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KAIDO KULAOTS WINS AEROFLOT OPEN



LIFE DOES NOT END AT 40

By GM Aleksandar Colovic

Photo: Eteri Kublashvili/Russian Chess Federation

Nobody gives you a chance of winning such a strong tournament as the Aeroflot Open (20-27 February) when you start as 62nd seed. Still, one day before his 43rd birthday, Kaido Kulaots of Estonia pulled off an incredible feat, scoring 7/9 and securing his path to the Dortmund super-tournament later this year.

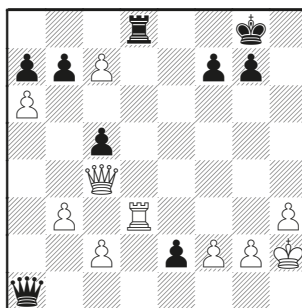
It is curious that Kulaots had a very 'regular' tournament - he won with Black in Round 1 and drew with White in Round 2; then he kept winning with Black (making it 4 out of 4!) and drawing with White until Round 8 when he repeated Black and drew with co-leader Sasikiran.

Then, in Round 9, he won for the first time with White!

This is the crucial moment for his tournament victory from the last round:

Kaido Kulaots - Denis Khismatullin

Aeroflot Open A 2019 Moscow RUS (9.3)



The position is sharp as both pawns are on the verge of promoting, but if Black is careful then it should end in a draw. But Black errs.

32...♖e5+? A mistake that leads to a queen endgame with an extra pawn for White.

32...♖e8! is the only move and now the game will most likely end in a perpetual after 33.♖d7 (33.♗f4!? e1♗ 34.axb7 is a very curious line. Still with two queens on the board Black should be able to deal with two White's pawns on the seventh rank. An entertaining line is: 34...♗h1+ 35.♔g3 ♗ag1 36.♔h4 ♗hxg2 37.c8♗ ♗2xf2+ 38.♗xf2 ♗xf2+ 39.♖g3 ♗f4+ 40.♖g4 ♗f2+ with a perpetual check.) 33...e1♗ 34.♗xf7+ ♔h8 35.♗h5+.

33.f4 ♗xc7 34.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 35.♗xe2 It's difficult to say what exactly Khismatullin missed, probably something in the 32...♖e8 line. Now the endgame is difficult for Black and he didn't manage to save it.

1-0

Another curiosity about Kulaots's victory is that he scored 2.5/3 on the Black side of the Najdorf, beating Iranian supertalents Maghsoodloo and Firouzja and drawing with Sasikiran. In yet another Sicilian (a Closed one this time) he beat the first-ranked Wei Yi and in an English Opening he beat Dubov. Quite an impressive score with Black against such opposition!

In today's world it is considered a major surprise if a player in his 40s achieves a great success. This applies both for the Top 10 (even when Anand wins nowadays it is considered

IN TODAY'S WORLD IT IS CONSIDERED A BIG SURPRISE IF A PLAYER IN HIS 40S ACHIEVES A BIG SUCCESS. THIS APPLIES BOTH FOR THE TOP 10 (EVEN WHEN ANAND WINS NOWADAYS IT IS CONSIDERED A SURPRISE) AND ALL THE REST



Kaido Kulaots during the tournament

a surprise) and all the rest. Modern culture has inculcated in us the idea that only the young 'have the right' to get to the top and the rest are quickly shovelled to the margins. The world does belong to the young, but it is also refreshing to have a reminder from time to time that life does not end at 40.

THE NEW RUSSIAN GENERATION

The Aeroflot Open is particularly convenient for the Russian players, who can play an extremely strong tournament on their home soil. The new crop of Russian talent is quite promising, even though to speak of players with potential to reach the very summit of the chess world is difficult. Perhaps the most promising ones, just because they are the youngest, are Andrey Esipenko (rated 2603 and born in 2002) and Alexey Sarana (rated 2630, born in 2000).

The competition in Russia has always been tough, so there are also Kirill Alekseenko (rated 2634, born in 1997), Maksim Chigaev (rated 2613, born in 1996), David Paravryan (rated 2627, born in 1998), in addition to the already-established Vladimir Fedoseev (rated 2715, born in 1995) and Daniil Dubov



(rated 2703, born in 1996). Only Vladislav Artemiev, rated 2709 and born in 1998, was missing in Moscow and these names more or less complete the list of Russia's next generation of elite grandmasters.

The young players are influenced heavily by computers, which means that they are very strong in concrete play as the computers force them to raise the level of their calculations.

Still, all of them have their own idiosyncrasies and here's a good example of Daniil Dubov's imagination.

Chithambaram VR. Aravindh - Daniil Dubov

Aeroflot Open A 2019 Moscow RUS (4.8)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 Dubov is one of the world's leading experts on the Sveshnikov Sicilian and for that expertise he was called to be part of Magnus Carlsen's team for the match with Caruana.

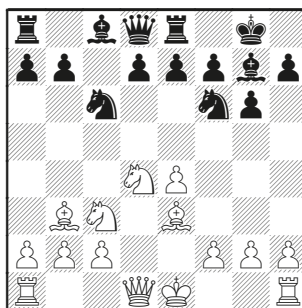
3.♘c3 One of the most common ways to avoid the Sveshnikov. The other one is the Rossolimo Variation after 3 ♘b5.

3...g6 Dubov is also known to work with Gelfand and both have chosen this

transposition to the Accelerated Dragon when people have avoided the Sveshnikov against them (Gelfand used the Sveshnikov to a great effect in his world championship match against Anand in 2012). Carlsen, on the other hand, chose 3...e5 both in the game against Vachier-Lagrave at the 2018 Sinquefeld Cup and against Aronian at the World Rapid and Blitz Championship in December 2018.

4.d4 cxd4 5.♗xd4 ♙g7 6.♙e3 ♘f6 7.♙c4
This is the most critical line.

7...0-0 8.♙b3 ♖e8!?



This curious move was first used by Vadim Zvjagintsev, a player known for his originality. The idea is to prepare for central play as Black intends to sacrifice a pawn with ...d5 in case White insists on plans with queenside castling and plays 9.f3. It was picked up by the Dubov-Gelfand team in 2017 and even Carlsen tried it in a bullet game against Nakamura.

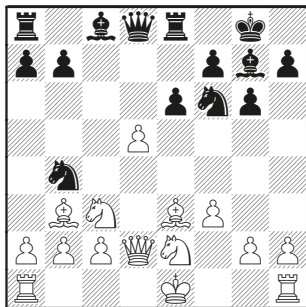
9.f3 9.0-0 is the other main line, when Black responds with 9...d6.

9...d5 The first phase of Black's idea that started with 8...♖e8.

10.exd5 ♗b4 11.♗de2 Otherwise Black takes the pawn on d5 with excellent play.

11...e6! Now we see the point of the rook move - the rook supports the e-pawn push.

12.♖d1



A novelty.

12.♟d4 has been played against Gelfand more than once. After 12...exd5 13.♞d2 is the latest try, as Navara played against Gelfand at the Batumi Olympiad. Gelfand didn't have any problems after 13 0-0 in his games with Jakovenko and Kovalev. 13...♞c6 14.0-0-0 ♞xd4 15.♞xd4 ♟d7 (15...h5!? is an interesting try, to stop g4.) 16.g4 And it seems that White has a more pleasant position here. 1-0 (33) Navara,D (2740)-Gelfand,B (2703) Batumi 2018.

12...♞bxd5 13.0-0 ♟d7 Black finishes development and insists on sacrificing a pawn.

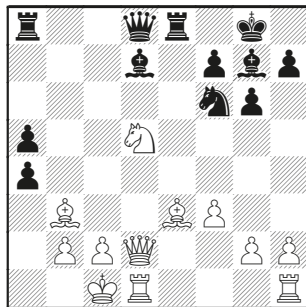
13...b5 is what the engine prefers, to sacrifice the b-pawn instead, mostly because it's off-limits in view of 14.♞xb5? ♟a6 with the subsequent capture of the bishop on e3 giving great dark-square compensation.

14.♞xd5 exd5 15.♞c3 a5 Black plays aggressively for the attack, ignoring the d5-pawn.

16.a4 b5 More fuel to the fire, but this is just the beginning.

17.♞xd5 17.♟d4 keeps more control, even though after 17...bxa4 18.♞xa4 ♞c7 Black will continue to harass White's queenside.

17...bxa4!



The start of the combination.

17...♟e6 is the engine's 0.00 choice. 18.♞xf6+ ♞xf6 19.♟d4 ♞xd4 20.♞xd4 ♟xd4 21.♞xd4 ♟xb3 22.cxb3 with a draw.

18.♟b6 axb3!! Of course! A fantastic concept! While objectively unsound, the aesthetical pleasure is enormous!

After 18...♞b8, which the engine says it's better, White has 19.♞xf6+ ♟xf6 20.♟xf7+ ♞xf7 21.♞xd7+ ♞e7 22.♞c6 but even here Black can continue to stir up trouble after 22...♞e6 and perhaps even threaten repetition! All this fades in comparison to Dubov's phenomenal queen sacrifice.

19.♟xd8 ♞axd8 20.♞xf6+ ♟xf6 Only two bishops for the queen, but very strong threats against White's king. Quite understandably the engine laughs and easily defends, but who cares?

21.♞he1 White wants to exchange pieces, which is quite natural being a queen up.

21.c3 is the best move according to the engine.

21...bxc2 22.♞xe8+ ♞xe8 23.♞e1 A good move. White correctly avoids adventures with his king.

23.♞xc2?? is impossible in view of 23...♟g5+ 24.♞b1 ♟f5; 23.♞xc2 looks risky, but is in fact possible as after 23...♞c8+ (or 23...♟f5+ 24.♞b3 ♟e6+ 25.♞a3 ♞b8

26.♖c2) 24.♔d3 ♕a4 though it looks scary for White he has the only move 25.♖f4!

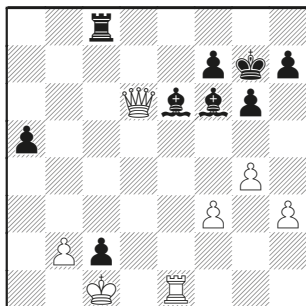
23...♖c8 24.g4 A very good move, depriving Black of the important f5-square from where the bishop would defend the pawn on c2, liberating the rook.

24...♕e6 Since f5 is taken the bishop aims to get to b3 now.

25.♖d6 Preventing ...♕b3 since the bishop on f6 would be hanging.

25...♔g7 Renewing the threat of ...♕b3.

26.h3??



White's play so far was quite good, but this is simply wrong in this context - as if White forgot that Black was threatening ...♕b3.

26.h4! was the way to go. The idea is that if 26...♕b3 now White has 27.g5! and the bishop is short of squares.

26...♕b3 Of course. Now White cannot prevent the ...♖d8-d1 manoeuvre that wins the game.

27.g5 ♕xg5+ 28.f4 ♕f6 29.♖b6 a4 30.♖e5 ♖d8 An inspired win by Dubov, who unfortunately couldn't build on it as he lost to eventual winner Kulaots with White in the next round and drew the remaining games.

0-1

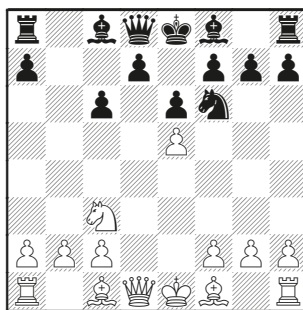
This wasn't the only pretty queen sacrifice in the tournament. In fact, as early as the first round there was a glimpse of what was to follow.

Yi Wei - Alexandr Fier

Aeroflot Open A 2019 Moscow RUS (2.15)

1.e4 c5 2.♖f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♖xd4 ♖f6 5.♖c3 ♖c6 6.♖xc6 6.♖db5 is the main alternative, when Black has the choice between the Sveshnikov Variation after 6...d6 7.♕f4 e5 8.♕g5 and the variation with 6...♕b4.

6...bxc6 7.e5



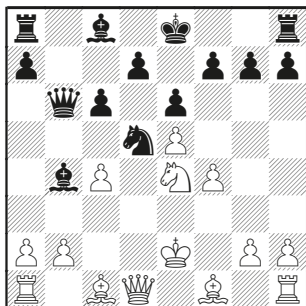
This line is strategically very risky for Black - he will get a worse structure and White

ON RUSSIAN TALENT: THE NEW CROP OF RUSSIAN TALENT IS QUITE PROMISING, EVEN THOUGH TO SPEAK OF PLAYERS WITH POTENTIAL TO REACH THE VERY SUMMIT OF THE CHESS WORLD IS DIFFICULT. PERHAPS THE MOST PROMISING ONES, JUST BECAUSE THEY ARE THE YOUNGEST, ARE ANDREY ESIPENKO (RATED 2603 AND BORN IN 2002) AND ALEXEY SARANA (RATED 2630, BORN IN 2000)

will also have the pair of bishops. The line is well-analysed and the opponents follow their preparations for a very long time.

7...♘d5 8.♗e4 ♔c7 9.f4 ♔b6 Black provoked f4 and now tries to take advantage of the weaknesses left behind the f-pawn.

10.c4 ♗b4+ 11.♖e2



White controls all the squares in the centre so the king is safe and soon Black is pushed backwards.

11...f5 12.exf6 ♗xf6 13.♗e3 ♔d8 14.♗d6+ This wins the bishop pair and fixes Black's central pawn mass, rendering the bishop on c8 very passive.

14...♗xd6 15.♔xd6 ♗b7 The only way to activate the bishop is to push ...c5.

16.♖d1 ♖c8 Preparing ...c5, but also ...♖c6, to chase the queen away.

17.♖g1 c5 18.g4 White's play is very ambitious. He's playing for domination and plans to kick the knight on f6 by g5.

18...♖c6 Finally getting rid of the queen and castling.

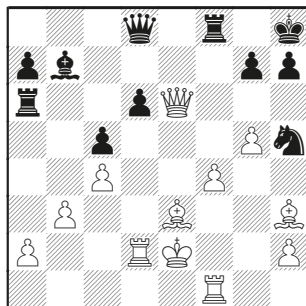
19.♔e5 0-0 20.g5 ♗h5 21.♗h3 Developing the last piece and preventing ...♖f5.

21...d6! Otherwise Black will be strangled. He now sacrifices a pawn in order to obtain counterplay against White's king.

22.♔xe6+ ♖h8 23.♖gf1 Defending the pawn on f4. If White manages to stabilise the position he would be winning, so Black must look for dynamism quickly.

23...♖b6 24.b3 ♖a6 Black provoked b3 in order to attack a2, threatening to take it with check. This is still theory...

25.♖d2



Already with this move White is preparing the queen sacrifice on move 27.

25.♔d7 is the engine's suggestion, but it has been played before and Black is fine after **25...♖xa2+ (or 25...♔b8 26.♔g4 ♖xa2+ 27.♖d2 ♖xd2+ 28.♗xd2 ♔e8+)** **26.♖d2 ♖xd2+ 27.♗xd2 ♔a8** with an unclear position.

25...d5 26.♔e5 26.♔d7 doesn't promise much after **26...♔b8**.

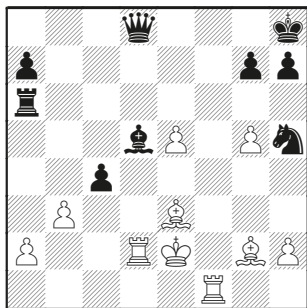
The event was held in hotel 'Cosmos', one of the largest in Moscow



26...♖e8 27.cxd5!! Forced, but this doesn't take away the beauty of the idea.

27...♖xe5 28.fxe5 White has a rook and two pawns for the queen, but they are mighty pawns threatening to march down the board. Black correctly decides to destroy the pair with a sacrifice.

28...♙xd5! 29.♙g2 c4?



But now he steps in the wrong direction.

29...♖xa2! would have been a great retort. 30.♙xd5 (*Taking the rook even loses after 30.♖xa2? ♙xg2 31.♖f2 ♙h3 and White now doesn't have enough for the material deficit since his army is completely disorganised and the king is still stuck in the centre.*) 30...♖xd2+ 31.♙xd2 and now spectacular and forced is 31...♗f6! covering the f-file and allowing the queen to take on d5. The game now should end in a perpetual after 32.gxf6 ♕xd5 33.f7 ♕e4+ 34.♙d1 ♕b1+.

MODERN CULTURE HAS INCULCATED US WITH THE IDEA THAT ONLY THE YOUNG 'HAVE THE RIGHT' TO GET TO THE TOP AND THE REST ARE QUICKLY SHOVELLED TO THE MARGINS

30.♙xd5 c3 This was apparently Black's idea, but after...

31.♙b7! cxd2 32.♙xa6 All White's pieces coordinate so well (and look at the poor knight on h5!) that the e-pawn decides the game quickly.

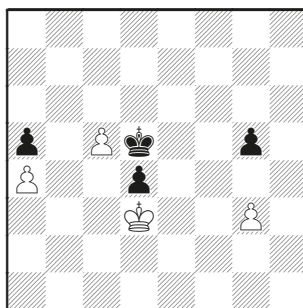
32...♕e8 33.♙c4 g6 34.e6

1-0

If queen sacrifices are what the public swoons about, blunders in pawn endgames are more of an embarrassment for the losing player. In the following game the strong Azeri Grandmaster makes an uncharacteristic howler.

**Chithambaram VR. Aravindh –
Eltaj Safarli**

Aeroflot Open A 2019 Moscow RUS (2.4)



41.c6 White tries his last chance in this relatively simple pawn endgame.

41...♙xc6?? And quite unexpectedly it works!

41...♙d6! was the only move. The point is that Black must not keep the opposition because there is an extra tempo on the kingside. 42.♙xd4 ♙xc6 43.♙c4 Now White has the opposition, but Black is saved by the extra tempo

(the pawn race after 43.♔e5 ♖c5 44.♕f5 ♖b4 leads to both sides queening; and if 43.g4 only then Black must take the opposition. 43...♗d6) 43...g4, with a draw.

42.♖xd4 Now White wins, as, when Black takes the opposition by:

42...♗d6, White can use the extra tempo to win it by 43.g4 or even play as in the game.

43.♖c4 And planning to use it if Black plays 43...♗c6, while the race after 43...♗e5 is easily won by White.

1-0

This year's edition of the Aeroflot didn't catapult any young talent into stardom. The best result was achieved by Alexey Sarana, who shared fourth to ninth (and finished fifth on tie-break). The tournament must have been a disappointment for the 2017 winner Fedoseev, who after a very successful 2017 still cannot seem to find the right balance of aggression and stability.

After winning the World Rapid Championship in December last year

Daniil Dubov must have had high hopes of continuing with the good results, but he failed to break the drawing spell in the last four rounds. Still, with the invitation to play the FIDE Grand Prix he will form part of the next World Championship cycle and this will be a true test of his potential.

RUSSIAN CHESS IS AT A CROSSROAD

Vladimir Kramnik retired, Svidler and Grischuk seem to have reached their maximum, while Nepomniachtchi entered the Top 10 for the first time on the February rating list (and he is the same age as Carlsen). Karjakin doesn't seem capable of reaching the same heights as in 2016 when he won the Candidates and played the match with Carlsen, as currently he is 14th on the rating list and cannot even stabilise his spot in the Top 10.

All this means that it must be some of the new names who we should expect to emerge as new hopes for Russian chess. The Russians have it all - tradition, culture, system, quality, talent pool, staff. All they need is one exceptional talent. Is he among the names mentioned above? Time will tell.

2019 AEROFLOT OPEN | FINAL STANDINGS (TOP 20)

| Rk | SNo | Title | Name | Rtg | Pts. | TB1 | TB2 |
|----|-----|-------|-----------------------|------|------|-----|------|
| 1 | 62 | GM | Kulaots, Kaido | 2542 | 7,0 | 5 | 2647 |
| 2 | 28 | GM | Martirosyan, Haik | 2616 | 7,0 | 4 | 2563 |
| 3 | 11 | GM | Sasikiran, Krishnan | 2678 | 6,5 | 4 | 2607 |
| 4 | 3 | GM | Wang Hao | 2714 | 6,0 | 5 | 2600 |
| 5 | 1 | GM | Wei Yi | 2733 | 6,0 | 4 | 2589 |
| 6 | 30 | GM | Chigaev, Maksim | 2613 | 6,0 | 4 | 2586 |
| 7 | 7 | GM | Inarkiev, Ernesto | 2692 | 6,0 | 4 | 2580 |
| 8 | 21 | GM | Sarana, Alexey | 2630 | 6,0 | 4 | 2573 |
| 9 | 15 | GM | Anton, Guijarro David | 2642 | 6,0 | 4 | 2557 |
| 10 | 43 | GM | Tabatabaei, Amin | 2590 | 5,5 | 5 | 2613 |



Stefan Kuipers
@TricksOnlyNL



Not sure what is more impressive:

- winning Aeroflot unbeaten as a 2542 with 7/9 and 2872 performance.
- beating Maghsoodloo, Firouzja, Dubov and Wei Yi with black during one tournament. [#WellPlayedSir](#) [#Kulaots](#)



Magnus Carlsen ✓
@MagnusCarlsen



Congrats to Kaiko Kulaots for an absolutely amazing underdog victory at the Aeroflot open! 19 years ago, he shared a flat with my father and I at the Gausdal tournament, and inspired an unrated 9 year old by predicting that he would one day be rated 2650



Sam Shankland
@GMShanky



Age is just a number, and rating is just a number. Congrats to Kaiko Kulaots (42 y/o, 2542 FIDE) on the biggest upset tournament win I have ever seen! Winning the Aeroflot A group as the 62nd seed ahead of 6 2700+ guys is no joke.

2019 AEROFLOT OPEN | FINAL STANDINGS (TOP 20)

| Rk | SNo | Title | Name | Rtg | Pts. | TB1 | TB2 |
|----|-----|-------|-----------------------|------|------|-----|------|
| 11 | 9 | GM | Korobov, Anton | 2687 | 5,5 | 5 | 2585 |
| 12 | 47 | GM | Vaibhav, Suri | 2575 | 5,5 | 5 | 2577 |
| 13 | 13 | GM | Sjugirov, Sanan | 2663 | 5,5 | 5 | 2558 |
| 14 | 23 | GM | Paravyan, David | 2627 | 5,5 | 5 | 2536 |
| 15 | 60 | GM | Hakobyan, Aram | 2515 | 5,5 | 5 | 2536 |
| 16 | 25 | GM | Khismatullin, Denis | 2621 | 5,5 | 5 | 2526 |
| 17 | 35 | GM | Deac, Bogdan-Daniel | 2603 | 5,5 | 4 | 2647 |
| 18 | 32 | GM | Lupulescu, Constantin | 2610 | 5,5 | 4 | 2640 |
| 19 | 61 | GM | Sychev, Klementy | 2545 | 5,5 | 4 | 2609 |
| 20 | 29 | GM | Zhou Jianchao | 2615 | 5,5 | 4 | 2601 |

CHAMPIONS SHOWDOWN

THE TEN-PLAYER SHOW IN SAINT LOUIS

By GM Aleksandar Colovic

Photo: St Louis Chess Club official

Crystal Fuller / Lennart Ootes / Austin Fuller





The Champions Showdown in Saint Louis (20–24 February) had an interesting match format. First of all, the best US players - Caruana, So, Nakamura, Shankland and the Cuban-born Dominguez - got to choose their match opponents. Second, the format consisted of 12 rapid and 24 blitz games, with the rapid games counting as double points.

The choice of the players was as follows: Caruana chose Harikrishna, So chose Navara, Nakamura chose Duda, Shankland chose Rapport and Dominguez chose Topalov. These choices didn't fail to produce entertaining games...

CARUANA

HARIKRISHNA

This match was completely dominated by the former Challenger. He started the rapid with 7-1 before losing the first and only game in that section. The blitz was no less impressive - 7.5-0.5 before Harikrishna won his first. The total score (with the traditional count) was 26.5-9.5.

Caruana was merciless in beating a very strong player, by taking advantage of almost every single lapse by the Indian. This also gives you an idea how strong Carlsen is, as he managed to dominate Caruana in such a way in a World Championship match.

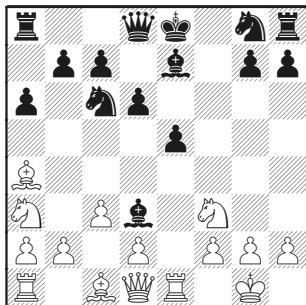
Caruana wasn't hiding his opening ideas and was bold in his choices. In the blitz he even ventured the Najdorf with Black and won an exciting game. Here's a very rare idea in the Siesta Variation.

Fabiano Caruana - Pentala Harikrishna

Champions Showdown Rapid
Saint Louis USA (6.1)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 d6 5.c3 f5
The Siesta Variation. It is not popular nowadays mostly because White has managed to curb Black's aggressive intentions, but if White is ambitious it can still lead to dynamic play.

6.exf5 ♙xf5 7.0-0 ♙d3 8.♖e1 ♙e7
9.♘a3!?



An extremely rare move!

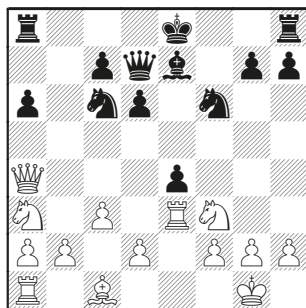
9.♙c2 is the main reason why the Siesta isn't popular any more. After the forced 9...♙xc2 10.♖xc2 ♘f6 11.d4 e4 12.♘g5 d5 13.f3 h6 14.♘h3 0-0 15.♘d2 exf3 16.♘xf3 White has a small plus, but more importantly Black is devoid of any active play.

9...♘f6 10.♖e3 b5 This is OK for Black, as it gives him good compensation.

10...e4?! 11.♘e1 and now we see one of the ideas of 9 ♘a3 - having already played 9...♘f6 Black now doesn't have the move ...♙g5.; 10...♙f5 was another decent option.

11.♖xd3 bxa4 12.♖xa4 ♖d7 White has won a pawn, but his pieces are awkward and this gives Black compensation.

13.♖e3 e4

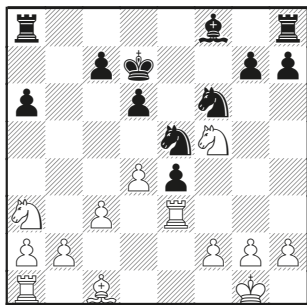


13...d5 leads to unclear play - Black has smooth development and a full pawn centre while White has a pawn; 13...0-0 is also possible, with the idea of following up with ...d5.

14.♘d4 ♘e5?! Since the endgame is inevitable, it was better to give White some weaknesses by taking on d4.

14...♘xd4 15.♖xd7+ ♖xd7 16.cxd4 ♖hb8 with compensation.

15. ♖xd7+ ♔xd7 16. ♘f5 ♙f8 17. d4±



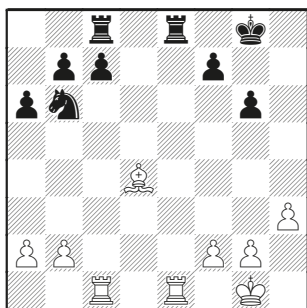
And Black is now hard pressed to find adequate compensation. He did manage to draw in the end though.

½-½

Caruana was simply the stronger player in this match. He played consistently better. This is the first game of the rapid that set the tone for the remainder of the match.

Pentala Harikrishna - Fabiano Caruana

Champions Showdown Rapid
Saint Louis USA (1.1)



27...♘d5 The position is equal. The bishop is usually a stronger piece in an open position but here the knight has the untouchable square on d5 from where it cannot be chased away.

28.g3 f6 Both players improve the position of their kings.

29. ♖g2 ♔f7 30. h4 Harikrishna starts to advance his kingside majority. Here it is worth to note the difference between a kingside and queenside majority. In old times it was even considered that the queenside majority is an advantage, due to the fact that a kingside majority is more difficult to take advantage of since usually the opponent's king is there and this makes it more difficult to advance, as opposed to the queenside majority where the pawns can advance freely. This game illustrates exactly that belief by the old masters, but only because Harikrishna allows it.

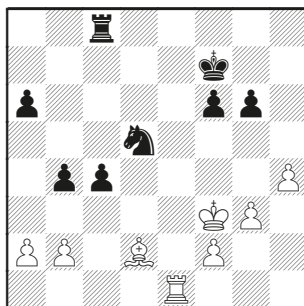
30.a4!? would have been a sensible move with the idea to exchange a pair of pawns when Black starts advancing with ...b5.

30...♖xe1 31. ♖xe1 c5 Black starts his advance by winning a tempo.

32. ♙e3?! White allows Black to advance freely and makes the position more difficult to play.

32. ♖c1! was a good way to stop Black's advance. After 32...c4 33.a3 White can also put a bishop on c3 to stop the b4-push and then he can start pushing his kingside pawns.

32...b5 33. ♖f3 c4 34. ♙d2 b4



In only a few moves we see a huge difference between the two majorities. In a way this game reminds me of the famous last game of the match Marshall-Capablanca, where the Cuban genius smoothly pushed his queenside pawns forward and won a classical game.

35.♖c1? White simply allows too much.

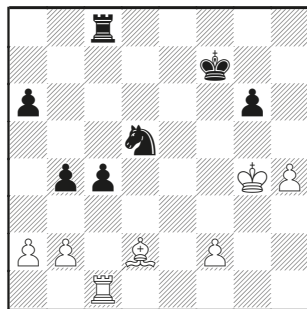
35.♖e4! still kept the game in balance. White must be active if he is to fight against Black's simple plan of pushing the pawns. Harikrishna probably had difficulties assessing the ensuing pawn endgame after 35...c3 36.bxc3 bxc3 (36...♟xc3+ 37.♙xc3 ♜xc3 38.♞b1 a5 39.♞b3 with a3 to follow leads to simplification and a draw.) 37.♙xd5 ♞d8+ 38.♙e4 ♞xd2 39.♙e3 ♞xa2 40.♞c1 c2 41.♙d2 and when White takes on c2 the pawn endgame is a draw because White can also create a passed pawn by g4 and h5.

35...f5! Black prevents the active move ♖e4.

36.g4? It's understandable that White wants to show some of his own trumps, but this loses.

36.♙e2 is passive, but if White is patient Black will still find it difficult to win, even though it's quite apparent that Black has made huge progress from the starting position, all this because of White's lack of urgency on moves 30, 32 and 35.

36...fxg4+ 37.♙xg4



37...c3! The difference in quality of the two majorities is obvious.

38.bxc3 bxc3 39.♙e1 This keeps an eye on the pawn on c3.

39.♙g5 ♟b4 40.a3 ♟d3 41.♞c2 ♙e6 should also win for Black.; 39.♙e3 ♟b4 (the rook endgame after 39...♟xe3+ should also be winning for Black as he can march his king all the way to c4.) 40.a3 ♟d3 41.♞c2 ♙e6 with excellent winning chances for Black.

39...♞c4+ 40.♙f3 40.♙g3 ♙e6 as the white king is tied down to the defence of the h4-pawn.

40...♞xh4 41.♙e2 ♞h3 Black is a pawn up and the rest is easy.

Caruana was merciless in beating Pentala Harikrishna



42.f3 ♖h2+ 43.♔d3 ♜b4+ 44.♔c4 ♜xa2
Now it's two pawns up.

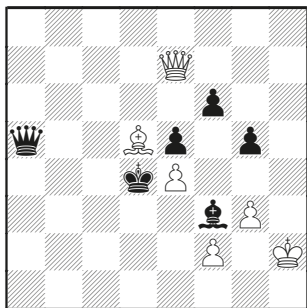
45.♙g3 ♖g2 46.♖a1 ♖xg3 47.♖xa2
♖xf3 48.♔d4 g5 49.♖xa6 g4 50.♔e4 c2
51.♖a1 ♔f6 52.♖c1 ♖f2

0-1

With fast time controls blunders are inevitable. Here's one embarrassing one by Caruana.

Fabiano Caruana - Pentala Harikrishna

Champions Showdown Blitz
Saint Louis USA (20.1)



61...♔a1?? Mate seems inevitable so Caruana resigned. Perhaps had he thought like a patzer ('a patzer sees check, a patzer gives check') he would have won this game.

61...g4 would have led to a draw.

62.♔b4+ The only move to postpone mate.

62...♔d3 63.♙c4+ 63.♔b3+ even this saves the game, though it doesn't win.

63...♔xe4 63...♔c2 64.♔b3+ wins the bishop on f3.

64.♙e2+ ♔d4 65.♔b7+ wins the bishop on f3 and the game.

0-1

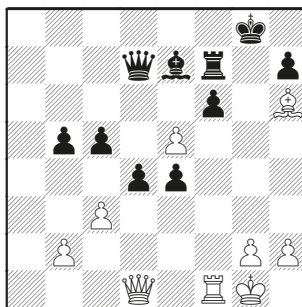
SO

NAVARA

David Navara turned out to be a tough opponent for Wesley So, who in his own words was often suffering in the openings with Black. Perhaps he was too affected by the start of the match?

David Navara - Wesley So

Champions Showdown Rapid
Saint Louis USA (1.3)



26.cxd4 All theory so far. Now So makes a 1-move blunder.

26...♔e6?? 26...fxe5 was played in the game Karjakin-Polgar from the World Cup in 2011 and there Black held the draw.

27.d5 Now there is nothing left to do but to resign as Black either allows e6 or ♔g4-c8.

27.d5 ♔xe5 28.♔g4+ ♔h8 29.♔c8+ winning a piece.

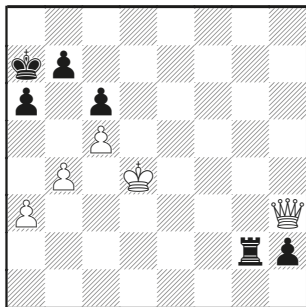
1-0

So managed to impose himself with 4 wins in a row in the rapid in Games 6-9 and won the rapid section 8-4. But the blitz ended in a tie, 12-12, where So had to win the last two games to draw this section. In the whole match So was better in technical positions (he even got

to mate with a knight and bishop) and showed quite impressive technique in several games.

Wesley So - David Navara

Champions Showdown Rapid
Saint Louis USA (6.3)



64...♖e2 This looks tricky for White and Black seems to have a fortress, but after White's next Black is in zugzwang. Or so it seems...

65.♜h8! a5? Navara loses his nerve.

65...♖f2 It may have looked hopeless to let the king cross the e-file and reach c7, but in fact Black had a hidden idea. **66.♜e5 ♖d2 67.♜e6** and it seems that Black is again forced to move his a-pawn. But in fact Black has **67...♗g2 68.♜d7 ♖g7+!** This is the idea - the rook cannot be taken because Black promotes and it gives side checks in order not to allow the king to come to c7. Now the king has to go back as **69.♜c8? ♗g8+ 70.♜xg8 h1 ♜** is an immediate draw.

66.♜h7 This also wins. With the pawn no longer on a6 White has the b5-push which fatally weakens Black's queenside fortress.

66.bxa5, with ideas of a6, was another way.

66...axb4 67.axb4 ♖d2+ 68.♜c3 ♖a2 69.b5! ♖a5 69...cxb5 70.c6 wins on the spot.

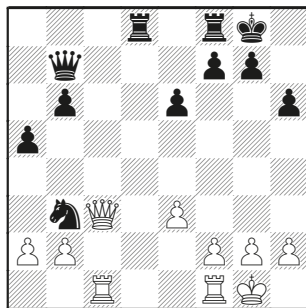
70.b6+ ♜a6 71.♜b4 ♖b5+ 72.♜c4 ♖b2 73.♜h8 Now Black is mated.

73...♖c2+ 74.♜b4 ♖b2+ 75.♜xb2

1-0

David Navara - Wesley So

Champions Showdown Rapid
Saint Louis USA (7.3)



22.♜xb3 Surely this is an easy draw?

22...♖d2 So prefers to play on as he has got the rook on the second rank.

23.♖c5?! This is too vague.

The patient **23.♖cd1**, with the idea of getting rid of the annoying rook, was much better. **23...♖fd8 24.♖xd2 ♖xd2 25.♖d1** and Black cannot keep the rook on the second rank as **25...♖e2?** drops the rook to **26.♖d8+ ♜h7 27.♖d3+**.

23...a4 24.♜b5 ♖fd8 Black has established control over the d-file and now the rook on d2 cannot be chased away. This is already progress for Black.

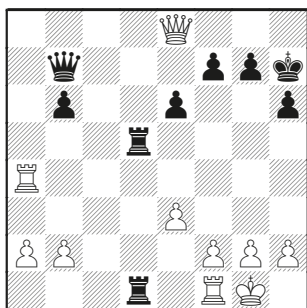
25.♖c4 White wants to take the a4-pawn.

25...♖8d5 26.♜e8+ ♜h7 27.♖xa4 27.♜xa4 was safer, as after **27...♗g5 28.g3 ♖xb2** White can try to get rid of the annoying rook by **29.♖c2**.



David Navara turned out to be a tough opponent for Wesley So

27...♖d1!



With the queen on e8 and the rook on a4 awkwardly placed So goes for the king!

28.♖c4? This is too slow and allows Black to develop an attack.

28.♖d4!, forcing exchanges, was the only way to stay in the game. 28...♖5xd4 29.exd4 ♖xd4 30.♙b5 is still equal.

28...♖xf1+ 29.♖xf1 ♖d1+ 30.♖e2 ♗d5 The difference in the activity of pieces is decisive.

31.♗c6 Now White is mated or loses too much material.

It was still better to exchange the rooks and avoid a mate: 31.♖d4 ♖xd4 32.exd4

♗e4+ 33.♖f1 ♗d3+ 34.♖e1 ♗b1+ and the endgame should be winning for Black, though it will require further play.

31...♗d2+ 32.♖f3 ♖f1 33.♗e4+ f5 34.♗h4 g5 35.♖d4 g4+ 36.♖f4 ♖xf2+ An impressive victory by So who managed to outplay Navara from a 'dead-drawn' position.

0-1

NAKAMURA

DUDA

With both players known for their blitz prowess this match promised to be tightly contested. And it was - Nakamura won the rapid section 7-5 and that wasn't enough for smooth sailing in the blitz, where he had to show all his mastery to win 15.5-8.5.

This match saw interesting opening duels in the Giuoco Piano and the Reti. Nakamura was true to his preferences of not engaging in opening battles with White, preferring 1.c4 or 1.♖f3 most of the time while with Black he was confident in his usual openings - the Berlin, the Giuoco Piano and the QGD set-ups.

The following is a fun miniature, and a very surprising one, since all the tricks Duda fell for have been known before.

Hikaru **Nakamura** - Jan-Krzysztof **Duda**

Champions Showdown Blitz
Saint Louis USA (12.2)

1.♖f3 f5 2.d3 ♖f6 Already this may not be the best even though it's the most often played move.

3.e4 fxe4? This is just bad. It's incredible that a player like Duda can show such lack of opening knowledge at such an early stage of the game!



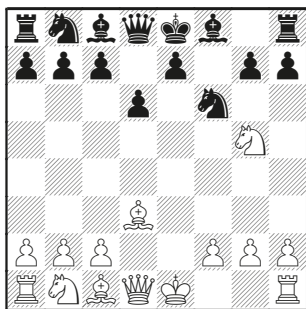
The match of the blitz masters went to Nakamura, after a fierce battle

3...d6.

4.dxe4 ♖xe4 5.♗d3 ♜f6 5...d5 is better, but pretty grim after the simple 6.♗xe4 dxe4 7.♞xd8+ ♖xd8 8.♜g5

6.♜g5! Black is close to lost on move 6! A rare occurrence!

6...d6



7.♗xh7! ♜xh7 8.♞h5+ ♖d7 9.♞g4+ Nakamura repeats moves once to accumulate time, but this gives Black an additional possibility.

9...♖e8 9...e6 was the extra option Black had here. 10.♜f7 ♞f6 11.♜xh8 g5 12.h4! ♞xh8 13.hxg5 ♗e7 and Black can resist here more than in the game as, even materially speaking, he has two pieces for a rook and a pawn.

10.♞h5+ ♖d7 11.♜f7! This is the correct way.

11...♖e8 12.♞h3+ ♖c6 13.♞f3+ ♖d7 14.♜xh8 White will manage to rescue the knight on h8 and will remain a clear exchange up. Nakamura won without problems.

1-0

SHANKLAND

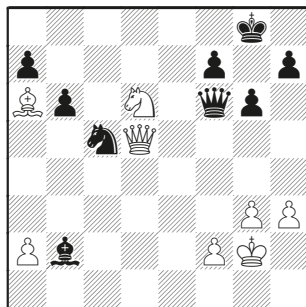
RAPPORT

By his own admission, Shankland isn't very good at faster time controls. He has improved considerably at classical chess, winning the US Championship and holding his own with the very best in Wijk aan Zee, but at faster time controls he still has a lot to learn. The match proved him right as he didn't really have a chance: in rapid he lost 9-3 (winning only one game) while at blitz Rapport was less dominant, winning 13.5-10.5.

It seemed to me that Shankland had problems getting accustomed to Rapport's style. Additionally, he was plagued by a lot of blunders, as in the following example:

Richard Rapport - Samuel Shankland

Champions Showdown Blitz
Saint Louis USA (5.5)





Still struggling with time-control: Sam Shankland

Black is a pawn up, but in view of the opposite-coloured bishops White has good drawing chances. Shankland now completely fails to see White's only threat.

30...♙d4?? 30...♘e6; 30...♚e7.

31.♚a8+ And White wins the queen after ♗e8.

1-0

Both players can take some positives from the match: a good learning experience for Shankland and a confidence boost for Rapport.

DOMINGUEZ

TOPALOV

After sitting out 2 years as required by FIDE, the Cuban-born Grandmaster had his first outing under the new flag. In a curious match-up we saw two 'retired' players - Dominguez because he was forced to and Topalov because he chose to (in his own words he is 'mentally retired'). Needless to say, this was the closest match of the five.

Still, in spite of his 'retirement' Topalov hasn't announced withdrawal from

practical play, so in view of Dominguez's inactivity for 2 years the Bulgarian had the advantage of being the more warmed-up player.

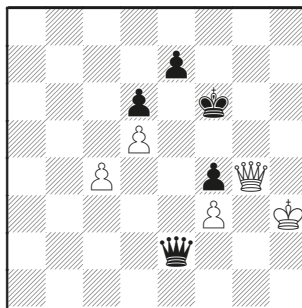
Both players opened with 1.e4 in the rapid section and this led to some theoretical discussions - the Giuoco Piano, the Scotch and the Anti-Berlin. It's a pity that we only saw one Najdorf, an opening where both players are leading experts.

Topalov won the rapid section 7.5-4.5, thanks to his strong finish of 3.5 out of 4. It was notable that he was choosing very positional lines in the openings he played. For example, when in the blitz section he switched to 1.d4, he was selecting lines with the fianchetto of the light-squared bishop.

This was the only match where each player won one section - Dominguez won the blitz 13.5-10.5, but in view of the double points for a rapid win Topalov won the match overall.

Veselin Topalov - Leinier Dominguez Perez

Champions Showdown Blitz
Saint Louis USA (19.4)



106...♚e5 Black has been trying to win a dead-drawn position for more than 70(!) moves, but now it seems that he finally has to give up. But on move 107 strange things can happen...



The match between Topalov and Dominguez was the closest one, but the Bulgarian came on top thanks to double points for a rapid win

107.♖h4?? An unexpected gift for Dominguez, but one that luckily didn't cost Topalov the match.

107.♖h2 was where the king was some moves ago, and it would have been safe to go back.

107...♚e1+ Now Black wins.

108.♖h3 It wasn't necessary to blunder into mate in 1, but White is lost anyway as the pawn endgame is hopeless.

108.♖h5 leads to a lost pawn endgame
 108...♚h1+ 109.♚h4+ ♚xh4+ 110.♖xh4
 ♖e5 111.♖g5 ♖d4 112.♖xf4 ♖xc4
 113.♖e4 ♖c5 and when the moves with the f-pawn run out White will lose the d-pawn.

108...♚h1#

0-1

The 'show' in the Showdown was definitely present in Saint Louis. It was fun to watch even though definitely much less fun for the players who - in spite of the friendly character of the matches - were under great stress, playing 36 games



The event attracted a lot of attention from the media and the public

in 4 days. Even so, they were nicely compensated for their efforts, so I assume everybody was happy in the end.

One thing is for sure - the show will go on in America.

(MIS)UNDERSTANDING THE GREAT MASTER



**THE MYTH ABOUT
LASKER'S PSYCHOLOGY**

By GM Aleksandar Colovic

I will start immediately with the shocker - there wasn't any diabolical mysterious psychology in Lasker's play.

Many books have repeated the view - which I will paraphrase here - that Lasker played the opening in a dubious manner in order to lure opponents into unfamiliar territory and then outplay them. Nothing can be further from the truth!

No strong player plays the opening dubiously on purpose. The fact that Lasker often ended up in dubious positions after the opening doesn't mean that he intended this to happen. Like anybody else he preferred a good position after the opening.

In an intriguing book "Od Steinitz do Botvinnika", volume 1 (From Steinitz to Botvinnik, published in Zagreb, Yugoslavia, in 1949) written by the Yugoslav chess master Vladimir Vukovic, the chapter on Lasker is very revealing. Vukovic's explanation for Lasker's opening struggles was that the old master found it hard to get into the game, so in the beginning he was often careless and this led to mistakes. Once in a bad position he would immediately snap out and concentrate hard and this, coupled with his incredible tactical talent, meant that he posed very difficult problems to his opponents, who were, after all, fallible. As the game progressed Lasker was playing better and better, especially if the momentum had swung his way, and when they finally reached the endgame Lasker was at his best. I think this is the most precise explanation of Lasker's 'psychology' I have read and in my opinion one that best describes the great champion's way of playing.

Lasker didn't care about the opponent so much. He was primarily concerned with his own *safety*.

Don't let this confuse you, however. Popular literature leads us to believe that Lasker was the risk-taker, the gambler, the great fighter. Yes, he could be all of these

things once the game was under way, but before the game he was very cautious and often insecure.

I would like to point to two very famous games of his to demonstrate my point. In both he used the Exchange Variation of the Ruy Lopez.

The first one is the first game of the match with Tarrasch in 1908. Here's the game without comments.

Emanuel Lasker - Siegbert Tarrasch

Lasker - Tarrasch World Championship
Mat Duesseldorf GER (1), 17.08.1908

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♗xc6 dxc6
5.d4 exd4 6.♖xd4 ♖xd4 7.♘xd4 c5 8.♗e2
♙d7 9.b3 ♙c6 10.f3 ♙e7 11.♙b2 ♙f6
12.♙xf6 ♘xf6 13.♘d2 0-0-0 14.0-0-0 ♖d7
15.♗f4 ♖e8 16.♗c4 b6 17.a4 a5 18.♖xd7
♗xd7 19.♖d1 ♗e5 20.♗xe5 ♖xe5 21.c4
♖e8 22.♗h5 ♖g8 23.♖d3 f6 24.♗d2 ♙e8
25.♗g3 ♙d7 26.♗e3 ♖e8 27.♗h5 ♖e7
28.g4 c6 29.h4 ♗c7 30.g5 f5 31.♗g3 fxe4
32.♗xe4 ♙f5 33.h5 ♖d7 34.♖c3 ♖d1
35.♗f4 ♙d7 36.♖e3 ♖h1 37.♗g3 ♖h4+
38.♗e5 ♖h3 39.f4 ♗d8 40.f5 ♖h4 41.f6
gxf6+ 42.♗xf6 ♙e8 43.♗f5 ♖f4 44.g6
hgx6 45.hxg6 ♖g4 46.♖xe8+ ♗xe8 47.g7
♗d7 48.♗h4 ♖xg7 49.♗xg7 ♗e6 50.♗f3
♗f5 51.♗f7 ♗e4 52.♗e6 ♗d3 53.♗d6
♗c3 54.♗xc6 ♗xb3 55.♗b5

1-0

**POPULAR LITERATURE
LEADS US TO BELIEVE THAT
LASKER WAS THE
RISK-TAKER, THE GAMBLER,
THE GREAT FIGHTER.
YES, HE COULD BE ALL OF
THESE THINGS ONCE THE
GAME WAS UNDER WAY,
BUT BEFORE THE GAME –
HE WAS VERY CAUTIOUS
AND OFTEN INSECURE**



Lasker and Tarrasch played their match in 1908 in Germany

We know that Tarrasch was a fierce critic of Lasker and often publicly stated that he wasn't a worthy World Champion. They finally met in a match in 1908. It is not widely known, but before the first game Lasker was nervous and this showed in his comment to his brother. He said something along the lines of, 'if I play the Exchange Variation, how can I possibly lose'?

Note that he was primarily seeking a safe haven: in the first place, he wanted to avoid losing! The fact that he won shows that once the game had started Lasker was just playing chess, trying to find the best moves. If an opportunity presented itself he would grab it and win the game, even if before it he had been content with a draw. The game with Tarrasch was around equal most of the time, but Tarrasch erred and Lasker took his chance.

The clash of Champions: Capablanca and Lasker





**THE FACT THAT
LASKER OFTEN ENDED
UP IN DUBIOUS
POSITIONS AFTER
THE OPENING
DOESN'T MEAN THAT
HE INTENDED THIS TO
HAPPEN**

Dr. Emanuel Lasker and his brother Berthold in 1908 (photo: Frank Eugene)

The second game is even more famous. In St. Petersburg in 1914 Capablanca was having a dream tournament. He was leading comfortably and playing excellent chess. He won the preliminary tournament with 8/10, a full point and a half ahead of Lasker and Tarrasch. These points counted toward the final standings and in the final he continued to play well. So what chances did Lasker have when they met in Round 7 in the final? He was trailing by a full point and he was playing a dangerous young opponent against whom he had suffered for 100 moves in Round 2 of the final and who was openly intent on claiming his title.

Losing that game would have been a disaster for Lasker in the eyes of the public. Not winning the tournament, and coming second behind the Cuban genius, much less so. How then does Lasker approach the game? No experiments, keep it safe and play the trusted Exchange Variation!

Emanuel Lasker - Jose Raul Capablanca

St. Petersburg St. Petersburg RUE (7),
18.05.1914

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙xc6 dxc6
5.d4 exd4 6.♞xd4 ♞xd4 7.♗xd4 ♙d6 8.♗c3
♗e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.f4 ♙e8 11.♗b3 f6 12.f5 b6

13.♙f4 ♙b7 14.♙xd6 cxd6 15.♗d4 ♙ad8
16.♗e6 ♙d7 17.♙ad1 ♗c8 18.♙f2 b5 19.♙fd2
♙de7 20.b4 ♗f7 21.a3 ♙a8 22.♗f2 ♙a7
23.g4 h6 24.♙d3 a5 25.h4 axb4 26.axb4 ♙ae7
27.♗f3 ♙g8 28.♗f4 g6 29.♙g3 g5+ 30.♗f3
♗b6 31.hxg5 hxg5 32.♙h3 ♙d7 33.♗g3
♗e8 34.♙dh1 ♙b7 35.e5 dxe5 36.♗e4 ♗d5
37.♗6c5 ♙c8 38.♗xd7 ♙xd7 39.♙h7 ♙f8
40.♙a1 ♗d8 41.♙a8+ ♙c8 42.♗c5

1-0

Just as in the game with Tarrasch, once the game had started and he was safe out of the opening, knowing that he could not possibly lose from that position, he started playing chess. And he outplayed Capablanca, who was probably somewhat confused: he became more relaxed after the innocuous opening choice but also puzzled about what Lasker was trying to achieve.

These two games were the most striking examples I found of Lasker's psychology. I was very surprised that even Kasparov, in his Predecessors series, fell for this myth of 'Lasker the Psychologist' who played the Exchange Variation in the Ruy Lopez for a win.

'Lasker was a great man,' Capablanca said on more than one occasion. And great men are often misunderstood.

BOOK REVIEW:

Alekhine's Odessa Secrets Chess, War and Revolution



Sergei Tkachenko

With a foreword by Boris Gelfand

The Odessa Affair: UNKNOWN FACTS ABOUT THE FORMER WORLD CHAMPION REVEALED

By Milan Dinic



In recent years we have seen the rise of publications explaining the history of the world from very specific angles: geography, culture, biology, philosophy, mathematics... The history of the world can also be told through chess, since its invention some 1500 years ago it has always been present - in the palaces of emperors and conquerors, at tables of the mightiest political offices, in the studies of great thinkers and philosophers, as well as in makeshift homes in the poorest slums.

Maybe one day someone will write a history of the world from the perspective of chess. And, if they do, they will find a very instructive and useful book for that undertaking - *'Alekhine's Odessa Secrets: Chess, War and Revolution'* written by Sergei Tkachenko (b. 1963).

At just over 200 pages, the book - published by Elk and Ruby in 2018 - offers a fascinating

account of events surrounding

Alexander Alekhine's three visits to Odessa during and immediately after the First World War. Drawing on research gathered from historians, chess players, memoirs of notable Odessans and their descendants, as well as the infamous Cheka and the KGB, the book is a valuable resource about a period in history of a life of a chess champion, as well as the people of that place and time. Sergei Tkachenko (an Odessa native and a member of the Ukrainian team that won the 5th World Chess Composition Tournament in 1997) takes the reader on a trip starting from the Russian Revolution in 1917 and ending with the analysis of the mystery surrounding the death of the great world champion in Portugal

Drawing on research gathered from historians, chess players, memoirs of notable Odessans and their descendants, as well as the infamous Cheka and the KGB, the book is a valuable resource about a period in history of a life of a chess champion Alexander Alekhine, as well as the people of that place and time. Sergei Tkachenko (an Odessan native and a member of the Ukrainian team that won the 5th World Chess Composition Tournament in 1997) takes the reader on a trip starting from the Russian Revolution in 1917 and ending with the analysis of the mystery surrounding the death of the great world champion in Portugal in 1946.

in 1946. The book debunks myths and reveals details about Alekhine's service during WW1 and (made-up?) decorations, his arrest by the Cheka in 1919 and the alleged links he had with the anti-communist White Movement which almost cost him his life.

However, this book is not only about Alekhine. As the author states in the introduction, 'I have attempted to fill in one of the biggest blanks - the time that Alekhine spent in Odessa in the early twentieth century. The book will tell you about the Odessans whom our hero met, both during his early southern chess tours and later on. Put differently, the aim of my book is to shed as much light as possible on the 'Odessa affair' in the life of this chess genius'.

The book represents a unique source about Odessa, the city in eastern Ukraine and the site of a workers' uprising supported by the crew of the Russian battleship Potemkin in 1905 (which was marvellously portrayed in Sergei Eisenstein's famous film 'Battleship



Potemkin'). The author gives a detailed account of its history, buildings, geography, ordinary people and leading town figures, from the 19th century all the way to the Second World War, who all have some connection to chess and the great Russian champion.

The book also includes an impressive collection of games Alekhine played against the locals during his visits, accompanied by analysis and comments.

In seven chapters, with copies of documents never before published, the book describes one of the most interesting and challenging periods of human history and unveils the life drama of not just the world chess champion, but of all who were destined to be there and then in Odessa - in the upheaval of a world war, a communist revolution and human tragedy.

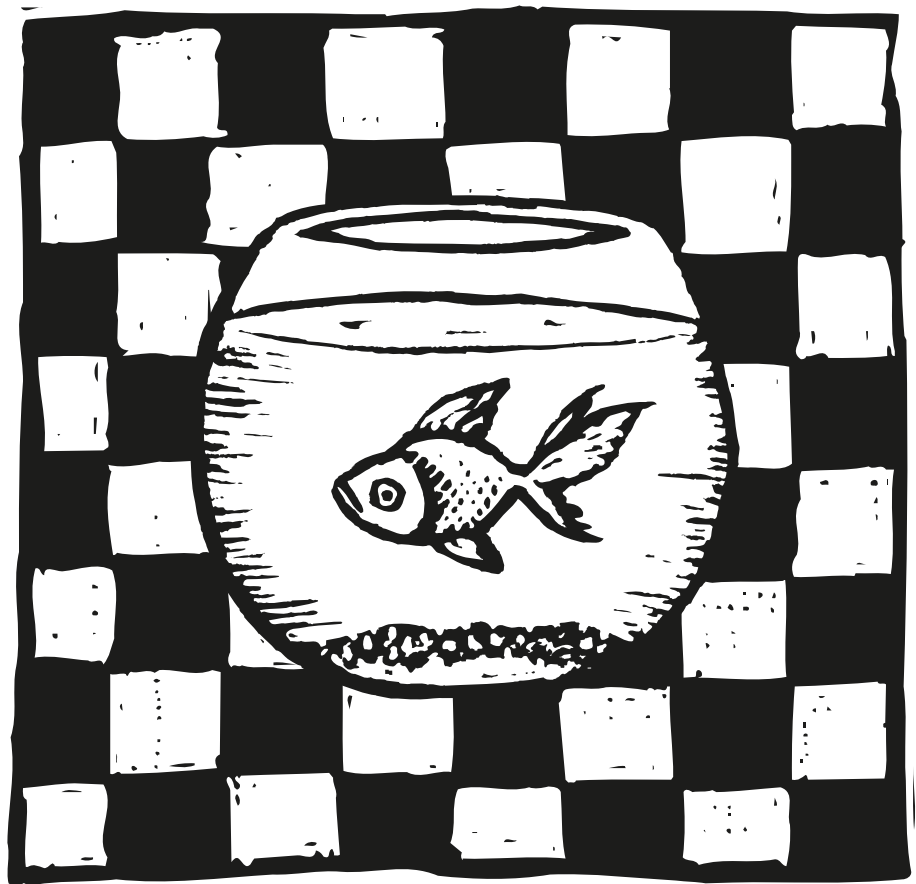
Overall, this is a highly readable and enjoyable piece for anyone who likes chess, history and politics.

The book has 214 pages and was published by Elk and Ruby. For more information, visit: <http://www.elkandruby.com>.



A Fishy Tail

By J. Corfield



To the best of my knowledge there have only ever been two recorded cases of chess being played by non-human life-forms. One is the well-known Joey, the budgerigar, but it is of the other case I wish to tell you.

My story begins on a wet November evening when I'd just settled down to listen to the radio. I was disturbed by the doorbell ringing. I looked at my watch; 18:58, just two minutes before the broadcast was due to begin. Who could it be on such a miserable night as this?

On opening the door, I received the first of the many surprises that were to come that memorable evening. It was Leslie! He was one of those old duffers who are to be found at every chess club; they turn up every week, never seem to win a game but will be back, for sure, the following week. I'd never actually played

him myself - how can I put this tactfully? - I've always played board one for our first team and Leslie was in the third team, mainly selected to avoid a default. In club knock-out competitions he was always eliminated in the first round whilst I was seeded straight into the final. Once, on strolling passed his board, I noticed that he was a whole rook down and it was obvious that only a violent king-side assault would give any hope of avoiding a defeat. And what did he play, after ten minutes thought? Why, P-QR3. That move summed up his abilities and, to this day, whenever I come across the move 'a3' I'm reminded of dear old Les. Incidentally, Leslie will be the last person in the country to abandon the English Descriptive notation. He still even writes 'Kt', rather than 'N'.

'Do you mind if I come in?' he rather diffidently asked. 'No', I replied, remembering that some months previously that he had mentioned a possible visit but I was also conscious of the opera that I was intending to listen to on the radio. At this, he shuffled in, carrying a large cardboard box, which he proceeded to set down carefully on my sitting room table.

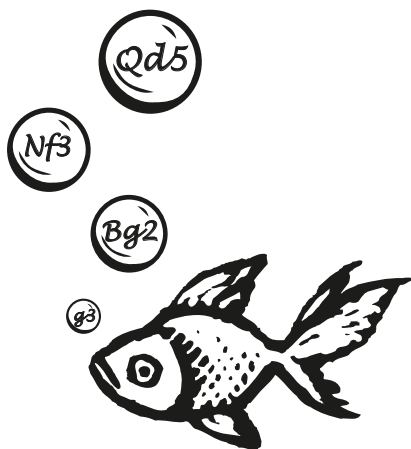
'I hope you don't mind my coming round like this,' he said 'but I do want the opinion of a top-class player and you're the obvious person to ask.'

'Yes, yes. Quite so', I replied. I ought to explain that I've been club president and champion for the last thirty-five years and so have acquired something of a local reputation, though I say it myself. My main distinction is that I'm the only one at the club who knows the 'en passant' rule in all its ramifications. If ever I find myself in a king and pawn ending, one pawn down, then I spring the 'en passant' rule upon my opponent when they are least expecting it. That one can remove one of one's opponent's pawns from the board and add an extra one of one's own,

on any square, is a little-known rule that I have utilised on several occasions.

I once opened a chess book and it stated that mating with a king and two bishops against a lone king was quite easy but a king, bishop and knight against a lone king was more tricky. Well, I've never investigated either of these, but it did inspire me to think of a simple way of allocating club players to teams. If they can checkmate with king and one queen against a lone king, they qualify for the first team; if they need two queens, they are placed in our second team; if they require three or more queens, they qualify for the third team. On a personal note, I did once manage to achieve a checkmate with a rook and king against a king. Afterwards I couldn't remember how I had done it and so didn't mention it to anyone else at the club in case they thought that I was boasting and challenged me to do it again.

'You do know that I've been acting as a chess coach?' he nervously confided. 'Yes, of course,' I replied. For weeks now at the club, Leslie had been buttonholing everyone about how he was intending to produce a player of grand-master strength, but I don't think that anyone took him at all seriously.





‘Well, actually,’ he continued, ‘I might as well tell you. You see...’ By this time he had reached the table and was standing by the box. ‘This is the awkward bit; despite what I told people at our club, the person I’ve been coaching isn’t a person at all. It’s a goldfish and his name is Murphy and here he is.’

‘Well, I’ve taught him all I possibly can and I want your opinion of how good he is. I’m hoping that you’ll give him a game and tell me what you think.’ ‘O.K.,’ I replied, trying not to smile, ‘bring him along to the club next Friday and I’ll give him a thrashing. By the way,’ I added ‘does he know how to checkmate in under 50 moves with just three queens against a lone king?’ Leslie pondered this for a moment and then said ‘I’m not absolutely sure if he can manage that yet. I can’t say precisely how much he has learned as he has taught himself for much of the time, as I’ll explain later. But,’ and here Leslie became even more earnest than usual, ‘I wondered if you could give him a game immediately; this evening, if that’s alright.’

His quiet tone of voice made me feel uneasy and instinctively I glanced across at his box on my table. ‘But what is his name and how can I possibly play him now? I really don’t want to go out this evening’ I said, thinking of the opera that I was missing. For a moment Leslie remained silent but he, too, was looking at his cardboard box.

‘This is the awkward bit,’ he began, ‘I don’t quite know how to explain this.’ By now his voice had dropped to a whisper and he was clearly struggling to express himself. ‘I might as well tell you directly, since you need to know but the whole point is, you see... Well...,’ here he rose in discomfort and started pacing around the room. ‘Well, actually,’ he continued,

‘I might as well tell you. You see...’ By this time he had reached the table and was standing by the box. ‘This is the awkward bit; despite what I told people at our club, the person I’ve been coaching isn’t a person at all. It’s a goldfish and his name is Murphy and here he is.’ As he exclaimed these last words, he opened the box and gingerly removed a bowl, a goldfish bowl, and inside the goldfish bowl, was a goldfish!

‘This is Murphy and he challenges you to a game! What do you say?’, he confidently enquired; his diffidence had evaporated.

What could I say? What can one say when one is speechless? I will freely admit that I was dumbfounded; never before had I been challenged to a game of chess by a goldfish. I just sat there slowly opening and closing my mouth, unable to think of anything appropriate to say.

Meanwhile, Leslie was setting up a magnetic set which he placed vertically beside the bowl. In a complete daze I sat down in front of my own chess set.

‘Now Murphy will play White and his opening move is **1.e4**.’ Leslie firstly played this move on the magnetic set and then again on my board and declaimed ‘Your move!’

‘Hang on a minute. Am I playing you or Murphy?’ for I was beginning to recover from my initial shock.

‘Don’t worry, I’ll explain as we go along. Just make your first move.’ In a trance I played **1...e5** and Leslie copied this on the magnetic board. Almost immediately he announced that Murphy had played **2.♘f3** and he proceeded to play that move on both the chess boards. ‘Now play your reply on your board and watch carefully what happens when I copy it on the magnetic board.’ Feeling utterly stupid but not

liking to say anything, I moved **2...d6** and turned my gaze to the goldfish who proceeded to wriggle for a moment or two and then became stationary, with its eyes focused on its magnetic board. ‘He has played **3.d4**; your move!’ ‘But how do you know?’ I protested at last. ‘The secret is you have to count how many times he wriggles his tail,’ Leslie explained. ‘Play your move and then count how many times Murphy wags his tail.’

I played **3...♙g4**, and we both watched Murphy start to wriggle and, as he did so, Leslie counted out loud ‘One, two, three, four; one, two, three, four; one, two, three, four, five; one, two, three, four, five. There we are! 4455; that means he has played **4.dxe5**’.

This was getting more and more ridiculous. ‘Why should 4455 mean dxe5?’, I asked helplessly. ‘Aren’t you familiar with the International Correspondence chess notation?’, Leslie asked.

| | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 18 | 28 | 38 | 48 | 58 | 68 | 78 | 88 |
| 17 | 27 | 37 | 47 | 57 | 67 | 77 | 87 |
| 16 | 26 | 36 | 46 | 56 | 66 | 76 | 86 |
| 15 | 25 | 35 | 45 | 55 | 65 | 75 | 85 |
| 14 | 24 | 34 | 44 | 54 | 64 | 67 | 84 |
| 13 | 23 | 33 | 43 | 53 | 63 | 73 | 83 |
| 12 | 22 | 32 | 42 | 52 | 62 | 72 | 82 |
| 11 | 21 | 31 | 41 | 51 | 61 | 71 | 81 |

‘It is so simple; I tried teaching Murphy the English Descriptive notation but KkT to QB square was beyond his understanding. I had more success with the Algebraic Notation but he took to the Correspondence Notation like a duck to water. Surely you must have met this notation before? So play your move and then count with me how many times he wriggles his tail when he replies.’

‘He has played 3.d4; your move!’ ‘But how do you know?’ I protested at last. ‘The secret is you have to count how many times he wriggles his tail,’ Leslie explained. ‘Play your move and then count how many times Murphy wags his tail.’



I played 4...♙xf3, and 4, 1, 6, 3 was wriggled and I could tell that this meant that the piece on square '41' moved to square '63' so 5.♖xf3 was played. It then dawned upon me that it was indeed Murphy, rather than Leslie, that I was playing and that he was a talented opponent. I could no longer anticipate a quick win and realised that I must settle down for the evening. Would you mind if I put on the radio because Rossini's Barber of Seville is being broadcast from Paris and it was my intention to listen to it tonight? I could count on a fine performance as it is being conducted by Luke Brunswick!' Leslie had no objection as he doubted if the sound waves would reach Murphy, so the remainder of the game was accompanied by this opera.

5...dxe5 6.♗c4

By this stage I had almost got used to the peculiar arrangements and play proceeded smoothly. Just occasionally I would count Murphy's wriggles to confirm that all was well, but I had a rash of questions to ask. 'Why did you teach him chess in the first place; and how did you teach him the moves; why not teach him bridge or mathematics or even Chinese?' 'Well,' Leslie replied, 'it all started when I

installed ChessBase on my computer. Until then Murphy had shown no interest in anything that appeared on the screen but once ChessBase was switched on I could tell he was fascinated; he couldn't take his eyes off the screen. When I do word-processing or anything like that he ignores the computer but switch on chess and he instantly concentrates. I even tried moving his bowl to different parts of the room but he always faces the monitor and focuses on the screen if there is chess to be watched.'

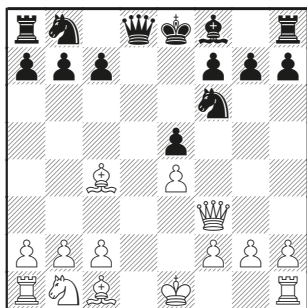
At this point I played another move.

6...♘f6

Whilst we were waiting for Murphy to reply Leslie continued his explanation. 'You've heard of the Polgar sisters?' I nodded agreement. 'Of course you have; everyone has. Well, I read the father's account of how he trained his three daughters. From infancy the girls were brought up in a chess environment; morning, noon and night; they were saturated with chess and became amongst the best players in the world. Well, if he could do it, why couldn't I? I meticulously followed his plan but as I've no longer any daughters, I fixed upon Murphy instead.'

Everyone in our town knew of the terrible tragedy that had struck Leslie; it had made the front page of our local paper. ‘And why is he called Murphy?’ I enquired, trying tactfully to change the subject.

‘Well, he was the only one who survived.’ For a moment Leslie was overcome with grief at the memory of that horrible evening when he had been at our chess club, oblivious to the awful fact that his house was burning down. Imagine adjourning a game and coming home to find that his home was destroyed, his four horses all dead, not to mention four visiting clerical friends, four birds, his almost identical-looking twin brother, his two wives and all sixteen children, too. And on top of that, he had a tricky rook ending to analyse before next week. What an evening! He had lost almost everything but when the rubble was searched there was something that had survived the fire: his goldfish, miraculously protected from the inferno by the bowl of water. ‘He clearly had the luck of the Irish, so I gave him an Irish name... Murphy’



7. ♖b3?

Until this move Murphy had played quite well and had successfully avoided all my traps. But this move is weak; everyone knows that Fred Reinfeld taught that you shouldn't move your queen a second time until all your back-row pieces have been developed. Leslie was clearly rattled by this blunder and got Murphy to confirm

The author and the story

Julian Corfield (1948) is an International master in correspondence chess. He learnt how to play chess at the age of 10, alongside his brother, thanks to his father. ‘Once he had taught us the moves, he announced that he intended to buy a chess book. Reputedly, I responded to this by saying ‘Why buy us a book? We know how to play!’”

At the age of 17 Corfield started to play regularly, but, as he says ‘I lacked the experience of my contemporaries who had started at an earlier age. As a consequence, I was never very successful at over-the-board chess. Aged about 30, I discovered correspondence chess and immediately realised that this was a form of the game that suited me’.

In 1999 he became an IM, and the pinnacle of his career were the British Correspondence Championships in 2009-2010 and again in 2010-2011. ‘In the former, I won seven games out of the 14 but lost one, and became joint champion; in the latter, I only won four but was outright champion!’

And how did the chess story come to life?

‘I first jotted down some notes for this over 40 years ago but did nothing with them until I retired from teaching last summer. I then fleshed them out but didn't receive any encouragement from publishers. However, I remembered that J. K. Rowling also suffered neglect initially, so I persevered and am now hoping that my second career, as an author, will be as successful as hers.’

the move, which he did in a rather aggressive manner.

7...♔e7 8.♘c3 c6 9.♙g5 b5 10.♘xb5?

The beginning of the end. This error is even worse than his 7th move. He obviously overlooked that this pawn is protected. I replied quickly, though for a moment I did wonder if it was fair to take advantage of his blunder. Somehow beating a goldfish at chess seemed like taking candy from a child but then I remembered that there is no such thing as a friendly game of chess.

10...cxb5

It was at this point that I asked Leslie just how good he thought Murphy could become and how did he compare with the chess-playing budgerigar that had been in the news a few years back. This, it turned out, was not the thing to say. 'Don't talk to me about Joey; he was a one-day wonder. He played one good game against somebody, it might have been Kasparov, and was never heard of again. Don't mention Joey to me.'

I quickly changed the subject and play continued.

11.♙xb5+ ♞bd7 12.0-0-0 ♜d8

'Teaching Murphy to play was easy; I just put a copy of the rules by his bowl and left him on his own for four hours. When I returned, he had obviously played against himself a huge number of times, for he had learned a tremendous amount. Now he loves following games on my computer, but I do wonder what he sees when he views a board from inside his bowl. I mean, does the curved glass distort his vision? Do the ranks and files appear as straight lines to him? I ask this because initially he found the moves of the rooks and bishops difficult, but he latched on to the knights' move instantly. And do the squares at the edge of the board look smaller than those in the centre?'

I was relieved of the necessity of attempting an answer by Murphy's next move.

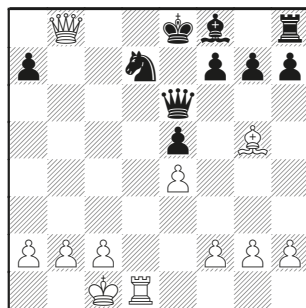
13.♞xd7?

I was as embarrassed as Leslie by this ghastly error; it cannot be blamed on time pressure; more likely Murphy's tiny, little mind was over-loaded. Apologetically, I took the rook.

13...♞xd7 14. ♞d1 ♔e6 15.♙xd7

When down in material, exchanging pieces is not to be recommended but his position is passed saving. I couldn't help wondering how a goldfish resigns a game of chess; this was not something that I had ever contemplated before today.

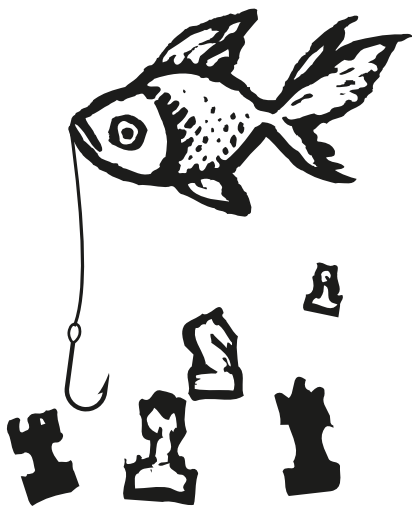
15...♘xd7 16.♔b8+??



On seeing this further, pathetic howler I giggled and Leslie slumped back in his chair. I don't know whether it was my laughter or the realisation that Murphy was being trounced that upset him but after I reluctantly played

16....♘xb8

Leslie, without a word, started to put away the chess pieces. He didn't need to say that the game was over, his demeanour stated it all too clearly. With a sad, parting glance at me, Leslie got up and left.



One final curious thing was, that as Leslie placed the towel back over the bowl and put the bowl back inside the box, I could hear that Murphy was thrashing madly with his fin, so much so, that water was being sprayed out of the bowl. I regret to report that this display of poor sportsmanship continued until my two visitors were out of my house.

Upon reflection, if training a goldfish for months only produces a standard of play that wouldn't get into our fourth team, if we had one, it doesn't say much about the coach. Unsurprisingly Leslie kept quiet about this episode, although years later, when I cautiously inquired, he did mention that chess had been abandoned by Murphy in favour of studying the law. This venture had an equally unsatisfactory conclusion: the public being unwilling to accept that a goldfish's memory was up to the task, resulting in Murphy's final years being rather troubled.

Subsequently the chess world was rocked by the revelation that the exploits of Joey, the budgerigar, were a deplorable hoax, meaning that Murphy is unique among animate chessplayers.

BOOK REVIEW

Werner Keym: 'CHESS PROBLEMS OUT OF THE BOX'

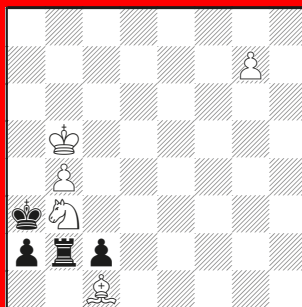
By Christopher Jones

If you are tempted by an escape from the practicalities of over-the-board chess, then the book 'Chess Problems Out of the Box' may be for you. The author is a long-standing expert in the chess problem world, specializing in problems featuring castling, promotions, en-passant captures, and other exotic features, often with a fascinating under-pinning of retro-analysis.

Werner Keym has made a painstaking selection from thousands of problems that exist in databases, using Voltaire's aphorism 'All genres are good except the boring' as the motto for this book.

This English-language publication is an updated and expanded version of a 2010 German-language edition.

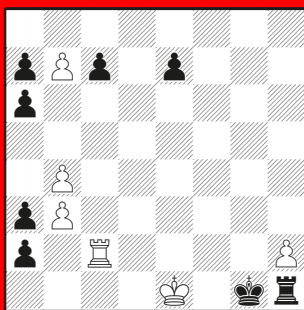
The problems range from the reasonably conventional to the distinctly unconventional. Take this problem, from the section dealing with promotions, as an example of the former end of the spectrum:



Matjaz Zigman
1st Prize, Delo-Tovaris 1970
Mate in 3

Clearly the g7 pawn will promote. It seems at first that 1.g8=queen must do the trick, planning to move the b3 knight with unanswerable threats of both 3.♖b3 and 3.♗a8. However, Black has the resource 1...a1=♙, when any move of the b3 knight gives stalemate. So try 1.g8=♖, when 1...a1=♙ fails (2.♘d2 ♔a2 3.♗a8) but now 1...a1=N refutes. Therefore we must invert the moves - 1.♘d2! and now we have 1...a1=♙ 2.g8=♖ and 1...a1=♘ 2.g8=♗. Thus we have (very economically) all 4 promotions, known to problemists by the German word *Allumwandlung* ('AUW' for short). (Note that it is to d2 that the white knight must go so as to guard b1.)

A couple of other examples give an idea of having to think 'outside the box' - beyond the parameters of everyday chess calculation. The following problem, by Werner Keym himself, was published in *Die Schwalbe* in 1997 with the unusual stipulation: 'add white bishop on a1, white rook on a1 or white queen on a1. Mate in how many moves?'



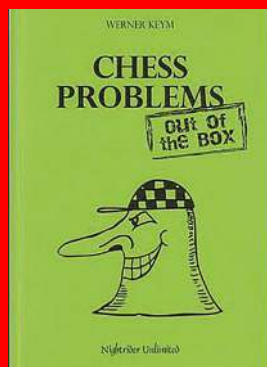
I quote Werner's solution: "There is mate in 1 single move by a bishop (1.♗d4♯). The last move could be a4-a3 because the black pawns could capture the 9 missing pieces on light squares. With ♖a1 or ♗a1 the black pawn d7 captured the dark-squared bishop on c5 or b4 or c3, so the last move could not be a4-a3 and Black is to play. The rook needs one single move more: 1.b♖xh2 0-0-0♯ and the queen even four moves: 1.b♖xh2 ♗g7+ 2.♙h1 ♖xh2+ 3.♙xh2 ♙f2 4.♙h3 ♗g3♯." The paradoxicality -

the stronger the piece the longer it takes to mate - is typical of the quirky humour of this book.

One final example, again by Werner himself, this time from *Allgemeine Zeitung Mainz* 2002, and this time with the odd stipulation 'Has White been mated?' Try and set up the following position: White - king on d3; bishop on c1; pawns on b2 and d2; Black - king on b1; queen on e5; bishop on a6; pawns on b7, c3 and d4. Now have a look at the position again - it's not a mistake!

It seems that this position would have to have arisen from a sequence of moves ...b5-b4+; c2-c4, bxc3 e.p. However, if the white pawn had been at c2 so recently, how on earth did the black king get to b1?! So the white pawn must have been at c3, in which case '...bxc3 e.p.' was an illegal move: Black, having touched his b4 pawn, must move it, and the result of his doing so, ...b4-b3, is stalemate! (Yes, a pinch of salt is sometimes needed with humorous puzzles such as this one...)

All in all, a very diverse and diverting potpourri of problems (and even a few studies), which should prove a pleasant introduction to the enjoyably impractical aspects of chess.



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BCM'S ALAN SMITH ON A SPECIAL MOMENT IN EVERY PLAYER'S CHESS CAREER



Rosendo Balinas vs. Bobby Fischer, Meralco, 1967, drawn after 39 moves

FIRST MEETING WITH A GRANDMASTER

By Alan Smith

A chess player's first meeting with a grandmaster is a memorable occasion. Back in 1978 grandmasters did not prowl the circuit like hungry wolves: indeed, it was rare even to see an IM.

I played my first grandmaster back in 1978 in round 5 of the first Benedictine International, held at the Wythenshawe Forum. I started the event slowly, losing to Keith Arkell in round 1, but recovered well with wins against Cockroft and Bruce Rind. After 4 rounds I had scored +2 =1 -1 and I was level with three grandmasters. When I was travelling back from the venue with Chris Morrison and David Kilgour, they pointed out that I was probably going to meet a GM the next day.

The next morning I was paired with GM Rosendo Balinas. He was one of a select band of foreign visitors who won an outright tournament victory in the USSR:

- Capablanca at Moscow 1936
- Fine at Moscow 1937
- Flohr at Leningrad-Moscow 1939
- **Balinas** at Odessa 1976
- (Nigel Short went on to win at Baku in 1983.)

Rosendo Carreon Balinas, Jr. (September 10, 1941 - September 24, 1998) was a player from the Philippines who received his GM title in 1976. A lawyer by profession, he was also an acclaimed chess writer and journalist. He is considered to be one of the strongest Asian chess players during the

60s and 70s, having won international tournaments in Hong Kong, Singapore and Manila during the period.

In the 1966 Chess Olympiad in Havana he scored 15.5 points from 20 games, winning the silver medal award for individual performance, behind the then World Champion Mikhail Tal. In the 1967 Meralco match in Manila, of the top 10 Filipino players Balinas was the only then Philippine national master to draw with Bobby Fischer. At the time Balinas was the Philippine Open Champion - the title which he won seven times! In 1968 he shared first place at the Philippine Open Championship with Serb (Yugoslav) GM Svetozar Gligoric.

I was 23 years old and he was the strongest player I had met. I had no expectations, but the other local players had shown that the visiting masters were by no means invincible. I was determined to play my best.

The next day John Watson advised playing 1.e4 versus Balinas. He said that Balinas did not enjoy facing 1.e4!? And so it was...

Alan Smith - Rosendo Balinas

Benedictine international, Wythenshawe
Forum, 1978

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 g6 This was his reserve defence. In round 1 he defended a main line Spanish and lost to Oliver Jackson. I had been hoping to play the Scotch Game.

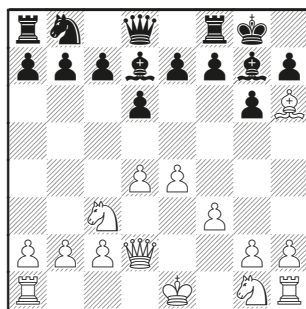
4.♗e2 ♗g7 5.♗e3 Amos Burn and Nimzowitsch both played this with success.

5... 0-0 6.♖d2 This line was not mentioned by Botterill and Keene in their book on the Pirc Defence.

6...♗g4? Already an error: 6...♘c6 is better.

7.♗xg4 ♗xg4 8.f3 ♗d7 9.♗h6

I WAS 23 YEARS OLD AND HE WAS THE STRONGEST PLAYER I HAD MET, I HAD NO EXPECTATIONS, BUT THE OTHER LOCAL PLAYERS HAD SHOWN THAT THE VISITING MASTERS WERE BY NO MEANS INVINCIBLE. I WAS DETERMINED TO PLAY MY BEST



Some years later I checked out this line in a database and was amused to find that this was the first new move, 9. h4 e5 10.h5 ♗e8 11.hxg6 fxg6 12.♗g5 ♖c8 13.♘d5 ♘c6 14.♗f6 is also strong F.Blatny- W.Lenk Decin 1972, 1-0 25. I did not find an example of Black surviving after 6...♗g4?

9...♘c6 10.♗ge2 e5 11.♗xg7 ♖xg7 12.h4 h6 13.0-0-0 exd4 14.♘xd4 Quite a lot like a Scotch Game now.

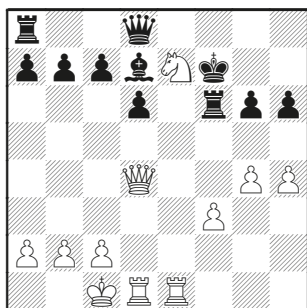
14...f5? Opening lines helps the better-developed player. I had expected 14...♗e5.

15.exf5 ♗xf5 16.♘d5 ♘xd4 17.♖xd4+ ♗g8 17...♗h7 is safer. **18.♖he1 ♖f7 19.g4 ♗d7 20.♖e4 ♗g7 20...♖g7** allows **21.♗e7+ ♗h7 22.h5 ♗e8 23.g5!**

21.♗e7 ♖f6 22.♖d4 ♖f7



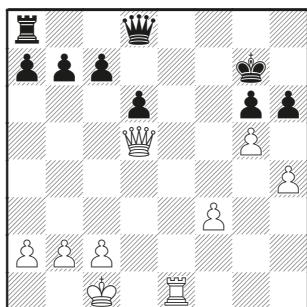
**ROSENDO CARREON BALINAS WAS
THE PHILIPPINE OPEN CHAMPION
- THE TITLE WHICH HE WON SEVEN
TIMES - AND ONE OF THE TOP ASIAN
PLAYERS IN THE 60'S AND 70'S**



23...d5? Missing a simple win with 23.g5! fxe6 24.fxe6 gxe6 25.f6+ e8 and now rather than 26.fxe6+, which I had seen, White has 26.f1! which wins on the spot.

23... fxe6 24.fxe6 gxe6 25.f1 The threat of 26.f4+ forces Black to exchange off his best defender.

25...gxd5 26.fxd5+ g7 27.g5!



hxg5? Once again Black obligingly opens lines for my pieces. 27...d7 27...f8 or 27...c6 were all better tries.

28.hxg5 c6 29.f4+ f7 30.f4+ A hesitant move.

30...g7 31.f4+ f7 This repetition of moves is omitted in the tournament bulletin, which was presumably based on my opponent's score.

32.h4 g8 33.f6

1-0

Black lost on time, with eight moves still to make. The black queen has not moved. Black is lost in any case: 33...f7 34.f6+ e8 35.f4+ d7 36.f7+ c8 37.f6+ b8 38.f7.

Leonard Barden published the game in his *Guardian* column on 21st October 1978 and praised my 'model attack with heavy pieces'.

Later the same day I drew with Forintos, who found no reason to refuse my draw offer after he had blundered a pawn. I was found out the next day: Janos Flesch gave me no chance. The event ended happily for me; a couple of solid draws, then a last round win saw me reach the dizzy heights of +4 =4 -2 and a tie with Flesch for seventh and eighth prizes.

4 NCL WEEKEND NO 3

IS CHESS.com GOING TO END THE DOMINANCE OF GUILDFORD?

By IM Shaun Taulbut, Photo: 4NCL, BCM

One of the most dominant national chess events in Britain, 4NCL - held annually over a number of weekends - does a lot to contribute to promoting chess on the Island. The event travels across the country where teams - organised in four divisions of about 600 players - fight for titles and prizes. Structured as a league, 4NCL attracts some of the very best chess players in Britain including leading GMs and IMs, and the average standard of play and dedication to chess of participating players is very high. Rightly, 4NCL can be regarded as one of the jewels in the British chess crown.

The third weekend of the Four Nations Chess League (4NCL) brought about a lot of great chess, showcasing the high standard of play.

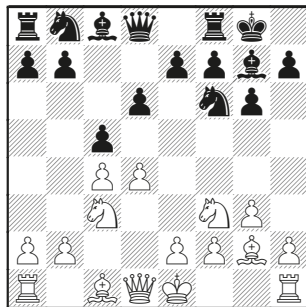
The two preliminary pools (see tables at the end) have almost been completed, with the top four teams from each pool going through to the Championship pool, and the bottom four from each into a relegation pool. As in previous years, Guildford 1 are setting the pace with six wins out of six, but they have a new rival in Chess.com Manx Liberty who also have six wins out of six but not as many game points. Chess.com Manx Liberty have

been rising through the ranks of the 4NCL with their team of European grandmasters and are sponsored by website Chess.com. Guildford 1 are preparing to meet the challenge by adding to their already strong contingent of grandmasters eligible to play; Luke McShane played for Guildford in this weekend and Michael Adams played for Guildford in the second weekend. Gawain Jones of Guildford 1 scored this victory in the 7.5-0.5 win against West is Best 1,

John Cooper – Gawain Jones

4NCL Div 1a 2018–19 Telford ENG (5.12)

1.c4 g6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♙g7 4.g3 0-0
5.♙g2 d6 6.♗c3 c5



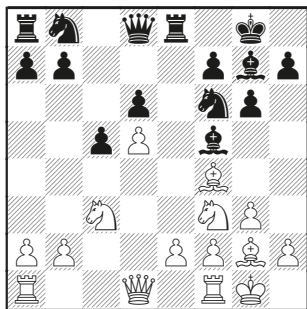
7.d5 White accepts the challenge of advancing in the centre, leading to a Modern Benoni; this type of position lends itself to Gawain Jones' tactical prowess.

The alternative 7.dxc5 dxc5 8.0-0, with a slight edge for White, is worth consideration.

7...e6 8.0-0 exd5 9.cxd5 ♖e8 Black prevents White from advancing immediately with e4: a logical choice.

10.♟f4 White aims at the pawn on d6, a weak spot in the black position as the pawn must be defended by pieces.

10...♟f5



11.♖c1 A key moment in the game; White aims to exchange off the dark-squared bishops. There were good alternatives:

a) 11.♖b3 is worth consideration.

b) 11.♟h4 ♟g4 12.♖b3 when if 12.. ♟h5 (12...♟a6 is satisfactory for Black, eg 13.♖xb7 ♟b4 14.a3 ♖e7 15.♖b5 ♟c2 16.♖ac1 ♟d4 and Black captures on e2) 13.♖xb7 ♟xf4 14.♖xa8 ♟xc3 15.bxc3 ♟xe2+ 16.♟h1 is better for White;

c) 11.♟d2 ♟h5 12.♟e3 ♟d7 with equality;

11...♟e4 Logical: aiming to exploit the e-file and opening up the fianchettoed bishop.

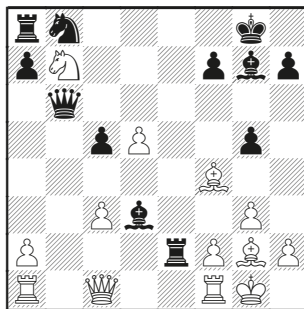
12.♟d2 White chooses to sacrifice the pawn on e2 but sees that he can attack d6 effectively.

12...♟xc3 13.bxc3 ♖xe2 14.♟c4 The knight comes to its best square.

14...♟d3 The game has quickly developed into a tactical battle; if Black defends d6 with 14...♟f8 then White can play 15.♟e3 trapping the rook in. Black can then obtain a good game with 15.. ♟d3 when 16.♖d1 c4 17.♟f3 g5 is satisfactory for Black as the bishop on f4 is also trapped.

15.♟xd6 g5 Black attacks the white bishop, defending the knight on d6 at the expense of weakening the kingside.

16.♟xb7 ♖b6



Now Black must win a piece, but White has good compensation in terms of the open black king position.

17.♟xg5 ♖xb7 18.♖e1 18.♟h6 is a good alternative: eg, 18...♟xh6 19.♖xh6 ♟d7 20.♖fd1 ♟e5 21.♖xd3 ♟xd3 22.♖g5+ ♟f8 23.♖h6+ ♟g8 24.♖g5+ with a draw by perpetual check.

18...♟d7 18...♖xe1+ 19.♖xe1 ♖d7 20.♖e3 c4 21.♟h6 is similar to the game.

19.d6 ♟e4 20.♖xe2 ♟xg2 21.♟h6 21.♖b1 ♖c6 22.♟h6 ♟h3 23.f3 ♖xf3 24.♖g5 is perhaps slightly better.

21...♟h3 The mate threat gains valuable time but White should still hold the position.

22.f3 ♖xf3 23.♗g5 ♖xc3 23...♗g4 24.♖ae1 ♗xg5 25.♖e8+ ♖xe8 26.♖xe8+ ♗f8 27.♗xg5 ♖g7 28.♗e7 is equal.

24.♗xg7+ 24.♖ae1 is stronger as Black has no moves to improve his position eg 24...♗d4+ 25.♖h1 ♗g4 26.♖e3 ♖h8 27.♗xg7+ ♗xg7 28.♖e8+ ♖xe8 29.♖xe8+ ♖f8 30.♗xc5 ♖a1+ 31.♖g2 ♗xa2+ 32.♖g1 with a draw.

24...♗xg7 25.♗g7 ♖xg7 Now Black has the advantage as he can connect his pieces.

26.g4 ♖g8 26...♖f6 27.♖e7 ♖d8 is also good for Black.

27.♖f2 ♗xg4 28.♖g1 ♖f8 29.♖e4 ♗e6 30.♖xg8+ ♖xg8 31.♖a4 ♖g7 32.♖xa7 ♖f6 The Black king rounds up the white d-pawn and the game is soon over.

33.♗e3 ♖e5 34.♖a6 ♖f6 34...f5 35.a4 f4+ 36.♖f2 ♖f6 is also good as the white king cannot stop the black pawns.

35.a4 ♖e8 36.a5 ♖xd6 37.♖a8 ♗d5 38.♖a7 c4 39.a6 ♖f5+ 40.♖d2 ♖d6 The key move, trapping the white rook by ensuring that Rb7 is not playable.

41.♖c3 ♖e7 White resigned as his king cannot advance because of the check on c6 and the rook has no good move.

0-1

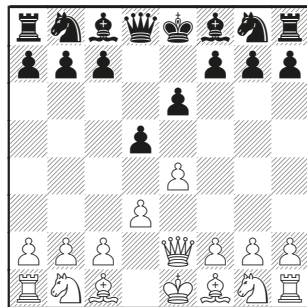
AS IN PREVIOUS YEARS, GUILDFORD 1 ARE SETTING THE PACE WITH SIX WINS OUT OF SIX, BUT THEY HAVE A NEW RIVAL IN CHESS.COM MANX LIBERTY WHO ALSO HAVE SIX WINS OUT OF SIX BUT NOT AS MANY GAME POINTS

Here is a game from one of the Chess.com Manx Liberty European grandmasters.

Lukasz Cyborowski – Ezra Kirk

4NCL Div 1b 2018–19 Telford ENG (5.55)

1.e4 e6 2.d3 d5 3.♗e2



The Chigorin line against the French Defence, often leading to the King's Indian Attack.

3...♖f6 4.♖f3 c5 5.g3 g6 6.♗g2 ♗g7 7.0-0 0-0 8.e5 White decides to advance even though Black is well prepared to meet this.

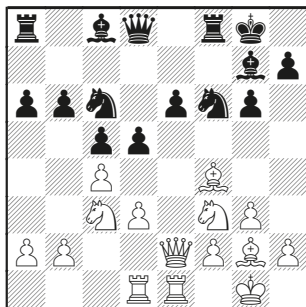
8...♖fd7 9.c4 An important move; White needs to play actively before Black attacks the pawn on e5.

9...♖c6 10.♗f4 f6 Not the best move. 10...dxc4 11.dxc4 ♖d4 12.♖xd4 cxd4 13.h4 h6 is slightly better for Black since White cannot play 14.♖d2 because of 14...g5, trapping the bishop on f4.

11.exf6 ♖xf6 12.♖c3 White has a slight edge now because of the slightly weak pawn on e6.

12...a6 13.♖fe1 b6 13...♖d4 looks best here.

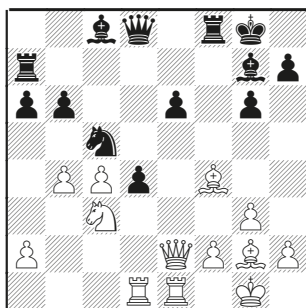
14.♖ad1



14...Ra7 15.d4 White opens up the centre to take advantage of his better-placed pieces.

15...dxd4 16.dxd4 cxd4 17.Rxd4 dxe4 The discovered attack on the white rook on d4 looks attractive but White simply drops the rook back; 17...Raf7 18.cxd5 dxd5 19.Rxd5 exd5 20.dxd5 b7 21.fxf7+ Rxf7 22.Ke8+ Kxe8 23.Rxe8+ Rf8 and Black has some compensation for the pawn.

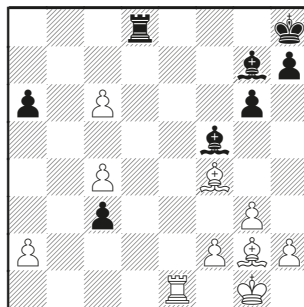
18.Rd3 19.c5 19...Rdd1 d4 20.b4



Now White is clearly better as Black is either driven back or loses the pawn on e6.

20...Rd7 After 20...d7 21.Ke6+ Kh8 22.d5 dxe5 (22...g5 23.fxc1; 22...b5 23.d7 dxb6 24.dxc8 dxc8 25.c5) 23.Kxb6; or 20...d7 21.f5 and the pawn on d4 is lost.

21.bxc5 dxc3 22.Ke6+ Kh8 23.Rxd7 dxd7 24.Kxb6 f5 25.dxd8 Rxd8 26.c6



The battle of the passed c-pawns is won by White because of his extra pawns.

26...c2 27.c7 Rf1 28.f1 f3 28...b2 is better but after 29.f7 a5 30.c8 K+ 31.fxc8 c1 32.fxc1 Rxf1+ 33.fxf1 fxc1 34.c5 g7 35.c6 a3 36.fxe2 f6 37.a6 d6 38.d3 e7 39.d4 d8 40.d5 b4 41.f4 c7 42.d3 d2 43.f2 e3 44.h3 f2 45.g4 g3 46.f5 gxf5 47.gxf5 h4 48.f6 e6 fxc6 49.f6 e1 50.f7. White is winning

29.f3 f1 If 29...Ra1 30.Rxa1 fxa1 31.f4 is winning for White; or if 29...Rxf1+ 30.fxf1 b2 31.f7 c1 K+ 32.fxc1 fxc1 33.fxa6 a3 34.f4 g7 35.c8 K+ 36.fxc8 is winning for White.

30.f4 f3 31.c8 K+ 32.fxc2 Winning a piece so Black resigned.

1-0

Entry of Chess.com Manx Liberty into 4NCL is an interesting development, likely to breathe in new life and excitement into the league, as the above game shows.

The standings in the two Preliminary pools in Division 1 after the end of the third weekend of the 4NCL are as follows:

4 NCL WEEKEND NO 3



DIVISION 1A

| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | GP | Pts |
|---|---------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-----------|
| 1 | Guildford 1 | | 5-3 | 7-1 | 7-1 | 7½-½ | | 7½-½ | 7½-½ | 41½ | 12 |
| 2 | Wood Green | 3-5 | | 5½-2½ | 3½-4½ | 6½-1½ | 8-0 | 7-1 | | 33½ | 8 |
| 3 | Barbican 4NCL 1 | 1-7 | 2½-5½ | | 6-2 | 5-3 | 6½-1½ | | 5½-2½ | 26½ | 8 |
| 4 | White Rose 1 | 1-7 | 4½-3½ | 2-6 | | | 6-2 | 5-1 | 5½-2½ | 24 | 8 |
| 5 | Alba | ½-7 ½ | 1½-6½ | 3-5 | | | 4-4 | 4-4 | 4½-3½ | 17½ | 4 |
| 6 | North East England | | 0-8 | 1½-6½ | 2-6 | 4-4 | | 4½-3½ | 4-4 | 16 | 4 |
| 7 | Oxford 1 | ½-7 ½ | 1-7 | | 1-5 | 4-4 | 3½-4½ | | 4½-3½ | 14½ | 3 |
| 8 | West is Best 1 | ½-7 ½ | | 2½-5½ | 2½-5½ | 3½-4½ | 4-4 | 3½-4½ | | 16½ | 1 |

DIVISION 1B

| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | GP | Pts |
|---|---------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-----------|
| 1 | Chess.com Manx Liberty 1 | | 4½-3½ | 5-3 | 7½-½ | 6-2 | | 4½-3½ | 6-2 | 33½ | 12 |
| 2 | Cheddleton 1 | 3½-4½ | | 5½-2½ | | 5-3 | 7-1 | 7½-½ | 6-2 | 34½ | 10 |
| 3 | Guildford 2 | 3-5 | 2½-5½ | | 5½-2½ | | 6½-1½ | 7-1 | | 30 | 8 |
| 4 | Celtic Tigers 1 | | | 2½-5½ | | 4½-3½ | 3½-4½ | 4½-3½ | 4-4 | 19½ | 5 |
| 5 | Blackthorne Russia | 2-6 | 3-5 | | 3½-4½ | | 5½-2½ | 4-4 | 4-4 | 22 | 4 |
| 6 | Wood Green Monarchs | | 1-7 | 1½-6½ | 4½-3½ | 2½-5½ | | 2-6 | 4½-3½ | 16 | 4 |
| 7 | 3Cs 1 | 3½-4½ | ½-7 ½ | 1-7 | | 4-4 | 6-2 | | | 18½ | 3 |
| 8 | Grantham Sharks 1 | 2-6 | 2-6 | 2½-5½ | 4-4 | 4-4 | 3½-4½ | | | 18 | 2 |

Openings

for Amateurs by Pete Tamburro, ptamburro@aol.com

LESS TRAVELLED PATHS IN THE NIMZO-INDIAN

Part II

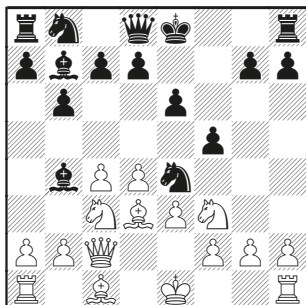
Whereas Xiong's first game - in the previous BCM issue - highlighted how to counterpunch when White assumes the conceded space, the following game demonstrates how Black can transpose into a Dutch Defence where the g3 system hasn't been played. Thus, White's best line is avoided and White himself may end up a bit at sea by not having the g3 system to navigate the way.

Awonder Liang - Jeffery Xiong

SPICE Cup Open, 21.10.2016

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♗f3 b6 In addition to Nimzovich, the ABCs played this as well: Alekhine, Botvinnik and Capablanca. What better way to avoid a draw and to find out how much your opponent knows away from his prepared lines?

5.e3 ♘e4 6.♙c2 ♙b7 7.♙d3 f5



And here we are with a Dutch Defence! And a very nice version of one at that.

8.0-0 ♙xc3 Interesting is also 8...♗xc3 9.bxc3 ♙xf3 10.gxf3 ♙d6 11.e4 ♗h4 12.e5 ♙e7, with a kingside assault involving g5 brewing.

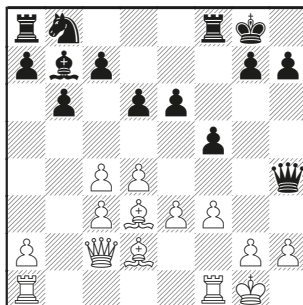
Taking the knight would simply help Black's aggressive intentions on the kingside:

9.bxc3 0-0 10.♗d2 10...♙xe4 ♙xe4 11.♗e2 d6 12.♗d2 ♙b7 13.f3 ♗d7 14.♙a3 ♗f6 15.e4 f4 16.e5 dxe5 17.♗e4 (17.dxe5 ♗f5) 17...♗h6.

10...♗h4 As long as there's no knight on f3, why not?

11.f3 ♗xd2 There is no plan after a knight retreat to d6 or f6, so it's best to take out a potential defender on the kingside.

12.♙xd2 d6



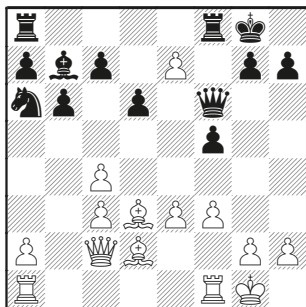
Black's plan is obvious: ♖d7, ♗ae8, g6 and e5. The white bishops are limited behind the wall of pawns. However, now White commits a positional blunder against the Nimzo-Dutch formation that C.J.S. Purdy warned against in the 1930s. He dooms his doubled pawns and donates a free square at c5 for the black knight.

13.d5? To equalise or encourage a draw, White needed to recognise the need to play either one of these moves: 13. ♗ae1 ♖d7 14.e4 f4; 13. ♗e1 ♗g5 14. ♗d2 ♗h4.

13...♖a6 Here comes the knight to claim his post at c5.

14.dxe6 ♗f6 Equally playable is 14...g6.

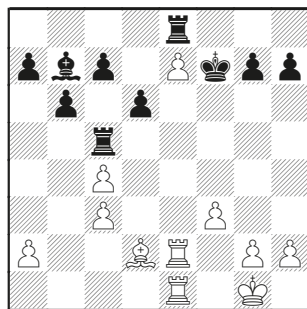
15.e7



The e-pawn is doomed and the superficial display causes Black no difficulties.

If White tries to open up the position for his bishops at this point the old bugaboo of the queenside pawns' decrepit state still looms. This is an important lesson for amateurs on how structural weaknesses created in the opening extend their negative influence far into the middlegame and endgame. The nice thing about this positional concept is that it's fairly easy to understand. 15.e4 ♖c5 16.exf5 ♖xd3 17.♗xd3 ♗xf5 18.♗xf5 ♗xf5 19.♗ae1 ♗a5.

15...♗f7 16.e4 ♖c5 17.exf5 ♖xd3 18.♗xd3 ♗xf5 19.♗xf5 ♗xf5 20.♗fe1 ♗e8 21.♗e2 ♖f7 22.♗ae1 ♗c5



White has gone as far as he can with the pawn and has no other arrows in his quiver; meanwhile Black's rook will be as busy as a fox in the henhouse. The decision made by Black in the opening to allow the damaged pawn structure and access to c5 is still evident on move 22. The opposite-coloured bishops also help Black as White's pawns on c4 and a2 are on light squares and the queening square is also a light square. The dark-squared black pawns limit the white bishop.

23.a3 ♗xc4 24.♖f2 ♗c5 25.g4 ♗d5 26.♗c1 ♗d3 27.♗e3 White is obliged to offer the exchange. The loss of the e7 pawn is of little importance as it wasn't going anywhere anyhow. Now comes a series of exchanges that lead to a bishops of opposite colour endgame. Drawing chances?

27...♗xe3 28.♗xe3 ♗xe7 29.♗xe7+ ♖xe7 30.♗g5+ ♖e6 31.f4 g6 32.♖e3 ♗d5 33.h4 ♗b3 34.♖d2 ♗a2 34...b5.

35.♖e3 ♗b1 Attacking and defending from behind.

36.h5 An active king doesn't seem to help: 36.♖d4 c5+ 37.♖e3 (*Worth a try would have been to head for an endgame where White would have to show he could force through a bishop*

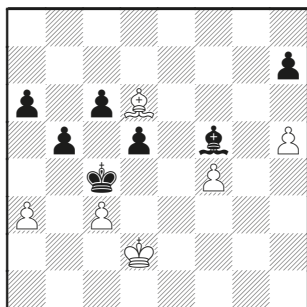
and two pawns vs. a bishop with the kings involved. The only reason I bring this up is that a world-class GM once showed me how one of his GM students didn't know how to play the endgame and was surprised that I knew how. 37.♖c4 d5+ 38.♖b3 ♙e4 39.h5 ♙f3 40.hxg6 hxg6 41.f5+ gx f5 42.gxf5+ ♖xf5 43.♙h4 ♖e4 44.♖c2 d4 45.cxd4 ♖xd4 46.♙f6+ ♖c4) 37...♖d5.

36...gxf5 37.gxf5 37.f5+ ♖e5 38.f6 ♙g6 39.gxf5 ♙xh5.

37...♖d5 Prophylaxis with 37...b5 was a bit better, but Black's eagerness to occupy d5 was understandable and fine; however, it's worth noticing that the bishops of opposite colours endgame is not helping the weaker side. The control of the light square and obvious breakthrough of the 4 on 2 majority dooms White.

38.♙d8 c6 39.♙c7 ♖c4 40.♖d2 d5 41.♙b8 a6 42.♙c7 b5 43.♙d6 43.♙a5 d4; 43.♙b6 ♙e4 44.♙g1 a5 45.♙b6 b4 46.cxb4 axb4 47.axb4 ♖xb4.

43...♙f5



One of the curious things about chess engines is that mine had it around -.50 for a long time and only in the last few moves started seeing it as won for Black. The basic truth of the position hasn't changed in all that time. Black churns it out. Both sides make some late-hour unimportant errors, but the outcome is just.

44.♙e5 ♖b3 45.♙d6 h6? 45...a5 46.♙c5 ♖c4 47.♙d6 c5 48.♙e7 b4 49.axb4 axb4 (49...a4).

46.♙f8 a5 47.♙e7 47.♙xh6 ♖xa3.

47...♙g4 48.♙d8 a4 49.♙e7 ♙xh5 50.f5 ♙g4 51.f6 ♙e6 52.♖d3 h5 53.♖d4 ♙f7 54.♙d6 h4 55.♖c5 ♖xc3 56.♖xc6 ♖c4 56...d4 57.♙e5 h3 58.♖c5 ♖d3 59.♙g3 ♖e4 60.♖d6 d3 and White can't stop them both.

0-1

The irony is that the kingside pawn is the last straw. In both of these games, Xiong has shown the average player some positional plans that have a similar theme in that they initially concede the centre and later attack the established position - a truly hypermodern conception. The key role that the doubled pawns on c3 and c4 played demonstrated that static weaknesses often stay that way throughout the game.

One of the games 'stayed' a Nimzoindian and the other mutated into a favourable Dutch, which is one reason I teach capable youngsters both defences. That way the plans needed are not new to them. It's a different type of chess for them, but it puts them on the path toward positional play, which is not a bad thing to do. Then, when they're old enough to deal with My System, some of Nimzo's ideas will not seem so strange. Then, they can start overprotecting the heck out of e5 as White in the French!

One concept at a time!



John White (standing on the right) overseeing action in Hammersmith town centre as the club took chess to the streets to raise money for Hammersmith MIND charity

HOW TO SUPERSIZE YOUR CHESS CLUB

By Adam Raoof

What does the future hold for club chess in Britain?

There is plenty of chess happening in the UK these days, with a large number of tournaments, leagues and of course the explosion in on-line chess playing, tuition and chess event watching. There is actually no apparent shortage of people interested in chess and who are prepared to spend their time playing the game.

This is perhaps well illustrated The Four Nations Chess League (4NCL) which is one of the most dominant national chess events in Britain.

At the other end of the spectrum are chess clubs many of which have been going for decades and have done little to change as their membership has aged and the world around them has moved on.

As has always been the case, chess clubs perform a somewhat different role to the 4NCL and similar competitions. Yes, club

chess tournaments and matches enable keen players to test their skills against each other and compete with like minded souls. But there is more to a club than that. As we shall see with the example of Hammersmith Chess Club below, they can be much more than technical squads for pros and players focused on improving their grading. They are also institutions where young players are nurtured and encouraged, where all lovers of chess can meet and have fun regardless of their age or skill at the game, where innovation happens and even where the chess community reaches out and plays a positive role in the wider community.

The attitude and approach towards chess have changed in recent years: like in most other spheres of work and life, everything seems to be migrating from print to online, moving from the personal to the computerised. As has been highlighted in numerous articles published in BCM in recent years, the future of chess and its relationship with the internet pose a difficult challenge.

In a world where lack of time is the prevailing condition of life for most of us in the so-called advanced economies, and where we already prefer to do many things online because we feel that we don't have enough time to do them in person, how can chess clubs - which, like pubs and restaurants, have their essence in human, person to person contact - survive?

Maybe the Hammersmith Chess Club in London can offer some guidance.

Committee Members John White, Andy Routledge, Adam Cranston, plus Celtic Tigers Manager & Hammersmith player Chris Skulte, sat down to talk to Adam Raoof about the recent renaissance of Hammersmith Chess Club (founded 1962).

In October 2014 Hammersmith Chess Club had 19 members - which in effect meant it was in terminal decline. Bankruptcy was a real possibility. Two years later, in October 2016, Hammersmith had 31 members, with a target of reaching 40 by the season end. Progress had been made, but new members were still desperately needed to stay afloat.

Fast forward to today - the club has a whopping 86 members, with almost 15 new enquiries in January 2019 alone. The biggest problem now is the venue size, and we are having to consider hiring it two evenings a week. A truly remarkable turnaround!



How did they do it?

PR & Events Officer John White explains: 'It took the passing of our old chairman John White [of the same name as the current PR] for things to change. The club had become a bit stale, with no proper governance, few events, and a declining membership.

The Committee was refreshed, and embraced the process of trying new things, empowering people, and governing the club properly. The former regime of one person being in charge was ended, and we become a club of all the talents'.

Sure not everything that is tried by the new Committee members works, but overall many new initiatives have been implemented and the outlook for the club is looking better and better.

The current PR & Events Officer is also, in a remarkable coincidence, called John White! This John White comments as follows:

'It still makes me laugh when I first visited Hammersmith...the secretary Mike Mackenzie asked me what my name was...his face when I said John White was hilarious....he could only say 'your having a laugh'....priceless...the other John White had died 6 months earlier'.

Asked to what they attribute their success, the response by John White was: 'Not one but several factors were at play: proper Committee, proper Constitution, good Twitter use, brilliant website that is always updated, get people involved - get ownership ie. make members feel they are part of the club; offer more than just playing chess such as a league; emphasize the social aspect, get involved with a junior club'.

Committee member Andy Routledge looks on as WIM Sue Marroa takes the club on at a simul in the Club's summer pub venue, the Albion



John White giving a presentation when Hammersmith hosted a Dutch club, Espion, and Cork Chess club this summer

Hammersmith Chess Club is also getting involved with the local community. Charitable activity has become an important factor in the Club's identity. 'We do a volunteer charity day with Hammersmith MIND every Summer - and have raised a £1000 in the last two years'.

If you want to succeed, you need to spread the word. So, Hammersmith chess club members travel. John White again: 'We go to foreign places we are off to Wroclaw this summer, last two years Amsterdam and Cork...to make contact with chess clubs. We took Bury St Edmunds on in a challenge match last year.'

One essential change of emphasis: what is needed in today's world is to turn chess into a business. John White: 'To be honest we took a business approach - we realised what worked for us. Cut costs. Try out new ideas - libraries, schools - make it everybody's club. Evolve & keep doing new things. One of our members has the task of inventing Chess-Golf'.

In the view of committee member Andy Routledge, it comes down to three things:

'1. Run the club properly. A committee that functions, not just stale people doing stuff the same way it's always been done. A constitution that works

and prevents the former from happening, and enfranchises people who actually do want to do new things.

2. Do stuff. Organise things other than just league matches, else that's all the club will ever be - a conduit to league chess. Events, simuls, trips abroad, social chess...

3. Communicate the stuff you do. Website, twitter, Facebook, emails etc. Gotta let people - members and non-members - know what you're up to.'

Celtic Tigers Manager & Hammersmith player Chris Skulte emphasized fun as an important angle in reviving the chess club scene: 'I think there was also a big focus on being fun. It's not just about chess. It is a social club, chess brings us together. We want to improve and learn, but it's the fun, and beauty of the game. But, also, often we have just gone on a pub crawl or a hike.'

And there was also another by-product of this, fun, learn, improve and have a pint approach - nickname designation. Chris is Showbag/Sydney, Adam is Pickle, Andy is Spidey and John What is, well... Clueless!

So the lesson from Hammersmith is simple: if your local chess club is struggling, get involved, bring in new blood and some fresh thinking. Technology enables people to link up and bounce ideas off each other at the twitch of a digit, so you will always have other people in other clubs to share their experiences and help you get ideas together and make change happen. There is a collective interest in making sure that the chess club remains a healthy and much loved part of the UK chess scene.

Should anyone wish to contact me directly about the issues raised in this article, my email address is:

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adamraof@gmail.com
chessengland.com

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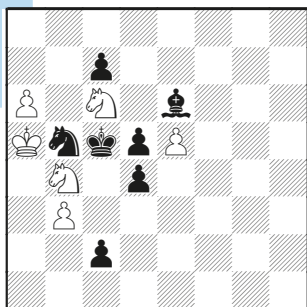
PROBLEM WORLD

by Christopher Jones

cjajones1@yahoo.co.uk

Grandmaster of Chess Composition

Solutions are given on page 190

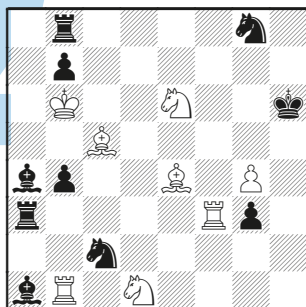


Colin Russ (Folkestone)

Mate in 2

ORIGINAL

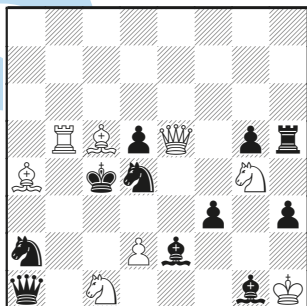
Dedicated to John Ellis



Kabe Moen (USA)

Mate in 2

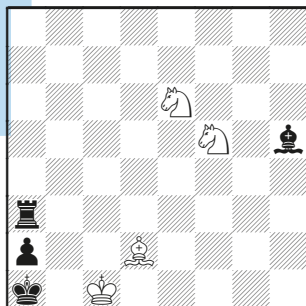
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Valery Shanshin (Russia)

Mate in 2

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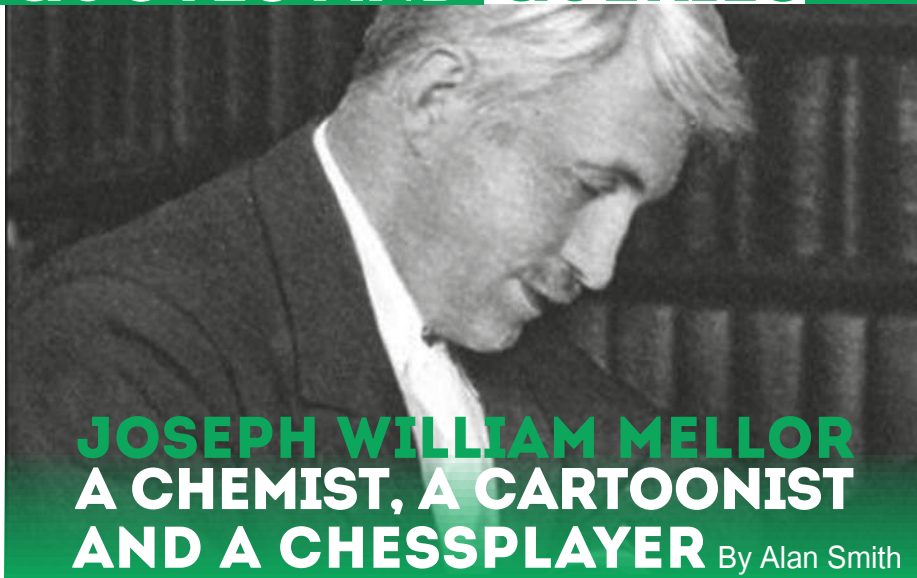


Paul Michelet (London)

Mate in 4

ORIGINAL

QUOTES AND QUERIES



JOSEPH WILLIAM MELLOR A CHEMIST, A CARTOONIST AND A CHESSPLAYER

By Alan Smith

6143 Joseph William Mellor (1869-1938) was a distinguished scientist who was the author of *A Comprehensive Treatise on Inorganic and Theoretical Chemistry*, which ran to 16 volumes.

He was born near Huddersfield, then travelled to New Zealand with his family. He was a late starter but distinguished himself at college and at the chess board. He wrote a chess column in the *Dunedin Evening Star* and shared second and third prizes at the 1896-97 national congress.

Here are two notable wins against national champions.

Joseph Mellor - Henry Hookham

New Zealand Ch Christchurch 1896-97

1.e4 e5 2.f4 d5 3.exd5 e4 4.♙b5+ Chigorin was fond of this; 4.d3 is fine for White.

4...c6 5.dxc6 ♖xc6 6.♙xc6+ bxc6 7.♜e2 A forgotten novelty.

7...♙g4 8.0-0 ♙c5+ 9.♜h1 Q♙6 10.♜bc3 ♖a6 11.♖e1 f5 12.d3 ♜f6 13.dxe4 ♙xe2 14.♜xe2 fxe4 15.♜g3 0-0 16.♙e3! Blockading the passed pawn.

16...♙xe3 17.♖xe3 ♖ae8 18.a3 To free his rook for duty elsewhere.

18...♜d5 19.♖b3 ♜h8 20.♖ae1 e3 21.c4 e2 22.♖xe2 ♖xe2 23.♜xe2 g5 24.f5 Black has no play for his two pawns. Sit back and enjoy Mellor's technique.

24...♜f6 25.♜d4 ♜f7 26.♜e6 h6 27.♖b8+ ♜h7 28.♜f8+ ♜g7 29.♜g6 ♜g8 30.♖e5+ ♜f6 31.♖c3 ♖c8 32.h4 gxh4 33.♜xh4 ♜h7 34.♖g3 ♜g7 35.♜g6 ♖b7 36.♖e5 ♜f7 37.b4 ♖c8 38.♜f4 ♖d7 39.♜d4 ♖b7 40.♜d6 ♜g7 41.c5 ♖a6 42.♜f4 ♜h7 43.♖xf6 ♖f1+ 44.♜h2 ♜xf6 45.♖xf6 ♖xf4+ 46.♜h3 ♖e3+ 47.g3 ♖f3 48.♖g6+ ♜h8 49.♖xh6+ ♜g8 50.♖f4 ♖xa3 51.f6 a5 52.♖c7

1-0

Otago Witness, 11th February 1897

Joseph Edwards - Joseph Mellor

New Zealand Ch Christchurch 1896-97

1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♟f6
5.d3 ♙c5 6.c3 0-0 7.h3 d6 8.♟bd2 ♟e7
9.♟f1 ♟g6 10.♟h2 d5 11.♙c2? dxe4
12.dxe4 b5 13.♙b3 ♙b7 14.♟g4 ♟xe4
15.0-0 ♙d6 16.♟d1 ♙e7 17.♙e3 ♟h8
18.♙e2? f5 19.♟gh2 f4 20.♙c1 ♙c5
21.♟g4 h5 22.♟d5 ♟g3 23.♙c2 hxe4
24.♙xg6 gxf3 25.♟xc5 ♟f6 26.♙g5
♙xc5 27.♙e3 ♟e2+ 28.♟h2 fxe3
29.♙h5+ ♟h6 30.♙g5 exf2 31.g3 ♟g1
32.♟d1 ♟xh3#

Dunedin Evening Star, 11th February 1897

Mellor left New Zealand in 1899. En route to a post at Owen's College, Manchester he stopped off at Simpson's Divan where he was able to defeat Francis Lee.

One of Dr Mellor's colleagues at Owen's College was the world champion. Here is an off-hand game between the two which is not included in Ken Whyld's *Collected games of Emanuel Lasker*.

Dr Joseph Mellor - Emanuel Lasker

Owen's College, Manchester 1902

1.e4 e5 2.♟f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♙c5
5.c3 ♟f6 6.d4 ♙a7 7.0-0 ♙e7? 7...♟xe4
transposes into the Moller variation.

8.♙g5 White missed his chance here:
8.♙xc6 dxc6 9.♟xe5 nets a key pawn as
9...♟xe4? 10.♟e1 f5 is refuted by 11.♙h5+.

8... b5 9.♙c2 h6 10.♙h4 d6 11.d5 ♟a5
12.♟bd2 ♟b7 13.h3? This is wrong. White
should be trying to open lines on the other
side of the board with 13.a4 or 13.b4.

13... g5 14.♙g3 ♟h5 15.♟h1 15.♙h2 is
better.

15... ♟xg3+ 16.fxg3 g4 17.♟h2 17.hxg4
♙xg4 was obligatory.

**HE WAS A LATE STARTER
BUT DISTINGUISHED
HIMSELF AT COLLEGE
AND AT THE CHESS
BOARD. HE CONDUCTED
A CHESS COLUMN IN THE
DUNEDIN EVENING STAR
AND SHARED SECOND
AND THIRD PRIZES AT
THE 1896-97 NATIONAL
CONGRESS**

17...gxh3 18.gxh3 ♙xh3 19.♙h5 19.♟f5!?
was a better way of sacrificing the exchange.

19...♙xf1 20.♟xf1 0-0-0 21.♟xf7 ♙g5
22.♙xg5 hxe4 23.♟g2 ♟d7 24.♟xd7
24.♟f5 is met by 24...♟dh7 25.♟g4 ♟h1.

24... ♟xd7 25.♟df3 ♙e3 White has
nothing for the exchange.

26.♟g1 ♙c1 27.b4 ♙b2 28.♟e2 a5
29.♙d3 c6 30.bxa5 ♟a8 31.dxc6+ ♟xc6
32.♙c2 ♟c5 33.♙b3 ♟xe4 34.♟g4 ♟xa5
35.♟e3 ♟c5 36.♟d1 ♙a1 An unusual
move: White is tied to defending a2 and c3.

37.♟f3 ♟d2+ 38.♟g4 ♟xb3 39.axb3 b4
40.cxb4+ ♟xb4 41.♟xg5 ♟xb3 42.g4
♙d4 43.♟f6 ♟a1 44.g5 44.♟xd4+ exd4
45.♟f2 loses to 45...♟f1.

44...♟xd1 45.g6 ♟a1 47.g7 ♟a8 48.♟f7
♟c4 49.g8=♙ ♟xg8 49.♟xg8 e4 50.♟f7
♟d3 51.♟g3 ♙e5

0-1

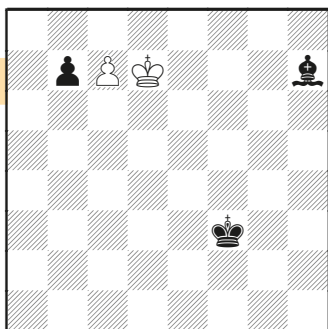
Otago Witness, 21st May 1902

After Mellor moved from Manchester to Stoke-on-Trent, he played little chess, but when Staffordshire reached the final of the English Counties in 1913, he played on board 3. However, there he came across Edward Lasker, who proved to be too strong for him.

Endgame Studies

by Ian Watson

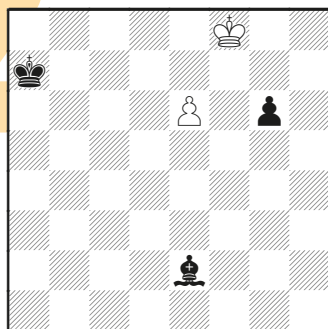
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A&K Sarychev

Shakhmatny Listok 1928

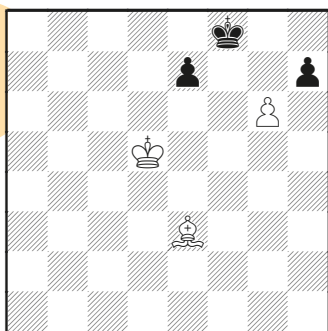
DRAW



R Reti

Narodni Listy 1928

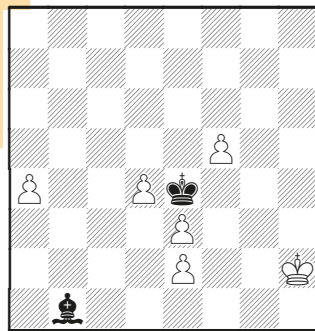
WIN



A Troitsky

Novoye Vremya 1895

WIN



F Peterson

Tidskrift for Schack 1954

WIN

Never Surrender

What is the worst experience you can have in chess? Maybe resigning when you're not losing? Sam Shankland did that at the Tata tournament. You may have seen the game, which was widely quoted. Why didn't he know it was a drawn position? He's a 2700 player, and well capable of analysing that position. It might be that, as commentators were saying, he was distracted by being annoyed with himself for messing up a decent position; I suspect, however, that he simply didn't imagine there could be a drawing method and so he didn't look for one. When the solution is unusual and unexpected, if you don't know it's there you don't search for it. That's the advantage of studies: you know that there's a solution, so even if you don't see it, you keep searching. After you've looked at the routine methods, you examine even the most unpromising ones.

The critical position in the Giri - Shankland game would have had king against king and bishop (and some pawns). Here are some such endings for you to solve; don't give up if you don't succeed quickly - unlike Shankland, you know there is a solution.

The title above - Never Surrender - is that of numerous songs, a film and a novel, but of course its most famous use is in the 'We shall fight on the beaches' Churchillian oration. Churchill didn't know whether the war would be won, but in a study you do. Winston's speech was propaganda, and Shankland's resignation was reasonable, but you mustn't give up because you have certainty.

So, no cheating! (No peeking at the solutions given on page ...), but you are allowed to check you've got them right! You may have seen some of these studies before, but if so, you still have to get the moves precisely right. The third move in the main line of the Trotsky is one of the most famous in the study world, but make sure you refute Black's second move alternatives too.

Oh, yes - how did Shankland react to his disaster? He won his next two games.

All the solutions are given on page 191.

SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS

(See page 185)

This month's problems

For once no helpmates - just orthodox problems in which the goal is to mate Black in the specified number of moves. In the first two there are no 'tries' of which to be wary and you may find the key moves quite easily; the interest is in the range of play arising from Black's possible responses. After cutting your teeth on these you will find our third 2-mover, by one of the world's leading practitioners of the genre, more challenging; here indeed there are tries, but picking your way through these (and their refutations) should enhance your enjoyment of the problem. Finally, a somewhat longer problem, in the customarily piquant style of one who has contributed many problems and studies to BCM.

Pattern play

...describes any problem whose solution uses letters as shorthand for significant moves that crop up more than once in the variations. Colin describes his problem as a 'cyclical Fleck', denoting that, after a key move that has multiple mate threats, there is a cyclical pattern to be found in the mates playable after Black's responses. So the key is the straightforward 1.♖d8, threatening 2.♖xe6 (A), 2.♖d3 (B) and 2.♖b7 (C). Now there are three black moves that allow just one mate: 1...d3 2.A; 1...♙c8 2.B; and 1...♙f5 2.C, and there are three other possibilities allowing two of the threatened mates, in which a cycle can be discerned: 1...♖d6 2.A,B; 1...other moves by the e6 bishop 2.B,C; and 1...c1=♖ 2.C,A. Colin dedicates this to a very old friend and colleague, who is also a BCM subscriber and sometime contributor!

'Anticipatory Nowotny doubled'...

...is how Kabe describes the idea of the second 2-mover. We've come across Nowotny interferences before, but rather unusually this one is anticipatory because 1.♖c3! doesn't immediately threaten to exploit the obstruction of the lines of the ♖a3 or ♙a1. Instead, the reason it threatens mate is that it opens the line of the ♖b1, with a view to playing 2.♖h1. The Nowotny effect though becomes apparent when we consider the four defences 1...♙e1 2.♙e3, 1...g2 2.♖h3, 1...♙e8 2.♙f8 and 1...♖f6 2.♖xf6. An extremely neat construction!

Duel between white queen and black knight

Valery describes his 2-mover as a 'duel between white queen-correction and black knight-correction'. The starting point is that a random move by the queen would threaten 2.♖e5 (and would meet 1...♙h2 by 2.♖e3) but would be defeated by a random move of the d4 knight. So we have to refine White's play so as to prepare for defences by the d4 knight. Try 1.♙e3, meeting a random move by the d4 knight by 2.♙b3 and 1...♖xb5 by 2.♙b3, but (with 2.♖e3 no longer possible) failing to 1...♙h2!. 1.♙e8 would meet random moves of the d4 knight by 2.♙b3 and 1...♖xb5 by the new mate 2.♙xb5, but 1...♖c6!, cutting the e8-b5 line, refutes this. So we come to the key 1.♙b8!. This is the way to guard b5. Now as well as having 2.♙b3 as a reply to a random move of the d4 knight we can meet 1...♖xb5 with 2.♙xb5, and we have preserved the set mate for 1...♙h2, 2.♖e3. Grandmasterly composing!

Anticipating another Nowotny

In our final problem (unlike Kabe's 2-mover) it's not that the Nowotny interference anticipates various black defences (no, it's an orthodox Nowotny, unanswerably threatening two mates next move) but that it only arises at move 3 after some interesting earlier play. I can do no better than to quote Paul's commentary: 'White can threaten mate from c2 with

either knight (1.♖d4 or 1.♖e3) but only 1.♖e3! is correct (1.♖6d4? ♙d1 2.♖e3 ♗xe3! and the white knight on d4 blocks the white bishop mate) 1...♙d1 2.♖c5! (2.♖d4? transposes to the try). Now Black

is in zugzwang, as 2...♗xe3 3.♙xe3 mates next move and after 2...♙a4 the bishop has crossed the ‘critical square’ b3 and the Nowotny move 3.♖b3+! forces mutual interference.’

SOLUTIONS TO ENDGAMES

(See page 188)

Sarychev

1.♙c8 b5 2.♙d7 ♙f5+ 3.♙d6 b4 4.♙e5 ♙c8 5.♙d4 and catches the Black pawn. Not 1.♙e6? ♙e4 wins. A ♙c8 move was the key idea in the Shankland game too, but here the motivation is different. The position I give is the finish of the Sarychevs’ study, which had introductory play.

Reti

1.♙e7 g5 2.♙d6 g4 3.e7 ♙b5 4.♙c5 ♙d7 5.♙d4 and will overload the bishop and so capture the Black pawn. Not 1.e7? ♙b5. The theme is the Reti Theme where a king catches up with an apparently unstoppable pawn, first used by Reti in his famous 1921 pawn study and subsequently elaborated by him in several studies.

Troitsky

The position I gave is an improved version of the 1895 setting; it was published in 1902 and its solution is: 1.♙h6+ ♙g8 2.g7 ♙f7 3.g8♖+ ♙xg8 4.♙e6 ♙h8 5.♙f7 e5 6.♙g7 mate. 2...e5 3.♙e6 e4 4.♙f6 e3 5.♙xe3 and 2...e6+ 3.♙d6 ♙f7 4.♙e5 ♙g8 5.♙f6 are both winning. Imagine you had that starting position in a game: you wouldn’t resign, but would you still try to win? So the ‘never surrender’ slogan applies to offering a draw just as much as to resigning.

Peterson

1.f6 ♙a2 2.d5 ♙xd5 3.a5 ♙f5 4.e4+ ♙xe4 5.a6 ♙f5 6.e4+ ♙xe4 7.a7 and wins. If 5...♙e5 6.e4. The e4+ trick is well-known, but the composer has succeeded in incorporating it twice.

I expect Sam Shankland will now be solving lots of endgame studies to get himself familiar with more of the unusual ideas that arise; it does help your OTB play, a lot. If he’d done so before, he would probably have recognised the defensive trick that he missed against Giri. There are many endgame collections that one can use; the first three studies here are in the latest edition of Beasley and Whitworth’s ‘Endgame Magic’.

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