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In the Zone

The Greatest Winning Streaks in Chess History

New In Chess 2020

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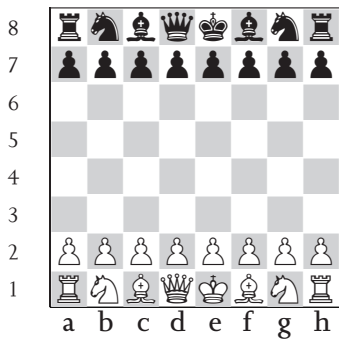
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Explanation of symbols

The chessboard with its coordinates:



- White to move
- Black to move
- ♔ King
- ♚ Queen
- ♖ Rook
- ♗ Bishop
- ♘ Knight

- ± White stands slightly better
- ∓ Black stands slightly better
- ± White stands better
- ∓ Black stands better
- +− White has a decisive advantage
- −+ Black has a decisive advantage
- = balanced position
- ! good move
- !! excellent move
- ? bad move
- ?? blunder
- ! ? interesting move
- ? ! dubious move

Introduction

*Living in the limelight
The universal dream
For those who wish to seem
Those who wish to be
Rush: Limelight*

When we, the ordinary, pass from this world, all we can hope for is a handful memorable games (or even one!) to our name. When the great players die, they unlike us remain in the world through the power of their sublime games. For the chess greats there is no old age, sickness or death.

Chess is a place without an inherited aristocracy. Just because Capablanca or Karpov is your father, doesn't automatically mean you play chess well. So these rare geniuses randomly pop up from era to era.

The Ideas behind this Book

This is not a book which speculates on how Capablanca would measure up against Tal, or how Blackburne would do in a match against Caruana, if they lived in the same era. Instead, it's a trip through chess history, covering peak performances and monster winning streaks from some of the greatest players who ever lived. I believe a player is not well rounded without a deep study of the great players of the past. The games in this book are not merely to be viewed as museum pieces, for aesthetic reasons alone.

Even though I beg them, some students still refuse to study the games of past great players, and their lack of perspective in their play is clearly seen. Something is missing in their knowledge. It's the story of the beginning piano student who refuses to learn the scales, and instead demands that the teacher illuminate him on how to play Chopin's first piano concerto in E minor.

The reason old, classic games are important is that present-day knowledge piggybacks off their discoveries. It takes intelligence to not judge the mistakes of the great players of the past by the standards and accumulated knowledge of the present. Essentially, we must view the games in the zeitgeist of their era. In 1857, an unsound sacrifice for a superficial initiative was considered mainstream, noble and to be applauded. Today, such a sacrifice would be considered extreme, and a poor

decision. Also, by today's standards the Great Romantics were strategic know-nothings. So when you are playing through the games – and I am well aware that this is a difficult mind-state to achieve! –, try and imagine yourself in the era, playing that game.

A teacher's/writer's job is not to teach the student/reader what to think, but how to think. Playing over Lasker's games is not going to help your opening knowledge. That is not the point. The goal of this book is that by playing over the games of the greatest players in chess history, during their greatest triumphs, and seeing their wildly varying styles, we will learn how to think for ourselves.

My wife Nancy and I went to the San Diego Museum of Art the other day. I noticed that a portion of the people would rather take a selfie with the Rembrandt painting than take the time to actually absorb the detail and beauty of it. Let's strive in this book to be thoughtful viewers, who extract from these old masterpieces.

Any winning streak is a lot more than the mere sum of its games. In this book we try and examine deeply the mechanics of what it means to be 'in the zone'. What are the causes and conditions which made the streak possible? What were the particular factors that sparked it and kept it going? Why did it end at that tournament or match? All these things we will look at in detail.

The streaks will be viewed in the perspective of the time period of the player, the player himself, and his past and future career

Chapter 1 – A God among Mortals: Paul Morphy, First American Chess Congress 1857

We remember Morphy for his domination over the leading players in the world, like Louis Paulsen and Adolf Anderssen, yet my favourite Morphy games were the ones where he toyed with amateurs and demonstrated dazzling combinations.

Believe it or not, some of Morphy's contemporaries considered him a dull player, since he was not as exciting as Adolf Anderssen, Johannes Zukertort and other Great Romantics. Like Spassky after him, Morphy was a universal player, equally deadly in any kind of position. Although for full disclosure, Morphy was awful in closed positions by today's standards. For his day, he held his own in closed games against early strategists like Staunton, Owen, Barnes and Paulsen.

Morphy, like Capablanca, learned the game simply by watching his father play. And like Capa, Morphy was a child prodigy, who was already able to defeat Johann Löwenthal in a match at age 12. Also like Capa, Morphy played astoundingly quickly, in a painfully slow clockless era.

I read that Morphy would use around one hour for his games, while some of his opponents (the agonizingly slow Louis Paulsen, for example) would take eight or more hours. Yet, despite his opponents' gigantic time consumption, Morphy often won his games between moves 20 and 30!

In this book, we cover Morphy's crushing win of the First American Chess Congress of 1857, which included top players like Paulsen and Meek.

Chapter 2 – The Great Un-Romantic and the Birth of Strategic/Defensive Chess: William Steinitz's 7-0 Match Victory over Joseph Henry Blackburne

You can't put the fear of God into an atheist. Steinitz was in fact the first chess atheist, who rejected the scriptures of the Great Romantics in favour of then unpopular strategic chess. When it came to strategic chess in the late 19th century, the players were akin to being legally blind, with about 10% eyesight, in that they still saw forms of grey and shadow, yet devoid of detail and colour.

Few chess historians rank Steinitz in the top five players of all time. Maybe they should, for the following reasons:

1. Steinitz, unlike other champions like Emanuel Lasker and Alexander Alekhine, never dodged his strongest challengers. He boldly challenged Adolf Anderssen (although Anderssen declined the challenge), Johannes Zukertort, Mikhail Chigorin and even, nearing age 60, was brave enough to take on and lose to Emanuel Lasker.

2. He won most of his matches convincingly (with the exception of his match with Lasker, of course), even beating Henry 'the Black Death' Blackburne, who was ranked by chess metrics at number two in the world between 1873 and 1889 for 77 months on end, by an astonishing 7-0 score, which is the streak featured in this book.

Chapter 3 – An Unlikely Potential Challenger: Harry Nelson Pillsbury's Unexpected Win at Hastings 1895

Harry Nelson Pillsbury was one of those masters who seemed to appear out of nowhere. His short yet incandescent life was between December 5th, 1872, born in Somerville Massachusetts, to his early death (some chess historians claim of syphilis) on June 17th, 1906. He learned chess late in life, at age 16, yet was a monstrous talent, who, at his peak, became Emanuel Lasker's logical early challenger for the World Chess Championship.

CHAPTER 3

An Unlikely Potential Challenger: Harry Nelson Pillsbury's Unexpected Win at Hastings 1895

A long time ago, in an era far, far away... Hastings 1895 was considered by many to be the strongest tournament of the 19th century. The field included World Champion Emanuel Lasker, his predecessor William Steinitz, plus Lasker-challengers Siegbert Tarrasch and Mikhail Chigorin. Then there was Blackburne and also Amos Burn.

Harry Nelson Pillsbury stunned the chess world by taking clear first place in this star-studded tournament. Pillsbury wasn't given much of a chance at the start, yet the relative unknown player blindsided the field by winning the tournament with a massive score of 15 wins, three draws and only three losses. Based on his performance, the following year Pillsbury was invited to the super-elite four-player tournament in St Petersburg, playing alongside Lasker, Steinitz, and Chigorin. Pillsbury led by a point and was on the cusp of his second giant win, when he became afflicted with health issues and collapsed in the second half. He lost three and drew three, fading to third place, behind Lasker and Steinitz.

The speculation among most chess historians is that if Pillsbury had managed to win or finish second, then Lasker might have given him a shot at a World Championship match. So Pillsbury ended up on that list of unfortunates with Rubinstein and Keres as the greatest players who didn't become World Champion and weren't even given a shot at the title. If offered a chance, Pillsbury may well have defeated Lasker, since their lifetime record after 14 games was 7-7.

Hastings 1895																									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22		
1	Pillsbury	*	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	½	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	½	1	1	1	1	16½	
2	Chigorin	1	*	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	½	0	1	1	1	½	½	1	1	½	1	1	16	
3	Lasker	1	0	*	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	½	1	1	1	½	1	1	½	1	1	15½	
4	Tarrasch	0	0	1	*	1	1	½	0	½	1	1	1	0	1	½	1	1	1	0	½	1	1	14	
5	Steinitz	0	1	0	0	*	1	1	½	½	1	1	0	1	½	1	0	1	1	0	½	1	1	13	
6	Schiffers	0	1	0	0	0	*	½	½	0	1	1	1	½	½	1	1	0	½	1	½	1	1	12	
7	Von Bardeleben	0	0	1	½	0	½	*	½	½	0	0	½	1	1	1	½	½	1	1	1	0	1	11½	
8	Teichmann	0	0	0	1	½	½	½	*	½	0	0	½	1	1	0	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	11½	
9	Schlechter	1	0	0	½	½	1	½	½	*	½	½	0	1	1	½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	0	11
10	Blackburne	½	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	½	*	0	1	0	1	0	½	1	0	1	0	1	1	10½	
11	Walbrodt	½	½	0	0	0	0	1	1	½	1	*	0	½	0	½	½	0	½	½	1	1	1	10	
12	Janowski	0	1	0	0	1	0	½	½	1	0	1	*	½	0	0	½	0	1	½	1	0	1	9½	
13	Mason	0	0	½	1	0	½	0	0	0	1	½	½	*	1	0	1	½	0	1	1	0	1	9½	
14	Burn	0	0	0	0	½	½	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	*	0	½	1	1	1	1	1	1	9½	
15	Gunsberg	0	0	0	½	0	0	0	1	½	1	½	1	1	1	*	0	1	½	0	1	0	0	9	
16	Bird	0	½	0	0	1	0	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	1	*	1	½	0	½	½	1	1	9	
17	Albin	0	½	½	0	0	1	½	½	½	0	1	1	½	0	0	0	*	0	0	1	1	½	8½	
18	Marco	½	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	½	1	½	0	1	0	½	½	1	*	1	1	0	½	8½	
19	Pollock	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	½	½	0	½	½	0	0	1	1	1	0	*	0	0	1	8	
20	Mieses	0	½	½	½	½	½	0	0	½	1	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	0	1	*	1	1	7½	
21	Tinsley	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	½	0	1	1	0	*	1	7½	
22	Vergani	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	½	½	0	0	0	*	3	

The Root Causes of Pillsbury’s Victory:

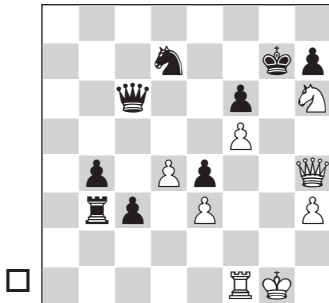
1. Pillsbury’s calculation power was only second to Lasker’s in this event. Take a look at his enormously long calculation against Gunsberg.
2. Pillsbury was the strongest initiative player of his era, superior to Chigorin and Tarrasch and perhaps equal to Lasker.
3. Pillsbury was the greatest natural attacker of his era. Examples of this are shown in the game below against Tarrasch, and also in his game against Burn.

Let’s look at some of his games from his greatest triumph in this chapter.

Game 18

**Harry Nelson Pillsbury
Siegbert Tarrasch**

Hastings 1895 (2)



position after 43...♔xg7

Tarrasch, playing Black, is about to promote in just a few moves, so it's clear that Pillsbury must find something to deliver either mate or perpetual chess immediately.

Exercise (combination alert): Time is the one thing White does not have. In the following position Pillsbury found one of the deepest combinations ever played and dashed Tarrasch's plans to promote in tiny fragments. Try and see as deeply as you can into it:

44. ♖g3+!!

Answer: Step 1: Give up the knight. The queen auditions for the role of heroine, one which she is capable of fulfilling. Black is losing whether he accepts or doesn't.

44... ♔xh6

Soft flesh and brittle bone collide with the blunt object of White's attack. Extra material is slim recompense for giving your opponent the right to knock your

king's teeth out and break his bones. There was a choice, but if 44...♔f8?? 45.♖g8+ wins the loose black rook on b3.

45. ♔h1!

Step 2: Clearance. This brilliantly nonchalant move is the deep point of Pillsbury's piece sacrifice. White threatens 46.♖g1 and oddly enough, Black has no way to deal with this slow build up plan. I'm certain Tarrasch expected 45.♖f4?, a false path which allows Black a perpetual check after 45...♖b1+ 46.♔g2 (46.♔f2 ♖b2+ 47.♔e1 ♖b1+ and White must take a draw since 48.♔e2?? gets mated to 48...♖a6+ 49.♔f2 ♖f1#) 46...♖b2+ 47.♔g1 ♖b1+.

45... ♖d5 46. ♖g1 ♖xf5 47. ♖h4+

Step 3: Begin a forcing sequence which wins Black's queen.

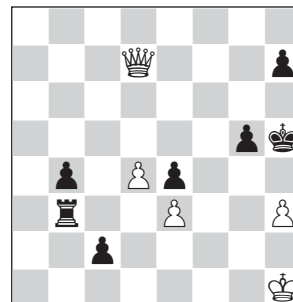
47... ♖h5 48. ♖f4+! ♖g5 49. ♖xg5 fxg5 50. ♖d6+!

Step 4: Double attack. The unfortunate Tarrasch's knight hangs.

50... ♔h5 51. ♖xd7

Threatening mate on the move.

51...c2??



'The entire world rings with praises for my accomplishments,'

thinks the c-pawn, who may have forgotten about something.

When someone responds to a direct question with silence, it is usually for one of the following reasons:

1. Shyness.
2. Excessive pride.
3. Discretion is called for.
4. The person is stupid and didn't understand the question.
5. Complete inattention.

Tarrasch's non-response is clearly a case of number 5 on the list. The position is sufficiently deranged, so that confusion naturally flows from it. Or maybe Tarrasch's c-pawn is like the smart, kind, homely high school kid who secretly prays that the prom queen will dump her football-playing boyfriend and accept him, for his inner beauty.

51...♖b1+! put up the greatest resistance: 52.♔g2 ♖b2+ 53.♔g3 ♔g6. The deepest part of the combination is to see that White wins even here, despite Black's deeply passed queenside pawns: 54.♜e8+ ♔f6 55.d5! ♖d2 (55...c2?? 56.♜e6+ ♔g7 57.♜e5+ loses the rook) 56.♜e6+ ♔g7 57.♜e7+ ♔g6 58.♜xe4+ ♔f6 59.♜xb4 ♖xd5 60.♜xc3+ wins. We don't know how much of this Pillsbury saw, since Tarrasch cracked on his last move.

52. ♜xh7#

Oops! I'm quite certain about two things:

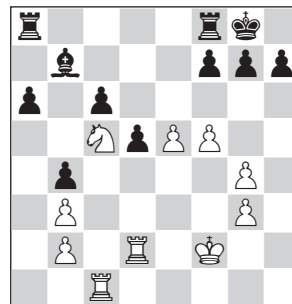
1. No poet will write an epic about Tarrasch's last move decision.
2. No bard will sing the unwritten poem's praises, either.

Details, details. I wasn't there to witness the finish of this game in 1895. I would bet all my worldly assets that Tarrasch's cheeks were at this point suffused with a ruby rich blush. This disease of inattention plagued Tarrasch later on in his career as well. In his book *Die Moderne Schachpartie*, written in 1912, Dr Siegbert Tarrasch self-diagnosed a particularly awful loss to Emanuel Lasker in their 1908 match, with the disease 'amaurosis scachistica', or chess blindness.

Game 19

Harry Nelson Pillsbury William Pollock

Hastings 1895 (4)



position after 27. ♔c5

Let's assess the imbalances:

1. White's monster knight is clearly superior to Black's remaining bishop.
2. White enjoys a space advantage.
3. White's king is mobile and active while Black's isn't.
4. Black is up a pawn.

Conclusion: Black's extra pawn isn't enough to outweigh White's many

strategic advantages and Black is the one struggling.

27...♙c8 28.♚e3 h5!?

This attempt to undermine comes at the cost of king safety for Black. 28...♖a7 was the unpleasantly passive alternative.

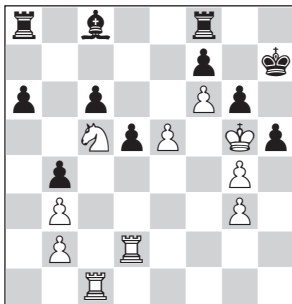
29.♚f4 g6

29...hxg4?? 30.♖h2 f6 31.e6 ♖e8
32.♖ch1 ♚f8 33.♖h7 a5 34.♚e3 ♖b8
35.♚d4 ♖a8 36.♖h4 zugzwang.
Black can resign.

30.♚g5 ♚g7?

30...♖e8 was better, but still miserable after 31.♚f6! ♖a7 32.♖e1 ♖ae7 33.♖h2.

31.f6+ ♚h7



Exercise (combination alert):

Pillsbury missed a win here. Can you find what he missed?

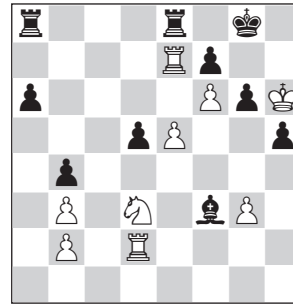
32.♘d3?

Answer: Crushing was the pawn breakthrough 32.e6! ♙xe6 33.♘xe6 fxe6 34.♖xc6 ♖ae8 35.♖c7+ ♚h8 36.♚xg6 ♖g8+ 37.♚h6 ♖xg4 38.♖h7+ ♚g8 39.f7+ and White wins.

32...♙xg4

Now Black is back in the game.

33.♖xc6 ♖fe8 34.♖c7 ♚g8 35.♚h6! ♙f3 36.♖e7



Exercise (critical decision): Should Black play 36...♖xe7, or should he challenge the rook with 36...♚f8? One line equalizes.

36...♚f8?

The access route can sometimes be more valuable than the commodity you wish to reach.

Answer: Black holds the game with 36...♖xe7! 37.fxe7 ♖e8 38.♘c5 ♖xe7 39.♖d3 ♙g2 40.♖d2 ♙h1 41.♖d1 with a draw by repetition of moves.

37.♖xe8+ ♖xe8 38.♚g5?

38.♘c5! (e5 is tactically protected due to a fork on d7) 38...♖c8 39.♘xa6 ♖e8 40.♘c5 ♖c8 41.♘d7+ ♚g8 (if 41...♚e8 42.♘b6 ♖c1 43.♚g7! g5 44.e6! wins) 42.♖d4 ♙g4 43.♘b6 ♖b8 44.♘xd5 ♙e6 45.♘xb4 ♖c8 46.♘c6! (threatening a fork on e7) 46...♚f8 47.b4! and Black is dead lost.

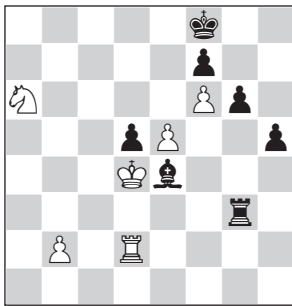
38...♙e4 39.♚f4 ♖c8?

39...a5! 40.♘c5 g5+! 41.♚e3 ♚g8 42.e6! fxe6 43.♘xe4 dxe4 44.♚xe4 ♚f7 45.♚e5 ♚g6 46.♖d7 ♖g8! 47.♚xe6 ♖e8+ 48.♖e7 ♖g8 and White can't make progress.

40.♘xb4 ♖c5 41.♘xa6 ♖b5 42.♚e3?

42.♖d4! ♖xb3 43.♖b4! ♖xb4 44.♘xb4 ♚e8 45.♘c6 ♚d7 46.♘d4 ♚d8 47.b4 ♚d7 48.b5 ♚d8 49.b6

♔d7 50.e6+! fxe6 51.f7 ♕e7 52.b7
and White promotes.
42...♖xb3+ 43.♔d4 ♖xg3



The question now is: whose passed pawn is stronger? Black's h-pawn or White's b-pawn? The computer assesses at dead even. The reasons:

1. Black's bishop looks superior to White's knight, since it can simultaneously defend and attack, while White's knight can only do one or the other.
2. Black's h-pawn looks faster.
3. Black's king is precariously placed and may well be in danger of a white mating attack later on.
4. White has the better king position.
5. White may construct future promotion threats with a timely e5-e6 break.

44.♘c5

Seizing control over b3.

44...h4 45.b4

Optically, Black looks faster. Objectively, this just isn't the case.

45...h3?

This is the point where Wile E Coyote foolishly follows a lit fuse, attached to a stick of dynamite.

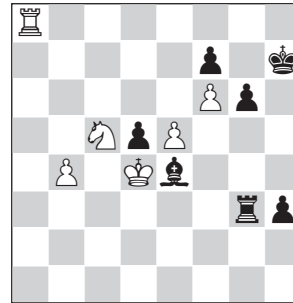
45...♖g4! was correct: 46.e6 ♕f5+ 47.♕e5 ♕xe6 48.♖a2 (threatening

mate) 48...♔g8 49.♘xe6 ♖e4+ 50.♕xd5 ♖xe6 51.b5 ♖xf6 52.♕c5 ♖f1 53.♖b2 ♖c1+ 54.♕d6 h3 55.b6 ♖d1+ 56.♕c7 ♖c1+ 57.♕d6 ♖d1+ with a draw.

46.♖a2!

Black's back rank is weak.

46...♔g8 47.♖a8+ ♕h7



Great attackers/tacticians are not monolithic. Sometimes they can also produce beautiful strategic efforts, as Pillsbury does in this game.

Exercise (combination alert): White to play and force the win:

48.e6!

Answer: Step 1: Pawn breakthrough/pawn promotion.

48...fxe6 49.♘xe4!

Step 2: Trade knight for bishop.

Even a virtue, when pressed to its limits, is in danger of morphing into fanaticism. This move shows good judgment and calculation.

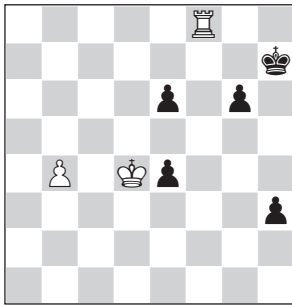
It's tempting for White to hang on to his knight, yet if he does so for too long, Black may hold a draw, as demonstrated in the following variation: 49.f7 ♖f3 50.f8 ♖?? e5+! 51.♕xe5 ♖xf8 52.♖xf8 h2 53.♖f1 h1 ♖ 54.♖xh1+ ♕xh1 55.♕d4 (55.b5

d4 will end in a draw) 55...♙f3 56.b5 ♘g4 57.b6 ♙c8 58.♙xd5 g5 59.♙c6 g4 60.♙c7 g3 61.♙xc8 g2 62.b7 g1♙ 63.b8♙ ♙xc5+ 64.♙c7+ ♙xc7+ 65.♙xc7 and I'm almost certain this ending is a theoretical draw.

49...dxe4 50.f7

White's position is one of increasing prosperity and the f-pawn costs Black his rook, yet this isn't the end of the story, since the final assessment remains confused, at least to my eyes.

50...♖f3 51.f8♙ ♖xf8 52.♖xf8



Now comes the hard part of Pillsbury's combination. Who is winning, losing or drawing? I have no clue without computer help and my expression is that of a mime, depicting utter bewilderment. Over the board such positions are difficult to calculate and often we believe we are winning when in reality we are losing, and vice versa. In this instance White isn't in a promotion race, since his king and rook are able to halt Black's surging passed pawns. Now Pillsbury must flesh out his vision with the tricky details.

52...g5 53.♙xe4 g4

It almost feels as if Black's dream is within arm's reach – almost.

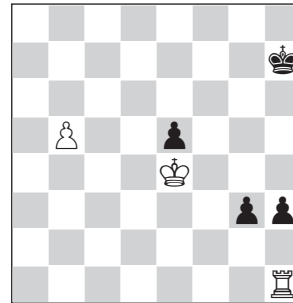
54.♖f1!

Certainly not 54.♙f4?? h2 when Black promotes.

54...e5

After 54...g3 55.♖h1 h2 56.♙f3 Black's pawns are halted.

55.b5 g3 56.♖h1! 1-0



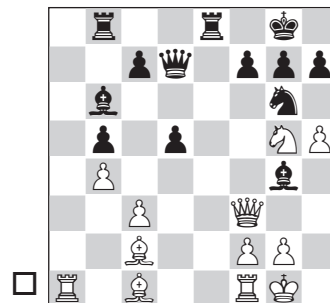
After 56...h2 (on 56...g2 57.♖xh3+ ♙g6 58.♖g3+ wins) 57.♙f3 Black's pawns aren't going anywhere.

Game 20

Harry Nelson Pillsbury

Adolf Albin

Hastings 1895 (5)

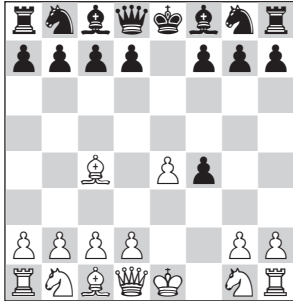


position after 21...♙g4?

Principle: Be certain that your information isn't, in reality,

Bobby refuses to play a Sears catalog opening, perhaps in an effort to evade Evans's opening preparation. So Bobby discards his beloved Ruy Lopez and bangs out the King's Gambit, which had to throw Evans for a loop!

2...exf4 3.♙c4!?



This line is a lonely place, since it's a bit of a black market variation, suited only for those who seek to live life outside of the law's sight. Banging out a risky line of a risky opening doesn't turn us into monsters. More likely, a monster is who you actually are and the opening is simply the conduit to reveal your true (chess) self. Even the shadiest line is gifted with credibility if it is embraced by a great player. Fischer has the fortitude to defy centuries of theoretical consensus that this is pretty risky! 3.♘f3 is played five times more often than Fischer's choice.

3...♙h4+

Depriving White's king of castling rights isn't for free, since Black's queen loses time. Black's main line today runs 3...♘f6 4.♘c3 c6.

4.♙f1 d6 5.♘c3

After 5.♘f3 ♙h5 6.d4 ♘f6 (6...g5 7.h4 h6 is a total mess) 7.♘c3 ♙e6 8.♙e2 ♙e7?! (Black should make White work harder to regain the sacrificed pawn with 8...♙h6!) 9.♙xf4 0-0 10.h3 White's king is safe and he controls the centre with a clear advantage, Sasikiran-Sargissian, Antwerp 2009.

5...♙e6!

Unlike Mednis in the previous round, Evans refuses to allow Bobby's opening shenanigans to confuse him. This move challenges White's most dangerous piece.

6.♙e2 c6!

Evans plays the position perfectly, denying White any future ♘d5, ♘b5 and ♙b5+ tricks. I already feel he has reached equality or better.

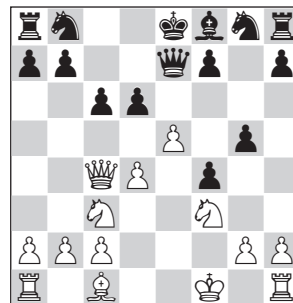
7.♘f3 ♙e7

This is Black's main move. He plans to develop his dark-squared bishop via ...g7-g5 and a fianchetto.

8.d4 ♙xc4 9.♙xc4 g5

Evans hangs on to his sole asset, his extra pawn. Bobby's compensation is a strong centre and development lead, which is slightly defused by his awkward king's position.

10.e5!



Principle: Open the game and create confrontation when leading in development. The move also cuts off ... f6 . 10.h4?! follows the principle, yet in an inferior version: 10...g4 11. e1 h6 12. d3 , Matsegora-Melnikov, Zaporozhye 2010. Black is slightly better after 12... f6 13. xf4 b5 14. b3 xf4 15. xf4 0-0.

10...d5!

Principle: Close the position when lagging in development.

11. d3 a6 !

a6 is a flexible square for the knight, since it can redeploy to c7 and e6, or harass the white queen on b4.

12. e2 b4

This doesn't gain or lose time, since White regains the lost tempo with a future c2-c3. I slightly prefer Black after 12...f6! which chips away at White's e5-point, on this move or the next.

13. d1 0-0-0 14.c3 a6 15.h4!

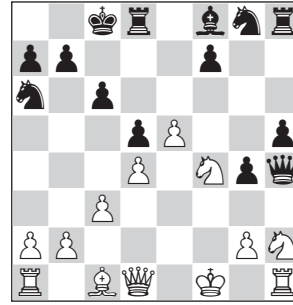
Black's kingside pawn chain must be loosened before Black consolidates his extra pawn with ... g7 and ...h7-h6.

15...g4 16. h2 h5 17. xf4

Bobby regains his pawn and also threatens 18. hx5 !

17... hx4 ?

Threatening to exploit the pin with 18...g3. When our blood mixes with our opponent's, it becomes impossible to discern whose is whose. This move is a serious strategic error, after which Black's kingside pawns begin to fall. Chances look balanced after the correct 17... d7 !



18. g1 !

Intending 19. f1 . It becomes clear that Black will lose his pawns. Then his g4-pawn and also his kingside dark squares look weak.

18... h6

Black's pain would be slightly lessened with 18... e7 19. xg4 h4.

19. f1 ! e7 20. hx5

Not only winning his lost pawn back, but also eyeing the f6 hole. White has a strategically won game.

20... g8

This makes his position even worse. Black should have given up a pawn to free his knight with 20... f5 ! 21. xg4 e6 although Black also stands miserably there.

21. fg3 !

Threat: 22. f6 ! with a double attack on the h6-knight and the g8-rook. Now Black's h6-knight has no place to go and is in grave danger.

21... g6 22. f4 ! g5

Evans's life for the remainder of the game is pure misery. He wants to play ... f5 to free his bad h6-knight, but to do so he puts his rook at risk of discovered attacks by the knight on f4. 22... g8 23. c2 ! when impossible is 23...f6?? 24. hx6 !

♙xh6 25.♘f5 ♖f8 26.e6! (threat: 27.e7) 26...♗e8 27.♘xd5! ♙xc1 28.e7!. Zwischenzug. Black loses material since his queen is unable to move to f7 due to a fork on d6.

23. ♙e3 ♘c7

Black has no good moves.

A) He lacks time to free himself with 23...f6 24.♗d2 ♖g8 (if 24...♘f7 25.exf6 ♖xf6 26.♘fh5 wins the exchange) 25.♘d3 ♘f7 26.♖h7 fxe5 27.♘xe5 ♖g7 28.♘f5 and wins;

B) If 23...♘g8 24.♗d2 f6 25.exf6 ♖xf6 26.♘e6! wins material.

24. ♗d2

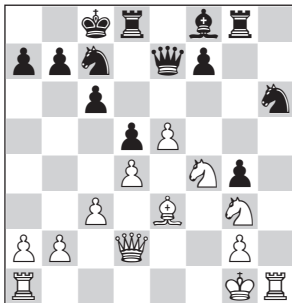
Threatening discoveries with the f4-knight.

24... ♖g8

Also hopeless are:

A) 24...f6 hangs a pawn to 25.♘fh5;

B) 24...♘g8 25.♘xd5.



Exercise (combination alert): Black's position is completely busted. Prove why.

25. ♘fe2!

Answer: Trapped piece. The h6-knight has no place to go.

25...f6

I'm wondering just why Larry played on, since his odds of scoring a draw or a win are zero here.

26.exf6 ♖xf6 27. ♙xh6 ♙d6 28. ♖f1 ♗e6 29. ♙f4

Challenging Black's only dangerous piece.

29... ♖de8 30. ♖h6 ♙xf4 31. ♖xf4 ♗e7 32. ♖f6

The comp found the flashy line 32.♘f5! ♖xe2 33.♖h7! ♘e6 34.♗g3! a6 35.♘d6+ ♖b8 36.♘xe8+.

32... ♘e6 33. ♗e5 ♘g5

Is this some spoof? Evans is just down a full piece, with the queens coming off the board against Bobby, and calmly playing on as if the game is even.

34. ♖xe7 ♖xe7 35. ♖f8+ ♖xf8

36. ♖xf8+ 1-0

Game 70

Robert Byrne

Robert James Fischer

New York ch-USA 1963/64 (3)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 c6 4. ♙g2 d5 5.cxd5

The Exchange version of any line tends to be synonymous with dull and safe. The best description of such a move, which is as expressive as the Sphinx, is both idea-killing and frowning upon all forms of creativity. IM Donald Byrne undoubtedly wanted to reach a position devoid of dynamism, and score a draw against Bobby. The plan didn't work out so well since Bobby managed to complicate anyway and was destined to go 11-0.

5...cxd5 6. ♘c3 ♙g7 7.e3!?

This at least alters the symmetry, yet I'm wondering just why Byrne

voluntarily shut in his dark-squared bishop? 7.♘f3 is played more often today. I have played this line for White since the 1980's and don't recall losing a single game with it.

7...0-0 8.♗ge2 ♘c6 9.0-0 b6!

a6 is an excellent spot for Black's bishop, now that White has slightly weakened his central light squares.

10.b3



This symmetrical Grünfeld line is essentially the 1960's hippy Volkswagen bus, with spray painted rainbow and flowers on its sides: it's both slow-moving and peace-loving. So it's all the more astonishing that Fischer won the game in just another 11 moves.

10...♗a6 11.♗a3 ♖e8

Unpinning his e-pawn in preparation of an ...e7-e5 break.

12.♞d2 e5!

Bobby correctly assesses that his enhanced activity level compensates the weakness of his d5 isolani. Magically, Black already stands better.

13.dxe5?!

This move gravely increases Black's piece activity. 13.♞ac1! exd4 14.exd4 ♞d7 15.♞fd1 ♗xe2! 16.♘xe2 ♘e4 17.♞d3 ♞ac8 is also in Black's

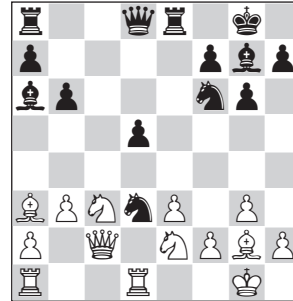
favour, but not as much as the game's continuation.

13...♘xe5 14.♞fd1?!

As it turns out, this is the wrong rook, since f2 is weakened.

14...♘d3 15.♞c2?

White was forced into the unpleasant 15.♘f4 ♘e4 16.♘xe4 dxe4.



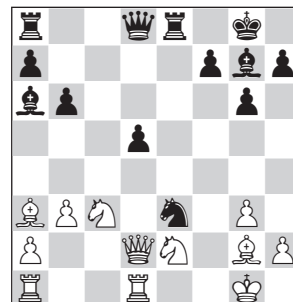
Exercise (combination alert):

Byrne's last move threatens 16.♞xd3. How did Fischer pursue his initiative? Warning: finding the exact sequence in the coming combination is only several degrees easier than splitting the atom.

15...♘xf2!!

Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier.

16.♙xf2 ♘g4+ 17.♙g1 ♘xe3 18.♞d2



18...♘g2!

The light squares are more important than chopping White's rook. This is the beautiful idea behind Fischer's initial sacrifice. If you happen to be a boy scout, then you deserve a new merit badge for comprehending this not-so-easy-to-comprehend sacrifice. Byrne probably expected 18...♘xd1? 19.♖xd1 when it is White who stands slightly better.

19. ♖xg2 d4!

The h1-a8 diagonal opens with deadly effect.

20. ♘xd4 ♖b7+ 21. ♔f1 ♔d7! 0-1



When I resigned my game to Grandmaster Boris Gulko in the 2005 U.S. Championship, the two IMs in the analysis room mistakenly told the spectators that I stood better! In the same way the grandmasters in the analysis room at the 1963 U.S. Championship at this point announced to the spectators that Byrne stood a shade better in the complications when he resigned.

Komodo's assessment is -7.11. White is unable to defend. For example: 22.♔g1 ♔h3 and there is no good defence to the coming ...♖h6 and

...♖e3+ and 23.♖e1 is met with 23...♖xd4+! (removal of the guard) 24.♔xd4 ♔g2#.

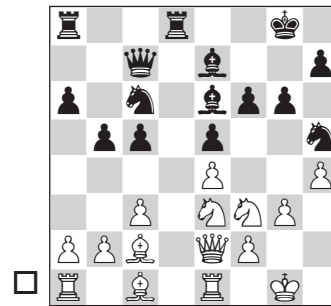
'Who are you and how did you get into my bedchamber?' asks the king, as he clutches the bed covers in terror.

Game 71

Robert James Fischer

Arthur Bisguier

New York ch-USA 1963/64 (4)



position after 18...f6

My friend the late GM Art Bisguier was two things:

1. A really nice human being.
2. A regular customer of Bobby Fischer, who nearly always beat him.

Exercise (planning): Fischer found an effective strategic idea here. How would you proceed?

19. ♘d5!

Answer: Strategic pawn sacrifice.

19... ♔b7!?

Art backs off. Let's see what would have happened if he had accepted: 19...♖xd5 20.exd5 ♖xd5 21.a4 ♖b8 22.axb5 axb5 23.c4! (Black is unable to take) 23...♖dd8 24.cxb5 ♘b4 25.♖b3+ ♔h8 26.♖c4 with a

clear advantage for White, for the following points:

1. White owns the bishop pair.
2. White dominates the light squares.
3. White's passed b5-pawn is more dangerous than Black's kingside pawn majority.

20. ♖xe7+

Fischer picks up the bishop pair and weakens the dark squares around Black's king.

20... ♖xe7 21. ♖h2!

Preventing 21... ♖g4, while preparing 22. ♖g4.

21... ♖g7 22. ♖g4 c4 23. ♖f3! ♖xg4

Bisguier decides to give up both bishops for Fischer's knights. Also unpleasant is 23... ♖f8 24. ♖h6+ ♖h8 25. ♖e3 with enduring strategic pressure for White.

24. ♖xg4 ♖e6 25.h5

Fischer seeks to provoke ...g6-g5, further weakening Black's light squares.

25... ♖h8?!

Inaccurate. 25... ♖f7 was correct.



26. ♖g2!?

Intending 27.hxg6, followed by ♖h1. This move is typical of Fischer, who, like Capablanca before him, loved clarity. He prefers safety to the more

complicated yet favourable 26.hxg6!?

♖g8 27. ♖e3. Here Black must take on g6 with his rook, further degrading his structure. Both parties may have mistakenly thought Black could get away with 27...hxg6?

28. ♖h6! (threat: 29. ♖g2! and 30. ♖h1)

28...g5 29. ♖h3! ♖g6 30. ♖xg5+ ♖g7

31. ♖e3 ♖f4 32. ♖xf4 ♖h8 (if 32...)

exf4?? 33.e5! wins) 33. ♖g2 exf4 34.e5!

♖xe5 35. ♖xg6 f3 36. ♖xe5! ♖xe5

37. ♖xf3 ♖xg6 with an extra pawn and the safer king for White.

26...g5

There wasn't much choice.

27. ♖e3 ♖f4+

Bisguier finds a cute way to gain a tempo and land his knight on d3.

28. ♖h2!

After 28.gxf4? gxf4 Black favourably regains his sacrificed piece, since White faces the dual threats 29...♖g8 and 29...fxe3.

28...♖d3 29. ♖xd3 cxd3

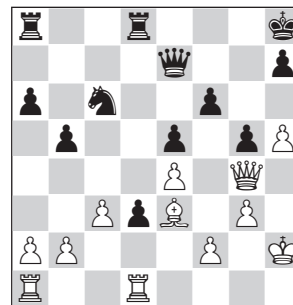
29...♖xd3 30. ♖ad1 ♖ad8 31. ♖xd3

cx d3 (31...♖xd3?? loses to 32. ♖c8+

♖d8 33. ♖xa6) 32. ♖d1 is similar to

the game, except with one pair of rooks removed from the board.

30. ♖ed1



The key question: is Black's d3-pawn a strength or an

overextended weakness? Fischer's coming moves prove that his judgement was superior and it is Black who is in danger.

30...♖d7

30...b4!? 31.♖ac1 also favours White.

31.♗d2 ♘a5

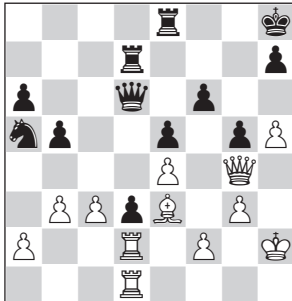
After 31...♖ad8 32.♖ad1 ♘a5 33.b3 ♘b7 34.♙b6 ♖e8 35.♗xd3 Black is busted.

32.b3 ♗d6

After this move Art goes under the anesthesia and his position slips into a confused oblivion.

Everything loses: 32...♖ad8?? isn't possible due to the skewer 33.♙b6, and 32...♘b7 33.♖ad1 ♖ad8 34.♙b6 ♖e8 35.♗xd3 ♗xd3 36.♗xd3 ♗e6 37.♗xe6 ♖xe6 38.♙e3 ♗d6 39.♗d5! is a lost ending for Black.

33.♖ad1 ♖e8



Exercise (critical decision): Should White play 34 ♗xd3 ?

34.♗xd3!

Answer: By taking on d3, Black does NOT get two rooks for the queen.

34...♗xd3

There's no way to evade the scaffold.

35.♗xd7! 1-0

X-ray attack. Oops! It's easy to envision Art's chagrin at missing

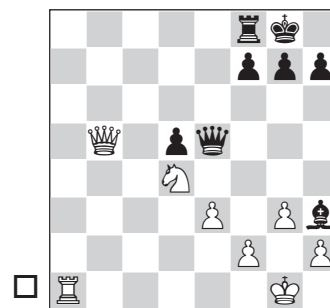
this shot. One thing many chess players don't realize is that not only our understanding of opening theory and strategic play have advanced. Our feel for tactics is far better than just a half century ago. Why? Because we are now a society of chess puzzle junkies, with all sorts of online resources. In those days, the only tactics books around in the USA were Reinfeld's two 1001 books. So a simple tactic like this one, which was missed by a GM in 1963, may be easily seen by an average club-level player today. The ending is completely hopeless for Black after 35...♗xd7 36.♗xd7.

Game 72

Samuel Reshevsky

Robert James Fischer

New York ch-USA 1963/64 (5)



position after 31...♗e5

Who stands better?

1. Black is stuck with a vulnerable isolani on d5. Yet if we reason further, even if White wins the pawn, Black has excellent chances to hold a draw, since it's 4:3 on the same side and White will have a hard time creating a passed pawn.

Anatoly Karpov

2740

Veselin Topalov

2640

Linares 1994 (4)

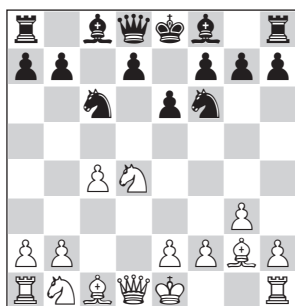
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.♗f3

Karpov has no interest in entering a theoretical clash in the Benoni against Topalov with 3.d5 e6.

3...cxd4 4.♗xd4 e6 5.g3

Also played is 5.♗c3 ♖b4 6.g3 or 6.♗db5. Karpov avoids these lines.

5...♗c6 6.♖g2



6...♖c5

The idea is to give White the 'free' tempo with 7.♗b3. The reasoning is that White's knight is worse on b3 than on the more central d4-square. 6...♖b6 is Black's main line.

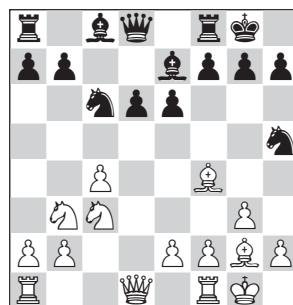
7.♗b3 ♖e7 8.♗c3 0-0 9.0-0 d6

If you get claustrophobic easily, then this Hedgehog formation isn't right for you. Black gives up space, in exchange for flexibility.

10.♖f4 ♗h5!?

Excess ambition has a way of contributing to our ruin. I have serious concerns about the advisability of this decision. Hasn't Topalov heard of the rhyme 'A knight on the rim is dim (or grim)'? At the time this game was played,

Topalov's move was considered just fine. Karpov's new move casts doubt on the old assessment. I actually don't understand why ...♗h5 is still the main line today, since Black cannot equalize after Karpov's next move. 10...a6 is the move I would play.



11.e3!

This counter-intuitive move was a theoretical novelty at the time. Karpov hands over the bishop pair. In return White gets:

1. An improved structure with an open e-file for his rooks.
 2. Control over e5.
 3. Karpov hands Topalov a lifeless position which doesn't suit his style.
 4. Without the option ...♗e8, Black's d6-pawn suddenly becomes weak.
- 11.♖e3 was the move Topalov probably expected.

11...♗xf4 12.exf4 ♖d7

I would have thought that 12...a6 was more accurate, yet the computer still likes White after 13.♖d2 ♖c7.

13.♖d2

Now ♗b5 or ♗e4 followed by ♖ad1 becomes a serious threat to Black's backward d6-pawn.

13... ♖b8

It's getting awkward. c7 is unavailable since White gains a free hit with ♘b5. On b8, the queen can help support a future pawn break ...b7-b5.

14. ♖fe1

f4-f5 is in the air, as is tricks involving ♘d5 tactics. Also strong was 14. ♖ad1 ♖d8 15. ♖fe1.

14...g6

Topalov slightly weakens his king to stop f4-f5.

15.h4!?

Karpov doesn't seem to be all that interested in going after the backward pawn on d6. Instead, he seeks to loosen the pawn front around the black king with h4-h5.

15...a6 16.h5 b5

Topalov tries to fight back on the queenside. 16... ♖d8 prevents ♘c5 tricks but Black's position still looks sickly after 17. ♖ad1.

17.hxg6 hxg6



18. ♘c5!

With this tactic Karpov deprives Topalov of his only asset, his bishop pair. He also weakens Black's light squares.

18...dxc5?

Topalov's algorithm goes haywire.

Principle: If you stumble upon a sleeping, dangerous creature, then you would be wise to leave it undisturbed and walk on. This is the wrong way to hand over his light-squared bishop, since it allows White's queen entry, with devastating results.

A) 18... ♘e8?? is met with the crushing sacrifice 19. ♘xe6! fxe6 20. ♖xe6. Black is unable to defend. For example: 20... ♖a7 21. ♖ae1 ♘f6 22. cxb5 axb5 23. ♘d5 ♔g7 24. ♘e4 ♘d7 25. ♖xf6 ♖xf6 26. ♘xf6 ♔xf6 27. ♖c3+ ♔f5 28. g4+ ♔xf4 29. ♖f6+ ♔xg4 30. ♖e4+ ♔h3 31. ♖h4#;

B) 18... ♖c7 was forced. White stands considerably better after 19. ♘xd7 ♖xd7.

19. ♖xd7 ♖c8



Exercise (critical decision): White must act within a narrow window of opportunity. What is Karpov's strongest continuation?

20. ♖xe6!

Answer: Annihilation of defensive barrier. Black's position just lost something essential to its survival. The civility level isn't equally applied and from this point on, Karpov manhandles Topalov. In

return for a mere exchange, Karpov denudes Black's king and picks up a huge number of pawns.

Karpov didn't fall for the trap 20. ♖xc6?! ♖a7 when Black regains the temporarily sacrificed piece.

20... ♖a7 21. ♖xg6+! fxc6 22. ♖e6+ ♔g7 23. ♖xc6

Threat: 24. ♖e4.

23... ♖d8

Intending ... ♖d6. 23... bxc4?? was too slow. After 24. ♖e4 ♖f6 25. ♖g4 Black's game collapses since the g6-pawn falls. Karpov continues picking up pawns:

24. cxb5 ♖f6

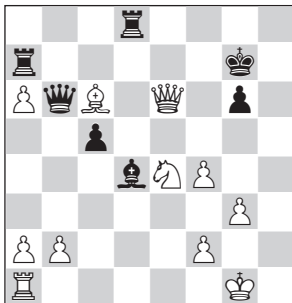
24... ♖d6 25. ♖e4 is also hopeless for Black.

25. ♗e4 ♖d4

Black lacks the time to play 25... ♖xb2?? 26. ♖b1 ♖d4 27. b6 ♖f7 28. ♗g5 and Black is crushed.

26. bxa6! ♖b6

If 26... ♖xa6 White can break the pin instantly with 27. ♖e7+.



Exercise (planning): Karpov found White's most deadly and most efficient winning plan. How would you proceed here?

27. ♖d1!!

Answer: Give up a second exchange on d4 to eliminate Black's steward of his dark squares. White's game is wealthy in both material and strategic assets.

27... ♖xa6

Or 27... ♖c7 28. ♖xd4! ♖xd4 29. ♖f6+.

28. ♖xd4!

Now Black's game descends into complete squalor.

28... ♖xd4 29. ♖f6+ ♔g8

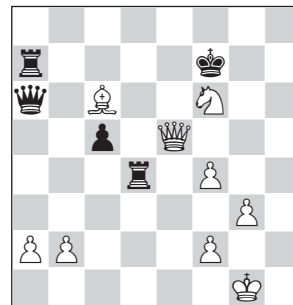
29... ♔h6 loses to 30. ♖h8+ ♖h7

31. ♖f8+ ♖g7 32. ♗f6! g5 33. fxc5+

♔xg5 34. ♖xg7+.

30. ♖xg6+ ♔f8 31. ♖e8+ ♔g7

32. ♖e5+ ♔g8 33. ♗f6+ ♔f7



Exercise (combination alert): White to play and regain an exchange.

34. ♖e8+!

Answer: Step 1: Force Black's king to f8.

34... ♔f8

After 34... ♔g7 35. ♗d7+ ♔h7 36. ♖f5+

♔g8 37. ♖g5+ ♔h7 38. ♖e7+ ♔h8

39. ♖f8+ ♔h7 40. ♗f6+ Black must hand over his queen.

35. ♖xc5+

Step 2: Double attack. Black's king and d4-rook hang simultaneously.

Well, that is the last one. White has run out of pawns to take!

35... ♖d6

This saves the d4-rook at the cost of the one on a7.

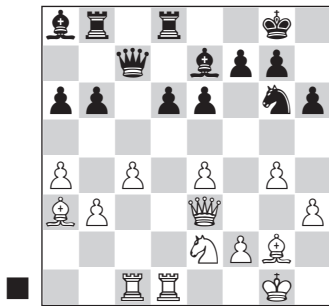
36. ♖xa7 ♖xf6 37. ♕h5 ♜d2 38. b3 ♜b2 39. ♔g2 1-0

Black's position is like a flimsy umbrella blown inside out by a howling storm, with only its pathetic ribs on display. Topalov finally tamed the white attackers, at too high a cost: five pawns and a bishop is way too much for a lone rook to handle.

Game 103

Vasily Ivanchuk 2710
Anatoly Karpov 2740

Linares 1994 (5)



position after 28. ♖e3?

Exercise (combination alert): The illusion of well-being is far worse than being miserable and being aware of it, since in the former, we are caught off-guard. Ivanchuk just blundered. How did Karpov win material?

28... ♕g5!

Answer: Step 1: Provoke f2-f4.

White's queen just awakened in the dark-squared bishop's dream.

29. f4 ♜xf4!

Step 2: Temporarily sacrifice a knight on f4.

30. ♜xf4 e5 0-1

Step 3: Pinned piece. White is down a pawn with a lost position after 31. ♜c2 ♕xf4 32. ♖f2 ♕c6. When we resign in a position which still contains chances, we become like a judge who imposes a life sentence on a jaywalker. Ivanchuk could have played on, but decided to conserve energy for the next round, trusting Karpov's technique. I still think the resignation was premature.

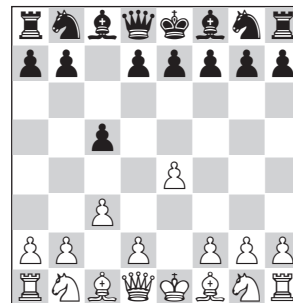
Game 104

Anatoly Karpov 2740
Judit Polgar 2630

Linares 1994 (6)

Karpov was a devoutly religious 1.e2-e4 player, until later in his career, when he suddenly switched to Queen's Pawn openings.

1. e4 c5 2. c3



What? Our opening choices are more acts of ritual, rather than conscious choice. The high priest of the strategic Open Sicilian switching to the mild 2.c3 version is disorienting. After all, Bruce Lee

never said ‘Eeh, I need a change in my life, so I guess I should trade in these outmoded nunchakus and buy a semi-automatic pistol with a clip capacity of 35 rounds.’ Openings tend to lean tactical or strategic, yet no opening is an extreme, where the positions always fall on one side of the spectrum. The c3-Sicilian is ultra-solid and actually fits perfectly with Karpov’s style.

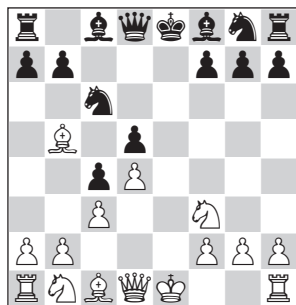
2...e6

This is an invitation to switch to an Advance French, which Karpov doesn’t want.

3.d4 d5 4.exd5 exd5

We are back to a hybrid version of a Tarrasch French, where White hasn’t played $\text{c}3$. 4... $\text{c}3$ xd5 transposes to main lines of the c3-Sicilian.

5. $\text{c}3$ f3 $\text{c}3$ c6 6. $\text{c}3$ b5 c4!?



Polgar plays a rare line, perhaps to try and throw Karpov off his opening preparation. 6... $\text{c}3$ b5 is Black’s main line.

7. $\text{c}3$ e5!?

Karpov avoids 7... $\text{c}3$ g4, while pressuring c6. 7.0-0 is White’s main move.

7... $\text{c}3$ b6

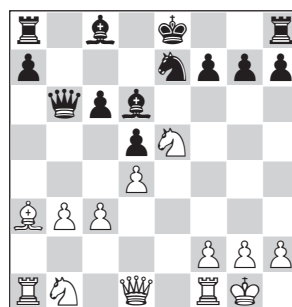
After 7... $\text{c}3$ d7 8. $\text{c}3$ xc6 $\text{c}3$ xc6 9.0-0 $\text{c}3$ f6 10. $\text{c}3$ e1 $\text{c}3$ e7 11. $\text{c}3$ e2! Black has trouble castling. Also b2-b3 and $\text{c}3$ a3 is coming, Csorsz-Eltigani, Miskolc 2008.

8. $\text{c}3$ xc6+!

This is stronger than the attempted improvement with 8. $\text{c}3$ a4?! $\text{c}3$ ge7 9.0-0 f6!. If anyone stands better here, it is Black, Liascovich-Rodriguez Vila, Buenos Aires 2009.

8...bxc6 9.0-0 $\text{c}3$ d6 10.b3! cxb3

11.axb3 $\text{c}3$ e7 12. $\text{c}3$ a3!



With the swap of Black’s dark-squared bishop, White achieves two things:

1. Black’s bishop pair is eliminated.
2. Black may get stuck with a slightly bad remaining bishop.

12... $\text{c}3$ xe5?!

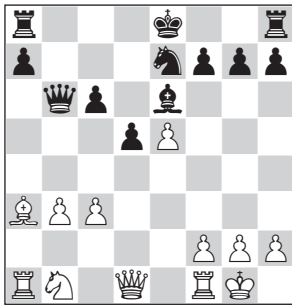
Moment of Contemplation: Just because you have a fighting style, doesn’t mean that going for an imbalance is going to help you. Aggressively going for opposite-coloured bishops is a bad idea here, since White’s power on the dark squares is more potent than Black’s on the light. Polgar could have minimized her disadvantage with

12... ♖xa3! 13. ♖xa3 0-0 14. ♗d3 ♖a6
15. ♖e1 ♖xd3 16. ♗xd3 ♗g6 17. ♗d2
♖fe8 18. ♖ea1.

13.dxe5 ♖e6

With this move Polgar allows Karpov to seize control over c5.

13...c5 14.b4 0-0 (after 14...c4? 15.b5!
♗xb5 16. ♖xe7! ♗xe7 17. ♗a3 ♗c5
18. ♗h5 h6 19. ♗h4+ g5 20. ♗h5 ♖e6
21. ♗c2 White has a strategically won game)
15.bxc5 ♗c7 16. ♖e1 with a long, miserable defence ahead.



14. ♗d4!

Karpov keeps treading on the toes of Judit's intent. In this case he prefers the safe bet. Kasparov might have opted for the more risky but no less strong option 14. ♖xe7!.

14... ♗f5

A) 14... ♗xb3?? is ridiculously greedy: 15. ♖xe7 ♗xe7 16. ♗c5+ ♗d8
17. ♗xc6 is awful for Black;

B) 14... ♗xd4 15.cxd4 – no sane person wants to defend an inferior ending against Anatoly Karpov.

15. ♗c5

c5 is blockaded.

15...h5

Polgar covers against g2-g4 ideas.

16. ♗d2 f6!

Otherwise Black has a difficult time connecting rooks.

17.exf6 gxf6 18. ♖b4!

Karpov is ready to pile up on Black's weak and isolated a7-pawn.

18... ♗f7 19. ♖a4 ♗xc5

A queen swap is no fun, but this is the only way to try and hang on to the sickly a-pawn.

20. ♖xc5 a6 21.f3

Preparing to centralize his king. 21. ♖fa1 was a touch more accurate.

21...h4

Maybe Polgar could try to bring a dead thing back to life with 21...d4 when White should respond with 22.c4!. Even here Black's position is miserable.

22. ♖fa1 ♖c8 23. ♗f2 ♖b8 24.b4

Clearing the way for ♗b3, after which the knight can later hop into d4, c5 or a5.

24... ♖e8 25. ♗b3 ♖b7 26. ♗a5 ♖a8

If you don't bury a corpse, the inconvenience starts when it begins to rot and smell. a8 is a sorry home for the bishop.

27. ♖a2 ♖e6 28. ♖a7! ♖b5

28... ♖be8 29. ♗b3 ♗g6 30.g4! hxg3+
31.hxg3 ♗g7 32.g4 f5 33. ♗d4 and Black is strategically busted.

29. ♗b3 ♖b7

