised how often a lead in development is important, even in a closed position. But this is not a closed center. A closed center normally features interlocked central pawns. This is a dynamic center because the pawns are mobile and the players can still choose between various central structures as play develops.

Student: Hmm.... I guess that's what you mean when you say "Understanding is the ultimate weapon." If you don't understand differences like that, you'll be hard pressed to find the right way to proceed, won't you? So White's strategy should be to open the position, and the next question is "How to do that?" The first thing that occurs to me is 10. d4.

Master: Well, that makes sense. So should you just play it?

Student: Well, Black does have a forcing capture, so I guess I'd better see what happens after 10. ...Nxf3+. Uh oh, there's a problem, isn't there? The obvious recapture is 11. Nxf3, but then he can play 11. ...Qxe4. So that's no good. What about capturing with the Queen?

Master: Before you go on, let's take a closer look at the position after 11. Nxf3 Qxe4. Do you have any forcing moves in that position?

Student: Well, I could play 12. Qb5+, and go after those queenside light squares. But then he can play 12. ...Nfd7 and his Queen holds b7.

Master: Do you see a forcing continuation?

Student: 13. Qxd7+, but he just takes and White is lost.

Master: Agreed. So what do you think of the position after 12. ...Nfd7?

Student: I suppose White has some compensation for the pawn, but it feels shaky to me. And in any case, I'd want something clearer as White.

Master: Me, too. However, after 11. ...Qxe4, Black's king is exposed and White has a forcing move, so you need to take at least a quick look to see if there is anything there. So let's take stock. White has a lead in development, and Black's king is in the center, so the "what" is pretty clear.

Student: He wants to open the center.

Master: Right. However, the immediate "how" – 10.d4 – doesn't work so well. So is it time to find another strategy?

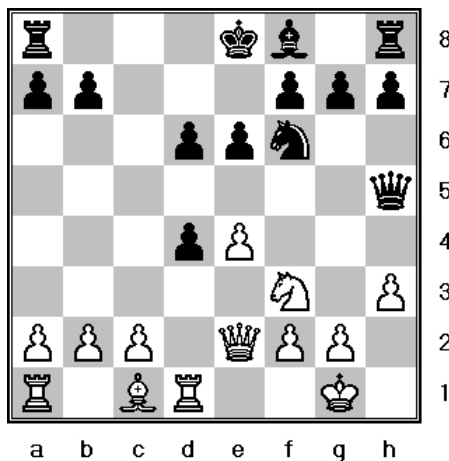
Student: I wouldn't think so. You've always told me the next question to ask is, "How can I repair the variation?"

Master: Good. So can you?

Student: How about driving off the queen? 10. h3 looks possible, and after the queen retreats, then we can break in the center.

Master: Bingo! That's precisely what Malakhov played. The game continued:

10. h3! Qh5 11. d4! Nxf3+ 12. Nxf3 cxd4



Master: Okay, what would you play now?

Student: Hmm...13. Nxd4 Qxe2 14. Nxe2 doesn't look promising, so maybe 13. Rxd4. Then perhaps I can build pressure on d6 with Bf4, Rad1 and so forth. I begin to see what you mean – my strategy narrows the number of moves I need consider.

Master: I'm glad you see that. And your strategy here makes sense. You'll have to be careful about things like ...e5 forking your rook on d4 and your bishop on f4, but as long as you play with reasonable care, you should have the advantage. However, White found a more powerful way to continue. Let's

not lose sight of the fundamental aspects of the position. When you have a development lead, what's the fundamental strategy – especially if your opponent's king is still in the center?

Student: To open the center... oh, I get it. Does 13. e5 work?

Master: It makes strategic sense, but does that make it a good move?

Student: Not according to you. I've heard you say, "The truth is in the variations" a gazillion times!

Master: I'm glad you've been listening. So let's look at 13. e5. What are Black's reasonable options?

Student: Taking the pawn with 13. ...dxe5 seems like the most obvious choice, and I guess we also need to consider 13. ...Nd7 and 13. ...Nd5. Somehow I think 13. ...Ng8 is doomed to failure. Doesn't 14. Qb5+ Ke7 and 15. Qxb7+ just win a rook? Or 15. exd6+ wins a queen, even better. So, Black would have to play 14...Kd8, but then 15.Qxb7 leaves White with at least equal material and an overwhelming attack.

Hey, I just saw something. You know that thing about good moves having more than one idea? It occurs to me that 13.e5 not only opens up the position, but it also cuts off the Black queen's coverage of b5.

Master: Good for you! So 13. ...Ng8 doesn't work. What would you consider next?

Student: Well, 13. ...dxe5 seems like the critical response – that's what you call the critical path, isn't it?

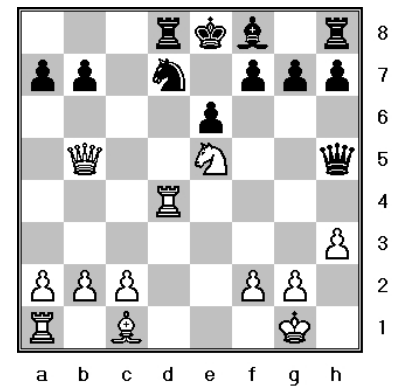
Master: It is. How would you expect play to go?

Student: Now the Black e-pawn blocks the Black's queen's coverage of b5, so 14. Qb5+ seems like the natural continuation, and then 14. ...Nd7, I suppose. Then maybe White could increase the pressure on d7 by opening the d-file with 15. c3.

Master: I like the way you're looking for what you want to do first, even in a highly tactical situation. You're right on the money, but there's an even more powerful way to do it. What's protecting the d4-pawn?

Student: The e5-pawn.... which is pinned against the black queen now that his knight is on d7.... so White just plays 15. Rxd4 and Black cringes in the corner. His only defense is 15. ...Rd8, and then White

just plays 16. Nxe5 and Black resigns.



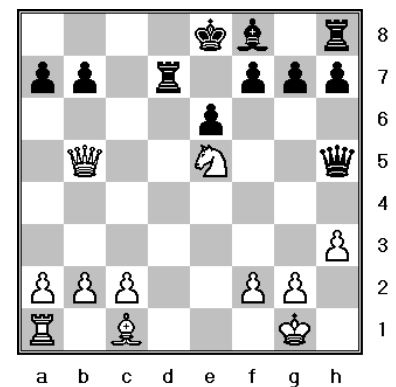
Master: Who resigns?

Student: Black...oh wait a minute. Heck, Black can play 16. ...Qxe5 because 17. Qxe5 releases the pin. I dropped a piece like that against Yuri Greatplayeroff awhile back.

Master: I remember. So what about this variation?

Student: Let's see if I can repair it. Maybe just 16. Rxd7 and then 17. Nxe5.

Master: There's still one trick left. Remember to go as far as you think you need to, and then go one more move. After 17. Nxe5, does Black have a forcing move?



Student: 17. ...Qxe5, but then I have 18. Qxe5, and... wait a minute, that releases the pin again, so he can play 18. ...Rd1+ 19. Kh2 Bd6 and once again I'm the one who resigns. There is a lot to see, isn't there?

Master: There is. Once again, can you improve the variation?

Student: Well, everything seems fine and forced after 13. ...dxe5 14. Qb5+ Nd7 15. Rxd4 Rd8, and now 16. Rxd7 is a forcing way to continue.

Master: Good. Now what?

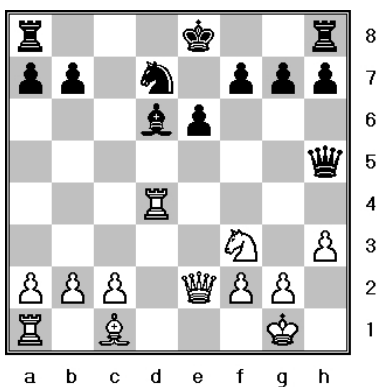
Student: Well, I probably need a forcing move. So 17. g4 maybe? He can take on h3, but then 18.Nxe5 holds g4 and hits d7 again. He's done there, so what else? The queen's only other move is 17. ...Qg6, and then 18. Nxe5 is game over once again. So it looks like 13. ...dxe5 doesn't work.

That leaves the two knight moves: 13. ...Nd5 and 13. ...Nd7. Since White has a forcing check after 13. ...Nd5, let me start there. It looks like Black has to meet 14. Qb5+ with 14. ...Kd8, and then 15. Qxb7 forces 15. ...Rc8. Then White can play 16. exd6 with an overwhelming position. Who knows, there may be something even stronger after 13. ...Nd5, but that seems enough for now.

Master: I agree. There's no point in spending time and energy looking for that "something extra" right now. It's enough to know that you have a clear line to a decisive advantage.

If, and when, the line actually appears on the board, you can search for even more powerful alternatives. So on to 13. ...Nd7.

Student: 14.exd6 continues to open the position, and so seems like the obvious continuation. Then he probably has to play 14. ...Bxd6 – White is going to capture on d4, and Black doesn't want to be a pawn down in addition to his positional difficulties. So then, White's most direct continuation is 15. Rxd4.



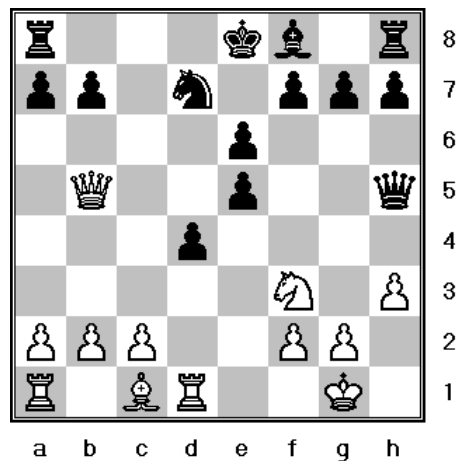
Oh, cool – if Black plays the obvious 15. ...Be7, White kills him with 16. Rxd7 and 17. Ne5+. So what does he do? 15. ...Bc7, I guess, but then White can complete his development with 16. Bg5 and Rad1. I'm tempted to quote some nameless Borg, "Resistance is futile!" In that position it certainly is. So I guess we're done. White plays 13. e5 with a decisive attack. Whew,

that was a lot of work!

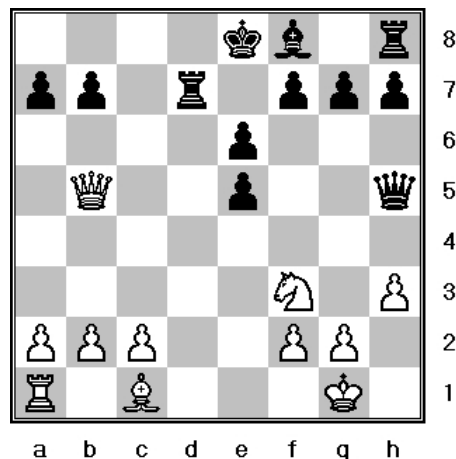
Master: It was, and you did it extremely well. This kind of position is a powerful example of the truth being in the variations. If one finds the right way through the forest, the questions are answered and the game is settled.

Of course, in many cases – in most cases, in fact – it's not so clear. The challenge in many positions is accurately assessing the outcome of a forcing line rather than just finding the line itself. However, this one is clear. In fact, you've already worked out the rest of the game. Malakov finished powerfully:

13.e5! de5 14.Qb5+ Nd7



15.Rxd4 Rd8 16.Rxd7! Rxd7



17.g4!

1-0

Black resigned.

Student: Cool! You said that

Areshchenko is a strong player?

Master: Yes, a very strong player. But even Grandmasters can get mixed up during the transition to the middlegame and lose badly. Of course, one often has to play brilliantly – as Malakov did here – to take advantage of such mistakes.

However, the fact that you were able to work through the complications as well as you did suggests that such powerful play is not the sole property of Grandmasters.

Student: It was easier with you gently guiding me. I'm not sure I could do the same thing in an actual tournament game.

Master: Probably not – yet. Building these skills takes dedicated training and a good deal of practical experience. My point is just that you have the capacity to play at a much higher level than you currently do.

You've got every right to feel good about what you've done so far, but we're not done yet.

Student: Okay, what's next?

Master: A Grandmaster lost in 17 moves. Why? Before next time, go back through the game and find the losing move. At what point could Black no longer hold the position? And then look for ways to improve his play – at that point, and earlier. There have to be big improvements in his play somewhere, right?

Student: I guess, though Malakhov did make it seem pretty inevitable. Maybe the losing move was 7...Qg4.

Master: That seems slightly early for Black to abandon all hope. I'll give you a couple of clues to work with. What's the most important thing to do when you're behind in development?

Student: Develop your pieces?

Master: Smack on.... though it always amazes me how players often don't seem to understand that simple idea.

And.... if the attacker wants to open the position, what does the defender want to do?

Student: Keep it closed?

Master: Yep. So go back into the game and see what you can discover. I'll see you again soon.

Student: Thanks, Pete.

Chess Business by Eric Holcomb



Hard Times – The U.S. economy is suffering a severe recession, with accompanying “hard times.” Although chess can serve as a pleasant diversion during both good times and bad, the business side of chess is not immune from hard times. Last summer, when gas prices were high, tournament attendance began to suffer. Now gas prices are low again, but unemployment, housing, and stock market losses are the new concerns.

WCF and OCF memberships are at their lowest levels in some time, which means less money to keep *Northwest Chess* going. At the same time, our new editor has gone out of his way to get more content for the magazine, so most editions can be a full 32 pages. However, it does cost slightly more to publish 32 pages compared to 24 pages, and significantly more compared to the 16-page issues we occasionally had in the past. Postage costs are also a bit higher than when I took over as business manager in 2003, although

printing costs have thus far remained the same for the same size magazine.

The cost of an annual membership and subscription has remained \$25 (\$17 for juniors) since 2003, and we’d like to keep it that way for a while longer. The *Northwest Chess* cash balance is running low. If nothing is done, there’s a possibility of running out of money early next year, which could result in a missed magazine issue.

We’re not planning to run off to Washington, D.C. to request a bailout, but we could use a few donations. If you’re in a secure position, consider donating an extra \$25 to say that you support our new editor and what he’s doing to bring excellent content to the magazine. You can also “lock in” the \$25 annual rate by buying a multi-year subscription. All donations of \$15 or more will be listed under “Northwest Chess Knights” in the magazine, unless you request anonymity. While you’re at it, you can also point out to other serious chess players (including jun-

iors) that the magazine is worth reading; sample back issues are now available online at nwchess.com.

With 32-page magazines, there’s also room for more advertising. For a limited time, I will make the more favorable “tournament” advertising rates available for any ads, within reason, even for non-chess products that might be of interest to chess players. As I discussed last month, chess coaches and instructors are encouraged to buy a \$100 annual advertising package that includes your business card ad in the magazine every month.

We wish everyone a Happy Holiday, and a better year to come in 2009!

Northwesterners in Reno

Open Section

Washington’s own Viktor Pupols, 3.0, lost to GM Sergey Kudrin in round one, IM Vladimir Mezentsev in round three, and GM Vinay Bhat in round five, and defeated three experts in rounds two, four (Washington’s Steve Merwin), and six.

Rex De Asis, also from Washington, 2.5, took half-point-byes in the first and last rounds, while losing to GM Alex Yermolinsky in round two, beating Steve Merwin in round three, losing to IM Salvijus Bercys in round four, and drawing with Idaho’s young A-player, Luke Harmon-Vellotti (whose 2.5 points included a draw with IM Walter Shipman), in round five.

Washington’s Mark Naus, 2.5, lost to Mongolian GM Dashzegve Sharavdorj in the first round, drew and won against A-players in rounds two and three, then lost to Arizona’s FM Robby Adamson and iconic IM Walter Shipman in rounds four and five, before beating an expert in round six.

Dereque Kelley of Washington, 2.5, lost to IM Salvijus Bercys in round one, Cornelius Rubsamen (Hawaii master) in round two, defeated WIM Ruth Haring in round three, lost to FM Andrew Karklins in round four, drew with a Canadian expert in five, and beat Oregon’s Richard Gutman in round six.

Washingtonian Steve Merwin, 2.0, lost to SM John Daniel Bryant in the first round, drew with experts in rounds two and five (Oregon’s Rich-

ard Gutman), lost to Rex De Asis and Viktor Pupols in the middle two rounds, and finished off the event with a win over WIM Ruth Haring in round six.

Richard Gutman, 1.5, was the lone Oregon representative in the open section. He lost to FM Robby Adamson in round one, Pennsylvania master Glenn Bady in round two, and Illinois FM Andrew Karklins in round three; defeated a strong A-player in round four, drew with Washington’s Steve Merwin in round five, and lost in the final round to Washingtonian Dereque Kelley.

Expert Section

Oregon’s Bill Heywood, 4.0, tied for fifth-sixth, and was in the hunt for first until he lost to eventual co-champion Benjamin Marmont in round five.

Roberto Dominguez from Oregon scored 1.5, withdrawing before the final round.

Class A Section

Oregon’s Paul Romero, 4.5, tied for second through fourth (as did Idahoan Dan Mayers, whom Romero defeated in round two).

Washington’s Fred Kleist and Keith Yamanaka, Oregon’s Larry Ball, and Idaho’s Mark Havrilla all scored 4.0, and tied for fifth through tenth.

Other Northwesterners in this section included: Mika Mitchell, Washington, 3.5; Edward Addis II and David Fulton, Oregon, both at 3.0;

Michael Goffe, Oregon, 2.5; Robert Bond and Drayton Harrison, Washington both with 2.0.

Class B Section

Washington’s Erland Millikan and Oregon’s Ewald Hopfenzitz each scored 4.5 and joined a six-way tie for first.

Just a half-point off the pace at 4.0 were Washington’s Arthur Iodice and Oregon’s William Gagnon and Alex Grom.

Oregon’s Michael Vaughn scored 3.5; at 3.0 were Washington’s Stephen Buck and Oregon’s Ritchie Duron and Wray Maxwell. Michael Titus of Oregon scored 2.0 and Washington’s Blackmar-Diemer fanatic Ernst Rasmussen finished with 1.5.

Class C Section

Richard Golden of Washington and Jim Fety of Oregon tied for sixth through thirteenth with 4.0. Oregon’s Peter Grant and Washingtonian August Piper scored 3.5. Other Oregon players: Bernard Spera, 3.0; David Wagner, 2.5; Tony Midson, 2.0.

Class D Section

In a tie for fifth through eighth with 4.0 were Washingtonians Robert Morgan Goodfellow and Nathaniel Yee. Kerry Van Veen, Washington, had 3.5. At 2.0 were Washington’s Dennis McGuire and John Mead, and Oregon’s George Petersen. Oregon’s Catlin Moser, previously unrated, lost two rounds and withdrew.

Theoretically Speaking

by Bill McGeary



Botvinnik Symmetrical English: 5. Nf3 e5, Part Two

While the pawn is the lowest value piece on the board, squares themselves have great value as staging points for operations. The closed nature of the position decreases the number of squares that are relevant at any one time, while increasing those squares' value.

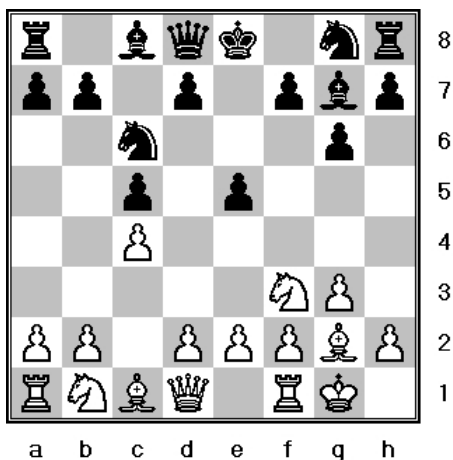
Games played from the position after Black's move five are based around the control of such squares and the results are generally determined by that control. The d5 square is the obvious square of note, but there are three other critical squares that we must observe. The b4 square is a critical link in White's most basic plan. Struggle for control of b4 will bring each side to have units focused on b4. Seeds of advantage are found by either side that can assign pieces to watch b4 and perform another positive task. White getting a knight entrenched on d5 is an example of this as the steed on d5 supports b4.

The corresponding square b5 is important because it has some indirect influence over the middle d-file from d4-d6. The final square of importance is d4. Black has quite an array trained on d4, yet it is very uncommon for any Black piece to arrive at d4 and less frequent that it will have much impact. The reason for all of the emphasis by Black on d4 is that if White can arrange to play d4 himself, the weakness of d5 and d6 will be exposed.

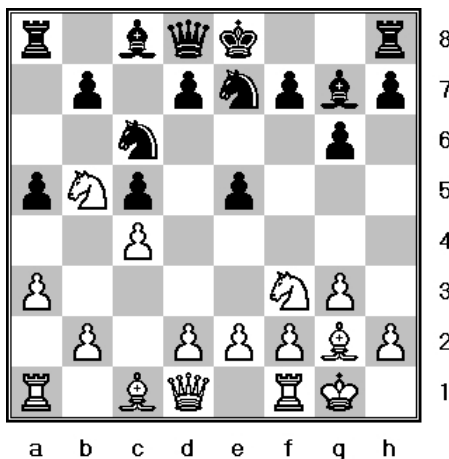
It is important to note that which squares are important and just how important they are is likely to change, but at the beginning these are the critical squares.

Hillar Karner – Lutz Espig
Tallinn, Round 8
Tallinn, Estonia, 1975

1. Nf3 e5 2. g3 g6 3. Bg2 Bg7 4. 0-0
Nc6 5. c4 e5

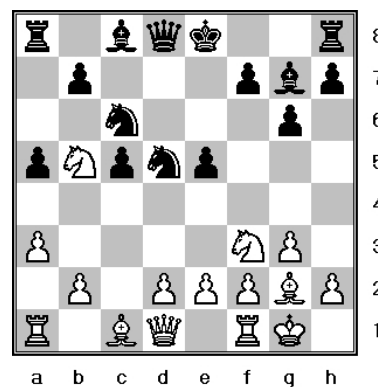


6. Nc3 Nge7 7. a3 a5 8. Nb5

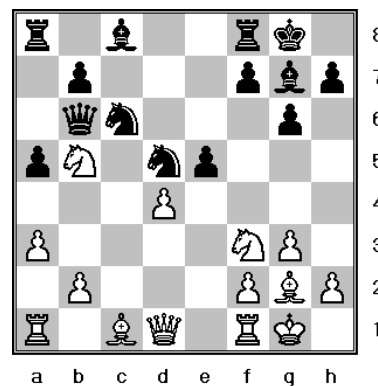


White uses the changed status of b5 in order to try to push through d4. This does relinquish control of d5 and that is where the immediate priority for Black should be.

Can 8. ...d5 be played? 8. ...d5 9. cxd5 Nxd5 doesn't look too bad, though there are some tactics on the long diagonal to watch.



How about 8. ...0-0? Then the game plan, 9. e3 (9. Nd6!?) 9. ...d5 10. cxd5 Nxd5 11. d4 cxd4 12. exd4 Qb6 is certainly no worse for Black.



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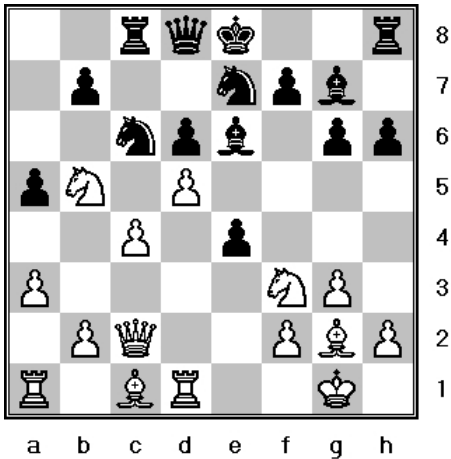
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So, this particular plan for White might not be the best, but lets see what happens when Black sticks to the standard development.

8. ...d6 9. e3 Be6 10. Qc2 h6 11. Rd1 Rc8 12. d4 cxd4 13. exd4 e4 14. d5

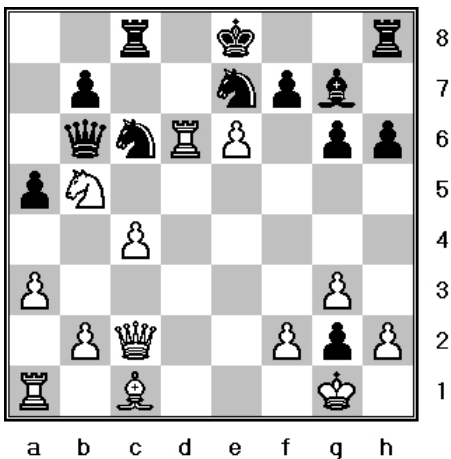


Black could certainly have avoided all these complications by simply castling at move 10 or 11. Instead 13. ...exd4 14. Nfxd4 Nxd4 15. Nxd4 will likely compel Black into 15. ...Rxc4 16. Nxe6 or 15. ...Bxc4 16. Bxb7.

14. ...exf3 15. dxe6 fxe2 16. Rxd6

White has given up a piece for a couple of pawns. The real factor is the combination of Black's unsafe king and the disparity in coordination between the two armies.

16. ...Qb6



17. Be3 Qa6 18. exf7+ Kxf7 19. Qe4 Rhe8 20. Qe6+ Kf8 21. Bc5



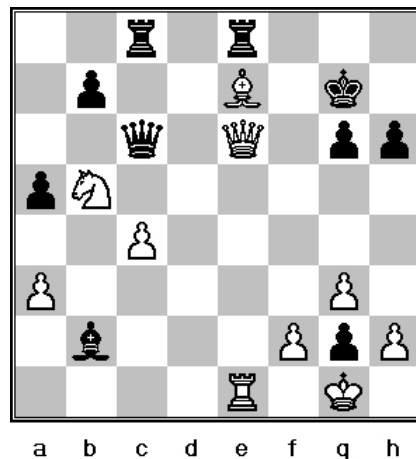
21. ...Be5 22. Re1

Showing that ...Be5 was futile; White would love to have a knight on d6.

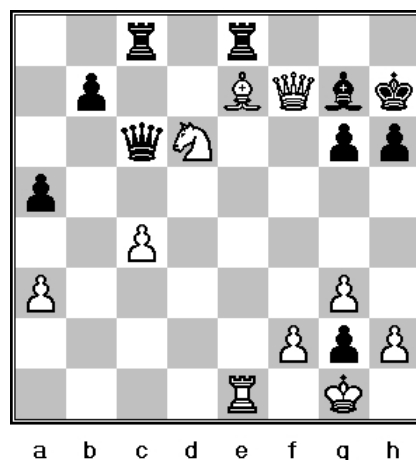
22. ...Bxb2 23. Rxc6

23. Rd7 intending 24. Nd6 is also strong.

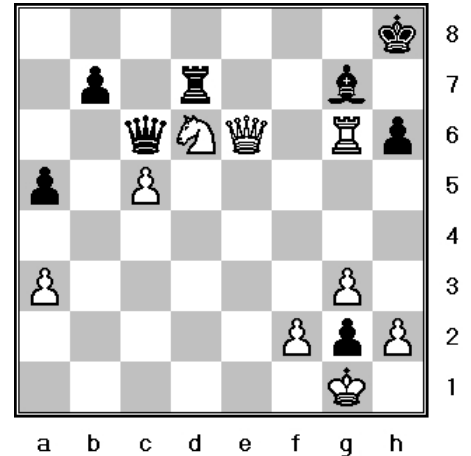
23. ...Qxc6 24. Bxe7+ Kg7



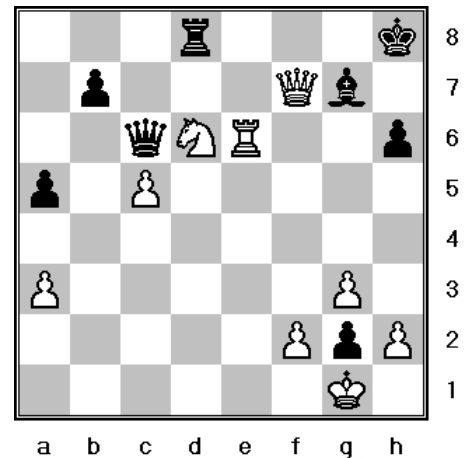
25. Nd6 Kh7 26. Qf7+ Bg7



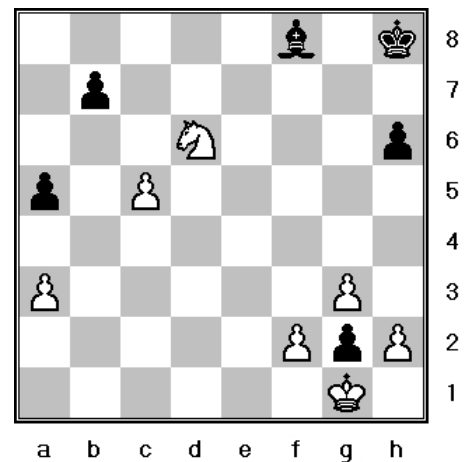
27. Re6 Kh8 28. Rxc6 (28. Bf6!) 28. ...Rxe7 29. Qxe7 Rc7 30. Qe6 Rd7 31. c5



31. ...Kh7 32. Qf5 Kg8 33. Re6 Rd8 34. Qf7+ Kh8



35. Re8+ (35. Re7 Rg8 36. Qg6, threatening 37. Nf7#, wins instantly.) 35. ...Rxe8 36. Qxe8+ Qxe8 37. Nxe8 Bf8 38. Nd6



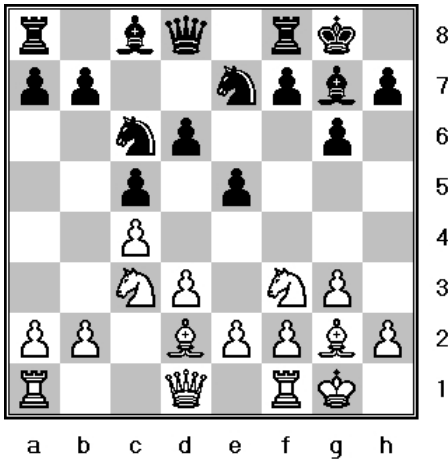
38. ...b6 39. a4 (Or 39. Nf7+ and 40. c6!) 39. ...Kg8 40. Kxg2 bxc5 41. Nc4 Kf7 42. Kf3 1-0

Not typical of this variation, but an example of what can happen if either side isn't keen to the importance of key squares, d4 in this case.

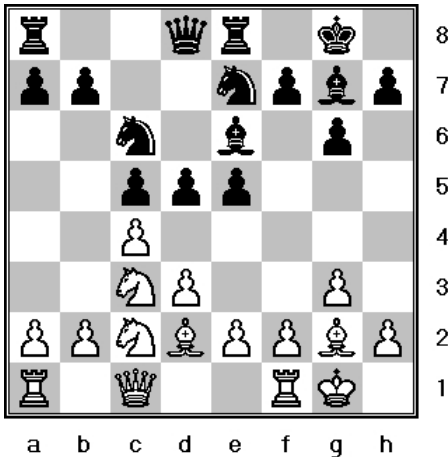
A more standard example:

Pavel Peniska – Tom Wedberg
Osterskar Open
Osterskar, Sweden, 1994

1. c4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. g3 e5 4. Nc3 g6 5. Bg2 Bg7 6. 0-0 d6 7. d3 Nge7 8. Bd2 0-0

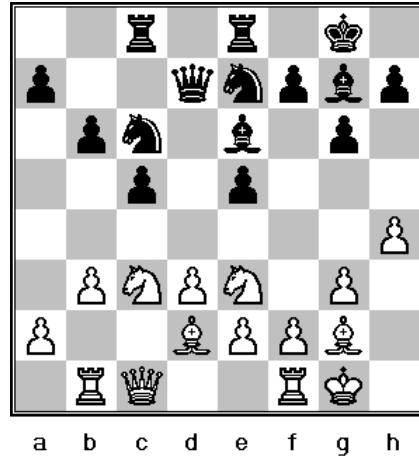


9. Qc1 Re8 10. Ne1 Be6 11. Nc2 d5

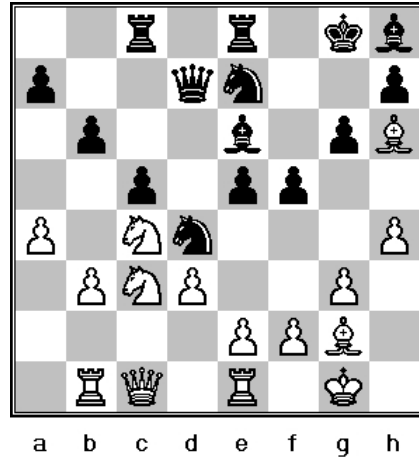


Bd2 and Qc1 are fairly reasonable moves, yet they don't affect the fight for the important squares. After this Black is left with a formation that he had sought and hasn't had to really give up anything for it, not even the b5 square.

12. cxd5 Nxd5 13. Ne3 Nde7 14. Rb1 Rc8 15. b3 b6 16. h4 Qd7

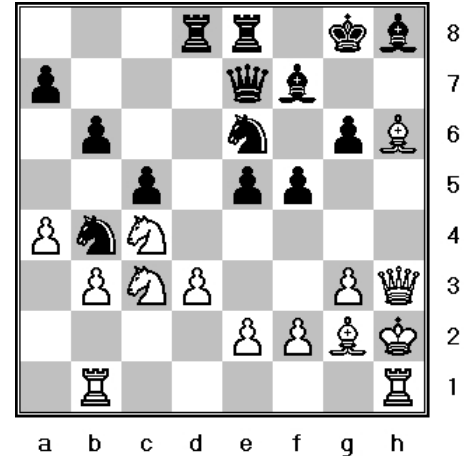


17. Re1 f5 18. Nc4 Nd4 19. Bh6 Bh8 20. a4



White seems content to work on keeping things under wraps on the wings. The problem is that without any play in the center, White is left in strategic passivity and must hope that Black overlooks something.

20. ...Rcd8 21. Kh2 Bf7 22. Qg5 Nec6 23. h5 Nb4 24. hxg6 hxg6 25. Qh4 Ne6 26. Rh1 Qe7 27. Qh3



The threat on the h-file is nothing really, but it is what he has been playing for. White failed to take into account the fight for d5 or b4 which has limited him to ideas such as this unusual doubling on the h-file.

27. ...e4 28. Bd2 exd3 29. Kgl Bg7 30. Qh7+ Kf8 31. Bh6 Qf6 0-1

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Nakamura Channels Suttles in Dresden

by
John
Glass

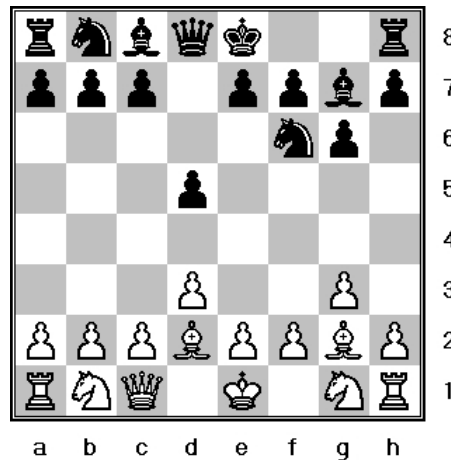
Hikaru Nakamura (2704) –
Pentala Harikrishna (2659)
2008 Olympiad, Round 9
Germany, November 13, 2008

1. g3 d5 2. Bg2 Nf6 3. d3

Nakamura knows his theory as deeply as any top GM, but he also has an uncanny knack for knowing how to take his competitors out of their comfort zones.

Playing in Suttles' heterodox style, Nakamura forsakes the center and encourages his opponent to occupy this prime real estate with his pawns. If Harikrishna plays into Nakamura's plans, the pawn center might actually become a hindrance to the coordination of Harikrishna's pieces, allowing Nakamura to undermine the central pawns or to launch a wing attack.

3 ... g6 4. Bd2!? Bg7 5. Qc1



The recently concluded 38th Chess Olympiad in Dresden, Germany proved a difficult test for the many world-class players brought together to represent their countries. The USA edged out the Ukraine and Russia to win the bronze medal, Armenia repeated as their gold medal performance, and Israel took silver.

Grandmaster Hikaru Nakamura ably represented the United States on board 2, as we can see in his game against Indian GM Pendyala Harikrishna.

Harikrishna, like Nakamura, was a prodigy – the 22-year-old Harikrishna was once the youngest Indian Grandmaster, and 20-year-old Nakamura was the youngest American master, also holding, for a time, the record as youngest American GM.

Here, Nakamura shows he is still *l'enfant terrible* as he channels maverick Canadian Grandmaster Duncan Suttles. Surely this is not a coincidence, since Nakamura lately resides in Vancouver, British Columbia. Not only does Nakamura venture into a strikingly unorthodox line pioneered by Suttles, but his play in this game embodies Suttles' explosively hypermodern approach.

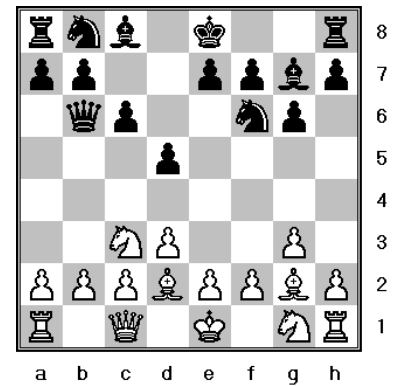
Holy heresy, Batman!

White's last two moves look bizarre, but there is a method in this madness. The strategy of attacking on the black squares is not a bad one. Black's most principled reply is 5... c6, denying the bishop at g2 its scope.

A similar position with ... c6 arose in

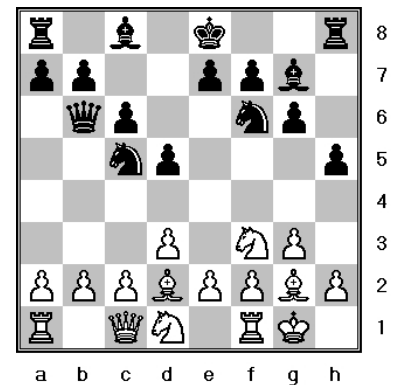
Duncan Suttles – Pal Benko
Hastings
England, 1973/4

1. g3 d5 2. Bg2 Nf6 3. d3 g6 4. Bd2 c6 5. Nc3 Bg7 6. Qc1 Qb6?



As we shall see in a moment, there is something about an early placement of the queen at c1 that makes the opponent want to post his queen early as well. Benko eyes b2 and the dark squares around the king, but this comes to nothing as the queen cannot achieve these objectives.

7. Nd1 h5 8. Nf3 Nbd7 9. 0-0 Nc5?

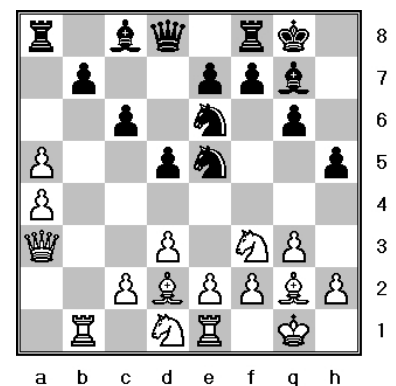


This encourages White's queenside expansion. Better was 9. ...Nf8 instead.

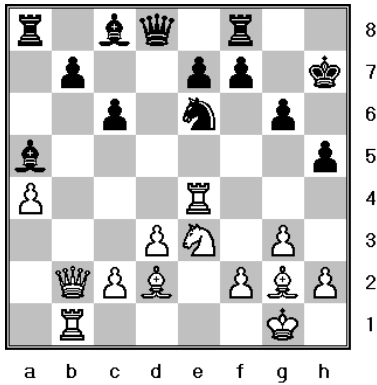
10. b4 Ne6 11. a4 a5?

Temporarily giving up the a-pawn is a big mistake, and, as we'll see, it allows white to take the initiative by attacking on the b-file. Better was 11. ...c5.

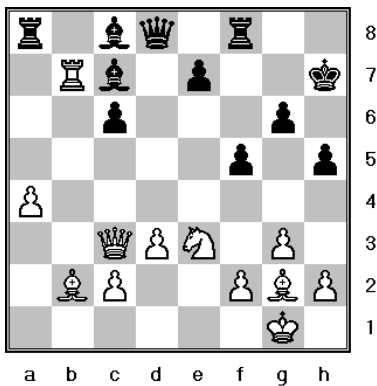
12. bxa5 Qd8 13. Rb1 0-0 14. Qa3 Ng4 15. Re1 Ne5



16. Nxe5 Bxe5 17. e4 dxe4 18. Rxe4 Bc7
 Else queenside black square weaknesses.
 19. Qb2 Kh7 20. Ne3 Bxa5



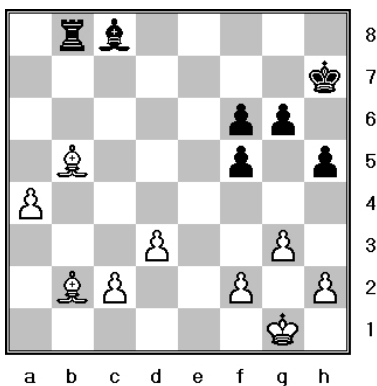
21. Bc1 Bc7 22. Qc3 f5 23. Rxe6 Bxe6 24.
 Rxb7 Bc8 25. Bb2



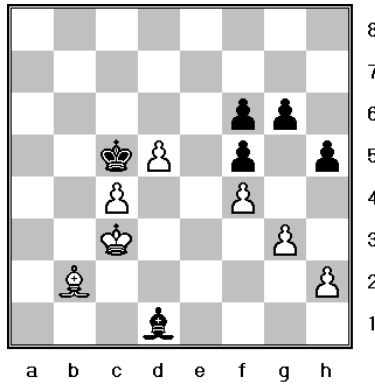
25. ...Rf6?

The best defense here is 25. ...Rg8 (not 25. ...e5?, answered by 26. Qxe5, or 25. ...Rf7, answered by 26. Rxc7!), which leads to complicated play, with white advantage. For example, after 26. Rb4 Ba5 27. Qxc6 Ra6 28. Rd4 Rxc6 29. Rxd8 Ra6 30. Rd4, the three extra pawns are worth much more than the exchange. Now an explosion:

26. Rxc7! Qxc7 27. Nd5 Qd6 28. Nxf6+ Qxf6 29. Qxf6 exf6 30. Bxc6 Rb8 31. Bb5



31. ...Bd7 32. c4 Kg7 33. Kf1 Kf7 34. Ke2 Ke7 35. Kd2 Ra8 36. Kc3 Rxa4 37. Bxa4 Bxa4 38. f4 Bd1 39. d4 Kd6 40. d5 Kc5



41. Ba3+ Kb6 42. Be7 Bf3 43. Kd4 Bd1 44. Bxf6 Ba4 45. Bd8+ Ka6 46. c5 Be8 47. Ke5 Bf7 48. c6 1-0

Instead Harikrishna played....

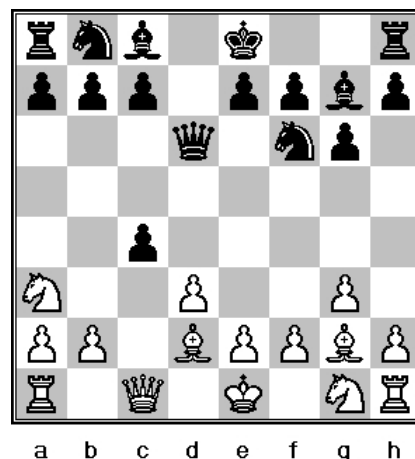
5. ...Qd6?!

This isn't a bad move per se – black will delay castling to avoid a kingside onslaught, and the queen at d6 can provide support for black pawns on c5 or e5 in the future. Also, it doesn't look like white is really up to much, so why should black take his time? The problem with 5. ...Qd6 is that it plays right into Nakamura's plans. White's next few moves, which are as much psychological warfare as considered strategy, take black on a trip down the rabbit hole.

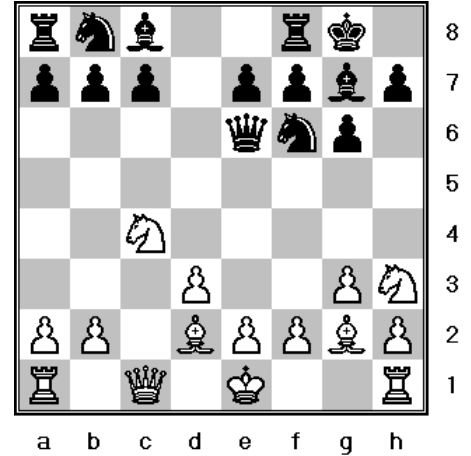
6. c4 dxc4

Ideally, black would like to be able to play 6. ...c6, preserving his center and planning to recapture on d5 with the c-pawn. The queen on d6 prevents this, since after 6. ...c6, the c-pawn could not recapture on 7. cxd5 anyway: 7. ...cxd5?? 8. Qxc8+.

7. Na3!

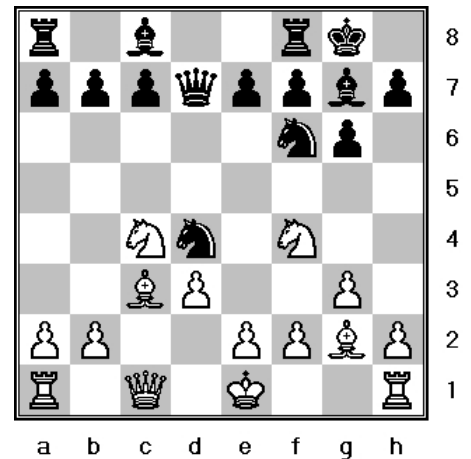


7. ...cxd3?? is answered by 8. Nb5.
 7. ...0-0 8. Nxc4 Qe6 9. Nh3

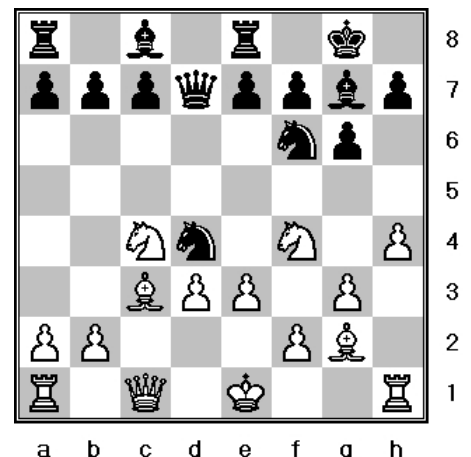


Knight strong on rim. Center bad. Bizzaro chess player no like center.

9. ...Nc6 10. Nf4 Qd7 11. Bc3 Nd4



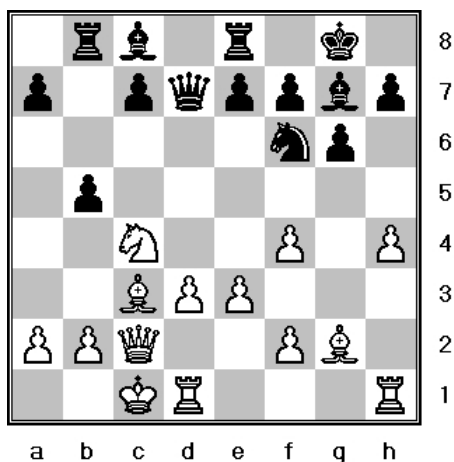
12. h4? (12. e3 first was necessary) 12. ...Re8 13. e3



13. ...Ne6

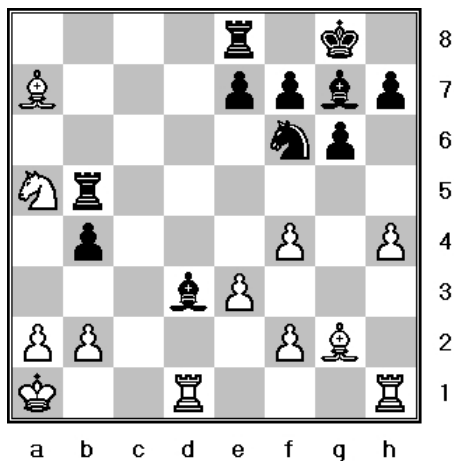
Much better is 13 ... e5!, with a better game for Black.

14. Qc2 Rb8 15. 0-0-0 Nxf4 16. gxf4 b5?



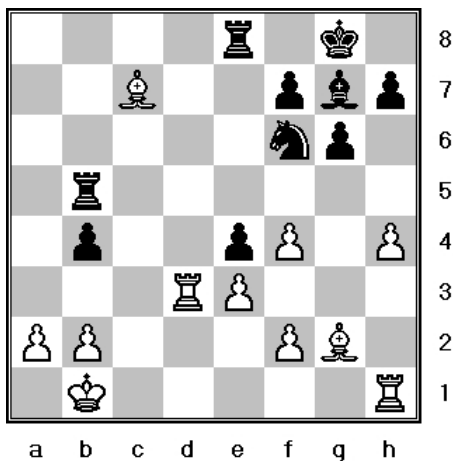
Fuse blown? Check. This looks like a natural attacking move, but it creates too many weak squares on black's queenside. The white king is not in danger.

17. Na5 Qe6 18. Kb1 b4 19. Bd4 Qa6 20. Qxc7 Bf5 21. Qxa7 Bxd3+ 22. Ka1 Qxa7 23. Bxa7 Rb5

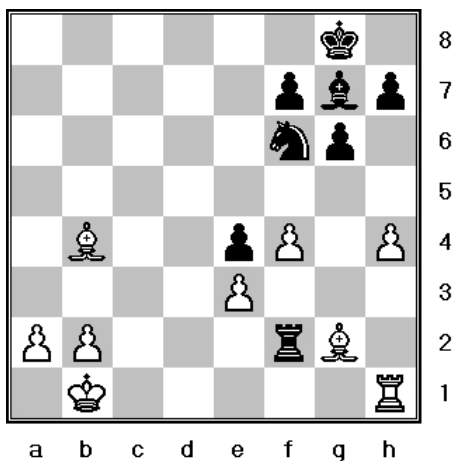


White stands much better in this endgame.

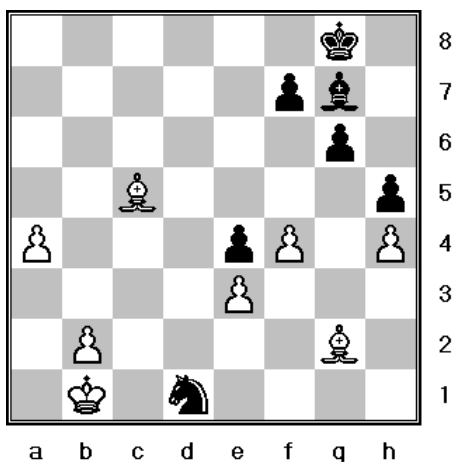
24. Rxd3 Rxa5 25. Bb6 Rb5 26. Bd8 Rc5 27. Kb1 e5 28. Bb6 Rb5 29. Bc7 e4



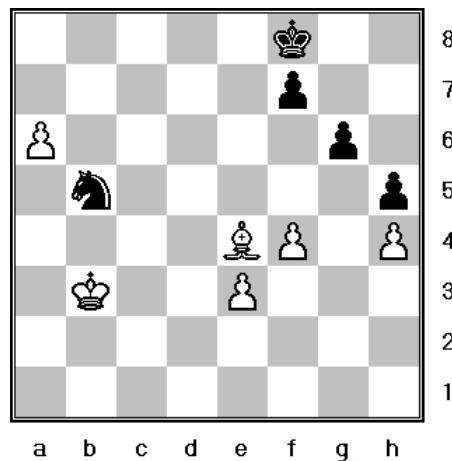
30. Rd8 Rxd8 31. Bxd8 Rd5? (31. ...Ng4) 32. Be7 Rd2 33. Bxb4 Rxf2



34. Rc1 h5 35. Rc2 Ng4 36. Rxf2 Nxf2 37. a4 Nd1 38. Bc5



38. ...Nxb2 39. a5 Na4 40. a6 Nc3+ 41. Kc2 Nb5 42. Bxe4 Bf8 43. Bxf8 Kxf8 44. Kb3



1-0

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Seattle Sluggers Update

by Josh Sinanan



Sluggers Eliminated by Sharks

The Seattle Sluggers qualified for the playoffs this season despite losing their last two matches and finishing with a 4.5-5.5 record. The top four teams from each division, East and West, earned a spot in the post season and played a series of matches to determine who advanced to the finals, similar to Major League Baseball. After an unexpected loss by Seattle to the Tennessee Tempo in week nine, the race to make the playoffs became extremely complicated.

Going into the last match of the regular season, three teams were in contention for the fourth spot in the West Division: Seattle, Chicago, and Arizona. Both Chicago and Arizona were new expansion teams in the league and had shown good potential, though they lacked the experience of the Sluggers. Seattle was also half a point ahead of Chicago and a full point ahead of Arizona, so a win would guarantee the Sluggers a spot in the post season. The last match pairings had Seattle playing Arizona and Chicago playing Dallas, the defending champions. This meant that a draw with Arizona and a Chicago loss or draw would also mean that Seattle advances. The Sluggers could even lose by 2.5-1.5 and qualify with better tie-breaks as long as Chicago also lost to Dallas – which was exactly what happened, with Slava Mikhailuk winning a miracle game against Mark Ginsburg to temporarily salvage the Sluggers' season.

Heading into the postseason, Sluggers manager Eddie Chang faced the difficult decision of which line-up to run against the division-leading Miami Sharks. He had to choose between the top-heavy option of Nakamura-Serper-Lee-May, or go for balance with Serper-Mikhailuk-Readley-Lee. Slava had been red-hot recently, winning his

last four games on board two and was known to be very clutch. However, the double GM line-up offered Seattle more favorable match-ups on boards one and two and seemed to offer the team better winning chances. Since Seattle was in a must win situation due to their lower place in the standings, Eddie decided on the double GM line-up.

Unfortunately for the Sluggers, GM Hikaru Nakamura was traveling in Europe for the Olympiad, which meant that he would have to play his game from off site. Under normal US Chess League rules, all team members are required to play from the same location, and a tournament director must be present on site during the match. USCL commissioner, IM Greg Shahade, made a special exception for the Sluggers by allowing Nakamura to play from his hotel room in Dresden, since he was representing the US in international competition.

Supervising Nakamura's game was IM John Donaldson, the captain of the US men's team and manager of the San Francisco Mechanics. To complicate the situation, the quarterfinal match started at 3:00 AM Dresden time, and Donaldson was also sweating the Mechanics taking on the Dallas Destiny. Obviously it was very difficult for Nakamura to play at his best in the middle of the night, and it didn't help that he had to face two-time league MVP, GM Julio Becerra, who had the white pieces.

Going into the match, the Sluggers' strategy was to try and get one and a half points on the bottom three boards and hope Nakamura's 100-point rating edge would be enough for him to win, even with the black pieces. On board 2, GM Gregory Serper with the white pieces was a heavy favorite over FM Bruce Lopez, who had surprisingly defeated him in the first match of the season with opposite colors. Board 3 was Seattle's least favorable match-up with FM Michael Lee taking on FM Osmany Perea with the black pieces and a 140-point rating disadvantage. Board four had Seattle's Andy May taking on Matan Prilleltensky with white and a small rating advantage. However, in US Chess League play, predic-

tions based on rating are rarely accurate and anything can happen.

The match began at 6:00 PM on November 10, along with the three other quarterfinal matches. The first game to finish was Nakamura's on board 1. True to his style, Nakamura played extremely fast and sacrificed a piece for two pawns in the middle game out of a Breyer Ruy Lopez. However, this did not work out for him and he soon had to resign a hopeless endgame with a bishop against two knights in a closed position. This game happened so quickly that most of the other games were still in the opening or early middle game when it finished. It is interesting to note that Nakamura finished the game with five more minutes than he started with due to the 30-second increment.

This unexpected start put tremendous pressure on the remaining team members to score 2.5 out of 3 or be eliminated since Miami had draw odds. As the match progressed, Andy May played a side-line of the Max Lange/Scotch Gambit and ended up with an equal position out of the opening. After pushing very hard to create winning chances out of nothing, he got into trouble and played on until mate, hoping for a miracle to keep the Sluggers alive.

Down by two points, the match was essentially over, but Serper scored a nice technical victory with the Botvinnik set-up over Lopez's King's Indian. After the game, Serper felt that it was ironically his best game of the season. On board three, Michael pressed for 61 moves with an extra pawn in the endgame without success after showing some nice preparation in the opening and early middle game against Perea.

So another season ends for the Sluggers. With the US Chess League getting stronger every year, the Sluggers will work and return even stronger for next year.

Congratulations to the Dallas Destiny, who repeated as US Chess League Champions December 6.

Until next year...

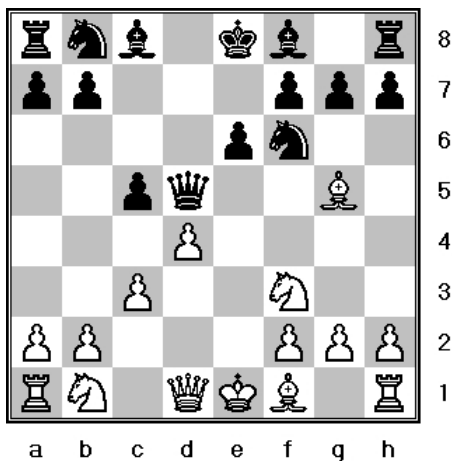
Oregon Junior Invitational

by
Charles
Schulien

Steven Breckenridge – Daniel Gay
Oregon Junior Invitational, Round 1
Oregon, November 15, 2008

The decisive game of the 2008 Oregon Junior Invitational occurred in the first round, between the top two ranked players. White, rated 2032, gained a normal opening edge, then went for an enticing combination at move seventeen. Black, rated 1994, answered at first correctly, but then missed the key counterattacking move. The game immediately transposed into a pawn up ending for White, who also boasted a better minor piece. He duly converted his advantage, and never looked back along the way to a perfect score.

1. e4 c5 2. c3 d5 3. exd5 Qxd5 4. d4 Nf6 5. Nf3 e6 6. Bg5



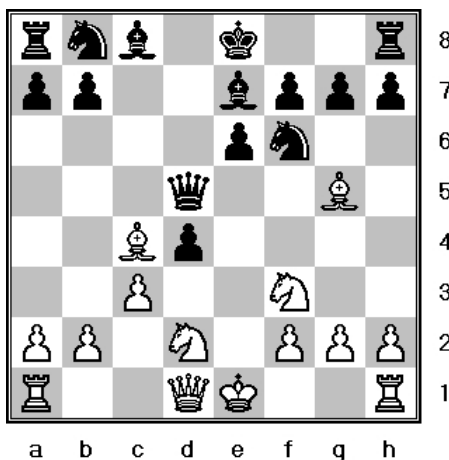
Steve has played the Alapin variation against Sicilian for years, and here takes his

opponent out of book lines early on. This is a clear advantage of getting into “your” systems: it is possible to play new positions by understanding as opposed to memorization.

6. ...Be7

Since the black knight isn't pinned, he can go for 6. ...Ne4 7. Be3 Nc6, as Hikaru Nakamura did in a blitz game at Dos Hermanes 2003, 0-1.

7. Nbd2 cxd4 8. Bc4



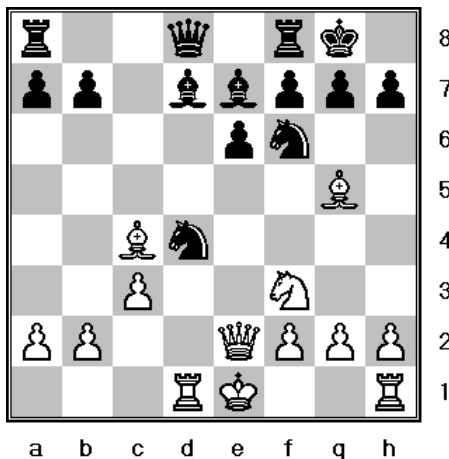
8. ...Qd8

A solid but passive answer. 8. ...Qf5 is superior, not allowing White's knight to take on d4 without first exchanging the bishop on g5.

9. Nxd4 0-0 10. Qe2 Bd7 11. N2f3

Based on the activity of the pieces, White could also consider 11. 0-0-0!?, saving a tempo for development and immediately pressing on the open file.

11. ...Nc6 12. Rd1 Nxd4

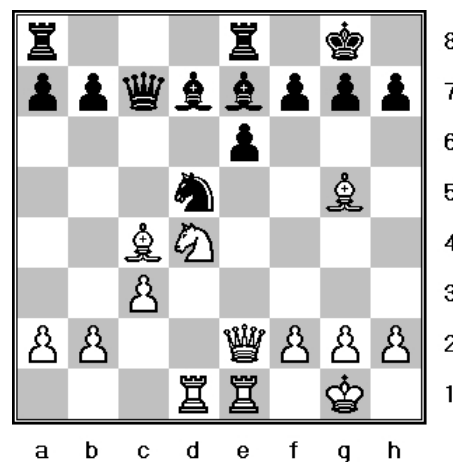


13. Nxd4

13. Rxd4 yields White more piece play, according to Steven. “I thought about doing this but I was more focused on the e6 pawn.” 13. ...Qc7 14. Bf4 Qb6 15. O-O +=.

13. ...Qc7 14. O-O Rfe8 15. Rfe1 Nd5

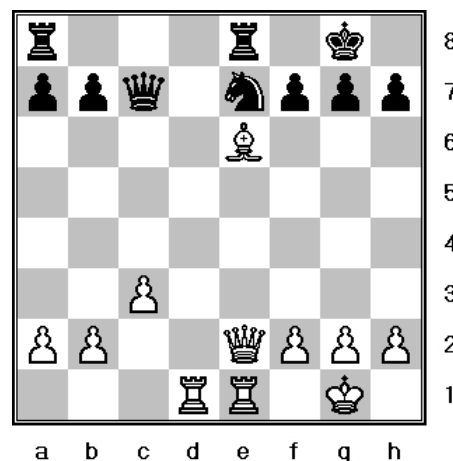
“This move made me think for a bit, why he would play here? I calculated that taking the bishop and then take the e6 pawn would just win a pawn – and computer analysis engines at first agree. But as soon as I took it, I saw one line, which might lead to a small advantage for Black or possibly a draw, instead of me being up a pawn.” - SB



16. Bxe7 Nxe7 17. Nxe6?!

Since the combination is ultimately unsatisfying, we should examine alternatives. 17. Nf3 Rad8 18. Bd3 Bc6 19. Ne5 is a typical organization of the pieces for this pawn structure. Black must be wary of a kingside piece blitz, but objectively White's advantage is not too large.

17. ...Bxe6 18. Bxe6



18. ...Ng6

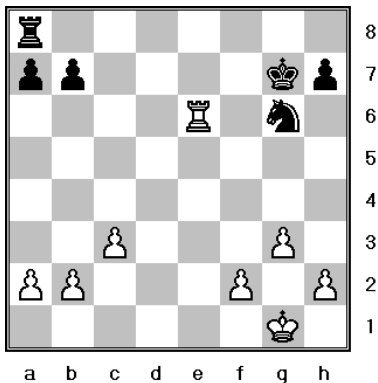
White's point is 18. ...fxe6 19. Qxe6+ Kh8 20. Rd7.

19. Rd7

The only move.

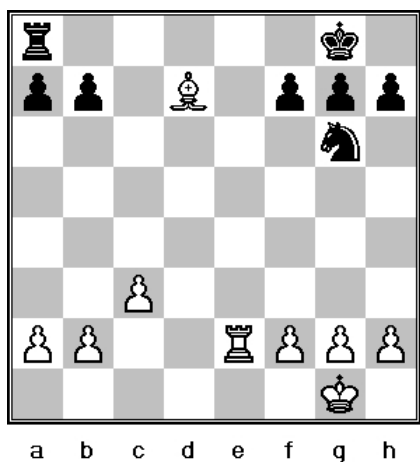
19. ...Qxd7?

19. ...Qf4! 20. g3 (20. Rxf7 Rxe6 21. Rxc7+ Kxc7 22. Qxe6 is another option, but after 22. ...Rf8 or 22. ...Rd8 Black fights for the initiative.) 20. ...Qf6 21. Rxf7 Rxe6 22. Rxc7+ Kxc7 23. Qxe6 Qxe6 24. Rxe6



White has 3 pawns for the knight in the endgame, but those pawns have no say at the moment. I've drawn such positions for White, but Black should be the one pressing for a win here.

20. Bxd7 Rxe2 21. Rxe2

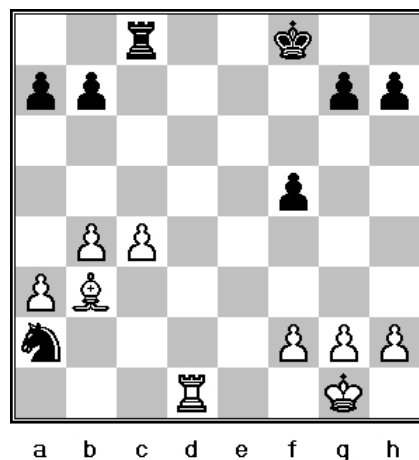


White gained a clear extra pawn, and bishop versus knight in the endgame. Thus the remainder of the game is technical – White plays to convert his advantage. Black seeks counterplay with his pieces. White needs first of all to secure the bishop and rook, then play his king to the center.

21. ...Nf4 22. Re4

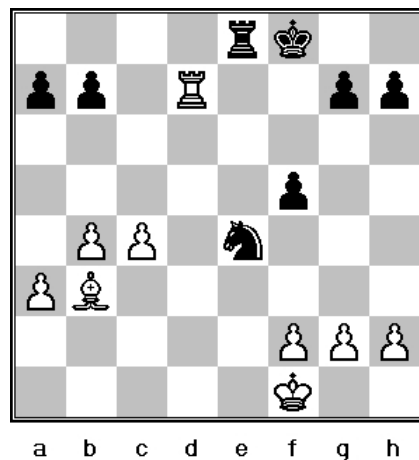
22. Rd2! Rd8 23. g3 Ne6 24. Rd5 Nc7 25. Rd3 is safe enough, and forces the Black knight out of the way. It is understandable that White wished to avoid any chance of miscalculating a variation where he allowed the bishop to be pinned.

22. ...Nd3 23. b4 Rd8 24. Ba4 (24. Rc4 may be better.) **24. ...Nc1 25. a3 Kf8 26. c4 f5 27. Re1 Na2 28. Rd1 Rc8 29. Bb3**



“A solid move, avoiding complications.” - SB

29. ...Nc3 30. Rd7 Re8 31. Kf1 Ne4?



Costs Black a second pawn. 31. ...Re7 32. Rxe7 Kxe7 33. Bc2 Ke6 34. Ke1 is easily winning too, as Black will have to surrender a pawn or allow exchange of the last pieces.

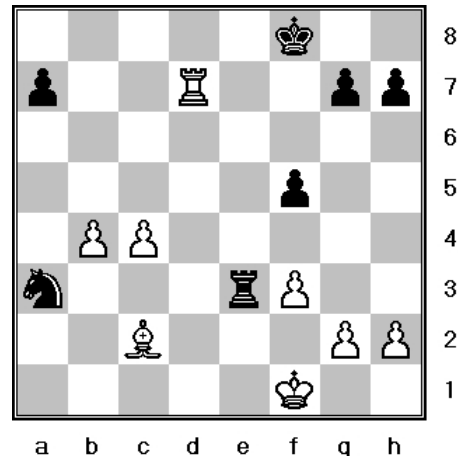
32. f3

Of course White avoids the trap 32. Rxb7 Nd2+ 33. Kg1 Re1#

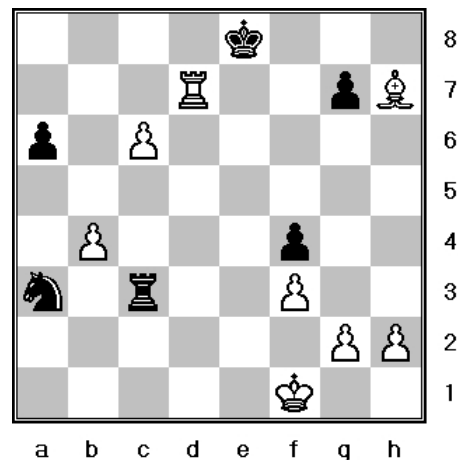
32. ...Nc3 33. Rxb7 Nb1 34. Ba2

“It is never a bad idea to make a move forcing your opponent to think a little extra time, that will just be transported back into the original position.” - SB

34. ...Nc3 35. Bb3 Nb1 36. Rd7 Re3 37. Bc2 Nxa3



38. Bd3 f4 39. c5 Ke8 40. c6 a6 41. Bxh7 Rc3



41. ...Re6 42. Be4

42. Bg6+ Kf8 43. c7 Nc2 44. Bxc2 Rxc2 45. Rd8+ Ke7 46. c8=Q 1-0

Final standings:

- 1 Steven Breckenridge -----5.0**
- 2 Daniel Gay -----3.5**
- 3 Nathan Porter -----2.0**
- 4 Daniel Friesen -----2.0**
- 5 Sean You -----1.5**
- 6 Carson Hannibal-----1.0**

A Herman Chiu Game

by
Mike
Morris

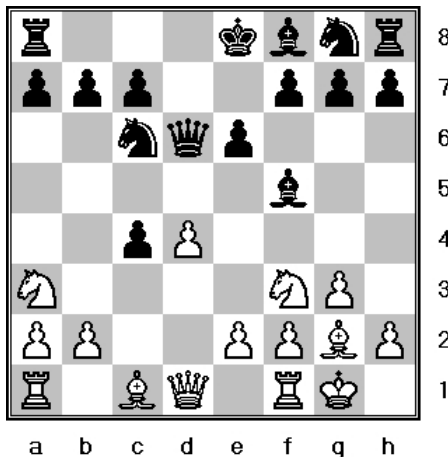
I was sorry to hear that Herman died. I wrote the attached article in 1989. I can't recall if NW Chess published it, but I thought it might be appropriate to look at it again. Of course, the notes were "pre-Fritz" and may not be so perfect. But it was an interesting game, played before computers were as strong as they are now.

Herman Chiu – Hitech
Great Games Festival
Portland, Oregon, January 1989

One of the highlights of the Great Games Festival, held at the Portland Hilton Hotel January 14-15, 1989, was the match between Hitech, Carnegie-Mellon University's inhuman chess playing computer, and Herman Chiu, Oregon co-champion. Herman obtained a dangerous attack, but was unable to pull Hitech's plug.

During the game I provided commentary (trying as best as possible to keep up with the complications) to an enthusiastic group of spectators.

1. Nf3 d5 2. g3 Nc6 3. d4 Bf5 4. c4 e6 5. Bg2 dxc4 6. 0-0 Qd6 7. Na3



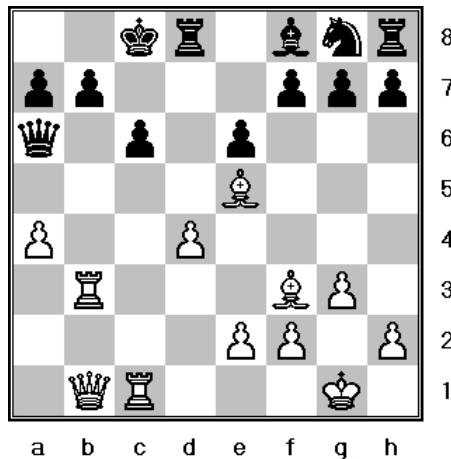
7. ...Qb4 8. Bd2 Qxb2 9. Nxc4 Qb5 10. Rc1 Be4 11. Bf4 0-0-0 12. a4 Qb4 13. Nce5 Bxf3 14. Bxf3



14. ...Nxe5

14. ...Nxd4 15. Nxf7 Nxf3+ 16. exf3 Rxd1 17. Rfxd1 when black must give back the queen to prevent mate, or 14. ...Rxd4 15. Qc2 and black cannot meet all the threats.

15. Bxe5 c6 16. Rb1 Qc3 17. Rb3 Qa5 18. Qb1 Qa6 19. Rc1



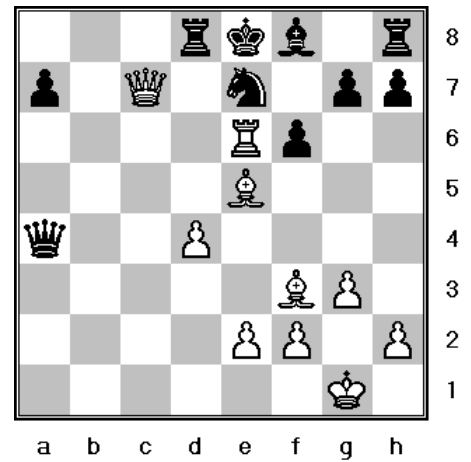
19. ...Ne7

There is no time for 19. ...f6 because of 20. Rb7!

20. Rbc3

A safer plan was 20. e3, threatening 21. Be2 Qe2 22. Rb7. For example, 20. ...Ng6 (20. ...Nd5 is met by 21. Qb2, threatening 22. Be2) 21. Rxc6+ bxc6 22. Rb8+ Kd7 23. Rxd8+ Kxd8 24. Qb8+ Qe8 25. Bc7+ Kd7 26. Bxc6+ Kxc6 27. Qxc8 Bd6 28. Bd8+.

20. ...f6 21. Rxc6+!? bxc6 22. Qb8+ Kd7 23. Qc7+ Ke8 24. Rxc6 Qxa4 25. Rxe6

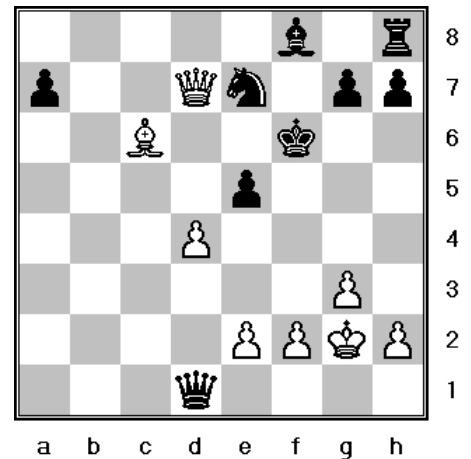


25. ...Qd1+?

White has courageously sacrificed a rook, knowing that the computer should be able to flawlessly analyze its way through the maze of tactical complications. However, here Hitech makes an unexplainable move. 26. Bc6+ was threatened, but 25. ...Qa1+ avoids the loss of the queen which follows.

26. Kg2 fxe5 27. Bc6+ Kf7 28. Qxd8 Kxe6 29. Qd7+ Kf6

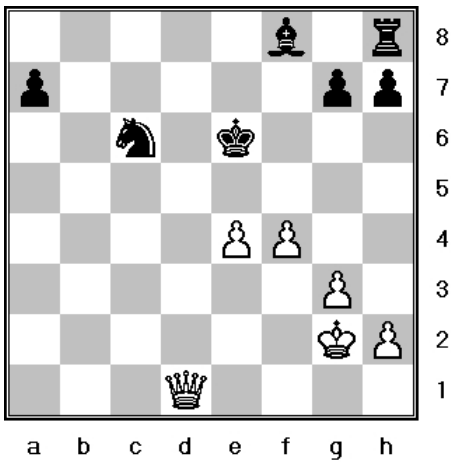
29. ...Kf7 was not possible because of 30. Bd5+ Kg6 31. Qe6+ Kh5 32. Bf3+ Kg5 33. h4#



30. dxe5+ Kxe5 31. Qxd1 Nxc6 32. f4+

The game was being played under a time control of 40 moves in 2 hours. Chiu had about one minute left to make his remaining 9 moves. After 32. Qd7 he captures the dangerous passed pawn on the a file.

32. ...Ke6 33. e4

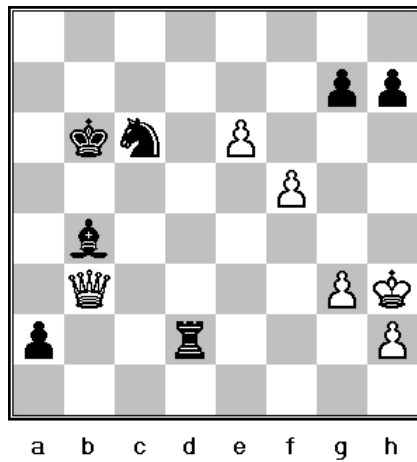


33. ...Nb4 34. Qb3+ Kd7 35. Qa4+ Nc6 36. Qb5 Kc7 37. Qd5 a5 38. e5 a4 39. Qf7+ Kb6 40. Qc4 a3 41. Qb3+ Bb4

At long last the black bishop and rook join the game. White is powerless to stop the advance of the a-pawn.

42. e6 Rd8 43. Kh3 Rd2 44. f5 a2

The beginning of a deep winning combination.

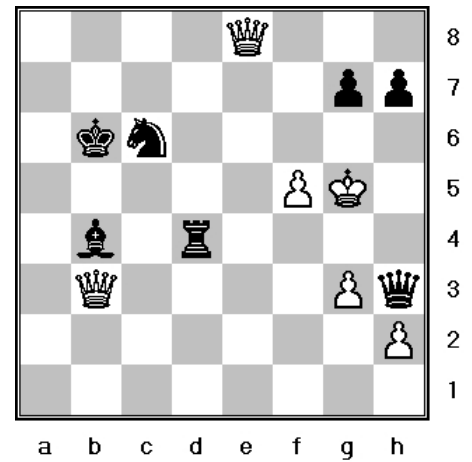


45. e7 a1=Q 46. e8=Q Qf1+ 47. Kg4

If 47. Kh4 Rd4+ 48. g4 Rd3 wins one of the queens and the ending.

47... Rd4+ 48. Kg5 Qh3!

A delightful position! Black threatens mate at h6 and g4 and white's two queens cannot save the game. In fact, Hitech's operators reported at this point that the computer announced a forced mate in 13 moves!



49. Qxc6+ Kxc6 50. Qe6+ Kb5 51. Qe8+ Kc4 52. Qc6+ Kd3 53. Qf3+ Kc2 54. Qe2+ Bd2+

0-1

After the game I spoke with Hans Berliner about the performance of his brainchild. Berliner was surprised at the problems Hitech had in playing the opening, in particular 5. ...dc4 and 6. ...Qd6. He also felt that Hitech would have been in serious trouble after 16. d5. Chiu gave the machine a scare and Berliner left me with the impression that he was about to take out his screwdriver and so some tinkering.

The Frozen Chosen by Jim Hanlen

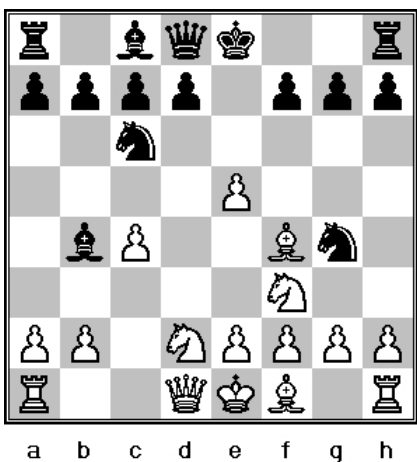
Alaska State Championship 2008 was held November 21, 22, 2008. Marvin Breis scored 4-0 to take sole first place and \$120. Tied for second place were six players, Jim Hanlen, Mike Stabenow, Matt Parshall, Jesse Holganza, Randy Parshall, John Warren.

Only 23 players showed up at Title Wave Bookstore on a perfect weekend for chess, 14 degrees and 3 inches of snow.

If you are in the Anchorage neighborhood, consider visiting the local club. For more information go to www.anchoragechess.com

Jim Hanlen – Oles Miroslaw
Alaska State Championship
Anchorage, Alaska, November 2008

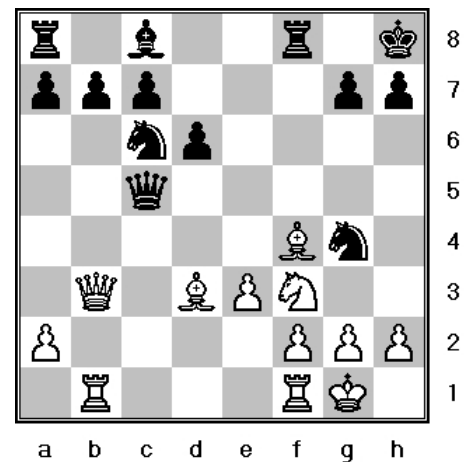
1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e5 3. de Ng4 4. Bf4 Nc6 5. Nf3 Bb4+ 6. Nbd2



6. ...f6 7. ef Qf6 8. e3 Qxb2 9. Be2 d6 10. 0-0-0



11. c5 Bxc5 12. Rb1 Qf6 13. Ne4 Qf5 14. Bd3 Qh5 15. Nxc5 Qxc5 16. Qb3+ Kh8



17. Ng5 Nd8 18. Rfc1 Qb6 19. Qa3 1-0

Future Events

♣ indicates a NW Grand Prix event ♣

**Note: Date Change
Due To Extreme Weather!**

♣Jan 3-4 Gresham Open♣
See ad page 9.

♣Jan 22, 29; Feb 5, 12, 19
Spokane Winter Championship♣
Site: Spokane CC, Rm 121 Herak Building, Gonzaga U. campus **Format:** 5-SS **TC:** G/120. **Rds:** 1 per week. **EF:** \$16. **Reg:** 6:30-7:15. **Misc:** USCF/WCF/NWGP event; coffee and cookies provided as always! **Info:** www.spokanechessclub.org. **Ent:** Spokane CC, c/o David B. Griffin, PO Box 631, Spokane Valley, WA 99037.

♣Jan 24-25 President's Congress♣
Contact Gary Dorfner, 253-535-2536, ggarychess@aol.com, for more information on this Tacoma Chess Club event.

♣Jan 31 PCC Game-in-60♣
Site: Portland Chess Club, 8205 SW 24th Ave, Portland OR 97219. **Format:** 4-SS **TC:** G/60. May switch to 5-SS and G/45 if entries > 25. **EF:** \$20, \$5 disc for PCC memb. No adv ent. **Prizes:** \$\$200 b/20. \$60-40-30, U1800 35, U1500 35. **Reg:** 9-9:30 am. **Byes:** 1 HPB if req at reg. **Misc:** USCF & OCF/WCF memb req, OSA. **Info:** portlandchessclub@gmail.com, 503-246-2978, www.pdxchess.org.

♣Feb 28-Mar 1 17th Dave Collyer Memorial♣
Site: Basement conference room, St. Anne's Children's Center, 25 W. Fifth Ave, Spokane. **Format:** 5-SS **TC:** G/120. **Rds:** 10-2:30-7; 9-1:30. **EF:** \$27 by 2/27, \$33 site. \$5 disc for U-19. **Prizes:** \$\$1600 G. \$325-200-125; X 100; A, B, C, D/E/U 100-75; Upset 100-50. Min 5/class. **Reg:** 8:30-9:30 am. **Opt:** Sleep-in rd 1 G/60 at noon, reg by 11:40. **Bye:** 1 hpb req. before end of preceding round; Sunday by end rd 3. **Misc:** Mand. players meeting 9:45 (unless "sleep-in"); USCF & OCF/WCF memb req, OSA. **Info:** www.spokanechessclub.org. **Ent:** Kevin Korsmo, N. 9923 Moore, Spokane, WA 99208-9339, (509) 270-7720.

January 2009 (also see page 3 for Seattle Chess Club events)

3-4	Gresham Open.....	Portland CC, Mike Morris, www.pdxchess.com	Portland, OR
22-Feb19	Spokane Winter Championship	Spokane CC, David Griffin, www.spokanechessclub.org	Spokane, WA
24-25	President's Congress	Tacoma CC, Gary Dorfner, ggarychess@aol.com	Tacoma, WA
31	PCC Game-in-60	Portland CC, www.pdxchess.org, 503-246-2978	Portland, OR

February 2009

28-Mar 1	17th Dave Collyer Memorial	Spokane CC, Kevin Korsmo, 509-270-7720	Portland, OR
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↑↑Open Events

Scholastic Events↓

January 2009

9	Seattle Metro MS League JV (5-9)	Eckstein MS, seattlemeschess@gmail.com	Seattle, WA
10	Whatcom County Championships (K-12)	R Kaech, http://mysite.verizon.net/kaech	Lynden, WA
10	St Mary Magdalene Fundraiser (K-12)	www.chess4life.com	Everett, WA
10	Purdy Elementary (K-6)	www.chess4life.com	Bellevue, WA
10	3rd Annual Medina G/30 (K, 1-3, 4-6, 7-12)	mgmowat@msn.com	Medina, WA
17	Lower Valley Tournament (K-12)	Alan Kawakami, arivertop@embarqmail.com 509-786-1822	Prosser, WA
17	Meridian Park (K, K-3, 4-6, 7-8 Girls K-3, 4-6)	http://www.chessplayer.com	Shoreline, WA
17	Chess4Life Beginner's Tournament	www.chess4life.com	Bellevue, WA
17	Chess4Life G/60 USCF Saturday Smash	www.chess4life.com	Bellevue, WA
19	WA Junior Open and Reserve	davidchendricks@comcast.net	Bellevue, WA
23	Seattle Metro MS League JV (5-9)	Eckstein MS, seattlemeschess@gmail.com	Seattle, WA
24	Roosevelt Winter Challenge (K-8)	R Kaech, http://mysite.verizon.net/kaech	Bellingham, WA
24	Chess Mates Winter Fest (K, 1-2, 3-4, 5-8)	http://www.chessplayer.com	Seattle, WA
31	Charles Wright Challenge (K-3, 4-6, 7-12/adult)	www.chess4life.com	Tacoma, WA
31	Eastside Grade Champs (K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6)	John Muir Elem, http://www.chessplayer.com	Kirkland, WA
31	Evergreen Knightsmares' Gauntlet (K, 1-3, 4-6, K-8 Quads)	chesstournament@evergreenschool.org	Shoreline, WA

February 2009

7	Waypoint Foundation Scholastic	www.waypointfoundation.org/index.html	Ephrata, WA
7	YMCA Chess Tournament (K-3, 4-6)	www.playingfortheeking.com	Vancouver, WA
7	International Chess Jam 2009 (K-12)	R Kaech, http://mysite.verizon.net/kaech	Ferndale, WA
7	Northwest Grade Level Tournament (K-8)	www.chess4life.com	Seattle, WA
14	Annie Wright Spring Tournament (K-12)	www.chess4life.com	Tacoma, WA
16	Kings Men Benefit Tournament (K-6)	www.chess4life.com	Newcastle, WA
21	Chess F.E.S.T. (K-6)	R Kaech, http://mysite.verizon.net/kaech	Ferndale, WA
21	Eastern WA Championships (K-12)	Dave Merrill, president@chesschampions.org	Richland, WA
27	Seattle Metro MS League JV (5-9)	Eckstein MS, seattlemeschess@gmail.com	Seattle, WA
28	Sammamish Spring State Qualifier (K-12)	www.chess4life.com	Issaquah, WA

More events will appear in the February magazine, or see the NWC website at nwchess.com

Don't forget about the WA State Elementary Championships, April 24-25 in Spokane, WA. Contact: James Stripes, jdstripes@comcast.net