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On the Cover: The NZ Chess community suffered a profound loss in December 2017. The cover photo, courtesy of Paul Spiller, shows Peter at the Centennial Congress in 1979.

One More Year

In the previous issue I announced the sad news that 2018 would be the last year of (this incarnation of) *New Zealand Chess*. The reaction to this news has been pretty muted, in itself possibly an indication that the decision is correct.

I did receive some feedback that I was being unrealistic in expecting "engaged readers" and that happy readers should be good enough. The problem with this is that a magazine produced by volunteers for a relatively small and declining audience needs readers who contribute more than just their annual subs. Someone needs to generate worthwhile content to fill the magazine. Expecting the same tiny roster of individuals to keep doing it in perpetuity is unrealistic. For this issue I've written a personal "Chess for the love of it" type article myself. It's an example of the kind of thing I wish I had seen contributed more often. There's still time readers!

Peter Stuart

Paul Garbett writes: Sometime in late 1971, having recently moved to the North Shore and missing the Auckland Chess Centre where I had received a great deal of encouragement and support during my junior years, I made my first visit to the North Shore Chess Club. At that time it operated from the small, quaint but pleasant rooms of the Croquet Club in Takapuna. Peter Stuart was about five years older than me (about 23 to my 18) and was the strongest player in the club (Peter was club champion every year from 1963 to 1972, with the one exception of 1969 - he also went on to win or share that title in 1980,1985,1986,1997,2000, 2012 and 2015 -a total of 16 times). Peter warmly welcomed the new stiff competition. So began the first of our many tight chess battles, the last of which was in early 2017. My memory may be playing tricks on me, but I think even in 1971 Peter was already the club captain and chief organiser of the club.

As a player, Peter achieved his most consistent success in the first half of the 1970s. His best result in a string of solid performances in the New Zealand Championships was an excellent and convincing 2nd place behind Ortvin Sarapu in the 1973 Championship in Wellington. After a loss to Wellington's Pat Kelly in the first round, Peter scored six wins and four draws for 8/11. Around this period Peter was definitely one of the stronger players in the country and represented New Zealand at the Skopje (1972) and Nice (1974) Chess Olympiads as well as later at Buenos Aires (1978). Peter did of course have many successes in other tournaments in the 1980s and since then, they included at least two fourth equals in NZ Championships (1991 and 1995); first or first equal in at least two NZ Senior Championships (2008 and 2009); and first place finishes in major Auckland weekend tournaments.

Over 50 years Peter's chess style did not change much. As a slightly lazy teenager I remember being deeply impressed that Peter and Michael Whaley had together worked their way through Reuben Fine's entire mammoth textbook on the endgame. Endgames remained Peter's greatest love in chess and he played them with skill and understanding. Otherwise Peter was a solid positional player who stuck mainly to the

same openings (English as white [Ed: A chess board with 1.c4 played was present at his funeral]; Taimanov Sicilian and Nimzo-Indian as black). He had a tendency to get into time trouble if the position was complex, but then to defend well and sometimes turn the tables.

Peter made an enormous contribution to the North Shore Chess Club, running events efficiently and reliably and steering the club through periods when it thrived and others when it was less popular. For at least five years in the 1980s Ortvin Sarapu was a member and his presence helped encourage other strong players to "cross the bridge".

For much of his life Peter seemed physically strong and healthy and it was sad to see him suffering from various health issues in recent years. I don't recall him complaining - he soldiered on.

Peter loved travel, with a particular fondness for the Greek Islands, and I recall him dropping in to the 2006 Turin Olympiad, shaded almost black from an odyssey around the Mediterranean.

Peter poured tens of thousands of hours into supporting chess, at local, regional and national levels. He was an excellent editor of the NZ Chess Magazine for a number of years, a member of the NZ Chess Federation Council and also President at one time, an organiser of interclub and interschool events, and last but not least the compiler of the NZ Chess games database - an amazing resource for people like me who have an abysmal record of preserving their games.

Peter was incredibly generous with the time he gave to chess and at times my wife and I have also experienced his kindness and generosity in other ways. In some ways he was a very private person and difficult to get to know deeply, but a good person and a tremendous loss for New Zealand chess and the North Shore Club.

William Lynn writes: I first played Peter in the 1970 North Island Champs in Rotorua. He was extremely difficult to play against because of his defensive technique and his outstanding endgame skills.

Peter participated in several correspondence events in the 1970s and in 1978 held the highest ranking in NZ with a rating of 708 (the old rating system).

Peter was a leading NZ expert on the English Opening with the White pieces and well known as a "draw champion". He was described as that in the write up to the 1982/83 NZ round robin championships held in Dunedin living up to this by drawing 8 out of the 11 games.

His contribution to NZ chess was just outstanding from a club and administration point. His compilation of the NZ Games Database with over 43,000 recorded games dating back to 1876 was amazing. Many players (including overseas entrants) use this in preparation for tournaments. Peter will be sadly missed.

Editors Notes: Peter Stuart probably made a larger contribution to *New Zealand Chess* magazine than any other individual. Since the modern era of the magazine began in 1975, Peter was more or less a continual

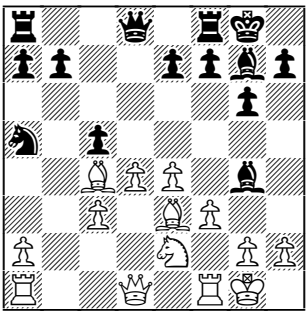
presence. His first stint as editor ran from 1976 to 1980, his second from 1982 to 1985. The magazine production then moved away from Auckland but Peter continued to serve firstly as consulting editor and more latterly (from 1996 until 2003) as overseas editor. As well as overseas news, Peter contributed endgame articles, a particular strength and interest of his. In recent years Peter could always be relied on to produce a good report on his beloved annual North Shore Open, including solid and entertaining game annotations. As editor I appreciated that my role was comfortably reduced to a mere technical one for these articles. No need to touch any prose or annotations. This reminds me that in the earlier years the Editor's job was actually dominated by the fearsome difficulty of typing, layout and composition in the days before computer assistance. My first job on the NZ Chess magazine in 2007 was writing some diagramming software. I can barely imagine trying to do this job without a faithful electronic servant to handle such tedious aspects, goodness knows how many hours Peter put in. Peter's multitudinous contributions to NZCF were recognised with Life Membership in 1996.

Small,Vernon A (2335) - Stuart,Peter W (2132) [D87]

New Zealand Championship Wellington 28.12.1992

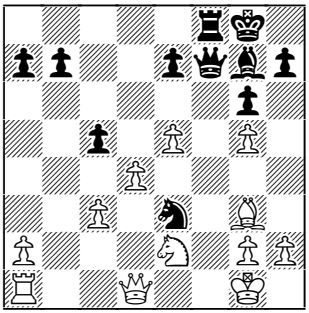
Annotated by Scott Wastney

This game was played in first round of the 92/93 NZ Championship which was held in the Hall at Queen Margaret's College in Wellington. This was my first congress and the first time I had seen many of the top NZ players in person including Ortvin Sarapu, Paul Garbett, Peter Stuart etc. These names were only known to me from reading the NZ Chess magazine. Back then the Championship was an exclusive 12 player round robin, then there was Reserve Championship with another 12 players, then a third tier of competition the Major Open, which was where I was playing. I was keen to follow the Championship games and in the first round there was an upset when Vernon Small, considered one of the favorites, was quickly defeated by Peter Stuart. **1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 g6 3.Nc3 d5** Peter plays a Grunfeld which can lead to many long complicated variations. The only insight I can offer on Peter's opening preparation comes a few years later when I shared a motel room with Peter during a congress. I remember Peter turning up in his car, then starting to unload boxes and boxes from his car boot. I can't recall how many boxes, but it seemed a surprising number to me at the time. Each box was packed full with "Chess Informant" books, each book with a brown paper book cover to keep in mint condition. **4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.e4 Nxc3 6.bxc3 Bg7 7.Bc4 0–0 8.Ne2 c5 9.0–0 Nc6 10.Be3 Bg4 11.f3 Na5**



12.Bxf7+ The Karpov variation, played by

Karpov four times in his 1987 match against Kasparov. **12...Rxf7 13.fxg4 Rxf1+ 14.Kxf1 Qd6 15.e5 Qd5 16.Bf2 Rf8 17.Kg1 Nc4**N Probably a novelty and at least a deviation from a Karpov-Kasparov game. Kasparov had played 17...Bh6 here instead. **18.g5** Vernon stamps out Bh6 altogether **18...Qf7 19.Bg3 Ne3**



Here Vernon blunders and I think I can understand the thought process. The first reaction is to move the Queen to c1, hitting to knight while keeping f1 sufficiently protected. But Black immediate regains the pawn with 20...Nxg2 and White is forced to go into an endgame after 21.Qf1 (which my chess engine gives as roughly equal). Vernon Small was understandably unhappy with this course of events and finds a subtle idea of provoking c4 first to stabilize Whites central pawn chain before dropping the Queen back... **20.Qb3?? c4** Whoops... the intended 21.Qb1 is met by 21...Qd5 game over. **21.e6 Qf1+ 0–1**

NZ Championship 2018
by Bill Forster

The featured tournament of the 125th New Zealand Congress in Palmerston North was the MilleniumHotels.com NZ Open. Chief organiser Mark Noble and the Manawatu Knights club scored a *coup* in attracting two French Grandmasters, Adrien Demuth (2538) and Fabien Libiszewski (2530) as top seeds, part of a significant overseas contingent. Of course the NZ players were also competing amongst themselves for the NZ Championship. In the end the French GMs did not disappoint, they were both unbeaten and came in 1st and 2nd. Top Kiwis were 3rd= Russell Dive and Alpheus Ang, who thus share the NZ Champion title.

Later Mike Steadman not only became NZ Rapid champion, but managed to defeat Demuth and share 1st= in the Rapid tournament with Libiszewski. Mike also distinguished himself as the only player (aside from Libiszewski) to avoid defeat against Demuth in the NZ Open. Sadly the Rapid win over Demuth was not recorded due to a technical glitch.

I'd like to thank Nigel Cooper who enterprisingly asked the players to nominate their good games from the Open for later inclusion in the magazine. Most of these nominations are annotated below. Kudos in particular to Anthony Ker and Daniel Gong who nominated personal losses!

One disappointment was that only automatically recorded games were

transcribed into PGN files. At least that gives me an excuse for not going through all the games, looking for overlooked moments of drama on the lower boards!

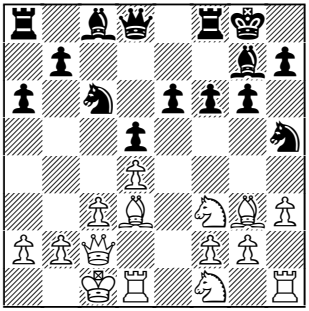
Gong,Daniel Hanwen (2272) - Demuth,Adrien (2538) [A45]

New Zealand Open 2018 Palmerston North (2.1), 02.01.2018

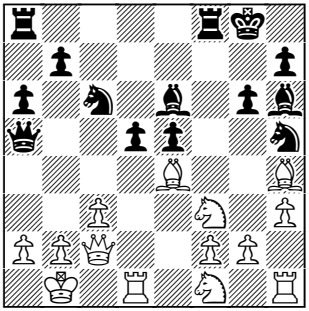
1.d4 Nf6 2.Bf4 I am sure that if you predicted 10 years ago that everyone from the world champion down would be playing this in 10 years time you'd have been scorned in serious chess circles. **2...e6 3.e3 c5 4.Nf3 d5 5.Nbd2 Nc6 6.c3 cxd4 7.exd4 Nh5 8.Bg3 g6 9.Bd3 f6** Black's last two subtle and grandmasterly moves (targetting the e5 square) are already enough to see the engine prefer Black (by the tiniest margin) **10.Qc2 Bg7 11.0–0–0 0–0 12.Nf1 a6 13.h3**

MilleniumHotels.com NZ Open

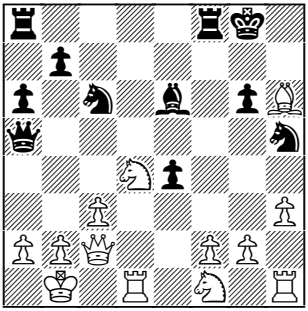
1	GM	Demuth, Adrien	2538	FRA	8.0	+W13	+B6	+W9	+B12	+W3	+B10	=W2	=B8	+W7	
2	GM	Libiszewski, Fabien	2530	FRA	7.0	+B16	=W11	=B3	+B7	=W6	+W15	=B1	+B9	+W8	
3	IM	Dive, Russell John	2309	WE	6.0	+W32	+B8	=W2	+B4	-B1	-W11	+B23	=W14	+B6	
4	CM	Ang, Alphaeus Wei Er	2219	AC	6.0	+B35	=W15	+B29	-W3	=B19	=W20	=B13	+W12	+B14	
5	CM	Fan, Allen Chi Zhou	2073	AC	5.5	-B36	+W32	-B31	+W34	+B22	-W12	+B28	+W13	=B15	
6	FM	Gong, Daniel Hanwen	2272	HP	5.5	+B18	-W1	+B26	=W23	=B2	+W28	=B11	+B10	-W3	
7	FM	Smith, Robert W	2201	MC	5.5	=W30	+B27	=B15	-W2	=W8	+B21	+W17	+B11	-B1	
8	FM	Steadman, Michael V	2166	AC	5.5	+B37	-W3	+B34	=W15	=B7	+W19	+B12	=W1	-B2	
9	IM	Ker, Anthony F	2311	WE	5.5	+B25	+W22	-B1	=W11	=B14	=W23	+B20	-W2	+B21	
10	FM	Hague, Ben	2368	AC	5.5	=B21	+W36	=B23	+W31	+B11	-W1	=B14	-W6	+B20	
11	FM	Stojic, Dusan	2251	AUS	5.5	+W31	=B2	+W14	=B9	-W10	+B3	=W6	-W7	+B19	
12	IM	Borsos, Bogdan	2315	UKR	5.0	+W34	=B14	+W19	-W1	=B23	+B5	-W8	-B4	+W17	
13		Dowden, R. Anthony	2028	OT	5.0	-B1	+W18	+B36	-W14	=W17	+B24	=W4	-B5	+W25	
14		Gao, Hans	2167	AC	5.0	+W24	=W12	-B11	+B13	=W9	+B27	=W10	=B3	-W4	
15	GM	Johansen, Darryl K	2374	AUS	5.0	+W26	=B4	=W7	=B8	=W27	-B2	+W24	=B19	=W5	
16	CM	Rains, Edward	2008	CA	4.5	-W2	-B31	+W18	-B19	-W34	+B35	+W32	+B36	=B23	
17	FM	Lukey, Stephen G	2179	CA	4.5	-B22	+W33	=B21	=W20	=B13	+W36	-B7	+W29	-B12	
18		Li, Xiang Wei Willia	1958	AC	4.5	-W6	-B13	-B16	=W25	+B38	+W33	+B36	=W23	=B22	
19		Salasan, Haran	1660	AUS	4.5	=B29	+W20	-B12	+W16	=W4	-B8	+B26	=W15	-W11	
20	WIM	Jule, Alexandra	2033	AUS	4.5	=W38	-B19	+W24	=B17	+W30	=B4	-W9	+B27	-W10	
21	CM	Schmitz, Andreas Arn	1998	GER	4.5	=W10	=B28	=W17	-B27	+W35	-W7	+B31	+B34	-W9	
22	WFM	Schmitz, Manuela	1896	GER	4.5	+W17	-B9	=W28	=B30	-W5	=B32	=W34	+B24	=W18	
23	FM	Goormachtigh, Johan	2159	BEL	4.5	=W27	+B30	=W10	=B6	=W12	=B9	-W3	=B18	=W16	
24		Seabrook, Roy	1784	AC	4.0	-B14	+W25	-B20	+W26	+B29	-W13	-B15	-W22	+B37	
25		Savige, Colin B	1964	AUS	4.0	-W9	-B24	-W35	=B18	=B33	+W38	+W30	+B28	-B13	
26	WIM	Timergazi, Layla	2000	WE	4.0	-B15	+W35	-W6	-B24	=W32	+B37	-W19	=B33	+W34	
27		Yan, Caroline	1759	AC	4.0	=B23	-W7	+B38	+W21	=B15	-W14	=B29	-W20	=B31	
28	CM	Duneas, John	2035	AC	4.0	=B33	=W21	=B22	=W29	+B31	-B6	-W5	-W25	+B35	
29	CM	James, Jack	2064	MK	4.0	=W19	+B38	-W4	=B28	-W24	+B30	=W27	-B17	=W32	
30		Jackson, L. Ross	1906	WE	3.5	=B7	-W23	+B33	=W22	-B20	-W29	-B25	=B37	+W36	
31		Goodhue, Nathan	1908	AC	3.5	-B11	+W16	+W5	-B10	-W28	=B34	-W21	=B35	=W27	
32	CM	Milligan, Helen	1958	NS	3.5	-B3	-B5	=W37	=W33	=B26	=W22	-B16	+W38	=B29	
33	WCM	Qin, Nicole Shu Yu	1613	AC	3.5	=W28	-B17	-W30	=B32	=W25	-B18	+W37	=W26	=B38	
34	WCM	Punsalan, Vyanla M	1987	NS	3.0	-B12	+W37	-W8	-B5	+B16	=W31	=B22	-W21	-B26	
35		Nicholls, Leighton	1906	OT	3.0	-W4	-B26	+B25	=W36	-B21	-W16	+B38	=W31	-W28	
36	WCM	Qin, Joy Shu Yan	1739	AC	2.5	+W5	-B10	-W13	=B35	+W37	-B17	-W18	-W16	-B30	
37		Caldeira, John	1779	FIJ	2.0	-W8	-B34	=B32	+W38	-B36	-W26	-B33	=W30	-W24	
38		Li, Rodney Xiang Rei	1487	NS	1.0	=B20	-W29	-W27	-B37	-W18	-B25	-W35	-B32	=W33	



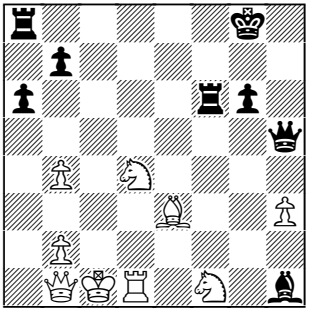
13...e5! According to the theory that even in opposite sides castling situations centre play trumps wing play unless the centre is static **14.dxe5 fxe5 15.Be4 Be6 16.Bh4 Bh6+ 17.Kb1 Qa5**



Is Black just winning a piece? **18.Bxg6!** No **18...e4 19.Bg5** 19.Bxh5 d4! is a pretty solution that also favours Black **19...hxg6?** Letting White back in the game 19...Bg7! retains a big advantage, eg if 20.Bxh5 exf3 threatens ...Bf5 and heralds a winning attack **20.Bxh6 d4** Not quite as effective without the dark squared Bishop, but still a nice (and positionally necessary) move **21.Nxd4**



21...Nb4?! Flashy but imprecise, this move could have cost Black dearly 21...Qxa2+ 22.Kc1 Rfd8 and Black has the initiative and a safe position since 23.Qxe4?? is now impossible due to 23...Bf5 **22.Qxe4 Bxa2+ 23.Kc1 Rxf2** Black threatens to move the Bishop, then play Qa1+ followed by (after Qb1) Na2 mate, but this is a little slow when Black's king is so weak. **24.Be3** 24.Qxg6+! Kh8 25.Be3 and White wins **24...Rf6** Black takes time out for a little D and gives White the opportunity to go wrong. Only a very narrow path will be sufficient **25.g4?** Tactically flawed. Strangely enough maintaining White's advantage requires playing very risky looking moves. Quiet defensive moves to strengthen White's position are strangely hard to find - mainly because putting a rook or knight on d2 takes away an important escape square for the King. 25.cxb4! is now actually possible with the Queen no longer in the firing line on c2; 25.Qxb7 winning more material, tempoing on the Ra8 and preventing it joining the attack is also good **25...Bd5! 26.Qb1 Bxh1 27.gxh5 Qxh5 28.cxb4**

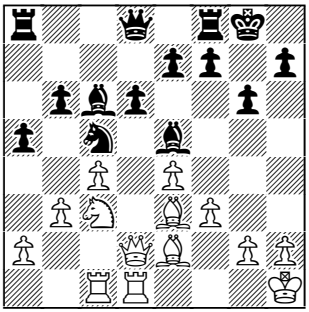


28...Qxd1+!! A brilliant coup to cap a great game. Note that Black is going to be more than just an exchange up since after 28...Qxd1+ 29.Kxd1 Rxf1+ 30.Kc2 there is 30...Be4+ and White doesn't get to recapture the Rook on b1 **0–1**

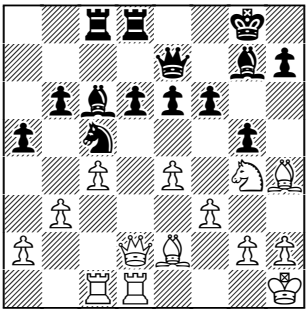
Hague,Ben (2368) - Gong,Daniel Hanwen (2272) [B38]

New Zealand Open 2018 Palmerston North (8.3), 08.01.2018

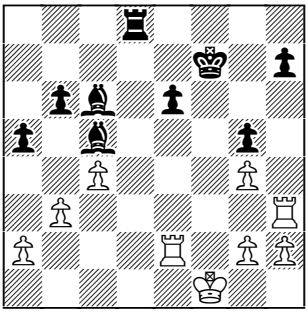
1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 g6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Bg7 5.c4 Nc6 6.Be3 Nf6 7.Nc3 d6 8.Be2 0–0 9.f3 Nxd4 10.Bxd4 Bd7 11.0–0 a5 12.Qd2 Bc6 13.Rac1 Nd7 14.Be3 Nc5 15.Rfd1 Be5 16.b3 b6 17.Kh1



The first new move according to my database. Subtle manoevring is the order of the day in these Maroczy positions. **17...Rc8 18.Nd5 e6 19.Nf4 Qh4 20.Nh3 Qe7 21.Nf2 Rfd8 22.Ng4 Bg7 23.Bg5 f6 24.Bh4 g5**

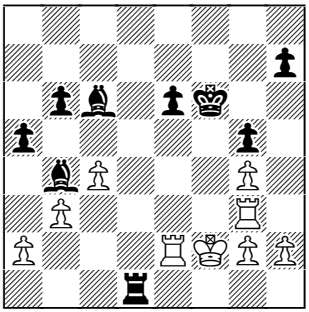


25.Bg3? f5! Winning material, both possible retreats invite ...f4 trapping the Bishop or forking Bishop and Knight, so... **26.Bxd6 Rxd6 27.Qxd6 Qxd6 28.Rxd6 fxg4 29.Rcd1 Bf6 30.Kg1 Kf7 31.fxg4 Nxe4** Black has a material advantage (the normal rule is you need 2 pawns not 1 to compensate for Rook versus two minor pieces), and he has three excellent minor pieces compared to one very sad Bishop for White. Conclusion: Black is winning. **32.R6d3 Nc3 33.R1d2 Nxe2+ 34.Rxe2 Be7 35.Rh3 Bc5+ 36.Kf1 Rd8**



The Bishops are rampant and the White

Rooks are amazingly clumsy, basically they seem like liabilities that are just trying to avoid falling off. **37.Rg3** This passive move is actually the logical consequence of the more natural line 37.Rxh7+ Kg6 38.Rc7 Rd1+ 39.Re1 Bxg2+! So rather than using his Rook actively White puts it on a horrible square to defend g2! **37...Kf6 38.Ke1 Bb4+ 39.Kf2 Rd1**

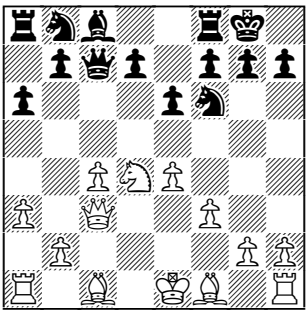


Game over, the threat of ...Bc5 wins decisive material **40.Ke3** A cute way of resigning (presumably) **40...Bc5# 0–1**

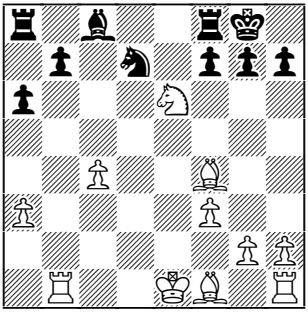
Libiszewski,Fabien (2530) - Gong,Daniel Hanwen (2272) [B41]

New Zealand Open 2018 Palmerston North (5.3), 05.01.2018

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6 5.c4 Nf6 6.Nc3 Bb4 7.Qd3 Qc7 8.a3 Bxc3+ 9.Qxc3 0–0 10.f3 Another Maroczy. This time Black's position doesn't feel very promising and he tries lashing out to dissolve White's big centre immediately.

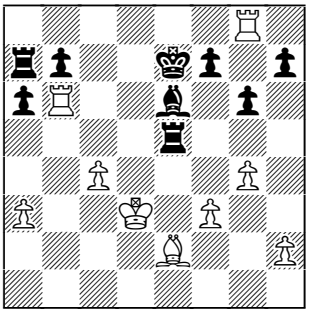


10...d5 11.cxd5 Qxc3+ 12.bxc3 exd5 13.exd5 Nxd5 14.c4 Nc7 15.Rb1 Nd7 16.Bf4 Ne6 17.Nxe6



17...Re8! A nice little refinement. Over the next few moves Black plays resourcefully to gradually unwind and neutralise White **18.Kf2 Rxe6 19.Be2 Nc5 20.Be3** 20.Rhd1! Keeps the pressure on, Black can't develop smoothly since after 20...Bd7 21.Bd6 is very awkward to deal with **20...Rc6!** A resourceful way of parrying the threats and holding things together. **21.Bxc5 Rxc5 22.Rhd1 Kf8 23.Rd8+ Ke7 24.Rg8 g6 25.g4 Ra7** Ra8-a7 is always one of my favourite moves - unfortunately for Black he is not going to get a chance to thematically activate the Rook along the second rank, but this is still a cunning way

of unpinning the Bishop. **26.Ke3** Now that the Bishop isn't pinned Black can get counterplay if required with ...b5 eg 26.Rh8 b5 27.cxb5 axb5 28.Rxb5 Rc3 since now 29.Re5+ can be met by 29...Be6 - if the Bishop was pinned the Re5 would be heading to the eighth rank too with a paralysing effect **26...Re5+ 27.Kd3 Be6 28.Rb6**

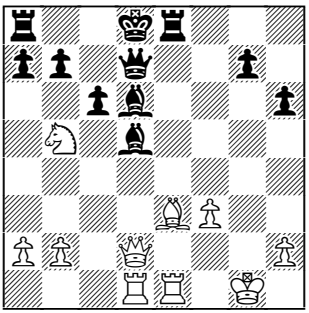


28...Bxc4+! Now Black is actually for choice **29.Kxc4 Rxe2 30.a4 Ra2 31.Kb4 a5+ 32.Kb5 Rxh2 33.Rb8 Rb2+ 34.Kc5 Rxb6 35.Kxb6 Ra6+ 36.Kb5 Rf6** Black can retain some advantage with 36...Kf6 37.Rxb7 Ra8 Although given both White's pieces are very active and for the moment at least Black's Rook is grovelling you'd expect the GM to hold the draw. **37.Rxb7+** Now the game burns out to a forced draw in short order. **37...Ke6 38.Rb6+ Ke7 39.Rxf6 Kxf6 40.Kxa5 h5 41.gxh5 gxh5 42.Kb6 h4 43.a5 h3 44.a6 h2 45.a7 h1Q 46.a8Q ½–½**

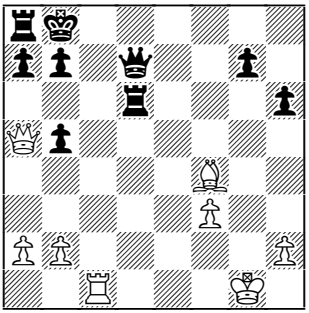
Borsos,Bogdan (2315) - Steadman,Michael V R (2166) [A04]

New Zealand Open 2018 Palmerston North (7.3), 07.01.2018

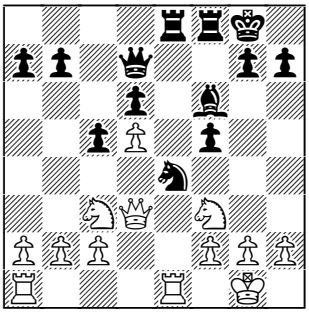
1.Nf3 f5 2.d3 Nf6 3.e4 This is a fun line **3...d6** The most common move 3...fxe4 4.dxe4 Nxe4 5.Bd3 Nf6 Is a kind of reversed From's Gambit (1.f4 e5 2.fxe5 d6 3.exd6 Bxd6) with an extra tempo (of course) for White. A particularly insane example was Nigalidze (2542) - Takyrbashev (2229), Tromso 2014 6.g4?! White throws everything he has at Black throughout, without counting material 6...d6 7.g5 Nfd7 8.g6 h6 9.Bc4 e6 10.Bxe6 Qe7 11.Qe2 Nc6 12.Bf7+ Kd8 13.Be3 Nde5 14.Nxe5 Nxe5 15.Bd5 c6 16.Bg2 Bg4 17.f3 Bf5 18.Na3 Nxg6 19.0–0 Nf4 20.Qd2 Nxg2 21.Kxg2 Qd7 22.Rfe1 d5 23.c4 Bh3+ 24.Kg1 Be6 25.Rad1 Bd6 26.cxd5 Bxd5 27.Nb5 Re8?



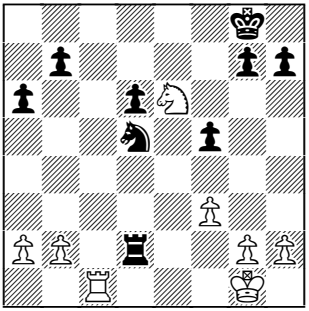
28.Qa5+ Kc8 29.Rxd5! cxb5 30.Rc1+ Kb8 31.Bf4 Re6 32.Rxd6 Rxd6



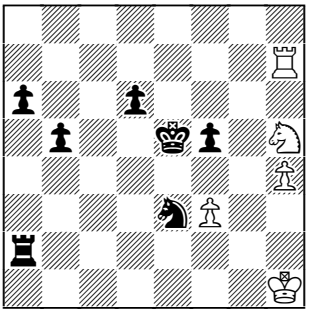
33.Qb4 good enough to elicit resignation, but still a shame *(*as *33.Qxb5* would have been really pretty*)* **4.exf5 Bxf5 5.d4 e6 6.Bd3 Qd7** In this obscure position Mamedyarov (2479) - Dovliatov (2360), Baku 2001, 1–0 in 48 moves was a nice game by the future superstar 6...Be7 7.0–0 Qd7 8.Re1 Bg4 9.h3 Bxf3 10.Qxf3 Nc6 11.c3 0–0 12.Qe2 e5 13.d5 Nd8 14.c4 Nf7 15.Nc3 Rae8 16.Be3 g6 17.Rad1 a6 18.Bc2 Rb8 19.b4 Nh5 20.Qg4 Qd8 21.c5 Bg5 22.Ne4 Bxe3 23.fxe3 Nf6 24.Nxf6+ Qxf6 25.Rf1 Qg5 26.Qxg5 Nxg5 27.h4 Nf7 28.Ba4 Nh6 29.Rxf8+ Rxf8 30.Bd7 Nf5 31.Rd3 Ng3 32.Ra3 Kf7 33.c6 Ke7 34.b5 bxc6 35.Bxc6 axb5 36.Bxb5 Rb8 37.Bc6 Nf5 38.Ra7 Rb1+ 39.Kh2 Nxe3 40.Rxc7+ Kf6 41.Rd7 Rb2 42.Rxd6+ Kf5 43.Rd8 Nxg2 44.Kg3 Kf6 45.d6 Nf4 46.Rf8+ Kg7 47.d7 Ne6 48.Re8 **7.0–0 Be7 8.Bxf5 exf5 9.Nc3 0–0 10.Re1 Na6 11.d5 Nc5 12.Bg5 Rae8** Black has equalised steadily, and over the next few moves he outplays his opponent and grabs an advantage **13.Be3 Nce4 14.Bd4 c5 15.Bxf6 Bxf6 16.Qd3**



16...c4! 17.Qxc4 Rc8 18.Qb5 Qxb5 19.Nxb5 Rxc2 20.Rab1 a6 21.Nbd4 Bxd4 22.Nxd4 Rd2 23.Ne6 Rc8 24.f3 Nf6 25.Red1 Rcc2 26.Rxd2 Rxd2 27.Rc1 Nxd5

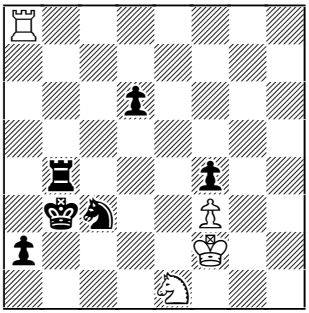


Black has an extra pawn and the initiative, he should win from here **28.Rc8+ Kf7 29.Ng5+ Kg6 30.h4 Ne3 31.Rc7** One King is safe and the other exposed **31...Rxb2 32.Ne6 Rxg2+ 33.Kh1 Kf6 34.Nf4 Rb2 35.Nh5+ Ke5 36.Rxg7 b5 37.Rxh7 Rxa2**



Black is now two healthy pawns up. The conversion process involves a steady advance on the queenside combined with neutralising White's passed h-pawn. Mike achieves this neatly and scores a nice scalp. **38.Re7+ Kd4 39.Rb7 Kc5 40.Nf4 Nd5 41.Ne6+ Kc4 42.h5 Re2 43.Ng5 Re7 44.Rb8 Rg7 45.Rc8+ Kb3 46.Ne6 Rh7 47.Nd4+ Ka4 48.Rc6 Rxh5+ 49.Kg1 a5 50.Rc1 Kb4 51.Rb1+ Kc5 52.Nxb5 Rh4 53.Na3 Ra4 54.Rc1+ Kb4 55.Nc2+ Kb3 56.Ne1 Nc3 57.Kf2 f4 58.Ng2 Rd4 59.Rh1**

a4 60.Rh8 a3 61.Rb8+ Rb4 62.Ra8 a2 63.Ne1

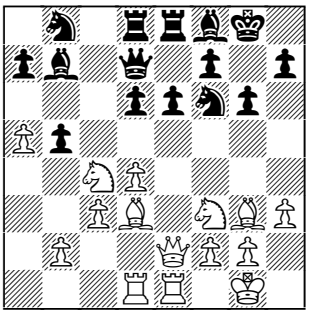


63...Na4 No doubt White was hoping for 63...Kb2? 64.Nd3+ But even here Black wins 64...Kb3 65.Nxb4 Kxb4 66.Ke1 Na4 67.Rb8+ Ka3 **0–1**

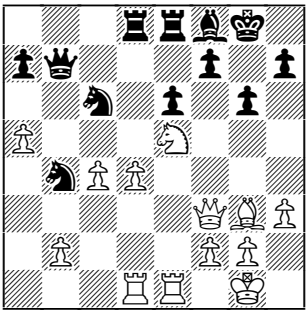
Demuth,Adrien (2538) - Ker,Anthony F (2311) [A46]

New Zealand Open 2018 Palmerston North (3.1), 03.01.2018

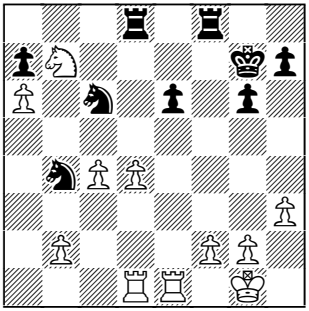
1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6 3.Bf4 c5 4.e3 Nc6 5.c3 Be7 6.Nbd2 cxd4 7.exd4 b6 8.Bd3 Bb7 9.h3 0–0 10.0–0 d6 11.Qe2 Re8 12.Bg3 g6 13.Rfe1 Qd7 14.a4 Bf8 15.Nc4 Rad8 16.Bh4 Be7 17.Bg3 Bf8 18.Rad1 Nb8 19.a5 b5



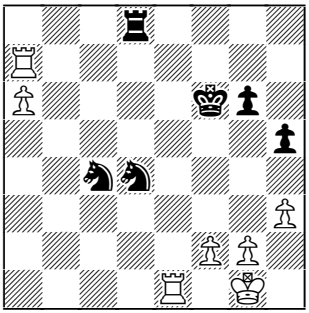
The new and revised version of Anthony Ker (the version that plays Sicilians and Nimzos rather than Pircs and 1...d6 anti Queens Pawn systems) often heads to these Hippo type setups. **20.Nce5?!** Enterprising play, White will get material back, but not necessarily a whole piece **20...dxe5 21.Bxb5 Bc6** The computer recommends 21...Bxf3 22.gxf3 Qb7 *(*Not *22...Nc6? 23.dxe5 Nd5 24.c4)* 23.Bxe8 Rxe8 24.Qxe5 Qxf3 and Black has a small material advantage **22.Nxe5 Qb7 23.Bxc6 Nxc6 24.Qf3 Nd5 25.c4 Ndb4**



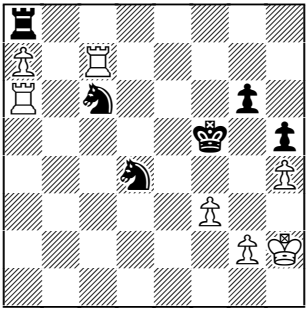
Is Black clinging on to his material? **26.a6 Qc7 27.Ng4!** No. Presumably White saw that he had this when he played his 20th move. That is GM level calculation in a nutshell **27...Bd6 28.Bxd6 Qxd6 29.Nh6+ Kg7 30.Nxf7 Rf8 31.Nxd6 Rxf3 32.Nb7 Rff8**



White now has enough pawns for the piece, and presumably is about to win the exchange as well **33.Nc5!** A nice move, postponing picking up material, but since Nxe6 forks three pieces, Black can't get everything out of the way in just one move. **33...Rfe8 34.Nxe6+ Rxe6 35.Rxe6 Nxd4 36.Re7+ Kf6 37.Rde1 Nd3 38.R1e3 Nxb2 39.Rxa7 Nxc4 40.Re1 h5**



A rook and two pawns for two knights is a classic endgame material advantage, and the advanced passer on a6 is more than just icing on the cake **41.Rb7 Ne5 42.a7 Ra8 43.Ra1 Nec6 44.Ra6 Kf5 45.Rf7+ Ke6 46.Rg7 Kf6 47.Rc7 Kf5 48.h4 Ne2+ 49.Kh2 Ned4 50.f3**



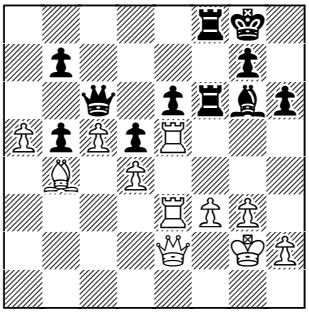
This is an interesting position. Why can't Black just sit here? Obviously White can liquidate to R+3 v R+2 starting with Rxc6, but presumably he wants much more than that. Why does the engine evaluate the position as +3.7? I think the problem for Black is that he is actually in Zugwang. Moving the King allows White to capture twice on c6 with either a check or an attack on the unprotected g6 pawn. Black has to make concessions and White can break him down. **50...Ne5 51.Rc5 Ne6 52.g4+ hxg4 53.fxg4+ Kf6 54.Kg3 Nd7 55.Rcc6 Ndf8 56.Rcb6 Ke7 57.Rb8 Nc7 58.Rb7 Kd7 59.Rf6 Ke7 60.Rxf8 Rxf8 61.Rxc7+ Ke6 62.Rc6+ Kf7 63.Ra6 Ra8 64.Kf4 1–0**

Steadman,Michael V R (2166) - Dive,Russell John (2309) [B12]

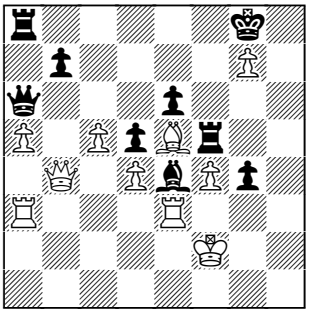
New Zealand Open 2018 Palmerston North (2.6), 02.01.2018

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 Bf5 4.Nf3 e6 5.Be2 h6 6.0–0 Nd7 7.c3 Bh7 8.Nbd2 Ne7 9.b4 a5 10.a4 Ng6 11.Qb3 axb4 Karjakin (2772) - Eljanov (2702), Tromso NOR 2013, 1–0 in 56 moves was an impressive elite level squeeze 11...Nf4 12.Bd1 axb4 13.cxb4 Be7 14.g3 Nh3+ 15.Kg2 Ng5 16.Nxg5 Bxg5 17.a5 0–0 18.Qc3 Nb8 19.Nb3 Be7 20.Be2 Na6 21.Nc5 Bxc5

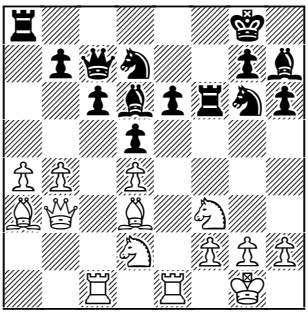
22.bxc5 Nc7 23.Bd2 Qd7 24.Rfe1 Nb5 25.Qb2 f6 26.Bxb5 cxb5 27.Ra3 fxe5 28.Rxe5 Rf6 29.f3 Raf8 30.Bb4 Qc6 31.Qe2 Re8 32.Rae3 Bg6 33.Bd2 Qd7 34.Rb3 Ref8 35.Bb4 Qc6 36.Rbe3



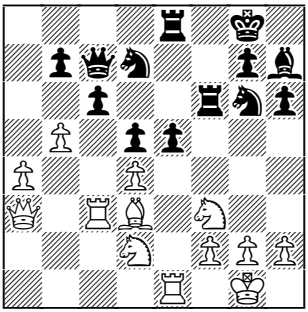
36...Re8 37.h4 Bf5 38.h5 Bh7 39.g4 Kh8 40.Be1 Bg8 41.Rb3 Ref8 42.Bh4 Rf4 43.Qd2 Bh7 44.Bg3 R4f6 45.Ree3 Qa6 46.Be5 R6f7 47.g5 hxg5 48.h6 Kg8 49.hxg7 Ra8 50.Ra3 b4 51.Qxb4 g4 52.f4 Be4+ 53.Kf2 Rf5



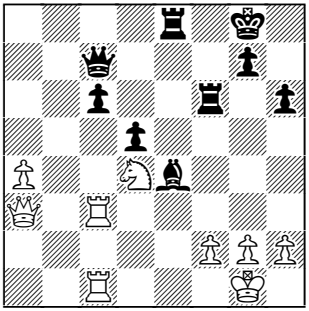
54.Qb6 Qc4 55.Qxe6+ Rf7 56.Rxe4 **12.cxb4 Be7 13.Ba3 0–0 14.Rfe1 f6 15.exf6 Rxf6 16.Bd3 Qc7 17.Rac1 Bd6**



18.Rc3 This turns out to be something of a wasted tempo 18.b5! immediately is well timed **18...Re8** Now ...e5 is definitely coming **19.b5 Bxa3 20.Qxa3 e5!**



Black has equalised (at least) **21.Bxg6 Bxg6 22.bxc6 bxc6 23.dxe5 Nxe5 24.Rec1 Nxf3+ 25.Nxf3 Be4 26.Nd4**

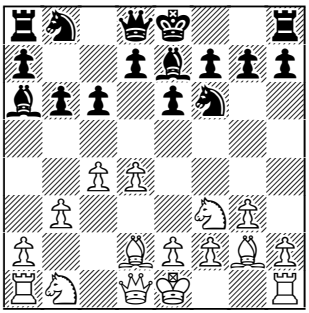


26...Bxg2! A shot **27.Kxg2?** White can reduce Black's attacking potential and maintain the balance by delaying this capture 27.Rxc6! Qf4 28.Rxf6 Qxf6 29.Kxg2 Qxd4 **27...Qf4 28.Nf3 Qg4+ 29.Kh1 Rg6** Resignation seems a bit premature29...Rg6 30.Ng5 *(30.Rg1? Re1!* is a classic pattern*)* 30...Rxg5 31.Rg3 Qe4+ and Black is obviously well on top but still has plenty of work still to do **0–1**

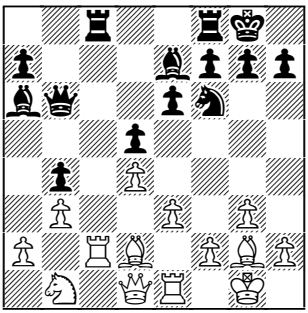
Goormachtigh,Johan (2159) - Dive,Russell John (2309) [E15]

New Zealand Open 2018 Palmerston North (7.6), 07.01.2018

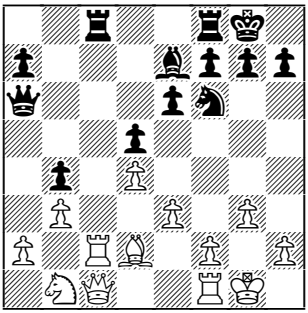
1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.g3 Ba6 5.b3 Bb4+ 6.Bd2 Be7 7.Bg2 c6



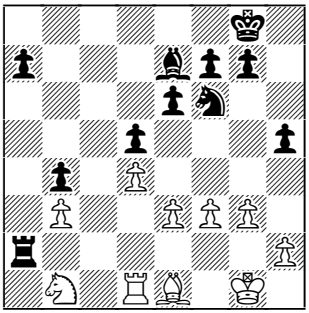
A very standard position in the modern Queens Indian **8.0–0** White normally plays 8.Bc3 to improve the Bishop that was cruelly displaced earlier in the game, although of course one of the points of the Bb4+ Bd2 Be7 pattern is that even then the White bishop is inconveniently taking the best square for the Nb1 **8...d5 9.Ne5 Nfd7!** This move reveals the innacuracy of White's most recent moves - White doesn't have a good way of supporting the Knight so Black has completely equalised and now starts to improve his position harmoniously while White's pieces get in each others way. **10.Nxd7 Nxd7 11.cxd5 cxd5 12.Nc3 Rc8 13.Rc1 0–0 14.Re1 Nf6 15.Rc2 b5 16.Nb1 Qb6 17.e3 b4**



White now tries to exchange his way out of trouble **18.Bf1 Bxf1 19.Rxf1 Qa6 20.Qc1**



20...h5! White is cramped and uncoordinated, so Black can take time out to grab more space. and wait for more concessions. I suspect this move wouldn't occur to most amateurs (it certainly wouldn't occur to me) but interestingly the computer loves it, along with the similar 20...g5! **21.f3** A decent move preparing Be1, Rf2 and sometimes g4 (in response to ...h4) as defensive manoevres, but actually Black is already winning by force. **21...Rxc2 22.Qxc2 Rc8 23.Qb2 Qe2 24.Rf2 Qd1+** This wins material but 24...Qd3! (now that Rc1 isn't possible 25.Be1 Qd1 26.Re2 Rc1 wins more material **25.Rf1 Rc2 26.Rxd1 Rxb2 27.Be1 Rxa2**

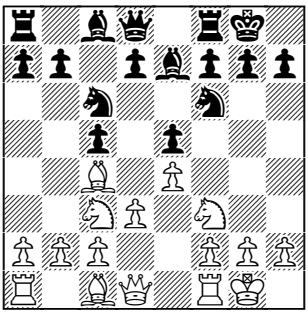


Black to go with his extra pawn retains the positional advantages he has enjoyed all game. White tries hard to wriggle and gain some counterplay, even at the cost of more material. Probably the most practical approach, but Black manages to eat heartily *and* retain complete control. **28.Nd2 Ne8 29.Rc1 Nd6 30.Rc7 Bg5 31.f4 Bf6 32.Nf3 a5 33.Ra7 Ra3 34.Ne5 Bxe5 35.dxe5 Ne4** Black has been humiliating the dark squared White bishop since move 5, sad to see it being completely dominated by a super-knight on e4. **36.Kg2 g5 37.fxg5 Nxg5 38.g4 hxg4 39.Kg3 Nf3 40.Bf2 Nxe5 41.Kh4 Kg7 42.e4 Kg6 43.Bg3 Nf3+ 44.Kxg4 dxe4 0–1**

Gao,Hans (2167) - Hague,Ben (2368) [B24]

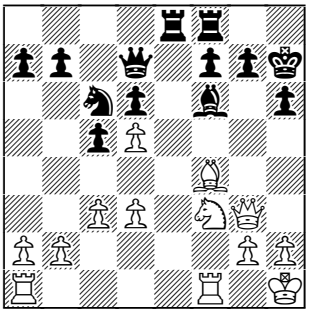
New Zealand Open 2018 Palmerston North (7.2), 07.01.2018

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 Nc6 3.Nf3 e5 4.Bc4 Be7 5.d3 Nf6 6.0–0 0–0

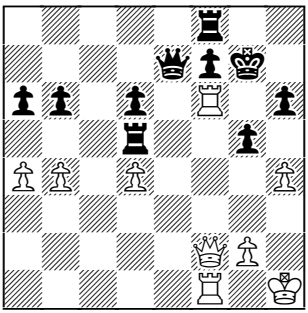


7.Ng5! Playing this here is a rather neat transpositional trick, that has been played by So, Nakamura and others. It's much more common to play the move when Black has played ...d6 rather than ...O-O on their last move. Then it comes with tempo against f7 allowing time for f4 ahead of ...h6 (which is the goal - White wants to play f2-f4 over the top of the Knight on f3 but unfortunately the rules don't allow that in one move). **7...h6 8.f4!** The trick is that White has time for this even in this move order **8...exf4** 8...hxg5? 9.fxg5 sees Black getting destroyed on the Kingside. The details are left as an exercise for the reader **9.Nf3 d6 10.Bxf4** We have transposed to, for example Kramnik-Leko Linares 2003 which reached the same position by a more conventional route after 1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Nc3 e5 4.Bc4 d6 5.d3 Be7 6.O-O Nf6

7.Ng5 O-O 8.f4 exf4 9.Bxf4 h6 10.Nf3 **10...Bg4** This reasonable looking move is a near novelty. ...Be6 instead has been played literally hundreds of times. **11.Qd2 Kh7 12.Kh1 Qd7 13.Nd5 Nxd5 14.Bxd5 Bf6 15.c3 Be6** Maybe 10...Be6 really would have been more logical, but really the game is level anyway. **16.Qe1 Rae8 17.Qg3 Bxd5 18.exd5**



18...Ne5 The computer also likes 18...Ne7 as 19.Bxd6? is not good for White after the forcing sequence 19...Nf5 20.Qg4 Qxd6 21.Qxf5+ g6 22.Qg4 Qxd5 **19.Nd2 g5!?** Rather bravely looking to sharpen the game at the cost of incurring a significant weakness. **20.Ne4 Bg7 21.Bxe5 Rxe5 22.Nf6+ Bxf6 23.Rxf6 Kg7 24.Raf1 Qe7 25.d4 cxd4 26.cxd4 Rxd5** 26...Re3 is also possible 27.Qxd6 Qxd6 28.Rxd6 and 28...Re2 is in time for Black to be more than fine **27.Qf2 Rb5** 27...Ra5 is slightly better 28.b4 Ra4 and Black is more succesfully making a nuisance of himself than in the game **28.h4! a6 29.a4 Rd5 30.b4 b6**



Black's Rd5 has run dangerously out of squares **31.Kh2!** Black is reduced to waiting and White has time to improve his position and look for an opportunity to play the extremely dangerous Qf3-h5 **31...Qd7 32.g3 Qe7 33.g4?** Missing his chance 33.Qf3!! is very strong here 33...Rxd4 34.Qh5 is actually winning as Black runs out of checks if he tries to counterattack (very computer-ey I know - it's tough criticising human players for this sort of thing) 34...Rd2+? *(34...Qxf6* is necessary but it leads to a very bad ending*)* 35.Kh3 Qd7+ *(35...Qxf6* is now completely impossible because the Rook is on a more exposed square and drops off *36.Rxf6 Kxf6 37.Qxh6+* etc*)* 36.g4 Rd3+ 37.Kh2 Rd2+ 38.Kg1 and mate is inevitable, eg 38...Rd5 39.Qxh6+ Kg8 40.Rg6+ **33...gxh4** Black now activates his pieces and the game burns out to a draw after some accurate play from both players **34.Qxh4 Qe3 35.R6f4 Rg5 36.Rf6 Rg6 37.Rxg6+ Kxg6 38.Qf6+ Kh7 39.Qxd6 Qe2+ 40.Kg3 Qxf1 41.Qxf8 Qd3+ ½–½**

The Major Open 2018
by Nigel Cooper

As a participant in, and former winner of, the Major Open, I was surprised to see the devastating form of Australian Leon Kempen in this year's Major Open. He finished with 7.5 out of 9, without losing a game. He prepared well for each game, won six and was never in trouble in the three drawn games, and had winning chances in them all. A masterly performance.

Stanley Yee was the top New Zealander in the Major Open, losing just one game (to John Packenham), and neatly destroying the hopes of Martin Post in round 8, who had been leading the tournament after 6 rounds, but who finished with three losses, to bring him down to earth with a thud.

The playing venue, the Steeple Conference Centre, part of the Copthorne Hotel, was excellent. Just the right amount of space and quietness, it coped well with the many tournaments that were running during the Congress. Well over 100 participants in the various events augured well for the future of chess in NZ. Grateful thanks must go to Mark Noble and his team for their excellent organisation. The loads of Juniors were very well behaved!

My one regret about the tournament is that games that were not played on the boards which had electronic recording devices have not been recorded on the internet at all. When I asked if I could get a copy of some of them, I was told it would cost $20 per game. In this day and age, when there is a perfectly good method of recording games and scanning them into the computer, five minutes after the game is finished. It seems a great pity that we continue with old style score sheets that cannot be scanned and put on line. The tournaments where this new system has been used have had all games played available online immediately after they were played. This helped players in preparing for their next games, as well as making the games available for posterity. Alas, most of the games played in Palmerston North won't make it to the internet, unless somebody spends the time entering them manually.

However, here is a selection of those Major Open games I managed to find recorded:

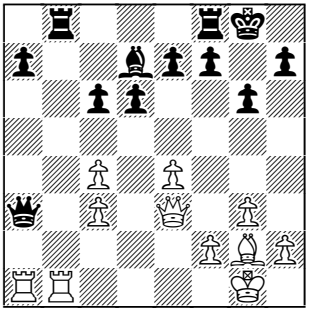
Altogether a most pleasing tournament, well organised and with many side events like the Palmy Open, Manawatu Rapids, NZ Juniors, and Fielding Rapids. Events for all ages and abilities, and everyone's time well spent.

Isn't chess great?

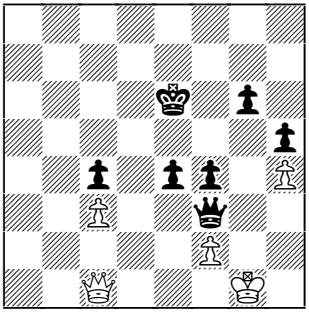
Aaron Wang (1487) - Leon Kempen (1888) [A37]

Major Open 2018 Palmerston North (1), 01.01.2018

1.c4 c5 2.Nc3 g6 3.g3 Bg7 4.Bg2 Nc6 5.Nf3 d6 6.0–0 Nf6 7.d4 cxd4 8.Nxd4 Bd7 9.e4 0–0 10.Be3 Ng4 11.Nxc6 bxc6 12.Qd2 Nxe3 13.Qxe3 Qa5 14.a3 Bxc3 15.bxc3 Rab8 16.Rfb1 Qxa3



White gets a rude shock. Black's queen cannot be taken because of ...Rb1+ and ...Bh3. **17.Bf1 Rxb1 18.Rxb1 c5 19.Rb7 Rd8 20.Rc7 Qa5 21.Rb7 Qa6 22.Rb3 Be6 23.Rb5 Qa1 24.Qd3 Bh3 25.Rb1 Bxf1 26.Rxf1 Qa5 27.Rb1 Qc7 28.Qd5 Rb8 29.Rb5 e6 30.Rxb8+ Qxb8 31.Qc6 Qb6 32.Qa8+ Kg7 33.Kg2 a5 34.h3 Qb1 35.e5 dxe5 36.Qxa5 Qe4+ 37.Kh2 Qxc4 38.h4 h5 39.Qa1 Qd5 40.Qe1 c4 41.Qe3 e4 42.Kg2 e5 43.Kh3 Qd3 44.Qe1 Kf6 45.Kh2 Ke6 46.Kg2 f5 47.Qc1 f4 48.gxf4 Qf3+ 49.Kg1 exf4**

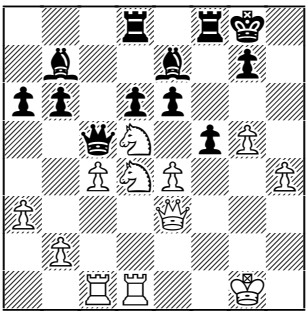


Black is two pawns ahead, and looking like a clear winner. But White defends admirably. **50.Qa3 Qd1+ 51.Kh2 Qd6 52.Qa4 f3+ 53.Kg1 Kf7 54.Qxc4+ Qe6 55.Qc7+ Ke8 56.Qb8+ Kd7 57.Qb7+ Kd6 58.Qb8+ Kc6 59.Qa8+ Kc7 60.Qa7+ Kd8 61.Qb8+ Ke7 62.Qc7+ Kf8 63.Qd8+ Kf7 64.Qc7+ Qe7 65.Qf4+ Kg7 66.c4 Qe6 67.Qc7+ Kf6 68.Qf4+ Ke7 69.Qc7+ Ke8 70.Qb8+ Kd7 71.Qb7+ Kd6 72.Qb6+ Ke5 73.Qc5+ Kf6 74.Qf8+ Ke5 75.Qc5+ Kf6 76.Qf8+ Ke5 ½–½**

Dion Charles (1747) - Stanley Yee (1898) [B42]

Major Open 2018 Palmerston North (6), 06.01.2018

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 a6 5.Bd3 Nf6 6.0–0 d6 7.Be3 Be7 8.c4 0–0 9.Nc3 Nbd7 10.Qe2 Qc7 11.a3 Ne5 12.Rac1 Nxd3 13.Qxd3 b6 14.Rfd1 Ng4 15.h3 Nxe3 16.Qxe3 Bb7 17.f4 h6 18.g4 Rad8 19.g5 hxg5 20.fxg5 Qc5 21.h4 f5 22.Nd5

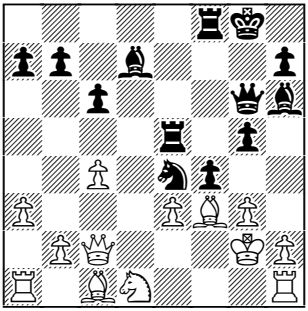


An interesting sacrifice. Is there enough compensation for the piece? **22...exd5 23.cxd5 Qa5 24.Nxf5 Rd7 25.h5 b5 26.h6 Qd8 27.hxg7 Rxf5** Giving material back, but breaking up White's attack. **28.exf5 Bxg5 29.Qe6+ Kxg7 30.Kh1 Bxc1 31.Rg1+ Kh8 32.Qg6 Qh4+ 33.Kg2 Rg7 34.Rh1 Bxd5+ 0–1**

John Packenham (1681) - Michael Sole (1801) [A04]

Major Open 2018 Palmerston North (4), 04.01.2018

1.Nf3 d6 2.d4 f5 3.g3 Nf6 4.Bg2 g6 5.c4 Bg7 6.0–0 0–0 7.Qc2 Nc6 8.a3 e5 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.Rd1 Qe8 11.e3 Bd7 12.Nc3 e4 13.Nd4 Ne5 14.Bf1 c6 15.Kg2 g5 16.Be2 Qg6 17.Rh1 Bh6 18.f4 exf3+ 19.Nxf3 Rae8 20.Nd1 Ne4 21.Nxe5 Rxe5 22.Bf3 f4



White may hold off the attack with g4, but

2018 Major Open

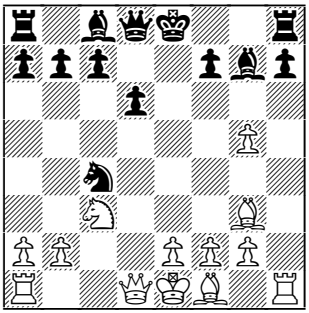
1	CM	Kempen, Leon	1888	AUS	7.5	=B35	+W19	+B5	+W8	+B12	+W4	=B2	=W3	+B14
2	CM	Yee, Stanley	1898	HP	7.0	+W29	-B39	+W33	=B14	+W10	+B6	=W1	+B12	+B8
3		Winfield, Alan W	1726	KP	6.5	+B31	+W10	+B9	-W12	-B8	+W15	+B25	=B1	+W13
4		Goormachtigh, Lauren	1692	BEL	6.5	+W42	-B18	+W13	+B34	+W21	-B1	+W24	+B17	=W5
5		Winter, Ryan	1470	WE	6.5	+W21	=B23	-W1	+B30	+W39	+B11	+B12	=W8	=B4
6		Charles, Dion	1747	MK	6.0	+B37	-W9	+B29	+W15	=B25	-W2	+W21	=B13	+W12
7		Wei, Louie	1609	AC	6.0	-W18	+B20	=W21	-B23	+W41	=B10	+W19	+W26	+B24
8	CM	Picken, Oliver	1769	PT	5.5	+W22	+B28	+W18	-B1	+W3	-W12	+B23	=B5	-W2
9		Clouston, Bevan	1651	AUS	5.5	+W20	+B6	-W3	-B11	+W38	-B24	=W18	+B39	+W25
10		Dai, Oliver	1623	HP	5.5	+W36	-B3	=W22	+B33	-B2	=W7	+B34	=W11	+B23
11		Carpinter, Bernard	1774	HB	5.5	=B15	+W35	=B16	+W9	=B17	-W5	=W13	=B10	+W18
12		Post, Martin	1850	WA	5.0	+W13	+B14	+W39	+B3	-W1	+B8	-W5	-W2	-B6
13		Yan, Sarah	1484	AC	5.0	-B12	+W44	-B4	+W19	+B26	+W27	=B11	=W6	-B3
14		Knightbridge, Wayne	1646	NS	5.0	+B41	-W12	+B19	=W2	=B15	+W16	=W17	=B25	-W1
15		He, Caleb	1463		5.0	=W11	+B24	+W23	-B6	=W14	-B3	+W39	=B21	=W17
16		Day, Fabian	1465	WE	5.0	+B25	=W17	=W11	=B24	=W23	-B14	=B27	+W33	=B26
17		Gold, Hamish	1749	OT	5.0	+W38	=B16	=W34	+B18	=W11	=W25	=B14	-W4	=B15
18		Sashikumar	0	IND	4.5	+B7	+W4	-B8	-W17	-B27	+W37	=B9	+W35	-B11
19		Polyakevich, Arkadi	0	RUS	4.5	+W30	-B1	-W14	-B13	+W36	+B28	-B7	+W37	=B27
20		He, Paul	1183		4.5	-B9	-W7	-B31	+W43	-B40	+W44	+B41	+B32	=W22
21		Stewart, James	1835	PN	4.5	-B5	+W32	=B7	+W37	-B4	+W22	-B6	=W15	=B35
22		Qin, Oscar Shu Xuan	1438	AC	4.5	-B8	+W41	=B10	-W29	+B37	-B21	+W28	=W27	=B20
23		Cooper, Nigel	1692	CA	4.5	+B40	=W5	-B15	+W7	=B16	+W34	-W8	=B24	-W10
24		Lyall, Simon	1760	AC	4.5	=B32	-W15	+B35	=W16	+B29	+W9	-B4	=W23	-W7
25		Sole, Michael D	1801	WE	4.5	-W16	+B42	+W28	+B39	=W6	=B17	-W3	=W14	-B9
26		Booth, Anthony	1742	HP	4.5	=W34	-B33	=W38	+B42	-W13	+B30	+W29	-B7	=W16
27		Calitz, Hananke	1699	MK	4.5	=W33	-B34	+W32	=B38	+W18	-B13	=W16	=B22	=W19
28		Steadman, Mathew	1509	AC	4.0	+B43	-W8	-B25	+W31	-B34	-W19	-B22	+W44	+B41
29		Murdoch, Stephen	1500	CA	4.0	-B2	+W40	-W6	+B22	-W24	+B32	-B26	=W34	=B33
30		Stracy, Don	1610	WE	4.0	-B19	+W31	=B37	-W5	+B33	-W26	-B35	+W38	=B34
31		Liu, John	1337	AC	4.0	-W3	-B30	+W20	-B28	=W32	=B41	-B36	+W43	+B40
32		Lopez Sanz, David	1423	ESP	4.0	=W24	-B21	-B27	+W44	=B31	-W29	+B40	-W20	+B43
33		Lukey, Bryce	1322	CA	4.0	=B27	+W26	-B2	-W10	-W30	+B42	+W38	-B16	=W29
34		Ross, Sol	1343	MK	4.0	=B26	+W27	=B17	-W4	+W28	-B23	-W10	=B29	=W30
35		Wang, Aaron Ziwen	1487	HP	4.0	=W1	-B11	-W24	=B41	+W42	=B38	+W30	-B18	=W21
36		Xu, Hannah	814		3.5	-B10	-W37	=B44	-W40	-B19	+B43	+W31	-W41	+B39
37		Wang, Ying	1352	AC	3.5	-W6	+B36	=W30	-B21	-W22	-B18	+W43	-B19	+W42
38		Ning, Isabelle Yixua	1391	AC	3.5	-B17	+W43	=B26	=W27	-B9	=W35	-B33	-B30	+W44
39		Pakenham, John	1681	AC	3.0	+B44	+W2	-B12	-W25	-B5	+W40	-B15	-W9	-W36
40		Li, Leo Xiang Yu	1277	AC	3.0	-W23	-B29	-W41	+B36	+W20	-B39	-W32	+B42	-W31
41		Warren, Elizabeth	1155	AUS	3.0	-W14	-B22	+B40	=W35	-B7	=W31	-W20	+B36	-W28
42		Malton, Isabella	1270	MK	2.0	-B4	-W25	+B43	-W26	-B35	-W33	+B44	-W40	-B37
43		Zheng, Yantao	0		1.0	-W28	-B38	-W42	-B20	+B44	-W36	-B37	-B31	-W32
44		Ryu, Rosa	1185	AC	0.5	-W39	-B13	=W36	-B32	-W43	-B20	-W42	-B28	-B38

plays instead **23.exf4 gxf4 24.Nf2 fxg3 25.Bxe4 Rxf2+ 26.Qxf2 Qxe4+ 27.Qf3 Bh3+ 28.Kxh3 Qxf3 0–1**

Leon Kempen (1888) - Oliver Picken (1769) [A52]

Major Open 2018 Palmerston North (4), 04.01.2018

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e5 3.dxe5 Ng4 4.Bf4 g5 Oliver chooses a rare line in the Budapest gambit, but Leon was happy with the challenge. **5.Bg3 Bg7 6.Nf3 Nc6 7.h4 Ngxe5 8.Nxe5 Nxe5 9.hxg5** Alternatively 9.Nc3 h6 10.Qc2 g4 11.e3 d6 12.Be2 0–0 13.0–0–0 gives an exciting, open game, with approximately equal chances. **9...Nxc4 10.Nc3 d6**

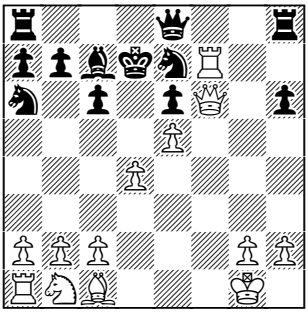


Black blunders a piece. 10...c6 was necessary, when the position is sharp. The game might have gone something like 11.e4 Nxb2 12.Qd2 d5 13.exd5 Qe7+ 14.Be2 Nc4 15.Qd3 Bg4 16.Rc1 Bxc3+ 17.Rxc3 Bxe2 18.Qxe2 Qxe2+ 19.Kxe2 cxd5 20.Rd3 0–0–0 with equal chances. Instead **11.Qa4+ c6 12.Qxc4 d5 13.Qd3 Be6 14.Rxh7 Rxh7 15.Qxh7 Kf8 16.e3 c5 17.Be2 d4 18.Ne4 d3 19.Bd6+ Ke8 20.Bxd3 c4 21.Qxg7 Qa5+ 22.b4 cxb3+ 23.Kf1 Kd7 24.axb3 Qd5 25.Nf6+ 1–0**

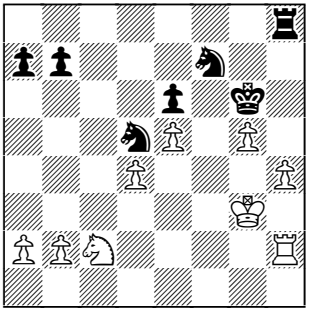
Nigel Cooper (1692) - Oliver Picken (1769) [A02]

Major Open 2018 Palmerston North (7), 07.01.2018

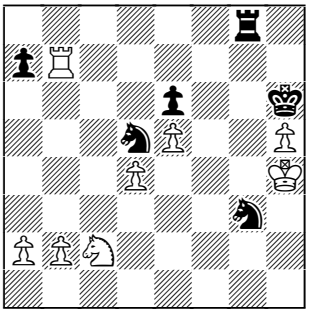
1.f4 e5 2.fxe5 d6 3.exd6 Bxd6 4.Nf3 g5 5.e4 I choose a less common line in the From's gambit. The usual moves are g3 or d4. **5...g4 6.Bb5+ c6 7.Bc4 gxf3 8.Qxf3 Be6 9.Bxe6 fxe6 10.Qh5+ Kd7 11.0–0 Qe8 12.Rf7+ Ne7 13.d4 h6 14.Qf3 Na6 15.e5 Bc7 16.Qf6**



A crucial mistake. White wastes a tempo, and Black takes the initiative from here on. 16.c3 would have been better, when both sides have chances. **16...Rf8 17.Rxf8 Qxf8 18.Qxf8 Rxf8 19.Bxh6 Rh8 20.Bd2 c5 21.c3 cxd4 22.cxd4 Nf5 23.Bc3 Bb6 24.Na3 Ke7 25.Nc2 Nc7 26.g4 Nh6 27.h3 Nf7 28.Kg2 Nd5 29.Bd2 Kf8 30.Kg3 Kg7 31.h4 Bd8 32.Rh1 Ng5 33.Bc1 Be7 34.Rh2 Ne4+ 35.Kf3 Bg5 36.Bxg5 Nxg5+ 37.Kg3 Nf7 38.g5 Kg6**



White is holding, and the kingside pawns are strong. But I blunder: **39.Kg4 Nxg5 40.h5+ Kh6 41.Rf2 Rg8 42.Kh4 Ne4 43.Rf7 Ng3 44.Rxb7**

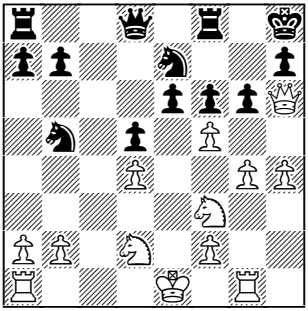


(Ed: A cute finish ensues) **44...Nf5+ 45.Kh3 Nf4+ 46.Kh2 Rg2+ 47.Kh1 Ng3# 0–1**

Hamish Gold (1749) - Laurens Goormachtigh (1692) [A46]

Major Open 2018 Palmerston North (8), 08.01.2018

1.d4 Nf6 2.Nf3 e6 3.Bf4 d5 4.Nbd2 c5 5.c3 Nc6 6.e3 Bd6 7.Ne5 0–0 8.Bd3 Ne7 9.g4 Ne8 10.Qf3 f6 11.Qh3 g6 12.Nef3 Bxf4 13.exf4 cxd4 14.cxd4 Nd6 15.Rg1 Bd7 16.Qh6 Bb5 17.Bxb5 Nxb5 18.h4 Kh8 19.f5

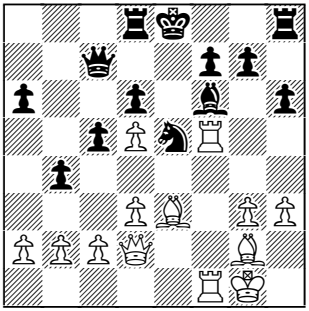


White must attack but pushing the g or h pawns endangers his Queen. Therefore he tries the f pawn, but this loses a pawn and the initiative. **19...exf5 20.gxf5 Nxf5 21.Qf4 Qe7+ 22.Kf1 Rae8 23.h5 Qe2+ 24.Kg2 Ne3+ 25.Kh1 g5 26.Qh2 Nf5 27.Rae1 Qd3 28.Rd1 Nbxd4 29.Nxd4 Qxd4 30.Qh3 Qh4 31.Qxh4 Nxh4 32.Rg3 Re2 33.Kg1 Rfe8 34.Kf1 Kg7 35.Nb3 Rxb2 36.Rc1 Ree2 37.Rc7+ Kh6 38.Rf7 Rxf2+ 39.Kg1 Nf3+ 0–1**

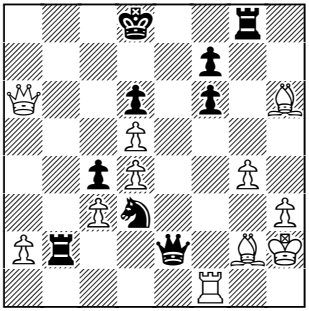
Ryan Winter (1470) - Oliver Picken (1769) [B23]

Major Open 2018 Palmerston North (8), 08.01.2018

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 a6 3.Nge2 d6 4.g3 b5 5.Bg2 Bb7 6.0–0 Nd7 7.d3 e6 8.f4 Qc7 9.Be3 Be7 10.f5 exf5 11.Rxf5 Ngf6 12.Qd2 h6 13.h3 Rd8 14.Raf1 Ne5 15.Nf4 b4 16.Ncd5 Nxd5 17.Nxd5 Bxd5 18.exd5 Bf6



White decides to sacrifice to open up the board. **19.Rxf6 gxf6 20.Bxh6 Rg8 21.g4 Qe7 22.c3 bxc3 23.bxc3 c4 24.d4 Nd3 25.Kh2 Rb8 26.Qd1 Kd8 27.Qa4 Qe2 28.Qxa6 Rb2**



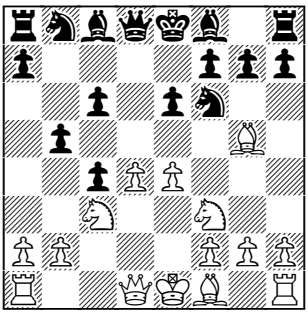
29.Qxd6+ A fine effort by young Ryan, who finished in 3= place on 6.5 points. (Ed: A nice game and a good result, but I would be derelict in my duty as editor if I didn't note that [the computer informs me that :-] White can win the game with the elegant and not too difficult manoeuvre 29.Qxd6+ Ke8 30.Qc6+ Kd8 31.d6! Qe6 32.Qc7+ Ke8 33.Kh1 and White's attack is stronger, his King safer, and he is about to collect more material) **½–½**

Chess For Fun Adventures with the Botvinnik Semi-Slav

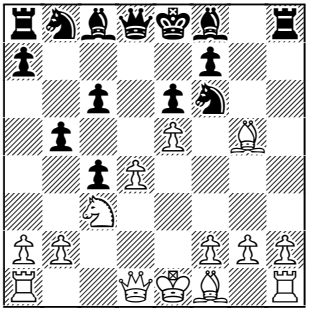
by Bill Forster

What's a low rated amateur like me doing writing about one of the most complicated and theoretical opening variations? We'll get to that, but first let's cut to the chase and put the moves in question on the board.

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 c6 This is the so called Semi Slav, Black reinforces d5 with both c6 and e6. The c6 pawn is not just about solidity, it also hints that Black might be interested in a pawn grab with dxc5 followed by b5 winning material and space. This is prescient. White has two main options now, the quiet e3 and **5.Bg5 dxc4** Black has options here too (of course), but this is the most dynamic way to play. White's pin lets him play **6.e4** and now **6...b5**



might not look possible in view of **7.e5** Initiating a forcing sequence. Is Black losing a piece? **7...h6** Just in time **8.Bh4 g5 9.Nxg5 hxg5 10.Bxg5**



We can take as the starting point of the Botvinnik variation, although both sides were basically committed to this position once White played 6.e4. If you haven't seen this position please take a long hard look. My feeling is that the intriguing imbalances here should stir the blood of any chess lover. For the moment Black is a piece up, but clearly the f6 Knight is doomed, after which Black will be a pawn down. So Black has gone from pawn grabber to pawn gambiteer in the space of a few moves. Black has a mass of mobile advanced pawns on the queenside. With a pawn coming to f6 White has a big majority on the other side. The kings are almost certainly heading in opposite directions. Black will argue that the King is safe on the queenside despite the pawn advances. White's king might come under fire on the open g and h files, but that feature also means White's pawn majority has already generated a passed pawn – and sometimes it doesn't wait for the endgame to advance menacingly. So both sides have dangerous potential plans on both sides of the board. The centre is also set to be a fierce battleground. White's d pawn might be a weakness, but in many games it advances d4-d5, d5xe6, e6-e7 possibly with decisive effect. Both sides control central squares deep in their opponent's territory (Black on d3, White on e7), this can mean bypassing conventional central play to go straight for the opponent's throat.

The stats say White scores around 58% from here, basically he has not yet relinquished his opening advantage. After all a pawn is a pawn. Or is it? One Botvinnik theme is that normal material bean counting tends to go out the window. For his pawn Black gets a position that's easy to play – all his pieces flow into good positions and his pawn structure is more compact. But White gets his share of the fun too, he is by no means reduced to clinging to a material advantage.

If you like stodgy chess there is nothing for you here. On the other hand if you like rich strategic and tactical complexity welcome to ground zero – your new home.

I started paying attention to the Botvinnik Semi-Slav when I read the older but still well regarded book “Starting out: 1.d4!” by John Cox (Everyman, 2006). We will put aside and not speak again of the tragedy of a man who has been playing chess for over forty years being attracted to a book with that title! The book provides a complete 1.d4 opening repertoire for White. Most repertoire books seek to tame the vast scale of the subject of opening theory by guiding the reader as much as possible down fairly narrow corridors. This is a very sensible way of dealing with a very big problem, but Cox tries to prove the validity of a completely different approach. He wants his readers to play the principled main lines against each of the defences Black has at

his disposal.

Naturally Cox spends a significant part of the early part of the book preemptively defending this approach against the inevitable criticism that this is outrageously impractical. Surely the reader will have to memorise vast tracts of opening theory? I'll quote some of my favourite parts of his defence;

"So hang on, you'll say, isn't this a Starting Out book? How can players rated 1500-1900 expect to grasp the intricacies of, say, the Botvinnik Semi-Slav. They don't need to be studying openings where the theory goes down to move twenty-odd when they don't know the first thing about the game."

"Well, first of all, I think that's patronizing tosh. Lower rated players may not play as strongly as GMs, and they may not understand, recall, or have need of deep theory in their games to the same extent, but that doesn't mean they're not interested to know what the thoery is, and it doesn't mean they can't improve by looking at it. Still less does it mean they shouldn't use the most thrilling openings in our game just because a lot of people have played them before (which is all 'theory' amounts to)."

"Secondly, I think everyone ought to play main line openings most of the time. If you want to be a strong player, then you have to play strong moves. It doesn't make sense to approach that by deliberately playing moves in the opening that aren't the strongest...These openings are not just the best, they are also the richest (in the end that's why they're the best)."

There's more, in this vein, for example;

"I think people tend to be afraid of the main lines. They think; gosh, there's so much theory, Kasparov has his zillion gigabyte playbook; how can I compete? The fact is of course that you can't compete with Kasparov, but then you only need to compete with your opponents. Anyway, titled players know much less theory than people tend to imagine. When I took up 9. b4 against the King's Indian my first game was against an IM who's played the KID all his life; essentially his knowledge of theory ran out on move nine (about the same time as mine) but that didn't stop him playing fairly sensibly."

"Another excuse tends to be; sure I'm going to take up (say) 5. Bg5 against the Semi-Slav, once I've got time and learned it properly. This tends to be a way of lying to yourself – it certainly was for me. My advice is – don't bother. The more you learn anyway, the more you'll recognise how little you know. If you wait until you've memorized forced sequences leading to White's advantage, you'll be waiting all your life. 5. Bg5 is a good move – get it on the board, get ready to fight, and see what happens".

There's absolutely no doubt this is very controversial advice, there's obviously very strong counter arguments to all of this. But I was attracted to Cox's ideas and decided to give them a go anyway. I noted that the Botvinnik Semi-Slav appeared twice in this section – it seemed it was perhaps the acid test of the whole idea. I particularly loved his concept of just playing 5. Bg5 and seeing what happens. Implicitly he is

admitting that the average reader of a repertoire book is quite incapable of memorizing all the details and theory in the book. He is giving me permission to go ahead and have fun anyway. This is not the conventional wisdom in this area. For example in the February 2018 edition of *CHESS* Sean Marsh reviews a DVD "The Beastly Botvinnik Variation in the Semi-Slav" by Erwin Ami. He starts his review with the comment. "Anyone wanting to play either side of 1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nf3 e6 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.Bh4 g5 9.Nxg5 hxg5 10.Bxg5 Nbd7 11.exf6 Bb7 12.g3 c5 13.d5 Qb6 14.Bg2 O-O-O 15.O-O b4 needs to put in a lot of hours preparing in a thorough fashion". I decided to just say no to that kind of thinking (it's no doubt good advice for chess professionals) and go with Cox's approach instead.

Of course Cox does teach you some of the theory of the Botvinnik Semi-Slav, even if he doesn't expect you to memorise it. One thing I quickly realised is that if this variation is fun for White, it's really a lot of fun for Black. I decided my Black repertoire was equally stale, and to rejuvenate it with the same ideas applied to the other side of the board. I wanted to have a chance of playing the Bot (I'm going to use this affectionate abbreviation from now on), so obviously that meant playing the Slav. This was no hardship – surely playing this stately prince amongst openings with both colours was bound to do my chess no harm. It had to be better than the lazy 1...c5 and 1...d6 junk I was essaying against 1.d4 at the time.

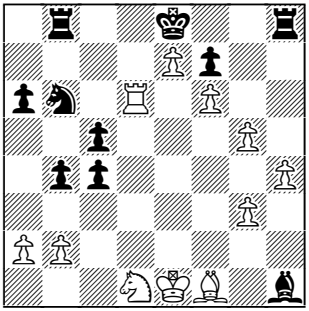
No doubt the reader has spotted a big flaw in my otherwise cunning plan. Deciding to play the Bot is very different from deciding to play (say) the Hippo. You can basically play the Hippo in every game. How often can you actually try out the Bot? This is an important practical issue when studying chess openings and I haven't seen an analytical approach to this problem before, so let's set a precedent and crunch the numbers for this example opening.

I'll use my own software (shameless plug) the Tarrasch Chess GUI V3, with Kingbase-Lite compiled by Pierre Havard. This database comprises a million games, all played by strong (2200+) players, all in the twenty first century. How often can a strong player expect to play the Bot?

The first step is getting the Semi-Slav on the board. Tarrasch tells us that 1.4% of the million games in the database reach the Semi-Slav via (believe it or not) 102 different move orders.

[Digression: weirdest of these move orders was in Jimenez Molina (2222) - Arias Santana (2207), Nicaragua 2001, where the players took five moves instead of four to reach a Semi-Slav. This game happened to head into the Bot and also serves as a handy illustration of some of the attractive mayhem that can ensue

1.c4 c6 2.Nc3 Nf6 3.Nf3 d6 4.d3 e6 5.d4 d5 6.Bg5 dxc4 7.e4 b5 8.e5 h6 9.Bh4 g5 10.Nxg5 hxg5 11.Bxg5 Nbd7 12.exf6 Bb7 13.g3 c5 14.d5 Nb6 The first non-theoretical move **15.dxe6 Qxd1+ 16.Rxd1 Bxh1 17.e7 a6 18.h4 Bh6 19.f4 b4 20.Rd6 Rb8 21.Nd1 Bxg5 22.fxg5**



White has only 3 pawns for a Rook, but the it's not clear how the Rook on h8 can ever join the game - in fact White is probably just winning **22...Nd5 23.Bxc4** The players wimped out now which is a shame 23... Nxe7 24.fxe7 Kxe7 25.Rf6 and White has rough material equality and dominates the board **½–½ End of digression]**

The tables opposite demonstrate (approximately) how often a player hoping to play the Semi-Slav and using disciplined move orders to that end will succeed.

The percentages after each opposition move indicate the rate that opposition players make that move in that position according to the database. The percentages multiply across each row and accumulate for each move order to generate the overall rate of "success". (I hope you were paying attention during your statistics and probability classes).

The conclusion is that if White aims for the Semi-Slav they will succeed about 9% of the time, whereas Black will succeed about 16% of the time;

It's interesting that players who want to play the Semi-Slav with both colours will get more practice with Black. The reason is that if a reasonably conventional opponent starts with 1.d4 our Black player is already well on the way to the Semi-Slav. In contrast our White player cannot avoid a fairly wide subset of the full spectrum of Nimzos, Kings Indians, Grunfelds, Queens Indians, Bogo Indians, Benonis, Moderns and Dutches and of course other types of Slav and Queens Gambit.

Actually this is overthinking it – if you want to play the Pirc with both colours you're obviously going to play a lot more Black Pircs – it's the same reason as that.

So once we reach a Semi-Slav, what are the chances of a Bot?

As Black we might face
5. e3 The Meran 42%
5. Bg5 Allowing the Bot 41%
5. Others 17%

As White after 5.Bg5 we have;
5...h6 The Moscow Gambit 47%
5...Nbd7 (heading to) The Cambridge Springs 26%
5...dxc4 The Bot 21%
5...Be7 Transposing to the QGD 4%

So in total we can estimate our chances of playing the Bot as 21% of 9% with White (about 2%) and 41% of 16% as Black (about 6.5%). A little bit depressing. It's nice that the most fun side (Black, I think anyway) is more likely.

Since I was following Cox's White repertoire, my chances of reaching a Bot were even lower. He has us playing Nf3

White player aims for Semi-Slav

1.d4 d5 28%	**2.c4 c6** 56%	**3.Nf3 Nf6** 92%	**4.Nc3 e6** 36%	5.19%
1.d4 d5 28%	**2.c4 c6** 56%	**3.Nf3 e6** 6%	**4.Nc3 Nf6** 45%	0.42%
1.d4 d5 28%	**2.c4 e6** 29%	**3.Nf3 Nf6** 59%	**4.Nc3 c6** 21%	1.01%
1.d4 d5 28%	**2.c4 e6** 29%	**3.Nf3 c6** 23%	**4.Nc3 Nf6** 45%	0.84%
1.d4 Nf6 57%	**2.c4 e6** 51%	**3.Nf3 d5** 29%	**4.Nc3 c6** 21%	1.77%
1.d4 Nf6 57%	**2.c4 c6** 1%	**3.Nf3 d5** 92%	**4.Nc3 e6** 36%	0.19%
				=====
				9.42%

Black player aims for Semi-Slav

1.d4 36% **d5**	**2.c4** 78% **c6**	**3.Nf3** 60% **Nf6**	**4.Nc3** 51% **e6**	8.59%
1.d4 36% **d5**	**2.c4** 78% **c6**	**3.Nc3** 27% **Nf6**	**4.Nf3** 35% **e6**	2.65%
1.d4 36% **d5**	**2.Nf3** 17% **Nf6**	**3.c4** 78% **c6**	**4.Nc3** 51% **e6**	2.43%
1.Nf3 10% **d5**	**2.d4** 33% **Nf6**	**3.c4** 78% **c6**	**4.Nc3** 51% **e6**	1.31%
1.Nf3 10% **d5**	**2.c4** 24% **c6**	**3.d4** 18% **Nf6**	**4.Nc3** 51% **e6**	0.22%
1.c4 7% **c6**	**2.Nf3** 39% **d5**	**3.d4** 18% **Nf6**	**4.Nc3** 51% **e6**	0.25%
1.c4 7% **c6**	**2.d4** 19% **d5**	**3.Nf3** 60% **Nf6**	**4.Nc3** 51% **e6**	0.41%
1.c4 7% **c6**	**2.d4** 19% **d5**	**3.Nc3** 27% **Nf6**	**4.Nf3** 35% **e6**	0.13%
1.c4 7% **c6**	**2.Nc3** 5% **d5**	**3.d4** 42% **Nf6**	**4.Nf3** 35% **e6**	0.05%
				=====
				16.04%

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only after Black has committed to ...c6, because he wants to play Nimzos rather than Queens Indians and the exciting Ne2 version of the QGD exchange. I hadn't actually realised this issue until I did some analytical thinking for this article. This reduces my chances to about 1%. Of course Cox spends significantly more than 1% of his book on the Bot. I forgive him, it is a fun opening and I wouldn't have got to write this article without him.

Despite these rather daunting odds, I have managed to play some Bots in the last two years. I am going to share these games here. This is after all about my personal "Adventures with the Botvinnik Semi-Slav". I am effectively reporting on the results of a rather elaborate statistical experiment. You may think I'm being outrageously self-indulgent but actually I am compelled to do it for Science! It's very true these are not great games and that they don't stand up to scrutiny. But it's also true that they are probably more representative of the kind of chess the average weekend warrior is going to experience than Polugaevsky-Torre or Ivanchuk-Shirov. We will see plenty of typical Bot themes and ideas. Most importantly and very gratifyingly there are a lot of fun positions in these games, and I will highlight those. Having more fun was the point of the whole exercise.

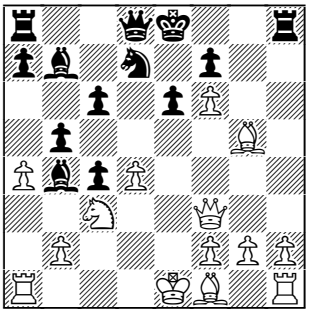
I only got to play one Bot in serious

classical chess. The game was a bit more lively than average perhaps, but sadly something of a damp squib by Bot standards.

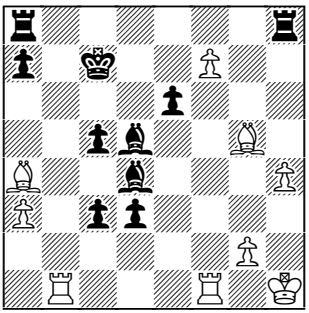
Nyberg,Michael (2085) - Forster,Bill (2066)

Club Championship 2016 Wellington Chess Club (9), 03.11.2016

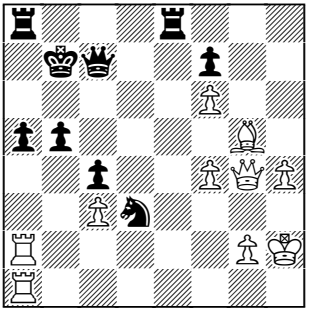
1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 c6 3.Nf3 d5 4.d4 e6 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.Bh4 g5 9.Nxg5 hxg5 10.Bxg5 Nbd7 11.exf6 Bb7 12.a4 The first non-theoretical move 12.g3 c5 13.d5 is typical Bot play **12...Bb4 13.Qf3**



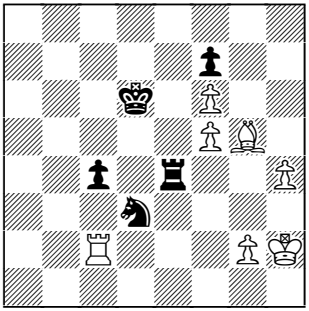
13...Qa5? My first poor move, b6 is usually the best square Lee (2243) - Shulman (2616), Las Vegas 2007 featured Black building a massive central presence 13...Qb6 14.Be2 c5 15.d5 exd5 16.0–0 d4 17.Nd5 Qd6 18.Qe4+ Ne5 19.f4 Bxd5 20.Qxe5+ Qxe5 21.fxe5 bxa4 22.h4 Kd7 23.Bg4+ Kc6 24.Bd1 a3 25.Ba4+ Kc7 26.bxa3 Bc3 27.Rab1 d3 28.e6 Bd4+ 29.Kh1 fxe6 30.f7 c3



31.Be8 c2 32.Rbc1 Raxe8 33.fxe8Q Rxe8 34.Rf7+ Kc6 0–1 **14.Bd2 0–0–0 15.Qd1 Bxc3?** 15...Qb6 is again the right move, with advantage **16.bxc3 Qb6 17.axb5 cxb5 18.Be3 Rhe8 19.Be2 a6 20.Bf3 Ne5 21.Bxb7+ Qxb7 22.0–0 Rg8 23.f3 Nd3 24.Qe2 Qc6 25.Ra2 Kb7 26.Rfa1 Ra8 27.h4 e5 28.dxe5 Nxe5 29.Bg5 Rge8 30.Qf2 Nd3 31.Qg3 Qb6+ 32.Kh2 a5 33.Qg4 Qc7+ 34.f4**



Both sides are advancing pawns in front of their King **34...b4?** I take it too far, losing a second pawn and worse heading into an ending which is lost **35.Qf3+ Qc6 36.Qxc6+ Kxc6 37.cxb4 Nxb4 38.Rxa5 Rad8 39.Rc1 Re4 40.Ra7 Nd3 41.Rc2 Rd7 42.Rxd7 Kxd7 43.f5 Kd6**



44.h5? Suddenly I am okay, I can claim my strong central control was always giving me fighting chances **44...Ke5 45.h6 Kxf5 46.h7 Re8 47.Bh4 Ne5 48.Rf2+ Kg6 49.Re2 Kxh7 50.Kg3 Kg6 51.Rc2 Rc8 52.Rc3 Nd7 53.Kf4 Rc6 54.Rg3+ Kh6 55.Bg5+ Kh7 56.Rh3+ Kg8 57.Rg3 Kh7 58.Rc3 Nxf6 59.Kf5 Ng8 60.Rh3+ Kg7 61.Bd2 Rc5+ 62.Kf4 f6 63.Bc3 Rc6 64.g4 Kg6 65.Re3 Kf7 66.Re1 Ne7 67.Rd1 Ke6 68.Ke4 f5+ 69.gxf5+ Nxf5 70.Rg1 Nd6+ 71.Ke3 Nb5 72.Rg6+ Kd7 73.Rxc6 Kxc6 74.Bg7 ½–½**

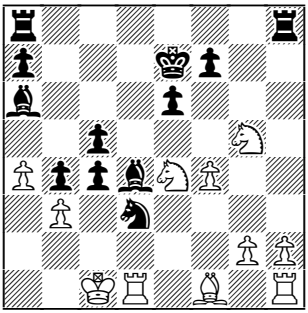
The other eight Bot games I've played were (shock horror) five minute games on the Internet. I was billforsternz on ICC and I'm now BillForster on chess.com. Of course this means the games ***really*** don't stand up to scrutiny. And my notorious incompetence and even lower rating at Blitz make things even worse. But still take a look, just for the fun factor;

I have had five Black games;

sumanlop (1547) - BillForster (1619)

Chess.com, 18.09.2017

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 e6 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.exf6? This can't be good, Black gets all the his normal Bot benefits, but White doesn't get his extra pawn or a kingside pawn mass. **8...hxg5 9.fxg7 Bxg7 10.a4 b4 11.Ne4 Ba6 12.Nexg5 Qa5 13.Qd2 Nd7 14.Ne4 Ke7 15.Qg5+ Qxg5 16.Nfxg5 Bxd4 17.0–0–0 c5 18.b3 Ne5 19.f4 Nd3+**

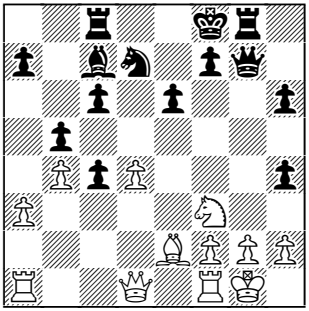


20.Bxd3 cxd3 21.Nf3 Be3+ 22.Kb2 c4 23.bxc4 Bxc4 24.Ned2 Bd5 25.Ne5 Bd4+ 26.Kb1 Rac8 27.Nxd3 b3 28.Nb4 Rh5 29.Nxd5+ Rxd5 30.Nxb3 Rb8 31.Ka2 Rb4 32.Nxd4 Rxa4+ 33.Kb3 Raxd4 34.Rxd4 Rxd4 35.g3 Rd2 36.h4 Kf6 37.Kc3 Rg2 38.Rh3 Kf5 39.Kd4 Kg4 I bungled my huge earlier advantage and win on time when only slightly better **0–1**

iq17 (1526) - BillForster (1543)

Chess.com, 06.07.2017

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 e6 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.Bh4 g5 9.exf6 Another early deviation which hands the advantage to Black **9...gxh4 10.Ne4 Bb4+ 11.Nfd2 Nd7 12.a3 Ba5 13.Nd6+ Kf8 14.Nxc8 Rxc8 15.Be2 Qxf6 16.0–0 Rg8 17.b4 Bc7 18.Nf3 Qg7**

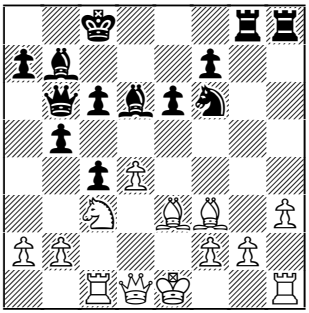


19.g3 hxg3 20.fxg3 Bxg3 21.hxg3 Qxg3+ 22.Kh1 Qg2# 0–1

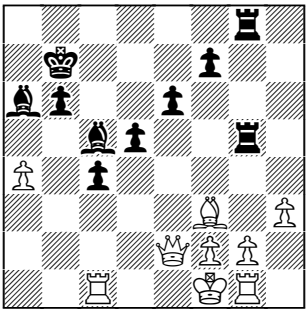
ca_nighthawk (1560) - BillForster (1566)

Chess.com, 05.12.2017

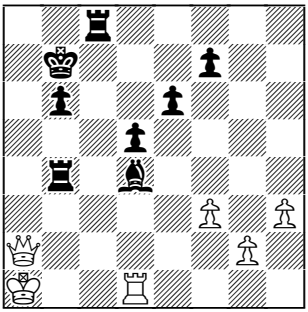
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 e6 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.Bh4 g5 9.Nxg5 hxg5 10.Bxg5 Nbd7 11.exf6 Qb6 12.Be2 Bb7 13.Bf3 0–0–0 This is a normal Bot position except that White normally plays g3 and Bg2 rather than Be2-f3 **14.Rc1 Bd6 15.h3 Rdg8 16.Be3 Nxf6**



I am sure I was very happy with the Black position **17.d5** Oh look a free pawn **17...Nxd5?? 18.Bxb6** Whoops. Oh well Black's position still looks beautiful, and in a 5 minute game you play on. A Bishop is almost a match for a Queen right? (being able to move like a rook too can't be that important surely?) **18...axb6 19.Nxd5 cxd5 20.Kf1 Rg5 21.b3 Rhg8 22.Rg1 Bc5 23.bxc4 bxc4 24.a4 Ba6 25.Qe2 Kb7**



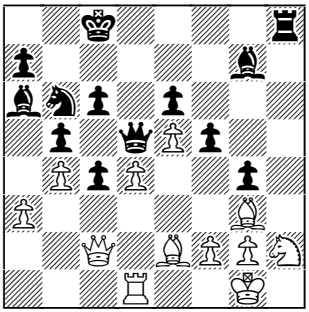
My opponent has been drifting, expecting the game to win itself, but now he spots a tactic **26.Rxc4? Ka7!** Suddenly Black is right back in the game, and even for choice Of course not 26...Bxc4? 27.Qxc4 **27.Ke1 Bxc4 28.Qd2 Re5+ 29.Kd1 Bb3+ 30.Kc1 Bxa4 31.Bd1 Rc8 32.Kb1 Bxd1 33.Rxd1 Re4 34.Qa2+ Kb7 35.f3 Rb4+ 36.Ka1 Bd4+**



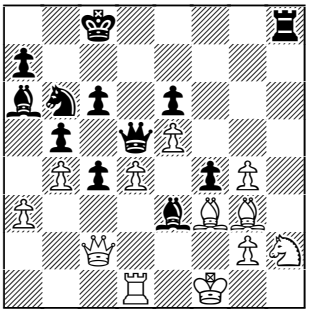
37.Rxd4 Rc1+ and Black is a rook up **0–1**

DELFUS (1649) - BillForster (1567)

Chess.com, 02.10.2017
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 e6 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.Bh4 g5 9.Bg3 Another anaemic option, Black just has a nice position and an extra pawn **9...Nd5 10.Nxd5 Qxd5 11.Be2 Bb4+ 12.Kf1 Nd7 13.a3 Bf8 14.b3 Nb6 15.Qc2 Ba6 16.h4 Bg7 17.hxg5 0–0–0 18.b4 hxg5 19.Rxh8 Rxh8 20.Kg1 f6 21.Rd1 g4 22.Nh2 f5**



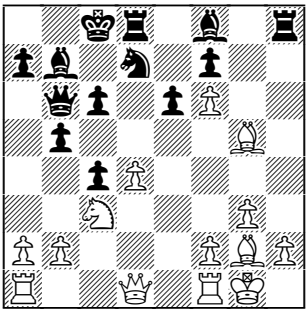
White has missed some tactical opportunities, but now the underlying positional merits of Black's position emerge **23.f3 Bh6 24.fxg4 Be3+ 25.Kf1 f4 26.Bf3**



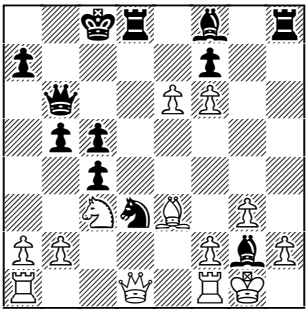
26...fxg3! It's always fun to sacrifice the Queen. White collapses quickly, but this is totally winning anyway **27.Bxd5 gxh2 28.Ke2** or 28.Bxe6+ Kb8 29.Ke2 Bg1 **28...Nxd5 29.Rh1 Bxd4 30.Qg6 Nf4+ 0–1**

FrankyG (1515) - billforsternz (1430)

Internet Chess Club, 25.10.2016
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 e6 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.Bh4 g5 9.Nxg5 hxg5 10.Bxg5 Nbd7 11.g3 Qb6 12.exf6 Bb7 13.Bg2 0–0–0 14.0–0



14...Ne5? The problem with this move is that White can just take the knight, a very thematic Bot sacrifice. White has Rook, Knight and Pawn plus positional domination for the Queen 14...c5! is the thematic Bot move **15.Be3? Nd3 16.d5 c5 17.dxe6 Bxg2**



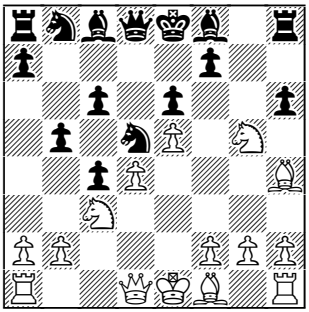
18.Kxg2? 18.e7! is essential - a very typical Bot pattern **18...Qxe6** Now White is

in trouble **19.Qf3?** 19.h4 or; 19.Rh1 are forced **19...Qh3+** and mate **0–1**

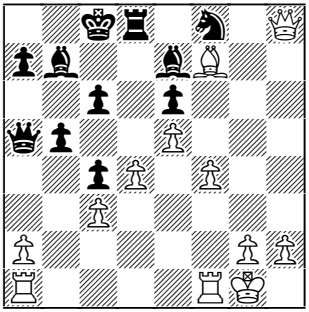
BillForster (1515) - kasparoig666 (1419)

Chess Chess.com, 19.12.2016

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.Bh4 g5 9.Nxg5 Nd5



This is the Alatortsez variation, which Cox labels dubious. He provides complicated tactics to pick up the exchange and hold onto it (see next game). **10.Qh5?** But of course I hadn't memorized enough. This way Black gets two pieces for the rook **10...hxg5 11.Qxh8 gxh4 12.Be2 Qa5 13.0–0 Nxc3 14.bxc3 Nd7 15.f4 Bb7 16.Qxh4 Be7 17.Qh8+ Nf8 18.Bh5 0–0–0 19.Bxf7**

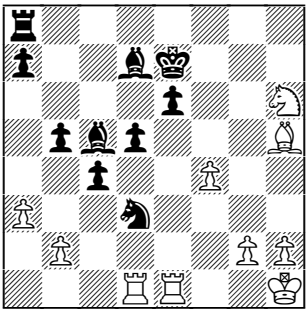


Black is still winning but after the reasonable looking **19...Nd7? 20.Qh3!** The computer eval swings over to winning for White. The e and f pawns are going to be very strong **20...Qxc3?? 21.Qxc3** Another point of Qh3 was that it defended that pawn! **21...Bb4 22.Qh3 Be1 23.Rfxe1 Nxe5 24.dxe5 Rd7 25.Bxe6 Kb8 26.Bxd7 Bc8 27.Bxc8 b4 28.Qd7 b3 29.Qb7# 1–0**

BillForster (1515) - zighi96 (1652)

Chess.com, 16.12.2017

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 e6 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.Bh4 g5 9.Nxg5 Nd5 The Alatortsev again (see diagram in previous game) **10.Nxf7!** This time I spot the right tactic **10...Qxh4 11.Nxh8 Bb4 12.Qf3?** Sadly this doesn't work The more conservative 12.Rc1 is the book move **12...Qxd4 13.Qh5+** My Queen and Knight don't co-ordinate effectively **13...Kd8 14.Nf7+ Ke7** 14...Kc7 is better demonstrating that all I am doing is chasing him to safety **15.Rd1!** This should have forced a draw **15...Qe4+?** Now White is seriously better again 15...Bxc3+ 16.bxc3 Qxc3+ 17.Rd2 Qc1+ 18.Rd1 Qc3+ **16.Be2 Nd7 17.0–0 Qf5 18.Nxd5+ cxd5 19.Nxh6?** 19.Qxf5! **19...Qxh5 20.Bxh5 Nxe5 21.a3 Bd6 22.Rfe1 Bd7 23.f4 Bc5+ 24.Kh1 Nd3**

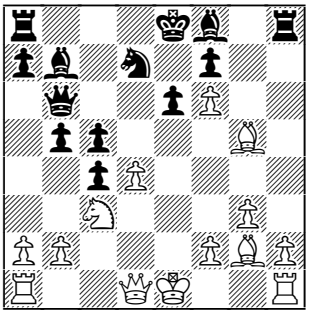


But I've bungled it and the coordination between Black's centralised minor pieces and his advanced pawn mass we've seen often in Bot positions is again the decisive factor. **25.Nf5+ Kd8 26.Re2 exf5 0–1**

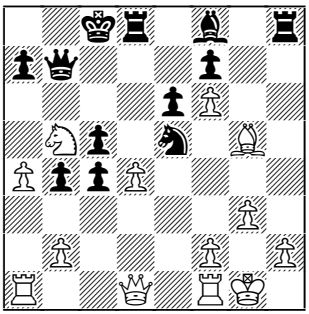
billforsternz (1625) - Zopov (1609)

Internet Chess Club, 20.03.2016

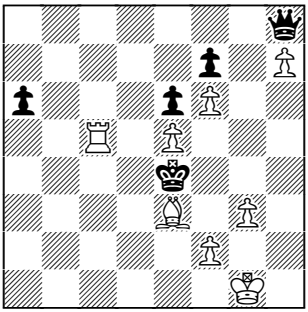
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.Bg5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.Bh4 g5 9.Nxg5 hxg5 10.Bxg5 Nbd7 11.g3 Qb6 12.exf6 c5 12...Bb7 13.Bg2 0–0–0 14.0–0 Ne5 15.dxe5! Is the standard Queen sac discussed below **13.Bg2 Bb7**



14.Bxb7? This is horrible 14.d5! is a very important move in this and similar positions **14...Qxb7 15.0–0 0–0–0 16.a4 b4 17.Nb5 Ne5**



18.dxe5! Reading Cox's book had at least made me aware of the idea of this Queen sac, even though it is nowhere near as good here as in the normal situation above, it's still a decent try **18...Rxd1 19.Rfxd1 a6 20.Nd6+ Bxd6 21.Rxd6 Rd8 22.Rxd8+ Kxd8 23.Rd1+ Kc7 24.Be3 Qb6 25.h4 Qa5 26.h5 Qxa4 27.Rc1 c3 28.bxc3 bxc3? 29.Bxc5? Qc4 30.Be3 Kc6? 31.h6 Kd5? 32.h7 Qc8 33.Rxc3 Qh8 34.Rc5+ Ke4**



35.Kg2?? Oh no - I could have won with the not too difficult 35.Rc4+ Kxe5 36.Rc5+ Ke4 37.Rh5 a5 38.Bc5 a4 39.Bf8 **35...Qxh7 36.Rc4+ Kd5 37.Rd4+ Kxe5 38.Ra4 Qc2 39.Kf3 Qc6+ 0–1**

It should be no surprise (given the previous numerical analysis) that I got to play more Black Bots than White. What may come as something of a disappointment is how many games I had to play to get this handful of examples. In the past two years I was ready to play the Bot in every one of the 80+ classical games and (wait for it) 2043 internet games I played. Where are the 70+ Bot games my calculations suggest I am entitled to?

Sadly at my level (especially at Blitz) my opponents are just not playing classical

main lines. The following stats are for the internet games only. As Black things get off to a bad start with only 31% of my opponents playing 1.d4 1.Nf3 or 1.c4 (versus 53% in the database). After 1.d4 d5 my opponents played 2.c4 or 2.Nf3 58% of the time, not the 95% of the time from the database or the 100% I imagine Capablanca expected. If they play 2.Nf3 they aren't following up with 3.c4. Early Bf4s (the accursed London system – so this is a trend that's worsening if anything) e3s, c3s and Nc3s in front of the c2 pawn are the order of the day irrespective of Black's moves. It's all sidelines, pet lines, odd lines.

Sometimes it's not so much deliberate opening choices as much as simple weak play. You can get most of the way to the Bot just by your opponent playing obvious moves (especially when you're Black). But in master chess, once White plays 5.Bg5 Black can count on the Bot. In my games less than a third of my opponents let me follow up with 5...dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5. The insipid 6.e3 (Why!? Why!? I would scream internally), unknown in master chess was just as common as 6.e4.

If anything, things are even more frustrating with White. A particular source of pain is the position after 5.Bg5. In the database only 4% of Blacks responded 5...Be7. My opponents play this more than half the time! Presumably strong Black players understand that in the standard QGD position reached after say 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.Nc3 Be7 5.Bg5 the move 5...c6 is considered premature and is rarely played. So they don't transpose into that. But 5...Be7 is hardly a bad move, and it's very natural. Another popular move is 5...Nbd7 which is supposed to be the standard route into the Cambridge Springs, another fun opening. But sadly my opponents tended to follow up with ...Be7 instead of ...Qa5 and again we have a just slightly unusual Nf3 QGD. Cox does not concern himself with any of this, which is perhaps understandable but nevertheless constitutes a big practical problem with his repertoire for amateurs. How to tackle the QGD is front and centre in every 1.d4 2.c4 repertoire book and Cox nails his colours firmly to the QGD exchange with Ne2 leaving his faithful followers somewhat marooned.

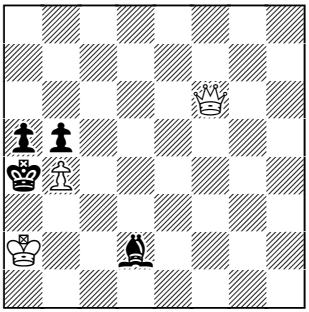
Conclusion

I remain very happy to play the Botvinnik Semi-Slav even though I haven't done a fraction of the work sober authorities reckon is necessary. Many great games have started with the Botvinnik Semi-Slav and it's definitely worth taking a look at them. But I would argue that (sadly) in practise you are likely to get to play this opening so rarely that extensive study beforehand for anything other than the entertainment value is an inefficient and impractical waste of time. I am sure very strong and competitive players will correctly ignore my advice, it doesn't apply to them. Perhaps it might make sense to prepare for a specific game against a known Bot fancier. I suppose you could write an article advertising the fact that you like to play the variation but don't know much about it. Is that a cunning plan to get to play more Bots?

Problem Kingdom
by Linden Lyons

- Submissions and comments to: problem.kingdom@gmail.com

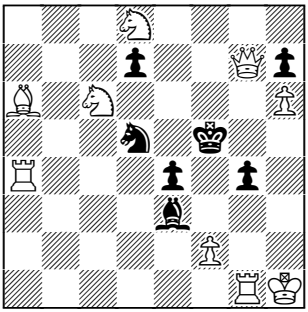
Problem 92
Alberto Armeni (Italy)
Original



#2

Problem 92 is a neat **miniature** (seven or fewer pieces). Set play: 1 … axb4 2 Qa6 and 1 … Kxb4 2 Qd4. There are four tries: (1) 1 Qe6? (threat 2 Qb3) with 1 … axb4 2 Qa6, but 1 … Kxb4!; (2) 1 Qb6? (threat 2 Qxa5), but 1 … Bxb4!; (3) 1 Qf7? (thr. 2 Qb3) with 1 … axb4 2 Qa7 (a **changed mate**), but 1 … Kxb4!; and (4) 1 Qb2? (thr. 2 Qa3/Qb3), but 1 axb4! The key is **1 Qd8!** (thr. 2 Qxa5) with the variations 1 … Kxb4 2 Qd4, 1 … axb4 2 Qa8 (changed mate), and 1 … Bxb4 2 Qd1.

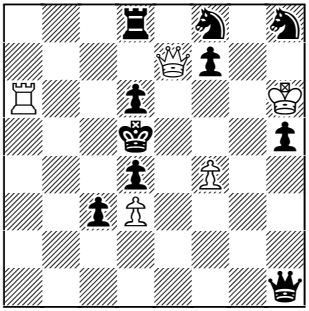
Problem 93
Alberto Armeni (Italy)
Original



#2

There are two tries in **Problem 93**. The first is 1 Rxg4? (zugzwang) with 1 … dxc6/d6 2 Bc8, 1 … Bxf2/Bd4/Bc5/Bb6/Ba7 2 Qg5, 1 … Bd2/Bc1/Bf4/Bg5/Bxh6 2 Nd4, 1 … N~ 2 Ne7, but 1 … Nf6!. The second is 1 fxe3? (thr. 2 Nd4) with 1 … Nf6 2 Rf1, 1 … dxc6 2 Bc8, but 1 … Nxe3! The key is **1 f4!** (thr. 2 Qg5). Black can now make two en passant captures of the pawn (the **Pape theme**): 1 … exf3 2 Bd3 and 1 … gxf3 2 Qe5. Black can capture the pawn in three other ways, but each still leads to disaster: 1 … Bxf4 2 Nd4, 1 … Nxf4 2 Ne7, and 1 … Kxf4 2 Qxg4.

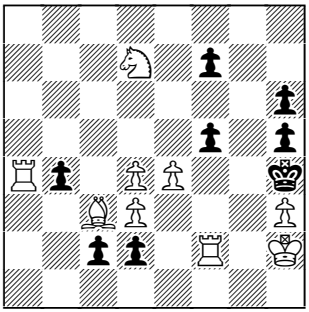
Problem 94
Leonid Makaronez (Israel)
Original



#3

Throughout the course of the solution of **Problem 94**, keep an eye on the c5 and e6 squares. The former is unguarded in the initial position; the latter, at first, ties down the white queen. Key: **1 Rb6!** (thr. 2 Rb5+ Kc6 3 Qb7). Variations: 1 … Qb1 2 Qe4+ Kc5 3 Qc6, 1 … Kc5 2 Qc7+ Kd5 3 Qc4 (regaining control of e6), 1 … Rd7 2 Qg5+ Ke6 3 Qe5 (the d6-pawn is pinned), and 1 … Ne6 2 Qb7+ Kc5 3 Rb5.

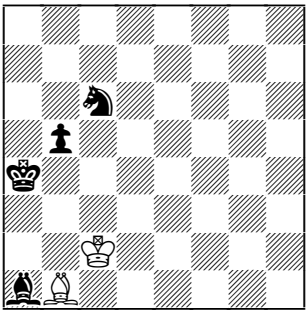
Problem 95
Daniele Gatti (Italy)
Original



#3

In **Problem 95**, the try 1 Bxd2? (thr. 2 Rf4+ Kg5 3 Rg4) fails to the **square-vacation** defence 1 … fxe4! Black has two defences against the key of **1 d5!** (thr. 2 Bf6#). The first is 1 … Kg5, and after 2 Rxf5+ there is either 2 … Kg6 3 Nf8 or 2 … Kh4 3 Bf6. The second is 1 … bxc3, after which there occurs 2 exf5+ Kg5 3 h4.

Problem 96
Rauf Aliovsadzade (USA)
Original

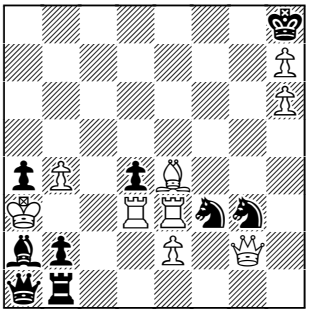


H#3 Duplex

There are two solutions in a **duplex helpmate** such as **Problem 96**. In the first solution, Black moves first and helps White deliver mate (1 Bc3 Ba2 2 Ba5 Kb2 3 Nb4 Bb3); in the second, White moves first and helps Black deliver mate (1 Ba2 Ka5 2 Kb3 Nd4+ 3 Ka3 b4).

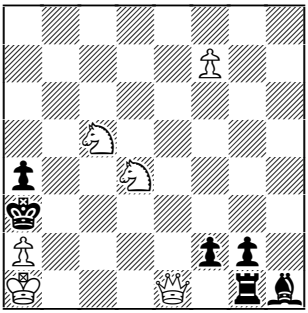
Next are a couple of **selfmates** from India. Doctors Phani Bushan and Manikumar are physicians and are both promising new composers.

Problem 97
Phani Bushan R. (India) & Narayanan C.G.S. (India)
Original



S#2

Problem 98
K. Seetharaman (India) & S. Manikumar (India)
Original
(after Knud Hannemann, *Thema Danicum* 1979)



S#2

In **Problem 97**, White must force Black, against his will, to deliver mate in two moves. White would like to check the black king along the eighth rank, thereby forcing … Bg8#. Tries: 1 Bg6? (thr. 2 Re8+ Bg8) Ne4, 1 Rxf3? (thr. 2 Rf8+ Bg8) Rf1!, and 1 Qxg3? (thr. 2 Qg8+ Bxg8) Rg1! The key is **1 Bf5!** (thr. 2 Re8+ Bg8) with 1 … dxe3 2 Rd8+ Bg8, 1 … Ne4 2 Qg8+ Bxg8, and 1 … Ne5 2 Qa8+ Bg8.

The key of **Problem 98** is **1 Na6!** (thr. 2 Qc1+ Rxc1). The variations involve black pawn promotions and rook mates on the first rank: 1 … f1B 2 Qe2 Bxe2, 1 … f1N 2 Qe3+ Nxe3, 1 … fxe1B 2 f8B+ Bb4, and 1 … fxe1N 2 Nxc2+ Nxc2. Note that there is even a promotion by the white pawn on the eighth rank, a feature absent from Knud Hannemann's 1979 composition (8/8/5N2/8/4NB2/pB2Pk2/pp6/r1Q2K2, S#2; **1 Bc4!** [thr. 2 Qd1+ Rxd1] with 1 … b1B 2 Qc2 Bxc2, 1 … b1N 2 Qc3 Nxc3/Nd2, 1 … bxc1B 2 Nd2+ Bxd2, and 1 … bxc1N 2 Be2+ Nxe2).

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