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# Most exciting games of 2016



Chess  
Evolution

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First edition 2017 by Chess Evolution

*Most exciting games of 2016*  
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ISBN 978-83-945362-7-5

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Printed in Hungary

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	3
Key to symbols	5
Introduction	7
Preface	9
GAME 1 ▶ M. Carlsen (2844) ▶ F. Caruana (2787)	11
GAME 2 ▶ A. Grischuk (2754) ▶ A. Volokitin (2647)	15
GAME 3 ▶ V. Kramnik (2808) ▶ B. Adhiban (2671)	20
GAME 4 ▶ V. Kramnik (2801) ▶ A. Giri (2798)	25
GAME 5 ▶ L. Aronian (2784) ▶ M. Carlsen (2851)	31
GAME 6 ▶ L. Aronian (2795) ▶ A. Giri (2755)	34
GAME 7 ▶ H. Nakamura (2789) ▶ B. Adhiban (2671)	38
GAME 8 ▶ F. Caruana (2794) ▶ V. Anand (2762)	43
GAME 9 ▶ D. Jakovenko (2712) ▶ E. Sutovsky (2622)	48
GAME 10 ▶ M. Carlsen (2844) ▶ E. Tomashevsky (2728)	53
GAME 11 ▶ Wen Yang (2614) ▶ E. Inarkiev (2729)	57
GAME 12 ▶ V. Artemiev (2658) ▶ S. Mamedyarov (2762)	61
GAME 13 ▶ J. Granda Zuniga (2672) ▶ M. Lagarde (2572)	65
GAME 14 ▶ H. Nakamura (2787) ▶ A. Guijarro (2639)	68
GAME 15 ▶ A. Grischuk (2747) ▶ Ding Liren (2778)	72
GAME 16 ▶ V. Topalov (2760) ▶ H. Nakamura (2779)	76
GAME 17 ▶ H. Nakamura (2787) ▶ M. Vachier-Lagrave (2785)	80
GAME 18 ▶ M. Carlsen (2855) ▶ S. Karjakin (2773)	83
GAME 19 ▶ McL. Shane (2655) ▶ D. Navara (2737)	88
GAME 20 ▶ S. Karjakin (2760) ▶ F. Caruana (2794)	92
GAME 21 ▶ F. Caruana (2795) ▶ H. Nakamura (2787)	97
GAME 22 ▶ I. Nepomniachtchi (2703) ▶ A. Grischuk (2752)	102
GAME 23 ▶ P. Svidler (2759) ▶ M. Vachier-Lagrave (2798)	106
GAME 24 ▶ J. Tomczak (2603) ▶ J. Duda (2652)	111
GAME 25 ▶ R. Kasimdzhanov (2691) ▶ G. Gajewski (2612)	116
GAME 26 ▶ A. Shirov (2684) ▶ H. Nakamura (2787)	119
GAME 27 ▶ V. Topalov (2760) ▶ F. Caruana (2823)	124
GAME 28 ▶ V. Kramnik (2812) ▶ R. Buhmann (2653)	128
GAME 29 ▶ M. Ragger (2694) ▶ M. Bluebaum (2641)	134
GAME 30 ▶ V. Anand (2770) ▶ F. Caruana (2807)	138
GAME 31 ▶ A. Naiditsch (2657) ▶ A. Beliavsky (2603)	143

GAME 32	▷ M. Muzychuk (2554) ▶ Hou Yifan (2673)	148
GAME 33	▷ K. Piorun (2681) ▶ E. Inarkiev (2732)	153
GAME 34	▷ M. Carlsen (2853) ▶ S. Karjakin (2772)	157
GAME 35	▷ M. Vachier-Lagrave (2789) ▶ V. Anand (2770)	163
GAME 36	▷ S. Karjakin (2772) ▶ M. Carlsen (2853)	167
GAME 37	▷ V. Topalov (2761) ▶ M. Carlsen (2855)	171
GAME 38	▷ W. So (2773) ▶ G. Kamsky (2678)	175
GAME 39	▷ Wei Yi (2700) ▶ S. Mamedyarov (2750)	179
GAME 40	▷ E. Inarkiev (2679) ▶ A. Shirov (2686)	186
GAME 41	▷ M. Rodshtein (2695) ▶ H. Melkumyan (2633)	190
GAME 42	▷ M. Carlsen (2851) ▶ P. Eljanov (2765)	195
GAME 43	▷ S. Mamedyarov (2761) ▶ P. Harikrishna (2752)	200
GAME 44	▷ S. Sjugirov (2664) ▶ P. Harikrishna (2768)	204
GAME 45	▷ A. Tari (2556) ▶ M. Vachier-Lagrave (2785)	207
GAME 46	▷ Li Chao (2751) ▶ L. Fressinet (2700)	213
GAME 47	▷ M. Rodshtein (2673) ▶ M. Tazbir (2517)	218
GAME 48	▷ V. Topalov (2780) ▶ S. Karjakin (2760)	222
GAME 49	▷ B. Gelfand (2743) ▶ A. Giri (2755)	226
GAME 50	▷ A. Grischuk (2751) ▶ A. Naiditsch (2686)	232

# KEY TO SYMBOLS

=	Equality or equal chances
±	White has a slight advantage
∓	Black has a slight advantage
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
+-	White has a decisive advantage
-+	Black has a decisive advantage
∞	unclear
∞̄	with compensation
↔	with counterplay
↑	with initiative
→	with an attack
Δ	with the idea
□	only move
N	novelty
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
+	check
#	mate



# INTRODUCTION

Useful information for our valued readers.

- »» This book is the continuation of last years's successful "Best Games" series
- »» The book contains 50 of the most exciting games of 2016
- »» As in the previous books, the games have been selected and analysed by GM Arkadij Naiditsch, GM Csaba and this time round GM Sebastien Maze also joins our team of experts.
- »» Most of the games are taken from the highest-level tournaments, such as the Baku Chess Olympiad, London Classic Super tournament, World Chess Championship, etc.
- »» The selected games includes illustrious names such as: Carlsen, Caruana, Karjakin, Nakamura and many more of the world's best chess players.
- »» The games are sorted according to their ECO code.





# PREFACE

We are proud to present the continuation of the successful 'Best Games' series, with the new release: 'Most exciting games of 2016'.

It was once again interesting and exciting work trying to select and analyse the 50 "best games" from the last year. Of course the choice was wide, with most of the best players in the world being very active on the chess board. Our aim was to find the most interesting, spectacular and, of course, useful attacking ideas — those which might also occur in our own practical games.

The main idea behind this book remains clear: We try to reduce the importance of opening theory and rather get inside the workings of the best chess-playing brains on the planet, in an attempt to explain the most complex attacking ideas in a way that is simple and understandable to any chess lover.

Another very important point of the book which we are proud of is, we have not used much "engine" assistance during our commentary on the games. We try to see the game the way we would in our own practical games, which makes the commentaries very special-and which in practice puts the reader fully in the shoes of the world-class players; this is exactly the best way to improve our own chess skills and level.

Sadly, nowadays, we have more-and-more computer analyses and we can hear chess amateurs judging the play of even Carlsen. Yes, you can find tactical mistakes with an engine at home-but the question is, can you do the same during your practical game over the board?! Chess is a game where everyone makes mistakes-and this is what it is all about in the current book!

We would advise all our readers to take out a real chessboard and enjoy these beautiful masterpieces. This is how we learned to play chess and this is why we still enjoy every wonderful game, even after almost 20 years of being professional chess players!

Yours,

Arkadij Naiditsch, Csaba Balogh & Sebastien Maze



## ■ GAME 1

- ▶ M. Carlsen (2844)
- ▶ F. Caruana (2787)  
78<sup>th</sup> Tata Steel GpA  
17.01.2016 [A00]  
Annotated by Csaba Balogh

We have ahead of us a fantastic fighting game which finally ends in a deserved draw after both players find many unusual and great ideas in a very difficult position.

### 1.g3

Carlsen decides to avoid the theoretical battle this time.

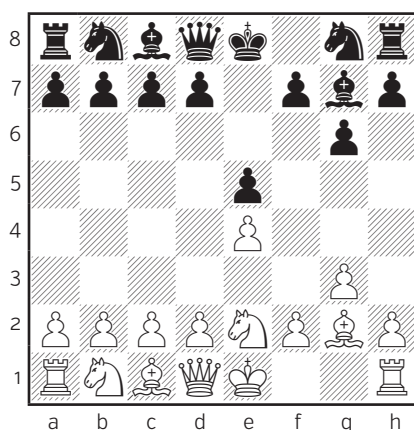
### 1...g6

As a Grünfeld player, Caruana fianchettoes his bishop with the hope that the game later transposes to some theoretical line if White plays d4 or c4.

### 2. ♖g2 ♖g7 3.e4

This means no Grünfeld today.

### 3...e5 4. ♘e2



### 4...c5!?

An interesting idea to fight for the center. White wants to play d4 and if Black prevents it with 4...♘c6 then 5.c3 followed by d4 looks promising. The drawback of the move is giving up the d5-square, but it can be controlled with the knight from e7. Actually we have transposed into the Closed Sicilian where this ...e7-e5 system is considered to be good, the only difference being that White has kept his knight on b1. Carlsen tries to make use of this.

### 5.d3 ♘c6 6. ♖e3 d6 7. ♔d2

White still delays the development of his b1-knight and completes the usual Closed Sicilian development instead.

7...♞d4

Black also puts off the development of his g8-knight to avoid the trade of the dark-squared bishops. A common trap to fall into is 7...♞ge7 8.♙h6 o-o 9.h4! when Black might face a dangerous attack.

8.c3

Finally Carlsen decides on the fate of the b1-knight. It will be driven to c4 through a3 or d2 as the d5-square can be well controlled by the knight on e7.

8...♞xe2 9.♚xe2 ♞e7

Black uses the fact that the queen is gone from d2 and there is no longer a ♙h6 available.

10.h4

White fights for the initiative. If he chooses some normal moves like o-o and ♞d2, Black has no reason to stand worse.

10...h6?!

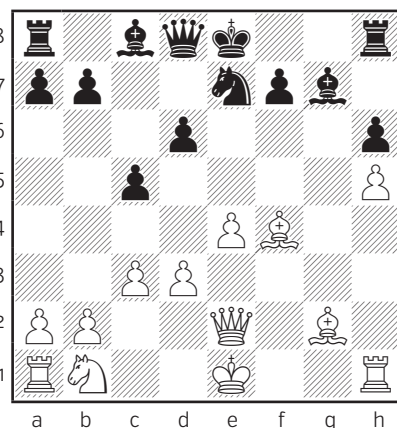
It is always a big question as to how to deal with such a flank attack? Black had to prevent h5, but to do it with ...h5 himself or like it happened in the game? In this particular position, probably ...h5 was preferable to get control over the g4-square. 10...h5!

11.h5 g5 12.f4!?

The right idea, but is it the right timing?! White has to open the position, but to do it with d4 is much harder to execute as Black is well-prepared due to his g7-bishop, therefore

White opens the f-file. White could have started with 12.♞a3 followed by o-o-o and only then f4.

12...exf4 13.gxf4 gxf4 14.♙xf4



14...♞c6

Black takes control over the central squares. After the exchanges on the kingside, it is clear that both sides must forget about castling there.

15.♞a3 ♙e5

Black wants to reduce the pressure on the d6-pawn. 15...♙e6 can be strongly met by 16.o-o-o! followed by ♞c4 or ♙h3. 16...♙xa2 going for the material at the cost of delaying development should backfire 17.e5! dxe5 18.♙xc6+ bxc6 19.♙xe5 and Black's position strategically collapses.

16.♙e3!

Carlsen feels the importance of the dark squares: he had to preserve his bishop. 16.♙xe5 ♞xe5 would have passed the initiative to Black; ...♙g4 and ...♚g5 are coming next.

**16... ♖e6**

Black could not force the trade of the bishops with 16... ♗g3+ because White simply plays 17. ♕d2! followed by ♖af1 and ♔c1, executing a kind of artificial castling.

**17. ♘c4**

Carlsen hunts down the pair of bishops.

**17... ♗g3+**

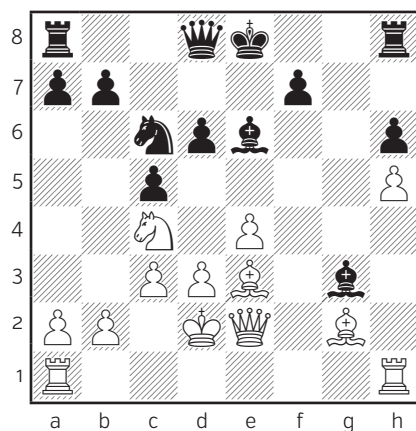
Caruana tries to save both of his bishops, but the one on g3 gets a bit misplaced. It is hard to evaluate the consequences of 17... ♗xc4 18.dxc4: White has the two bishops, but Black has the nice e5-square. It seems to me that White's chances remain better after some logical moves like 18... ♖f6 19.o-o-o o-o-o 20. ♗h3+ ♔b8 21. ♗f5± Black has only one square on e5 and it can be occupied by only one piece at a time. On the other hand, White can improve his position by doubling his rooks on the f-file. The pawn on h6 is also weak, so I prefer White's position.

**18. ♔d2!**

Keeping the dark-squared bishop.

**18... ♖d7**

Preparing for queenside castling and at the same time creating the threat of b5! 18...b5 did not work immediately in view of 19.e5! when Black loses material.

**19.d4!**

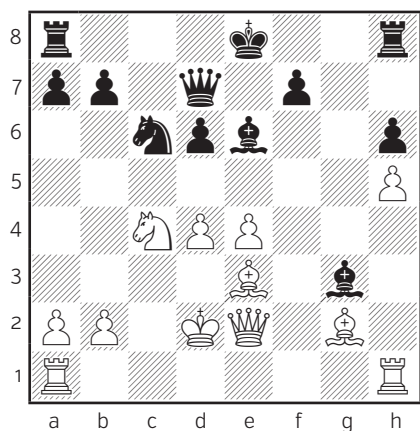
An extremely hard-to-make move by Carlsen. The move suggests itself to occupy the center, but it feels really bad to open the position with the king on d2. However Carlsen foresees correctly that he is ready to counter properly all the aggressive answers of his opponent. 19. ♖af1 could have been met by 19...b5 20. ♘a3 b4

**19...cxd4**

Now on 19...b5 20.d5! bxc4 21.dxe6 ♖xe6 22. ♗h3! ♖e7 (22... ♖xe4 loses to 23. ♗g2!) 23. ♖xc4± The opening of the position and the changes in the pawn structure favors White because of his bishop pair.

**20.cxd4**

White threatens to win a piece with d5! Black does not want to give up his light-squared bishop for the c4-knight and also his g3-bishop is misplaced. Caruana knows that he must compensate these facts with direct play, specifically trying to make use of the king on d2.



### 20...Nxe5!

A nice tactical move! White removes his knight from the d5-fork. The positional reply would be 20...d5 to create a weakness on d4, but the black king stands in the pin... 21.exd5 ♙xd5 22. ♙xd5 ♚xd5 23. ♙f4+-

### 21. ♙xe5!

Black wins back the piece after 21.dxe5 dxe5+ 22. ♚d3 ♙xc4 23. ♚xd7+ ♙xd7

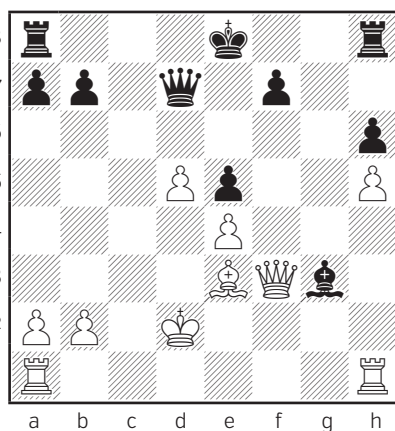
### 21...dxe5 22.d5

Trying to keep the position closed with the king on d2. White also obtains a protected passed pawn and the bishop on g3 is still out of the game. He retains all his hopes for an advantage.

### 22... ♙g4 23. ♙f3

23. ♚d3 was met by 23...f5! with ...f4 to follow.

### 23... ♙xf3 24. ♚xf3



### 24... ♚b5!

Caruana continues to play the most direct and concrete moves. He must search for active counterplay to compensate White's positional advantages.

### 25. ♜ac1!?

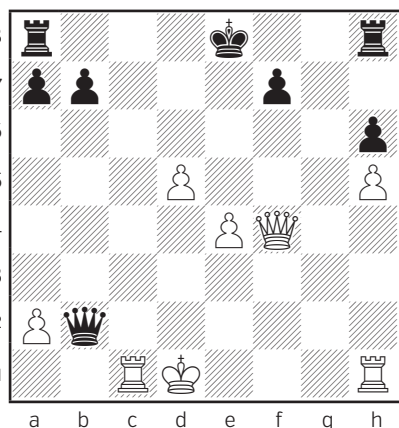
Carlsen plays with style, but this is the move with which he spoils his advantage. He should have simply played 25.b3! ♚b4+ 26. ♙d3! (26. ♙d1 allows 26... ♚c3! attacking the rook and ♙f4 next.) 26... ♙f4 (26... ♚b5+ just sends the king into his shelter 27. ♙c2 ♜c8+ 28. ♙b2 Black has problems with the g3 bishop.) trying to give a check on d4 in case of ♙xf4, but White can simply play 27. ♜ac1±;

25. ♚xg3 leads to perpetual check after 25... ♚xb2+ 26. ♙d3 ♚b5+ 27. ♙c2 (27. ♙d2 ♚b2+=) 27... ♜c8+ 28. ♙d1 ♚d3+ 29. ♙e1 ♜c2! and White has to force draw with 30. ♚xe5+ ♙d7 31. ♚f5+=

### 25... ♚xb2+ 26. ♙d1

26. ♖c2 also has a tactical drawback  
26... ♖b4+ 27. ♔c1 ♖a3+! 28. ♔b1 and  
now 28... ♙f4.

26... ♙f4 27. ♙xf4 exf4 28. ♖xf4



The game still remains very sharp. Both kings are stuck in the center and Black cannot activate his a8-rook as the c-file is controlled by White, who will bring his other rook to f1. Black must keep on aiming for active counterplay.

28... ♖g8!

Trying to break into White's 2<sup>nd</sup> rank.

29. ♖f1! ♖d4+! 30. ♔e1 ♖b4+!

White cannot allow the rook to his 2<sup>nd</sup> rank with check, therefore Carlsen allows the perpetual check.

31. ♔d1

31. ♙f2 ♖d4+ 32. ♔e1=

31... ♖d4+ 32. ♔e1 ♖b4+ 1/2

A hard-fought draw with many nice ideas!

## ■ GAME 2

► A. Grischuk (2754)

► A. Volokitin (2647)

Olympiad

05.09.2016 [A05]

Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

Volokitin was playing like a God at the Chess Olympiad 2016 in Baku, leading his team to shared first place, and this game is just more proof of it. It seems like Volokitin was really well-prepared in a relatively rare line, and with a great pawn sacrifice he put Grischuk under a lot of pressure. Being under attack and having not too much time on the clock, Grischuk decided that his best chance of escape lay in a double-rook endgame a pawn down. But, showing very nice technique, Volokitin did what needed to be done and won the game without offering his opponent any real chances.

1. ♖f3

It is almost impossible to guess Grischuk's opening choices, but I think most common is probably 1.e4

1... ♖f6 2.g3 g6

Volokitin is famous for being a Grünfeld player.

3. ♙g2 ♙g7 4.c4

Grischuk is ready to play after 4...d5.

4...c6

One of the safest lines. The position is now going to be almost symmetrical with the center being closed.

**5.b3**

A rare line, and probably Grischuk is a bit surprised by the opening choice of Volokitin. 5.d4 d5 leads to the main positions.

**5...♞e4**

Forcing the d4 move to be played.

**6.d4 d5 7.o-o o-o 8.♙b2**

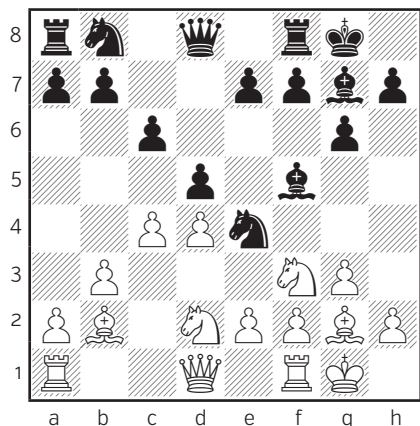
Kramnik has played this kind of position a couple of times, but to me they look to be not particularly promising for White. Black's position is extremely solid and I don't see why he should have any problems here at all.

**8...♙f5**

A very logical move. Black only needs to take care a bit about ♞h4 somewhere

**9.♞bd2**

Grischuk also develops his pieces in the most common way.

**9...♙a5!**

I like this move a lot! It has a strong positional idea behind it, which is to not allow White to play ♞h4 (basically anywhere) because the knight is hanging on d2. In case of ♞xe4 Black will react with ♙xe4 and the position just looks equal to me.

**10.e3**

White improves his position. The idea of playing b4 would not bring much: 10.a3 ♞d7 11.b4 ♙a6 and it is unclear why a3-b4 is useful at all.

**10...♞d7**

Black has finished his development.

**11.♙e2**

Setting a little trap.

**11...♞fe8**

A very solid move with the idea of playing ...♞xd2 next, followed by the ...e5-push. It is a bad idea to try to punish White for playing 11.♙e2 with 11...♞c3? 12.♙e1 ♙d3 because of the beautiful 13.♞b1! ♞e2+ 14.♙h1 and Black's pieces are stuck in the white defensive lines, leading very soon to the loss of some material.

**12.♞xe4**

White needs to do something. In case of 12.♞fc1 ♞xd2 13.♞xd2 e5 only Black can be better.

**12...♙xe4 13.♙h3**

A very typical idea. White avoids the exchange of the bishops and prepares the main idea of playing ♞d2 next.

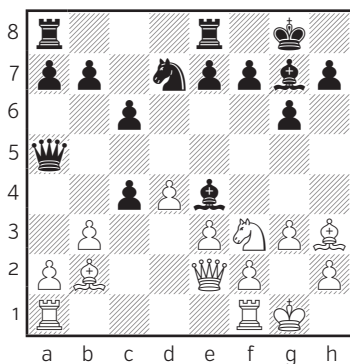


**13...dxc4!!**

A very beautiful move, even though I am quite sure the current position was nothing new to Volokitin. Black could also continue with the super-solid 13...♙xf3 14.♖xf3 e6 but White could hope for some small advantage after 15.♗e2 and having a bishop pair is a long-term plus for White.

**14.♙xd7**

This seems to be the only option.



If White tries the exchange sacrifice after 14.♘d2 ♙d3 15.♘xc4 ♙xe2 16.♘xa5 ♙xf1 17.♗xf1 only Black can be better after 17...f5 18.♘xb7 ♗ab8 19.♘a5 c5 and the position is somewhere between equal and better for Black.

**14...♗h5**

This is the key behind 13...dxc4!! The knight on f3 can't be protected so easily.

**15.g4**

What else to play?! To go for the exchange up with 15.♙xe8 ♙xf3 16.♗xc4 ♗xe8 17.♗fe1 looks dangerous for White after 17...♗d8 18.♗f1 g5 and the bishop on f3 is worth at least

the exchange. I think Black is better here. White is unable to defend the knight on f3 with 15.♙g2 ♗ed8! 16.♙h3 ♗d6 17.g4 ♗h4 and it is funny, but there is no defense against the upcoming ...♗f6.

**15...♗h3 16.♘e1**

All White's moves are very logical.

**16...♙d3**

Of course! Otherwise the threat of bxc4 and f3 would catch the bishop on e4.

**17.♘xd3 cxd3 18.♗xd3 ♗ad8!**

So after massive exchanges White is a piece up! But the bishop on d7 has no moves and the position of the black queen on h3 is very unpleasant for White.

**19.♙xc6**

Probably the best try for White. In case of 19.♙e6 fxe6 20.♗e4 Black equalizes with 20...♗f8 21.♗xe6+ ♗f7 22.♗e4 ♗f3 and his activity offers equal chances.

**19...bxc6 20.♗e4**

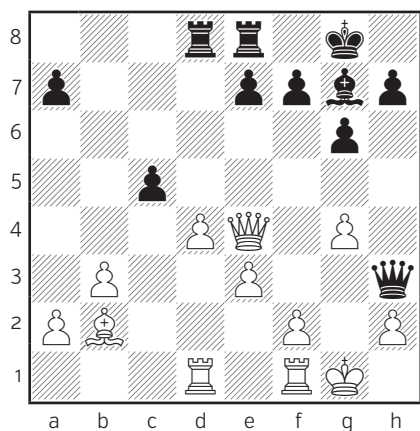
The pawn on g4 has to be protected.

**20...c5**

Clearly the best! Black is trying to get as much counterplay as possible for the pawn deficit.

**21.♗ad1**

Protecting the d4-pawn and looking to play ♗g2 next, achieving an endgame with an extra pawn.

**21...h5!**

A very strong move! Black not only frees his Queen from h3, but also opens the position of the white king even more.

**22.gxh5**

Maybe it is already time to force a draw with 22. ♖g2? But who could play such an ugly move! Clearly not Grischuk, who is a big fighter and I am sure still hoped to stand better somewhere.

**22...♔xh5 23.f4?**

But this is already a little blunder. 23. ♖d2 White should continue with this safer move. 23... ♖d5 and only now with 24.f4 but still Black has little to worry about and can enjoy the position with 24...e6 followed by ... ♖ed8 next and I think the game should end in a draw.

**23...♔e2!**

Attacking the b2-bishop and threatening ...cxd4. Black is clearly taking over the game.

**24. ♖a1 cxd4**

The e3-pawn is hanging, the a2-pawn also, so White is doing really badly here.

**25. ♖de1 ♔g4+**

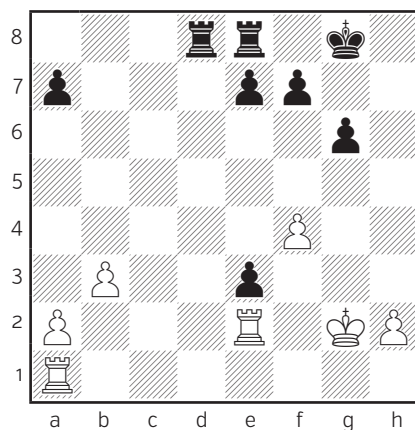
The best, as after 25... ♖xa2 White can complicate things with 26.f5!

**26. ♔g2 ♖xg2+**

Now the game reaches an endgame.

**27. ♔xg2 dxg3 28. ♖e2!**

A nice move. White continues to attack the e3-pawn and hopes to get a drawish rook endgame after the exchanges.

**28... ♖xa1 29. ♖xa1****29...e5!?**

An interesting option and an attempt to keep the e3-pawn alive, but probably not the best. After 29... ♔g7 30. ♖xe3 ♖d2+ 31. ♔g3 e6 Black stands clearly better and the idea of ... ♖c8-♖c2 next puts real pressure on White.

**30.fxe5?!**

I think a good try to reach a draw would be 30. ♖xe3 e4 (after 30...exf4 31. ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 32. ♖f3 it seems like White reaches a drawn rook endgame 32...g5 33.h4 ♖e3+ 34. ♖g4 ♖g3+ 35. ♖f5 gxh4 36. ♖xf4 with excellent drawing chances for White) 31. ♖f2 and of course Black is better, but I think White's chances to escape are not so bad.

**30...♖xe5 31. ♖ae1**

It is impossible to get the e3-pawn and this is probably what Grischuk has missed. To more-or-less the same result leads 31. ♖f3 ♖h5 (White is able to make a draw after 31...♖g7? 32. ♖xe3 ♖xe3+ 33. ♖xe3 ♖h8 34. ♖h1 ♖h3+ 35. ♖f2 followed by ♖g2 and freeing the rook from h1) 32. ♖ae1 ♖g7 the pawn on e3 just can't be taken... 33. ♖xe3 ♖h3+ 34. ♖f4 ♖d4+ and Black wins the h2-pawn and with it probably the game.

**31...♖g7**

With the idea of ...♖h8 in mind.

**32. ♖g3**

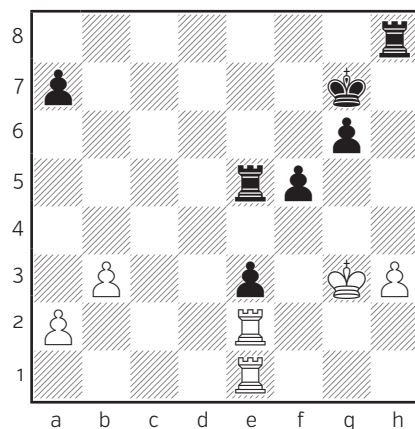
If White tries 32. ♖xe3 ♖d2+ the bad luck for him is that it is not possible to get a nice version of a single rook endgame. 33. ♖g1 (33. ♖g3 ♖g5+) 33... ♖xe3 34. ♖xe3 ♖xa2 and the position with the king cut off on the first rank should most probably be losing.

**32...♖de8 33.h3 f5**

The black pawns start to move.

**34. ♖f3 ♖h8**

Attacking the h3-pawn.

**35. ♖g3****35...g5**

And of course White still can't take the e3-pawn because of the f4-check. The game is totally lost.

**36. ♖h2 f4+ 37. ♖f3 ♖f6**

It is all just hopeless.

**38. ♖c1 ♖f5 0-1**

Really a very nice win by Volokitin, who clearly out-prepared Grischuk and gained a very comfortable position directly out of the opening. At the point where Grischuk didn't want to force a draw, he basically blundered and found himself in a very difficult rook endgame which he was unable to save. A great game by Volokitin—nothing else to say!

## ■ GAME 3

► **V. Kramnik (2808)**

► **B. Adhiban (2671)**

Olympiad

12.09.2016 [A07]

Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

What does it mean to understand the position well? What does it mean to 'feel' the co-ordination of pieces better than your opponent? This is what we are going to see in the current game. Kramnik is about to give a great positional lesson to his less-experienced opponent followed by a great finish, basically putting Adhiban's pieces into stalemate positions!

1. ♘f3 d5 2.g3

This silent 'Reti' opening is very tricky. Many people make the mistake that when you are facing the Reti it is something for which you do not need to know a lot of theory. Nowadays, this is clearly NOT the case. Yes, it is a slow opening, but Kramnik has analyzed it very deeply, knows very well what he is doing and all the main ideas behind it.

2... ♗f6 3. ♖g2 ♖f5

Adhiban chooses the line with ♖f5, actually a rare option. Much more popular is the development of the bishop to g4.

4. 0-0 c6

The move-orders are very important in this system. Depending on Black's answers, White coordinates his play

accordingly. Right now with 4...c6 Black is avoiding the c4 line.

5. d3 e6

Allowing the move in the game. 5...h6 seems to me to be a decent option, but now White can switch to the plan of playing ♗bd2-♖e1 and e4.

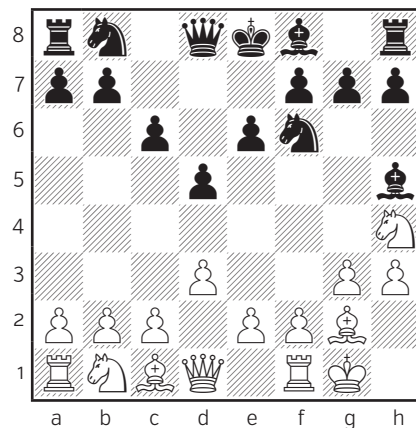
6. ♗h4!?

I think clearly the most critical move. The bishop has no escape except to go to g4.

6... ♖g4

If 6... ♖g6 then White will be able to get a bishop pair and a slight plus.

7. h3 ♖h5



8. ♖e1!

This is the key move! In the event of 8.g4 Black has 8... ♗fd7!? attacking the knight on h4 and forcing it to go back 9. ♗f3 ♖g6 and the bishop is saved.

8... ♖e7

A very solid reply. Black just develops his pieces and already a move such as ... $\text{Nfd7}$  could be a threat because the white knight has to return to  $\text{f3}$ , after which White's play would be 'strange' to say the least!

#### 9.f4

This is the idea behind  $\text{Ke1}$ . White begins his play against the  $\text{h5}$ -bishop. And please, be absolutely sure, Vladimir has analyzed this position very deeply!

#### 9... $\text{Nfd7}$

Probably Adhiban was also well-prepared, as this is one of the main lines suggested by engines.

#### 10. $\text{Nf3 f5}$

This is not a bad move, but personally I do not like it much; why weaken your own structure so much?! The first question, to me, is if White is really doing better after 10... $\text{xf3}$  11.  $\text{xf3 o-o}$  I think Black's position is perfectly fine. Not so accurate is 10... $\text{o-o}$  11.g4  $\text{g6}$  12.e4 and Black experiences problems with the  $\text{g6}$ -bishop.

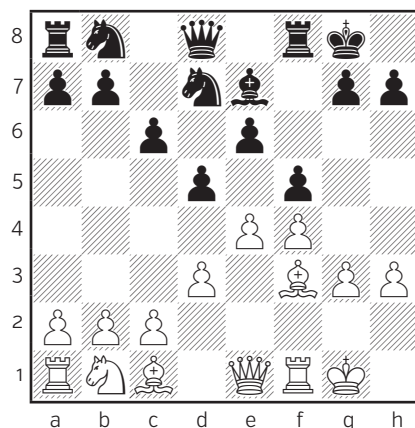
#### 11.e4

Of course! Why not  $\text{e4}$ , trying to make use of the weak  $\text{e6}$ -square?

#### 11... $\text{xf3?!}$

And this looks like a positional mistake to me. I think the combination of moves such as ... $\text{f5}$  and ...  $\text{xf3}$  just doesn't fit together well. Black should have played 11. ... $\text{o-o}$ .

#### 12. $\text{xf3 o-o}$



#### 13. $\text{Nc3!}$

A very nice move! The first question could be: where does the white knight go? This we are going to see during the course of the game.

#### 13... $\text{fxe4?!}$

And another positional inaccuracy from Adhiban, who was clearly provoked by 13. $\text{Nc3}$ . Black should have kept the center tightly together: 13... $\text{a6}$  14.a3  $\text{c7}$  15. $\text{g2}$  and White is clearly a bit better but Black's position is still very safe.

#### 14. $\text{dxe4 d4}$

I think it is clear that Adhiban has underestimated White's next move.

#### 15. $\text{Nd1!}$

A very smart decision as White's knight will take up a very good position on  $\text{f2}$ . Probably Black was hoping for 15. $\text{Ne2 e5}$  and the knight on  $\text{e2}$  is a bit passive.

**15...e5**

The ...e5-move has to be played otherwise White will play e5 himself.

**16. ♘f2 c5**

Black tries to keep the center alive, but we are going to see how beautifully the white pieces will go 'around' this darker zone.

**17. ♔e2**

Winning control over the white squares

**17... ♞c6 18. ♙g4**

Of course! Now, slowly, Black starts to feel how it is to miss his white-squared bishop when the center opens.

**18... ♔h8 19. ♙e6**

White does not want anything concrete, but the simple idea of playing let's say: ♙d2-♘g4 could already be very unpleasant for Black. It is going to be very difficult to keep the center solid. This is why Adhiban decides to act immediately-but it only makes things worse.

**19...exf4**

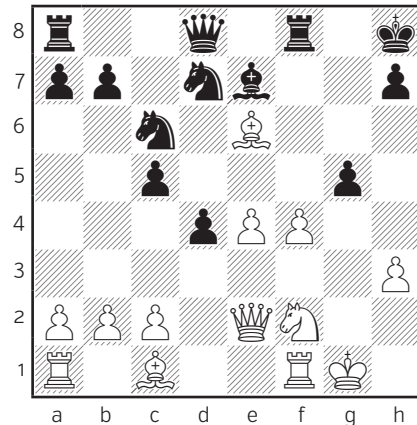
This is probably the correct decision as White maybe wanted to push f5 next as well.

**20.gxf4**

Of course Kramnik keeps control over the e5-square.

**20...g5?**

This is a logical move — Black wants to win the e5-square for the knight, the kind of idea we see a lot in Sicilians. However, here is not the right moment for it! White has a bishop pair and black can't win control over the e5-square, which leads to very difficult position. Black should have continued with 20... ♔c7 and now the idea of ...g5 becomes much stronger. Also a simple move such as ... ♖ae8 next doesn't look too bad. White might be a bit better but Black is more-or-less fine.

**21. ♘g4!**

Strong play. White keeps on fighting for control of the e5-square.

**21...gxf4**

Opening the position even more. I think Black should still have tried 21... ♔c7 22. ♙f5 (not so clear is 22.fxf5 ♙g3+ 23. ♙g2 ♖xf1+ 24. ♔xf1 ♖f8+ 25. ♙f5 ♙h4 and Black clearly has decent compensation for being a pawn down) 22...gxf4 23. ♙xf4 ♘de5 and even though White is clearly better,

Black has managed to get the knight to e5, which is at least some small achievement.

### 22. ♖xf4

Now Black's position starts to look really unpleasant.

### 22... ♕e8

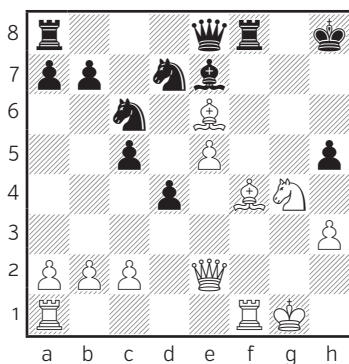
Bringing the queen a bit more into the action.

### 23. e5

An interesting move, but I am not so sure if White really needs these complications. He also had the 'un-human' but very strong 23. ♖b5! and I don't see a good way for Black to defend the b7-pawn — while the solid 23. ♖f5 would also cement White's advantage.

### 23... ♖h4?!

This is what Kramnik was hoping for: now his e-pawn becomes very dangerous. Even if it looks super-risky, Adhiban had no other choice but to try 23...h5! Now white has a lot of moves...



24. ♖h1! a genius move! (Black is more-or-less fine after 24. ♖xd7 ♖xd7 25. e6 ♖d5) 24...hxg4? Of course Black doesn't need to take on g4, but then we don't see the beauty of ♖h1 25. ♖xg4 and with these 2 silent moves White gains a winning advantage! Black can't defend the knight on d7 and at the same time against White's ♖g1 threat. Beautiful!

### 24. ♖c4

The bishop pair plus a running e-pawn — what else do you need to win a game!

### 24... ♖g6 25. ♖h1

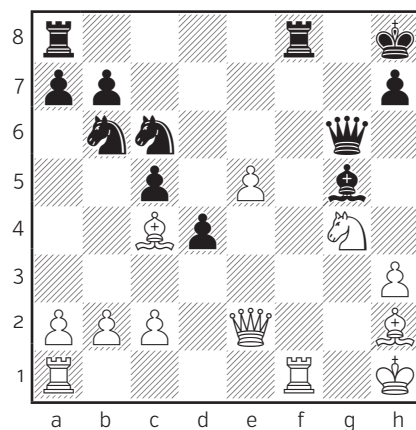
Avoiding — just in case — some tricks with the ...h5 move.

### 25... ♖g5 26. ♖h2

Of course no exchange of the bishops. White will retain the bishop pair for as long as possible.

### 26... ♖b6

After this we can count the position as lost.



Arkadij Naiditsch  
Csaba Balogh  
Sebastien Maze

# Most stunning victories of 2016



Chess  
Evolution



Cover designer  
Piotr Pielach

Typesetting  
Piotr Pielach <[www.i-press.pl](http://www.i-press.pl)>

First edition 2017 by Chess Evolution

*Most stunning victories of 2016*  
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ISBN 978-83-945362-8-2

All sales or enquiries should be directed to Chess Evolution  
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e-mail: [info@chess-evolution.com](mailto:info@chess-evolution.com)  
website: [www.chess-evolution.com](http://www.chess-evolution.com)

Printed in Hungary

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	3
Key to symbols	5
Introduction	7
Preface	9
GAME 1 ▷ R. Rapport (2730) ▶ T. Radjabov (2696)	11
GAME 2 ▷ T. Radjabov (2710) ▶ O. Bortnyk (2581)	14
GAME 3 ▷ M. Rodshtein (2678) ▶ A. Donchenko (2588)	17
GAME 4 ▷ M. Vachier-Lagrave (2804) ▶ J. Krassowizkij (2446)	20
GAME 5 ▷ D. Andreikin (2733) ▶ F. Ashiku (2306)	24
GAME 6 ▷ H. Nakamura (2790) ▶ V. Anand (2762)	27
GAME 7 ▷ D. Howell (2685) ▶ R. Jumabayev (2607)	31
GAME 8 ▷ W. So (2773) ▶ G. Kasparov (2812)	35
GAME 9 ▷ B. Jobava (2665) ▶ R. Ponomariov (2709)	39
GAME 10 ▷ V. Kramnik (2808) ▶ D. Vocaturo (2583)	44
GAME 11 ▷ C. Lupulescu (2609) ▶ G. Papp (2587)	49
GAME 12 ▷ M. Cornette (2581) ▶ C. Bauer (2620)	53
GAME 13 ▷ I. Saric (2660) ▶ R. Kempinski (2612)	56
GAME 14 ▷ Hou Yifan (2673) ▶ D. Navara (2730)	59
GAME 15 ▷ Wen Yang (2609) ▶ V. Artemiev (2674)	64
GAME 16 ▷ M. Carlsen (2851) ▶ N. Grandelius (2649)	67
GAME 17 ▷ F. Caruana (2804) ▶ T. Radjabov (2726)	71
GAME 18 ▷ L. Nisipeanu-D (2669) ▶ Z. Kozul (2591)	76
GAME 19 ▷ A. Salem (2617) ▶ M. Siva (2352)	79
GAME 20 ▷ F. Caruana (2823) ▶ H. Nakamura (2779)	84
GAME 21 ▷ A. Giri (2790) ▶ Vachier M. Lagrave (2788)	87
GAME 22 ▷ V. Kramnik (2808) ▶ B. Gelfand (2743)	91
GAME 23 ▷ H. Nakamura (2779) ▶ M. Vachier-Lagrave (2804)	97
GAME 24 ▷ V. Kramnik (2808) ▶ G. Meier (2654)	101
GAME 25 ▷ E. Safarli (2678) ▶ C. Vernay (2507)	106
GAME 26 ▷ S. Ganguly (2660) ▶ P. Tregubov (2582)	110
GAME 27 ▷ B. Socko (2604) ▶ E. Bacrot (2692)	114
GAME 28 ▷ V. Anand (2784) ▶ L. Aronian (2792)	117
GAME 29 ▷ E. Najer (2681) ▶ D. Jakovenko (2731)	120
GAME 30 ▷ F. Caruana (2804) ▶ V. Kramnik (2812)	124
GAME 31 ▷ Dominguez L. Perez (2720) ▶ B. Adhiban (2671)	129

GAME 32	▷ V. Anand (2762) ▶ P. Svidler (2757)	134
GAME 33	▷ E. Inarkiev (2732) ▶ P. Svidler (2745)	137
GAME 34	▷ G. Kamsky (2673) ▶ A. Goganov (2575)	139
GAME 35	▷ M. Carlsen (2857) ▶ E. Ghaem Maghami (2566)	144
GAME 36	▷ N. Sedlak (2537) ▶ W. So (2782)	148
GAME 37	▷ T. Gelashvili (2557) ▶ V. Akobian (2612)	153
GAME 38	▷ L. Aronian (2795) ▶ R. Rapport (2730)	157
GAME 39	▷ D. Dubov (2644) ▶ A. Brkic (2584)	160
GAME 40	▷ A. Ipatov (2648) ▶ A. Brkic (2584)	163
GAME 41	▷ M. Ragger (2688) ▶ H. Poetsch (2514)	168
GAME 42	▷ V. Topalov (2760) ▶ V. Anand (2779)	171
GAME 43	▷ S. Mamedyarov (2747) ▶ L. Fressinet (2700)	175
GAME 44	▷ A. Giri (2790) ▶ P. Harikrishna (2763)	178
GAME 45	▷ H. Nakamura (2791) ▶ Ding Liren (2755)	181
GAME 46	▷ H. Nakamura (2787) ▶ M. Muzychuk (2554)	185
GAME 47	▷ A. Beliavsky (2603) ▶ J. Borisek (2576)	189
GAME 48	▷ B. Gelfand (2734) ▶ E. Inarkiev (2730)	193
GAME 49	▷ H. Nakamura (2787) ▶ B. Bok (2594)	197
GAME 50	▷ Z. Almasi (2682) ▶ S. Maze (2617)	202

# KEY TO SYMBOLS

=	Equality or equal chances
±	White has a slight advantage
∓	Black has a slight advantage
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
+-	White has a decisive advantage
-+	Black has a decisive advantage
∞	unclear
∞̄	with compensation
↔	with counterplay
↑	with initiative
→	with an attack
Δ	with the idea
□	only move
N	novelty
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
+	check
#	mate



# INTRODUCTION

Useful information for our valued readers.

- »» This book is the continuation of last years's successful "Best Games" series
- »» The book contains 50 of the stunning victories of 2016
- »» As in the previous books, the games have been selected and analysed by GM Arkadij Naiditsch, GM Csaba and this time round GM Sebastien Maze also joins our team of experts.
- »» Most of the games are taken from the highest-level tournaments, such as the Baku Chess Olympiad, London Classic Super tournament, World Chess Championship, etc.
- »» The selected games includes illustrious names such as: Carlsen, Caruana, Karjakin, Nakamura and many more of the world's best chess players.
- »» The games are sorted according to their ECO code.



# PREFACE

We are proud to present the continuation of the successful 'Best Games' series, with the new release: 'Most stunning victories of 2016'.

It was once again interesting and exciting work trying to select and analyse the 50 "best games" from the last year. Of course the choice was wide, with most of the best players in the world being very active on the chess board. Our aim was to find the most interesting, spectacular and, of course, useful attacking ideas -those which might also occur in our own practical games.

The main idea behind this book remains clear: We try to reduce the importance of opening theory and rather get inside the workings of the best chess-playing brains on the planet, in an attempt to explain the most complex attacking ideas in a way that is simple and understandable to any chess lover.

Another very important point of the book which we are proud of is, we have not used much "engine" assistance during our commentary on the games. We try to see the game the way we would in our own practical games, which makes the commentaries very special-and which in practice puts the reader fully in the shoes of the world-class players; this is exactly the best way to improve our own chess skills and level.

Sadly, nowadays, we have more-and-more computer analyses and we can hear chess amateurs judging the play of even Carlsen. Yes, you can find tactical mistakes with an engine at home-but the question is, can you do the same during your practical game over the board?! Chess is a game where everyone makes mistakes-and this is what it is all about in the current book!

We would advise all our readers to take out a real chessboard and enjoy these beautiful masterpieces. This is how we learned to play chess and this is why we still enjoy every wonderful game, even after almost 20 years of being professional chess players!

Yours,

Arkadij Naiditsch, Csaba Balogh & Sebastien Maze





## ■ GAME 1

- ▷ R. Rapport (2730)
- ▶ T. Radjabov (2696)  
European Club Cup  
Novi Sad SRB  
12.11.2016 [A01]  
Annotated by Sebastien Maze

Let's have a look at this funny game between Rapport and Radjabov. A really weird opening from the Hungarian player and a great attack by Radjabov are on the menu!

### 1.b3

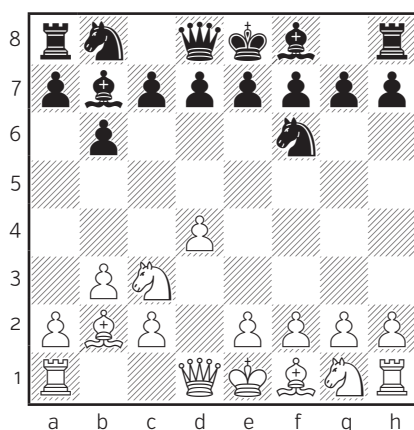
Rapport chooses his pet line! It's very rare to see this kind of first move at the highest level.

### 1...b6

Not a typical reply from Black. Normally, the system with ♘f6 and g6 is more popular.

### 2. ♖b2 ♖b7 3. ♘c3 ♘f6 4.d4?

I don't like this move at all as he blocks in his own bishop.



### 4...e6

After only 4 moves, this position has never been reached before! It's not a huge surprise with this super-creative player, Rapport, involved.

### 5.f3

Preparing to push e4.

### 5...d5

There is no other choice for Radjabov to stop this idea.

### 6. ♙d2?!

It's really difficult to understand what the Hungarian prodigy's plan is? He is mixing many ideas and this strategy — against a very strong player such as Radjabov — could be very dangerous.

6... ♖e7 7.0-0-0

Rapport is in attacking mood today. An easy bet is that there will be no draw: one of the 2 kings will be checkmated!

7...0-0 8.e3 c5

A logical move from the Azeri player, developing his knight behind the pawn and then thinking of how to prepare the offensive.

9.♖b1 ♗c6 10.♗ge2 ♖c8

Placing the rook on a good file.

11.g4 c4

And Radjabov starts!

12.g5

12.bxc4 ♗a5+ and the knight will cause a lot of damage.

12...♗e8 13.h4

Both sides push their pawns to weaken the opposing kings.

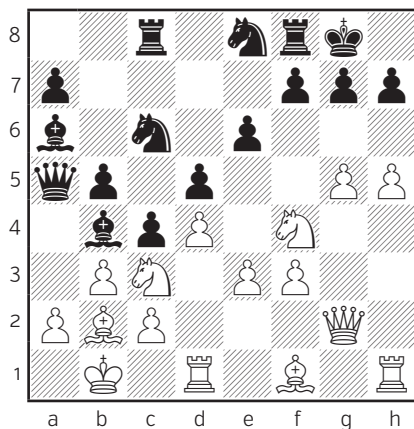
13...♖a6

Radjabov prepares his attack. His plan is very simple, ...b5 then ...♖a5 and ...♖b4.

14.♗f4 b5 15.♖g2 ♖a5 16.h5

Rapport also attacks, but it's too slow.

16...♖b4



17.♗cxd5?

The position is too boring and too passive for the Hungarian! He decides to go for a sacrifice. 17.♖d2 is clearly passive, but still solid and the best way to play for White. 17...♗e7 18.a3 ♖xa3 19.♗cxd5 ♖xd2 20.♗xd2 ♖d6 21.♗xe7+ ♖xe7 leads to a complicated position, but one which is close to equality.

17...exd5 18.♗xd5

18.h6 g6 19.♗xd5 ♖d8 20.c3 ♖a3 21.e4 ♖xb2 22.♖xb2 b4 Black is piece up and has a big attack! No chance for White here.

18...♖d8+

A move with a great idea behind it...

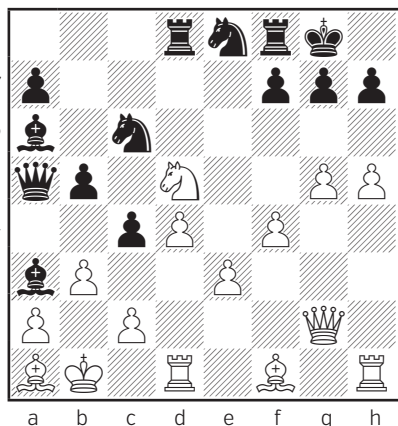
19.f4

19.e4 ♖xd5! 20.exd5 ♗e7 21.f4 ♖b7 22.bxc4 bxc4 23.♖xc4 ♗xd5-- with a killing attack.

19...♖a3

Trying to exchange the last of White's defenders.

20. ♖a1



20... ♗b7--+

And the bishop is now on this beautiful diagonal with the queen on g2 as a target.

21. ♖e2 ♖xd5!

A nice sacrifice to eliminate a good defender.

22. ♗xd5 ♘d8!

Chasing the queen. However, 22... ♘d6 was more accurate. 23. ♗f3 ♘xd4 24. ♗f2 (24. ♖xd4 ♖xf3 25. ♖xf3 ♘f5-- winning easily.) 24... ♘e4--

23. ♗d7 ♖e4

And the bishop is on a fantastic spot, staring at his target, the c2-pawn.

24. ♖hf1

It's terrible for Rapport; there is nothing to do, not even a single trick.

24... ♘d6 25. f5 ♘c6

White's position is now completely hopeless. All the black pieces are looking at the white king, and the attack is terrifying!

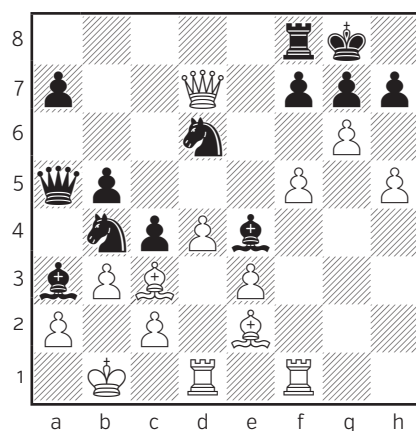
26. g6

Trying something... 26. ♖f3 ♖xf3 27. ♖xf3 ♘e4--+

26... ♘b4

And here comes the knight.

27. ♖c3



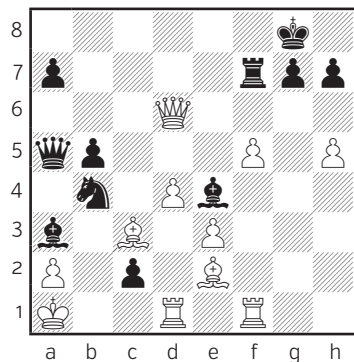
27... cxb3

27... ♖xc2+ checkmates nicely in 7 moves! 28. ♖a1 ♖b2+ 29. ♖xb2 ♗xa2+ 30. ♖c1 ♗b1+ 31. ♖d2 ♘e4+ 32. ♖e1 ♘d3+ 33. ♖xd3 ♗xd1#

28. gxf7+ ♖xf7 0-1

and Rapport will be checkmated soon. The dubious plan of the Hungarian didn't work and Radjabov created a beautiful attack against the long castled position. With accurate moves, Black won this game

with gusto! 28... ♖xf7 29. ♔xd6 bxc2+  
30. ♔a1



30...c1 ♔+! 31. ♖xc1 ♗b2+ 32. ♔xb2  
♔xa2#

## ■ GAME 2

▷ T. Radjabov (2710)

▶ O. Bortnyk (2581)

World Rapid

27.12.2016 [A04]

Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

This game was played in the WCC rapid event that is played as an Open tournament with players over 2500 ELO. Even though the game had a short time-control, we are going to see one of the most beautiful mates I have ever seen! After the opening, White, with a great positional exchange sacrifice, starts a very strong mating attack and finishes the game with a queen sacrifice — where a rook and a bishop pair mate the black king despite Black being a full queen up! A very spectacular game with an amazing mating web!

1. ♘f3 d6

In rapidplay we see more often openings such as 1. ♘f3 d6, lines which are rare in classical chess.

2.d4 ♘f6 3.g3 g6 4. ♗g2 ♗g7

But we are quickly back into the KID with g3.

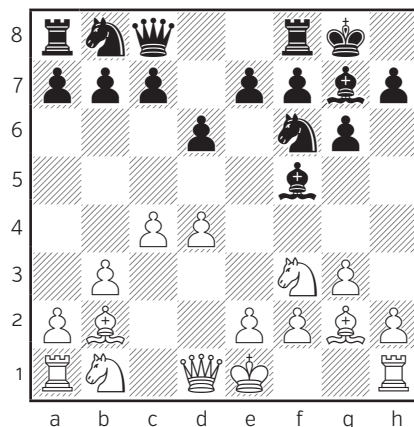
5.b3

The line with 5.b3 is not so stupid at all. White plays against the ...e5-move of Black, but of course the main move is 5.o-o.

5...o-o 6. ♗b2 ♗f5

Quite a rare move, as usually Black tries to get in ...e5 anyway. The idea of the move in the game is simple; to play ...♖c8 next and if possible ...♗h3 afterwards, with a bishop exchange which is good for Black.

7.c4 ♖c8



8.h3

Not allowing ... ♗h3

**8...c5**

And of course Black has to start his play using the moment that White can't castle short.

**9.♘c3**

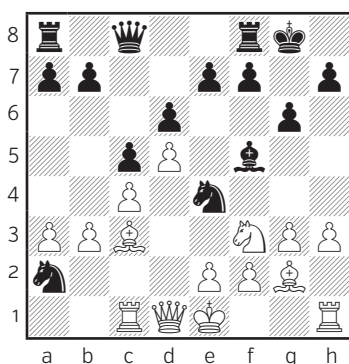
The most solid in my opinion. If White was to wait with moves such as 9.g4 ♕d7 it does not really cause any damage to Black, and now in short castling Black will always have the unpleasant ...h5 move: 10.♘c3 cxd4 11.♘xd4 ♖c6 with a unclear play.

**9...♗c6**

Questioning if White can push the d5-move or not?

**10.♖c1?!**

Of course, a solid move, but I think White could have pushed d5 here. Very powerful-looking is 10.d5 ♘b4 11.♖c1! White offers the exchange with similar ideas to what we will see in the game. 11...♗e4 12.a3 ♕xc3+ 13.♕xc3 ♘a2



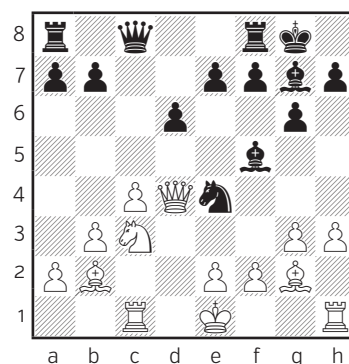
14.♕a1! This is the key move. 14...♗xc1 15.♖xc1 and despite being an exchange down, I think White's position has great prospects. Black can't

really do much against the upcoming attack on the king-side!

**10...♕h6?**

Not feeling the danger. Radjabov shows great understanding of the position and his exchange sacrifice will give White a massive attack, which is especially dangerous in rapid chess. I think Black should continue with 10...♗e4 11.♘d5 ♖e8 with a very complex position, and I believe Black should be perfectly OK here, the move ♖c1 being a bit loss of a tempo.

Not working is: 10...cxd4 11.♘xd4 ♗xd4 12.♖xd4 ♗e4? It seems as though Black is able to exchange all the pieces, but here comes the blow!



13.♘d5!! and White is simply winning, e.g. 13...♕xd4 14.♗xe7+ ♖g7 15.♕xd4+ f6 16.♗xc8

**11.d5! ♕xc1 12.♖xc1 ♗d4 13.g4**

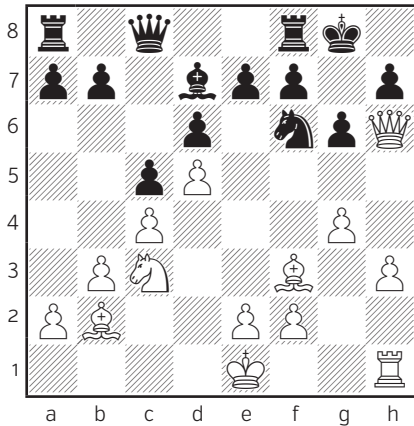
Of course White doesn't on d4 or make any other moves to open the position; the goal is the attack on the king-side, and the key to that is the rook on h1.

**13...♕d7 14.♖h6**

The threat is ♖g5 next.

14... ♖xf3+ 15. ♙xf3

The threat now is to play ♖e4 next. Actually, Black's position can already be considered lost!



15... ♖e8

With the idea of playing ...f6 to hold things together-what else to do?!

16. ♖e4

A good move, but White had an even better one. 16.h4! seems to end the game immediately 16...f6 17.h5 g5 and after Black is forced to play ...g5 to close the h-file, there comes the knight 18. ♖e4 and Black has no defense against the upcoming ♖xg5. 18... ♖f7 19. ♖xg5 fxg5 20. ♙xg5+ ♖g7 21.h6 with an easily winning position for White.

16...f6 17.h4 ♙xg4!

The best and only move. Black gives back everything to avoid getting immediately mated.

18.h5 gxh5

The h5-pawn also has to be taken.

19. ♖g5!

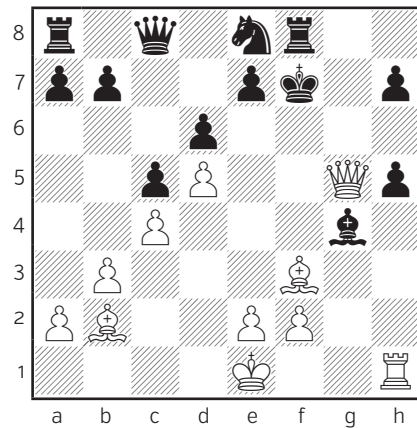
A great attacking move, not giving Black even a second to breathe.

19...fxg5?!

This makes the beautiful mate possible. Black should continue instead with 19... ♖f7 20. ♖xf7 ♙xf7 but of course White is still better after 21. ♙e4, but this is already not much better and Black has survived the most dangerous part of the game: 21... ♙f5 and the game goes on.

20. ♙xg5+ ♖f7

And here comes the beginning of one of the most beautiful mates I have ever seen!



21. ♙xh5+!!

Just 2 bishops and rook will mate the black king by force! There is no escape nor even the slightest chance, it is a forced mate in 13 moves!

21... ♖xh5 22. ♖xh5+ ♔g8 23. ♖g1+  
The moves are all forced now.

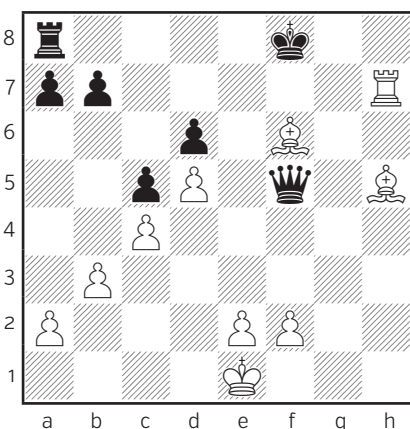
23... ♖g7 24. ♖xg7+ ♔h8 25. ♖xe7+  
♖f6

If 25... ♔g8 then 26. ♖g7+ ♔h8  
27. ♖g5+ ♖f6 28. ♖xf6#

26. ♖xf6+ ♔g8 27. ♖g7+ ♔f8  
28. ♖xh7

and there is no escape against ♖h8  
next. What a beauty! Showing a good  
sense of humor, Bortnyk allows Rad-  
jabov to show the mate on the board.

28... ♖f5



29. ♖h8# 1-o

We have just seen a game with  
a very nice and somewhat typical  
exchange sacrifice, one which is use-  
ful to remember and can be used in  
a practical game Here special atten-  
tion should be paid to the moment  
when White still had not castled and  
had his rook on h1! And, of course,  
the amazingly beautiful queen sacri-  
fice leading to a forced mate!

## ■ GAME 3

▷ M. Rodshtein (2678)

▶ A. Donchenko (2588)

Rilton Cup

04.01.2016 [A05]

Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

We are now going to see a short, but  
very nice victory from Maxim, who  
became the tournament winner with  
one of the best results of his chess ca-  
reer, scoring 8/9!

1. ♖f3

Most of the Israeli players start with  
1.d4, 1. c4 or 1. ♖f3 because of their  
work with Gelfand, who almost never  
starts his games with 1.e4.

1... ♖f6 2.g3 c5

It is hard to say what both players are  
trying to avoid. Anyhow we will see  
a rare and tricky move order over the  
following moves.

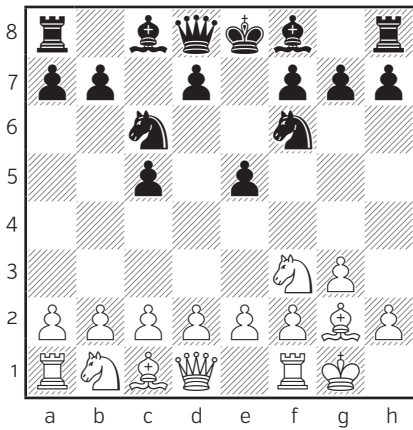
3. ♖g2 ♖c6 4.0-o

White still waits with the develop-  
ment of the central pawns by not  
playing c4 or d4.

4...e5

Maybe Black is trying to avoid the  
4...d5 5.d4 line, which could end up in  
a Catalan after 5...e6 6.c4, or a Grün-  
feld with colors reversed in case of 5...  
cxd4 6. ♖xd4 and now ...e5.





### 5.e4!?

A rarely-played move, but an interesting option for White.

### 5...♞xe4

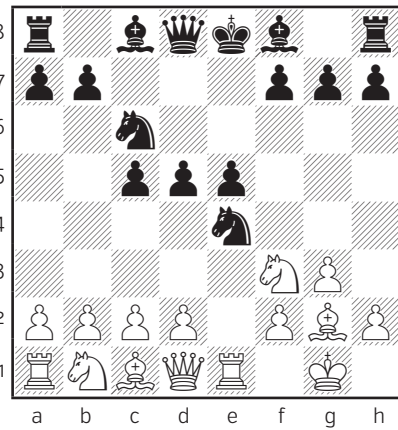
A very principled reply, but probably not the best. A simple move like 5...d6 followed by ...g6 and ...♖g7 looks like a very solid setup for Black.

### 6.♞e1

White might also try 6.♞xe5 ♞xe5 7.♙xe4 d5 8.♙g2 with probably some small advantage because of his better development.

### 6...d5?

Once again very direct play, but this time it is a clear mistake. The simple 6...♞f6 leads to just a slightly worse position after 7.♞xe5 ♙e7 and of course Black is very safe here.



### 7.c4!

This is the point of White's play! Black's center falls apart, but in a very beautiful way, which is hard to calculate during a practical game.

### 7...♙e6

This is probably the only move. Now White has quite a few options:

### 8.♙a4

White had another interesting option in 8.cxd5 ♙xd5 9.♞xe5 ♞xe5 and here comes the key move of the line: 10.d4! (10.♙xe4 ♙e7 and Black is perfectly OK.) 10...cxd4 11.♙xe4 It seems like Black should be fine somehow, but things are far from simple: 11...♙e7 12.♙xd4 ♙xe4 13.♙xe4 ♞c6 14.♙g5 f6 15.♙f4 o-o 16.♞c3 and the current position is clearly a bit better for White.

### 8...♙d6?

This is already a clear miscalculation. Much better was 8...♙d7 9.cxd5 ♙xd5 Now White once again has two choices: 10.♞xe4 (10.d3 ♞f6 11.♞xe5

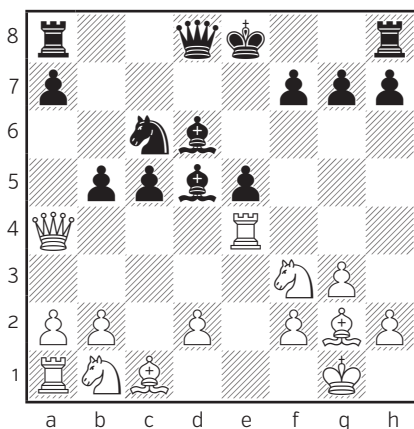
♖xe5 12. ♜xe5+ ♙e6 13. ♘c3 ♚xa4  
 14. ♘xa4 ♜g4 15. ♜e1 0-0-0 and  
 maybe the position is still better for  
 White, but only minimally so.) 10...  
 ♙xe4 11. ♚xe4 f5 Black tries to get  
 some play for the material deficit.  
 12. ♚c4 e4 13. ♘e1 ♘d4 and White  
 is better, but the position is not that  
 easy to play.

### 9.cxd5 ♙xd5 10. ♜xe4

Now White easily keeps the two  
 pieces for a rook and pawn, but with  
 an open position where it is especially  
 easy to see the advantage of the two  
 pieces.

### 10...b5

and here comes what Black has  
 blundered:



10... ♙xe4 11. ♚xe4 0-0 12. ♘c3 leads  
 to a position where White should actually  
 be able to win the game with-  
 out too much trouble.

### 11. ♚xb5!

A very beautiful tactical blow! Lead-  
 ing to a totally unclear position is  
 11. ♚c2 ♘b4 12. ♜xb4 cxb4

### 11... ♙xe4

It seems as though Black is an ex-  
 change up, but here comes the win-  
 ning move...

### 12. ♚a4!!

Beautiful! Of course not 12. ♘c3?  
 ♜b8 13. ♚a4 ♜b4 and it is already  
 Black who is better.

### 12... ♙xf3

Nothing helps any longer... 12... ♙d5  
 13. ♘c3; 12...f5 was also losing: 13.d3  
 ♙d5 14. ♘c3

### 13. ♙xf3 0-0 14. ♙xc6

The complications are over and  
 White has two pieces for a rook,  
 which basically gives him a winning  
 position. All that's needed now is to  
 develop the pieces from the queen-  
 side.

### 14... ♜c8 15.d3

The bishop from c1 gets into the  
 game now.

### 15... ♙e7 16. ♙b5

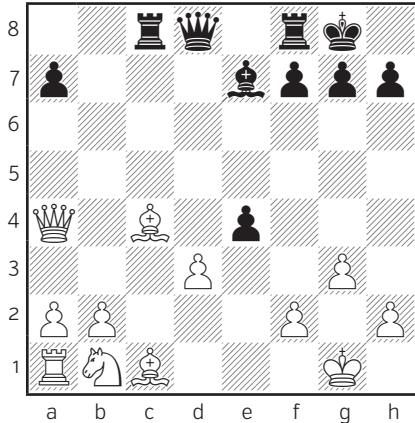
A very safe and strong move. White  
 defends the d3-pawn, after which the  
 bishop will take up an excellent posi-  
 tion on c4.

### 16...c4

Black tries to create something...

### 17. ♙xc4 e4

But of course this playing for small tricks doesn't often work at such a high level...



18. ♖c3

White keeps his cool and continues developing his pieces. Very strong play!

18...exd3 19. ♕e3

White needs one more move to end Black's suffering, and that is to play ♖d1.

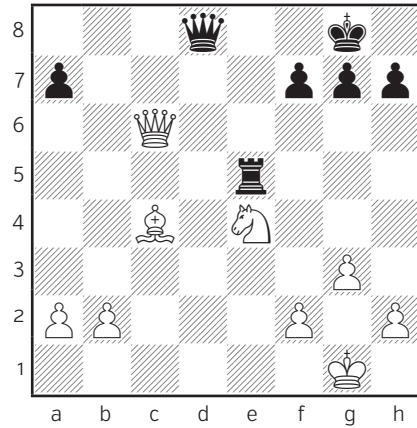
19...♕c5 20. ♕xc5 ♖xc5 21. ♖d1

Donchenko has tried his best to create some complications, but there is just nothing left for Black to hope for any longer. The d-pawn is falling, and with it the game...

21...d2 22. ♖e4 ♖e5 23. ♖xd2

The d-pawn is gone...

23...♗a8 24. ♖d4 ♖d8 25. ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 26. ♗c6 1-0



It is clear that Black's position is hopeless here, as ♖d6 is coming next. An interesting and beautiful game with a very tricky opening and move-orders already by move 5, which is useful to remember!

## ■ GAME 4

▷ M. Vachier-Lagrave (2804)

▶ J. Krassowizkij (2446)

Bundesliga

04.12.2016 [A05]

Annotated by Sebastien Maze

This game was played between the number 3 in the world, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and the Polish IM, Jaroslaw Krassowizkij, in the strongest league in the world. The fight looks unbalanced, and MVL will show his strategic skills. Let's see how it goes....

1. ♖f3 ♗f6 2.g3

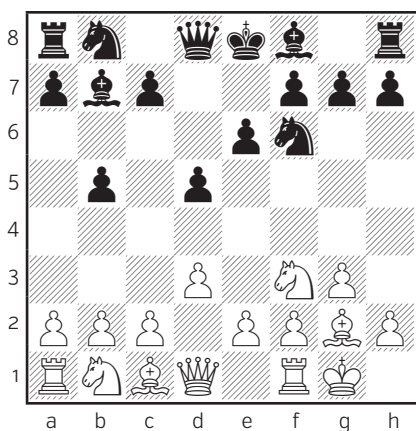
Maxime likes to play this system, as it avoids long theoretical lines. Lately, Carlsen and Kramnik have also used it a lot.

**2...b5**

An interesting system for Black, played by many strong players. The idea is to fight on the diagonal h1–a8 and also control the c4-square.

**3. ♖g2 ♜b7 4. o-o e6 5. d3 d5?!**

I think it's too early to play this move. Better to play 5... ♙e7 and see what White's plan is.



5... ♙e7 6. e4 d6 and ...c5-... ♞bd7.

**6...c4**

A typical move to break Black's center.

**6...a6**

6... bxc4 7. dxc4 ♙e7 (7... c6 8. ♞c3 ♙e7 9. e4!± The bishop on b7 looks stupid and White has a space advantage.) 8. cxd5 exd5 9. ♞d4 o-o (9... g6 10. ♙h6±) 10. ♞f5±

**7.cxd5 ♞xd5**

Black decides to take with the knight to keep the h1–a8 diagonal open. 7... exd5 is also possible but White will take advantage of the central position

of the black king. 8. e4! dxe4 9. dxe4 ♜xd1 10. ♜xd1 ♞xe4 11. ♞bd2 ♞xd2 12. ♙xd2 ♙d6 13. ♞e1+♞ with a lot of compensation for the pawn.

**8.a4 ♞b6**

Definitely not a good square for the knight. Sooner or later it will come under pressure. 8... ♙e7 was played recently in the game Short-Hou: 9. ♞c3 o-o 10. axb5 ♞xc3 11. bxc3 axb5 12. ♜xa8 ♙xa8 13. ♞b3± giving White a comfortable advantage.

**9. ♞c3**

Putting pressure on the b5-pawn.

**9...b4 10. ♞e4**

The knight is on a very good square, preparing his jump to c5.

**10... ♙e7**

10... f5? 11. ♞eg5 ♞f6 12. e4 and Black's position is lost...

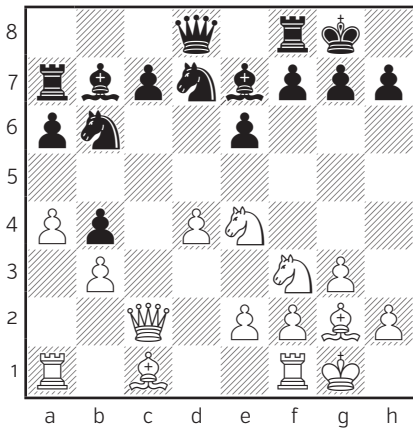
**11. ♞c2 o-o 12. d4**

I already think that White has a dream position. The knight will jump soon into c5 and cause a lot of damage.

**12... ♞a7?**

A really weird decision by the Polish player. This idea to put the Rook on a7 is well-known in the Catalan opening, but here it is just bad. 12... f5 13. ♞c5 ♙d5 14. ♙f4± Black has too many weaknesses on the dark squares.

**13. b3 ♞8d7**



#### 14. ♖c5

Everything is in order to introduce the knight into Black's camp!

#### 14... ♕xf3

14... ♕a8? 15.e4 It's funny, but Black's position is solid — but strategically it's completely lost!

#### 15. ♕xf3 ♖xc5

Black exchanges the maximum of pieces in order to find some space for the remaining ones.

#### 16.dxc5 ♖d5 17. ♖d1

With the idea of playing e2-e4.

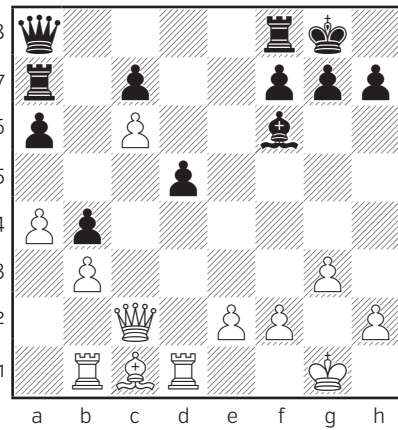
#### 17... ♕f6 18. ♖b1 ♔a8

18... ♕c3 19. ♕d2 ♔e7 20. ♕xd5 exd5 21. ♕xc3 ♔xc5 22. ♖d3 ♖b7 23. ♖c1 bxc3 24. ♖xc3 and White gets a very good endgame a pawn up.

#### 19. ♕xd5

The French player gives up his strong bishop for a good reason; he wants to paralyze the black queen-side.

#### 19...exd5 20.c6±



A great positional idea by MVL. The rook on a7 is completely dominated by the c6-pawn!!

#### 20... ♖d8

20...a5 21. ♖xd5 ♖a6 22. ♖c5±

#### 21.e4 d4

Black has to close the position, otherwise the bishop comes to e3 and wins the rook on a7...

#### 22. ♕f4 g5

The Polish player has to do something, so he tries to create some complications... 22... ♖e8 23.e5 ♕xe5 24. ♕xe5 ♖xe5 25. ♖xd4+- No material advantage, but this poor rook on a7 gives White a winning position.

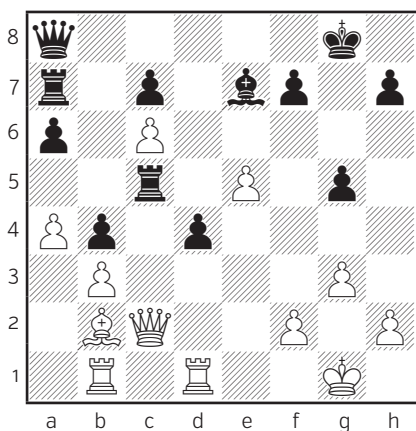
#### 23.e5

A nice move, attacking the black bishop and also offering a magical square on f5 to the queen.

#### 23... ♕e7 24. ♕c1

White transfers the bishop to the a1-h8 diagonal.

#### 24... ♖d5 25. ♕b2 ♖c5



### 26. ♕f5

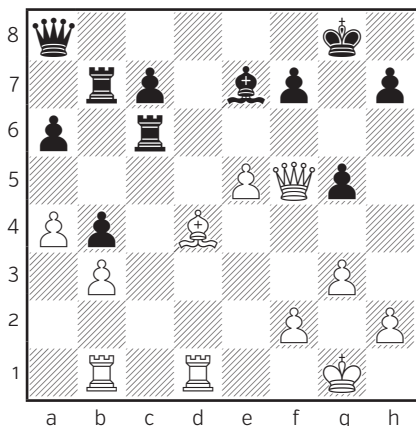
And the queen finally arrives on f5, and now big problems are heading Black's way...

### 26... ♖xc6

26... ♕xc6 27. ♗xd4+-

### 27. ♗xd4 ♖b7

As we can see, the queen on a8 is blocked by his rooks on b7 and c8! A funny situation.



### 28. h4!+-

It's time to attack... by opening the g-file.

### 28... gxh4

28... ♖g6 29. h5 ♖e6 30. ♗e3 h6 31. f4 ♕f8 32. ♕e4+- attacking the rook on b7 and threatening f5.

### 29. e6!

A double pawn sacrifice, opening all the lines around Black's king!

### 29... ♖xe6 30. ♖e1!

and here comes the key move to eliminate the best defensive black piece.

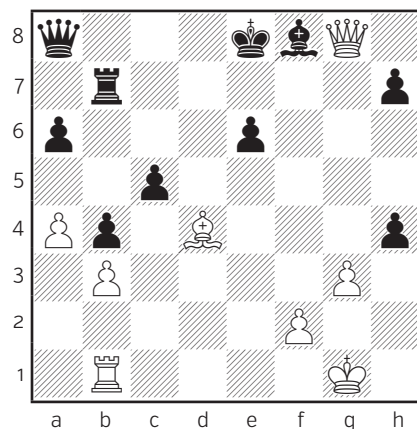
### 30... c5 31. ♖xe6 fxe6

31... cxd4 32. ♖h6 wins immediately.

### 32. ♕g4+

The black king has no more defenders, and Maxime lands a killing check with his queen.

### 32... ♕f8 33. ♕g7+ ♗e8 34. ♕g8+ ♗f8



34... ♗d7 35. ♕xa8+-

Arkadij Naiditsch  
Csaba Balogh

# Most instructive endgames of 2016



Chess  
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Cover designer  
Piotr Pielach

Typesetting  
Piotr Pielach <[www.i-press.pl](http://www.i-press.pl)>

First edition 2017 by Chess Evolution

*Most instructive endgames of 2016*  
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ISBN 978-83-945362-6-8

All sales or enquiries should be directed to Chess Evolution  
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e-mail: [info@chess-evolution.com](mailto:info@chess-evolution.com)  
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Printed in Hungary



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	3
Key to symbols	7
Introduction	9
Preface	11
1. Pawn endgames	13
GAME 1   ▷ I. Ivanisevic (2643) ▶ A. Volokitin (2624)	13
GAME 2   ▷ A. Demuth (2545) ▶ J. Jolly (2361)	15
2. Transposing into pawn endgames	19
GAME 1   ▷ S. Ivanov (2556) ▶ M. Krasenkow (2610)	19
GAME 2   ▷ M. Carlsen (2844) ▶ Hou Yifan (2673)	22
3. Queen endgames	25
GAME 1   ▷ Hou Yifan (2663) ▶ S. Mamedyarov (2748)	25
4. Transposing into queen endgames	27
GAME 1   ▷ C. Balogh (2659) ▶ J. Van Foreest (2541)	27
5. Minor piece endgames	31
GAME 1   ▷ B. Gelfand (2735) ▶ K. Georgiev (2624)	31
GAME 2   ▷ Ding Liren (2766) ▶ L. Dominguez (2732)	34
GAME 3   ▷ R. Wojtaszek (2713) ▶ K. Dragun (2594)	37
GAME 4   ▷ G. Gajewski (2633) ▶ J. Tomczak (2603)	39
GAME 5   ▷ R. Robson (2663) ▶ A. Lenderman (2618)	42
GAME 6   ▷ M. Vachier-Lagrave (2788) ▶ P. Eljanov (2765)	44
GAME 7   ▷ Bu Xiangzhi (2723) ▶ V. Artemiev (2669)	47
GAME 8   ▷ S. Sjugirov (2674) ▶ V. Kramnik (2801)	49
GAME 9   ▷ I. Cheparinov (2685) ▶ D. A. Guijarro (2616)	53
GAME 10  ▷ Ding Liren (2778) ▶ Wang Hao (2734)	55
GAME 11  ▷ Wang Yue (2730) ▶ Wang Hao (2734)	58
GAME 12  ▷ Yi Wei (2696) ▶ A. Giri (2785)	60
GAME 13  ▷ Ding Liren (2778) ▶ Grischuk (2747)	64
GAME 14  ▷ V. Kunin (2592) ▶ E. Safarli (2678)	68
GAME 15  ▷ R. Svane (2546) ▶ B. Harsha (2344)	70
GAME 16  ▷ F. Caruana (2807) ▶ Ding Liren (2755)	73

GAME 17	▷ S. Karjakin (2772) ▶ M. Carlsen (2853)	77
6. Transposing into minor piece endgames		81
GAME 1	▷ Li Chao b (2751) ▶ L. Lenic (2611)	81
7. Rook endgames		83
GAME 1	▷ A. Donchenko (2568) ▶ Li Chao (2756)	83
GAME 2	▷ Yue Wang (2718) ▶ V. Ivanchuk (2710)	85
GAME 3	▷ D. Bocharov (2595) ▶ E. Inarkiev (2677)	88
GAME 4	▷ L. Aronian (2786) ▶ H. Nakamura (2790)	91
GAME 5	▷ V. Anand (2762) ▶ L. Aronian (2786)	94
GAME 6	▷ L. Aronian (2784) ▶ A. Grischuk (2752)	97
GAME 7	▷ R. Kasimdzhanov (2704) ▶ Li Chao2 (2756)	102
GAME 8	▷ V. Malakhov (2695) ▶ Y. Liu (2413)	105
GAME 9	▷ G. Kamsky (2670) ▶ A. Grischuk (2752)	107
GAME 10	▷ D. Mehaj (2204) ▶ D. Swiercz (2656)	109
GAME 11	▷ D. Navara (2735) ▶ B. Jobava (2661)	113
GAME 12	▷ S. Mamedyarov (2748) ▶ A. Giri (2790)	115
GAME 13	▷ V. Kramnik (2812) ▶ H. Nakamura (2787)	118
GAME 14	▷ A. Pashikian (2615) ▶ J. Duda (2671)	121
GAME 15	▷ R. Wojtaszek (2733) ▶ E. Sutovsky (2622)	123
GAME 16	▷ V. Topalov (2761) ▶ L. Aronian (2792)	127
GAME 17	▷ R. Bates A (2347) ▶ E. Safarli (2691)	130
GAME 18	▷ R. Svane (2555) ▶ R. Pert G (2423)	134
GAME 19	▷ M. Adams (2748) ▶ A. Giri (2771)	136
8. Transposing into rook endgames		139
GAME 1	▷ A. Giri (2793) ▶ L. Aronian (2786)	139
GAME 2	▷ L. Aronian (2792) ▶ A. Giri (2782)	142
GAME 3	▷ L. Lenic (2624) ▶ A. Volokitin (2624)	144
GAME 4	▷ A. Beliavsky G (2603) ▶ L.-D. Nisipeanu (2668)	147
9. Complex endgames		151
GAME 1	▷ M. Krasenkow (2610) ▶ J. L. Hammer (2695)	151
GAME 2	▷ L. Ding (2766) ▶ M. Adams (2744)	154
GAME 3	▷ Hou Yifan (2673) ▶ W. So (2773)	156
GAME 4	▷ D. Navara (2730) ▶ F. Caruana (2787)	158
GAME 5	▷ B. Adhiban (2653) ▶ E. Safarli (2653)	161
GAME 6	▷ V. Kramnik (2801) ▶ V. Anand (2784)	163
GAME 7	▷ L. Aronian (2792) ▶ A. Shirov (2687)	165
GAME 8	▷ P. Svidler (2727) ▶ J. Smeets (2617)	169

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GAME 9	▷ A. Khalifman (2624) ▶ D. Yuffa (2502)	171
GAME 10	▷ H. Nakamura (2790) ▶ P. Svidler (2757)	174
GAME 11	▷ L. Aronian (2786) ▶ S. Karjakin (2760)	176
GAME 12	▷ M. Vachier-Lagrave (2788) ▶ M. Carlsen (2851)	180
GAME 13	▷ P. Eljanov (2765) ▶ Li Chao (2755)	184
GAME 14	▷ V. Artemiev (2669) ▶ E. Tomashevsky (2722)	186
GAME 15	▷ B. Jobava (2661) ▶ R. Wojtaszek (2722)	188
GAME 16	▷ M. Carlsen (2855) ▶ V. Kramnik (2812)	192
GAME 17	▷ S. L. Shankland (2646) ▶ S. S. Ganguly (2654)	195
GAME 18	▷ M. Vachier-Lagrave (2798) ▶ R. Ponomariov (2706)	197
GAME 19	▷ W. So (2771) ▶ H. Nakamura (2791)	200
GAME 20	▷ M. Ly (2501) ▶ A. Kovalyov (2617)	203
GAME 21	▷ M. Carlsen (2853) ▶ S. Karjakin (2772)	205
GAME 22	▷ M. Carlsen (2853) ▶ S. Karjakin (2772)	211
GAME 23	▷ E. Bacrot (2689) ▶ C. J. Deepan (2471)	214



# KEY TO SYMBOLS

=	Equality or equal chances
±	White has a slight advantage
∓	Black has a slight advantage
±	White is better
∓	Black is better
+-	White has a decisive advantage
-+	Black has a decisive advantage
∞	unclear
∞̄	with compensation
↔	with counterplay
↑	with initiative
→	with an attack
Δ	with the idea
□	only move
N	novelty
!	a good move
!!	an excellent move
?	a weak move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
+	check
#	mate



# INTRODUCTION

Useful information for our valued readers.

- »» This book is the continuation of last year's successful edition of "The Most Instructive Endgames of 2012-2015".
- »» The book contains the 70 most instructive endgames from 2016.
- »» The games were selected and analyzed by the authors GM Arkadij Naiditsch and GM Csaba Balogh.
- »» Most of the games are taken from the highest-level tournaments, such as the Baku Chess Olympiad, the World Championship Match Carlsen-Karjakin, London Super tournament. etc.
- »» Most of the endgames are played by the very best Grandmasters such as: Carlsen, Karjakin, Kramnik, Caruana and many more of the world's best chess-players.
- »» The games are sorted into the following chapters:
  1. Pawn endgames (2 games)
  2. Transposing into pawn endgames (2 games)
  3. Queen endgames (1 game)
  4. Transposing into queen endgames (1 game)
  5. Minor piece endgames (17 games)
  6. Transposing into minor piece endgames (1 game)
  7. Rook endgames (19 games)
  8. Transposing into rook endgames (4 games)
  9. Complex endgames (23 games)





# PREFACE

We are proud to present “Most Instructive Endgames of 2016”, the continuation of last year’s successful starter “Most Instructive Endgames of 2012–2015”.

It was very interesting work trying to select and analyze the 70 most instructive endgames from the past year: the choice was wide and even the simplest-looking endgames have their hidden beauties! We were aiming to find the most instructive, interesting and, of course, useful endgame ideas — those which might also occur in our own practical games.

The main idea behind this book stands out clearly: we try to reduce the importance of endgame table-base analyses or many other forms of computer help, and rather get inside the workings of the best chess-playing brains on the planet, in an attempt to explain the most complex endgames ideas in a way that is simple and understandable to any chess lover.

Another very important point of the book which we are proud of is, we have not used much ‘engine’ assistance during our commentary on the games. We try to see the game the way we would do in a practical game, which makes the commentaries very special — and which in practice puts the reader fully in the shoes of world-class players; and this is exactly the best way to improve our own chess level.

Sadly, nowadays, we have more-and-more computer analyses and we can even hear chess amateurs judging the play of Carlsen, having analyzed some particular endgame till the very end. Yes, you can make a very deep engine analysis at home — but the question is, can you do the same during your practical game over the board?! Chess is a game where everyone makes mistakes — and this is what it is all about in the current book!

We would advise all our readers to take out a real chessboard and enjoy these beautiful masterpieces. This is how we learned to play chess and this is why we still enjoy every wonderful game, even after almost 20 years of being professional chess players!

Yours, Arkadij Naiditsch & Csaba Balogh



# 1. PAWN ENDGAMES

## ■ GAME 1

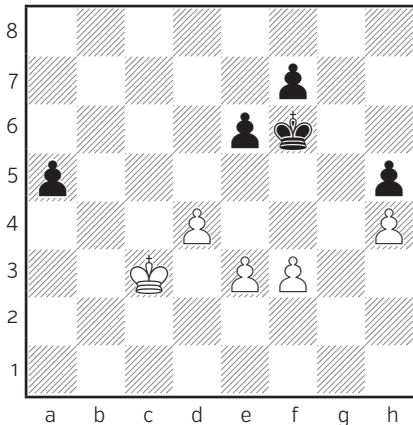
▷ I. Ivanisevic (2643)

▶ A. Volokitin (2624)

Vidmar Memorial

24.06.2016

Annotated by Csaba Balogh



We have reached this pawn endgame after trading a pair of rooks on c3. The material is balanced, but the question is — who has calculated and evaluated the arising position better? White, who thought that he was soon going to win the a5 pawn? Or Black, who believed that he was going to have a distant passed pawn — which will deflect the white king to the queen-side — in the meantime finding a way for his king to attack the pawns?

43...♔e7!

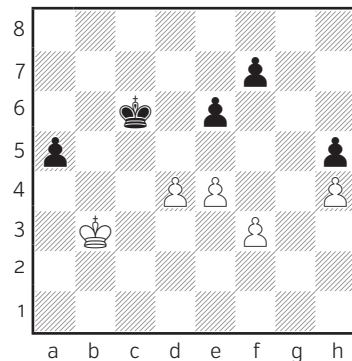
After this move it all becomes clear. Black wants to head towards the e3-pawn via d6-d5-c4-d3 while the white king picks up a5.

The same strategy with 43...e5? loses to 44.d5!+- and White creates a protected passed pawn by playing e4 next move and he can simply win the a5-pawn afterwards.

44.♔c4

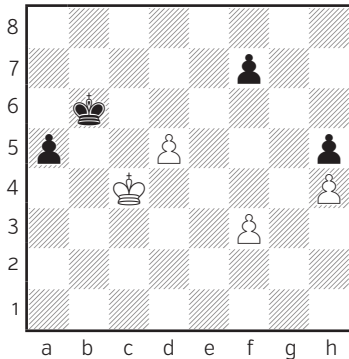
If White comes from the other direction with 44.♔b3 ♔d6 45.e4 (45.♔a4 ♔d5 is the same as the game.)

45...♔c6



Black successfully protects his a-pawn and maintains the material balance and we have reached a classic example on the distant passed pawn. 46.♔c4 (If 46.♔a4 ♔b6 47.f4 ♔a6-+ Black just waits with ...♔a6-b6 until White runs out of moves, when he

could proceed with ...♔b5.) 46...♔b6  
Here again, Black just intends to wait  
with ...♔c6-b6. If the white king re-  
treats then ...♔b5 wins, while White  
will soon run out of useful pawn  
moves. 47.d5 exd5+ 48.exd5



(48.♔xd5 ♔b5 Black promotes his  
a-pawn faster. 49.e5 a4 50.f4 a3 51.f5  
a2-+) 48...♔c7! The typical execu-  
tion of a distant passed pawn. Black  
trades his a-pawn for the one on d5  
and his king will be closer to the  
kingside pawns. 49.♔c5 a4 50.♔b4  
♔d6 51.♔xa4 ♔xd5-+

44...♔d6 45.♔b5 ♔d5 46.♔xa5 ♔c4  
47.♔b6

White tries to rush towards the f7  
pawn, but he is a tempo behind.

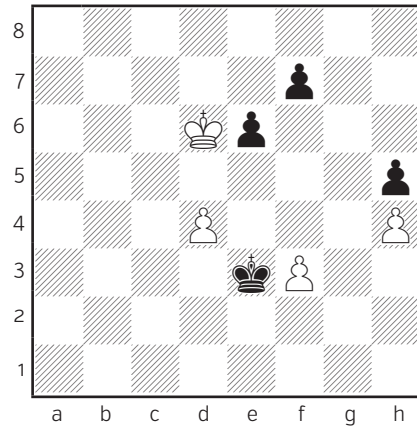
47...♔d3 48.♔c5

48.e4 also loses to 48...♔xd4 49.♔c6  
♔e3-+

48...♔xe3 49.♔d6

The last critical position from Black's  
point of view. Which pawn should be  
captured? Only one of them is win-  
ning. Of course, this is just an easy

calculation problem which is solved  
effortlessly by Black.



49...♔xd4!

49...♔xf3 leads to a draw after  
50.♔e7 ♔e4 (50...♔g4 51.♔xf7 ♔xh4  
52.♔xe6= the pawns promote at the  
same time.) 51.♔xf7 ♔xd4 52.♔xe6  
♔e4 Black wins the h-pawn, but  
White manages to squeeze the king  
to the h-file with 53.♔d6 ♔f4 54.♔d5  
♔g4 55.♔e4 ♔xh4 56.♔f3=

50.♔e7 f5!

The only winning move again, but it  
was already easy to find.

51.♔f6

White tries to avoid losing a tempo  
by taking on e6 and instead hurries  
towards the h5 pawn.

51.♔xe6 loses to 51...f4! 52.♔f5 ♔e3  
53.♔g5 ♔xf3 54.♔xh5 ♔e4 55.♔g6 f3  
56.h5 f2 57.h6 f1♚ 58.h7 If the king  
was on g7, the game is drawn, but  
here Black can play 58...♚f8-+

51...♔e3 52.♔g5 ♕xf3 53.♔xh5 ♕g3  
54.♔g5

The pawns promote at the same time, but we should always calculate a move further after the promotion.

54...f4 55.h5 f3 56.h6 f2 57.h7 f1♕  
58.h8♕ ♕f5+ 0-1

White resigned as ...♕h3 trades queens next move, followed by making a new queen with the e-pawn.

## ■ GAME 2

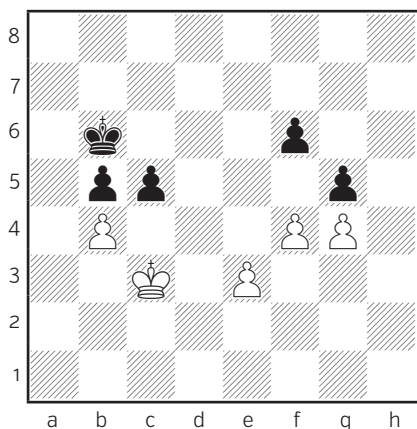
▷ A. Demuth (2545)

▷ J. Jolly (2361)

French Championship

17.08.2016

Annotated by Csaba Balogh



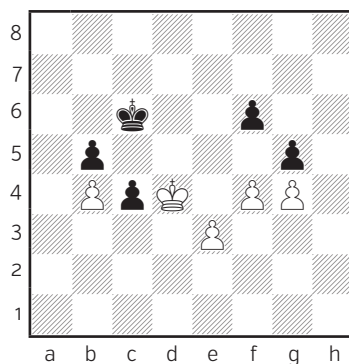
A very instructive pawn endgame. The material is balanced, but it is clear that Black is fighting for the win because of his distant passed pawn on the queen-side, which might eventually also become a protected passed pawn after ...c4. We know that passed pawns play

a key role in almost all endgames. On the other side, White cannot create a passed pawn because Black keeps the tension with the f6-g5 pawns.

50...♔c6?!

This allows White to save the game in a relatively simple way. Black should have created a protected passed pawn with 50...c4! when 51.f5! transposes to the game.

a) 51.♔d4 ♔c6

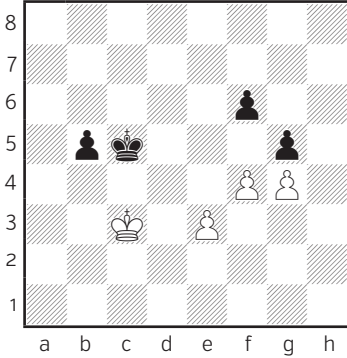


White runs out of moves as he cannot use his king, which must stay with the c4-passed pawn. If he returns with ♔c3, then Black proceeds with ...♔d5. The only move is f5, which transposes to the game. The pretty tactical point is that after 52.♔e4, if White tries to avoid the ♔d5 plan, Black creates a second passed pawn with the nice breakthrough 52...f5+! 53.gxf5 g4+;

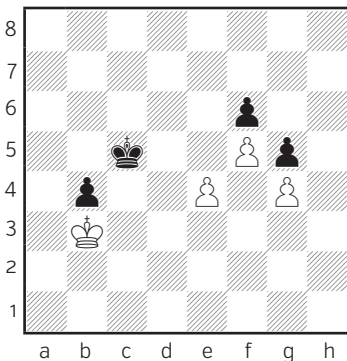
b) If White tries the breakthrough himself, he loses the pawn race after 51.e4 gxf4 52.e5 fxe5 53.g5 f3! 54.♔d2 (54.g6 f2 55.g7 f1♕ 56.g8♕ ♕c1#) 54...c3+-+ as Black promotes first.

**51.f5**

White could have saved the game in an easier way after 51.bxc5! ♖xc5



Black has a distant passed pawn. There are two possible winning plans, but neither of them seems to work after some forced lines. The first attempt might be to advance the b-pawn with the help of the king, stalemate White after pushing the pawn to b2 and forcing White to make a decisive weakening on the kingside. The other typical plan is to deflect the white king by sacrificing the b-pawn, meanwhile collecting the other pawns with the king. However White holds the draw now by playing 52.f5! ♖d5 (If 52...b4+ 53.♖b3 ♖b5 White has 54.e4! ♖c5



55.e5! fxe5 56.f6 ♖d6 57.♖xb4 ♖e6 58.♖c4 ♖xf6 59.♖d5= just in time and White restores the material balance next move.) 53.♖b4 ♖e4 54.♖xb5 ♖xe3 (Another attempt is to avoid losing a tempo by taking on e3, but it does not change the outcome... 54...♖f3 55.♖c4 ♖xg4 56.e4 ♖f4 57.♖d5 g4 58.e5! the pawns are promoting at the same time. 58...g3 (58...♖xf5 59.e6 g3 60.e7=) 59.exf6=) 55.♖c5 ♖f4 56.♖d5 ♖xg4 57.♖e6! White again arrives in time and the pawns promote on the same move. 57...♖h4 58.♖xf6 g4 59.♖e6 g3 60.f6 g2 61.f7 g1♗ 62.f8♗=

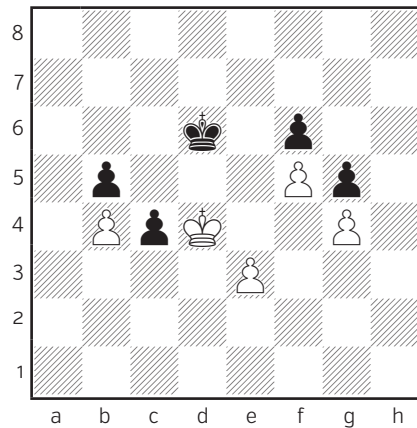
**51...c4!**

Creating the protected passed pawn. Black intends to invade with ...♖d5-e4 with an automatic win, therefore White should try to block its way...

**52.♖d4 ♖d7**

Just a repetition of moves, Black goes ...♖d6 soon.

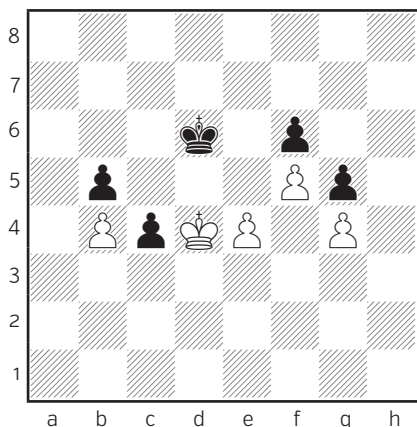
**53.♖c3 ♖c6 54.♖d4 ♖d6**



**55.e4!**

The only move! At first sight it looks easy, but difficult calculation was required. The point is that after executing a triangulation with the king, White finds himself in zugzwang...

If White starts to wait with  $\text{♔e4-d4}$ , he loses the game after  $55.\text{♔e4-c3}$ ! sacrificing the pawn in order to invade with the king; classical use of the passed pawns...  $56.\text{♔d3 ♔e5}$   $57.\text{♔xc3 ♔e4}$   $58.\text{♔d2 ♔f3}$   $59.\text{♔d3 ♔xg4}$   $60.\text{e4 ♔f4-+}$  with an easy win for Black.

**55...♔e7 56.♔c3 ♔d7 57.♔d4 ♔d6!**

Black has done his job by giving the right to move to White. If he can get his king to e5, the game would be immediately over after advancing the c-pawn.

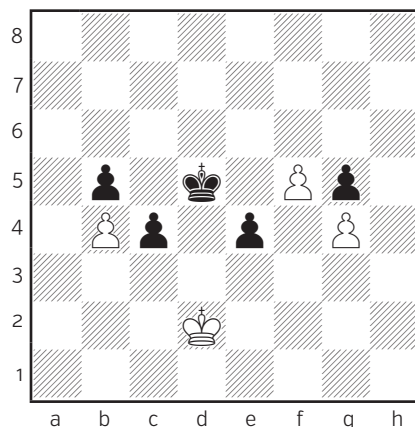
**58.e5+!**

A great resource! White sacrifices the pawn in order to create a protected passed pawn of his own! He aims to hold the black pawns with his king and makes use of the fact that

the black king cannot support them, because he must stay with the f-pawn.

**58...fxe5+ 59.♔e4 ♔d7!**

Black proceeds once again with a triangulation.

**60.♔e3 ♔e7 61.♔e4 ♔d6 62.♔e3 ♔d5 63.♔d2 e4****64.♔e3??**

A miscalculation after which the game is lost. The correct move was  $64.\text{♔d1!}$  followed by waiting with  $\text{♔d2-d1}$ . Whenever Black advances one of his pawns, White can immediately go for it with the king. Black has no chances to play for the win without being able to cross the middle of the board with his king.

**64...c3! 65.♔e2**

The problem is, White cannot play  $\text{♔d1-c2}$ , as after  $\text{♔d1 e3}$  he finds himself in zugzwang. Black executes another triangulation, giving the move to his opponent to lure the king to the poisoned square...

65...♔d6! 66.♕e3 ♕e5! 67.♕e2 ♔d5!

Here we are! White is in zugzwang.

68.♕e3

68.♕d1 e3-+

68...♕c4!

This is the point! Black can allow the f-pawn to run, because he promotes his c-pawn faster with the help of the king, thanks to the fact that it queens with check.

69.f6 c2 70.♕d2 ♕b3 71.f7

71.♕c1 e3 is also over. 72.f7 e2-+

71...♕b2

71...e3+--+ was also winning on the spot.

72.f8 ♖ c1 ♖+ 73.♕e2 ♖c2+ 74.♕e1 ♖c3+ 75.♕e2 ♖d3+ 0-1

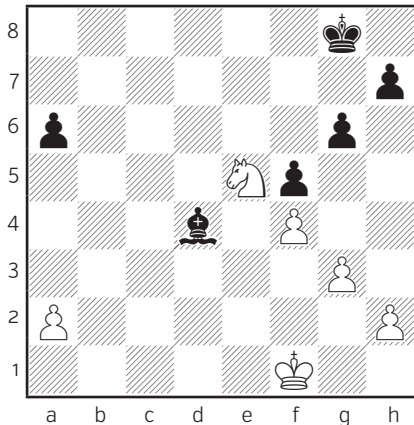
White resigned. Black has many winning lines, but the easiest is to simplify into a pawn endgame... 75... ♖d3+ 76.♕f2 ♖f3+ 77.♖xf3 exf3 78.♕xf3 ♕c3 Black wins the pawn race by a decisive tempo. 79.♕e4 ♕xb4 80.♕f5 ♕c5 81.♕xg5 b4 82.♕f6 b3 83.g5 b2 84.g6 b1 ♖ 85.g7 ♖a2-+



# 2. TRANSPOSING INTO PAWN ENDGAMES

## ■ GAME 1

▷ S. Ivanov (2556)  
 ▶ M. Krasenkow (2610)  
 Rilton Cup  
 01.01.2016  
 Annotated by Csaba Balogh

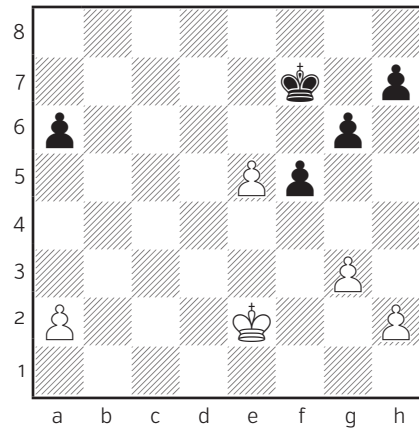


We are very close to a draw, when suddenly White takes an extremely risky decision by allowing Black to take on e5.

### 39. ♔e2?

Objectively not losing, but it is a very strange decision to give Black such a chance to go for the pawn endgame. After the natural 39. ♘f3, followed by bringing the king to the light squares, the game would have ended in an inevitable draw.

39... ♔xe5 40.fxe5 ♖f7

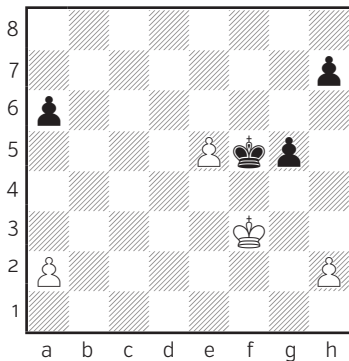


It is a very interesting task to analyze this pawn endgame. After a brief look we can see that the passed pawn on e5 is rather weak and it is Black who is going to have a distant passed pawn after ...g5 and a later ...f4, therefore he is the one playing for the win.

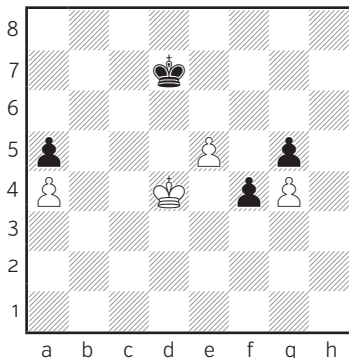
### 41. ♖e3?

This is the decisive mistake, but it was already very difficult to hold in a practical game. The only move was 41. ♖f3! g5! Black should prevent ♖f4, just like in the game, however the big difference here is that White has the option of playing g4! (41... ♖e6 does not create real problems for White. 42. ♖f4 ♖d5 43.h4 ♖e6 The idea is to place White into zugzwang by simply waiting with king moves and e5 falls at the end, but

White can create counterplay by going for the h7 pawn. 44. ♖g5 ♜xe5 45. ♖h6 and the game is drawn. 45...f4 46.gxf4+ ♜xf4 47. ♖xh7=) 42.g4! f4 A protected passed pawn is usually a big trump in all endings, but here it is insufficient to win the game. (The alternative is 42... ♜e6 but White is just in time to save the game with 43.gxf5+ ♜xf5



44.e6! ♜xe6 45. ♖g4 ♜f6 46. ♖h5 and Black cannot save his extra pawn, ♜h6 comes next and the game is drawn. 46...♜f5 47. ♖h6=) 43.h4 h6 44.hxg5 hxg5 45. ♖e4 White waits on the e4-d4-d3 squares with his king, giving protection to the e5 pawn and staying close enough to the f-pawn. 45...♜e6 46.a3 a5 47.a4 ♜e7 (47...f3 48. ♖xf3 ♜xe5 49. ♖e3= White holds the opposition.) 48. ♖d4 ♖d7



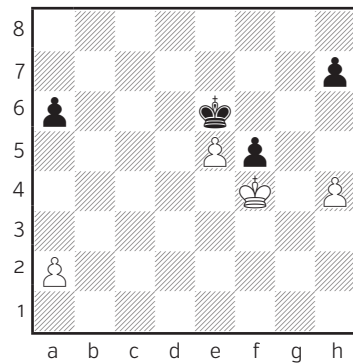
49. ♖d3!= It is very important to realize that White must play ♖e4 only when the black king goes to e6! (The reason is 49. ♖e4? ♜e6 50. ♖d4 White finds himself in zugzwang and he has to leave the f4 pawn, which allows Black to win the opposition after 50...f3! 51. ♖e3 ♜xe5 52. ♖xf3 ♖d4+) 49...♜e7 50. ♖d4!= avoiding again the ♖e4-♜e6 trap.

#### 41...g5!

In the 41. ♖f3 ♖e6 line, we already saw that allowing the white king to go to f4 leads to a draw. 41...♖e6 42. ♖f4=

#### 42.h3

White has just realized that he should play g4, but he has lost a decisive tempo. 42.h4 also loses: 42...gxh4 (42...h6 wins as well.) 43.gxh4 ♖e6 44. ♖f4



We have reached a position where the side who runs out of pawn moves loses. The one who needs to move with his king loses the f5 or the e5 pawn and the game. In such cases a very important rule to ease our calculation is that both sides must push the pawns which have already

moved. The pawn is already on a6, therefore Black must advance that pawn. (44. ♔d4 a5 leads to the same zugzwang positions as the 44. ♔f4 a5 line.) 44...a5! 45.h5 White also follows the principle, but it doesn't help him. (45.a4 h5 46. ♔g5 ♔xe5 47. ♔xh5 ♔f6 48. ♔h6 f4-+; 45.a3 a4 46.h5 h6-+) 45...a4!-+ Following the principles again! A clear example is that if Black plays 45... h6 instead, then 47.a4 wins for White! Now if White pushes h6, a3 wins, or in case of a3, h6 wins for Black.

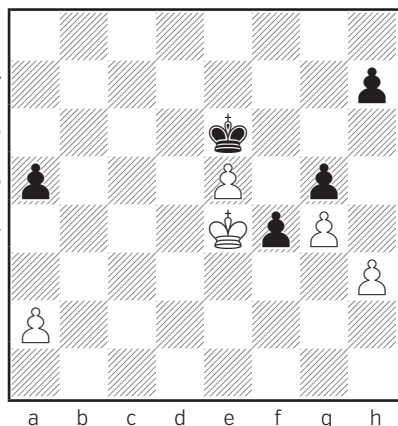
#### 42... ♔e6 43. ♔d4 a5!

Krasenkov follows the same principle that we already know from the 42.h4 line. He moves the pawn which has already left its initial position.

#### 44.g4

44.a4 h5-+ is zugzwang for White.

#### 44...f4 45. ♔e4



#### 45...f3!

Precise calculation! It is important to save all the tempi (...h6 and ...a4) for setting White into zugzwang in the future. 45...a4 allows White to play 46.h4 h6 47.hxg5 hxg5 48.a3 with the same draw that we already discovered in the 41. ♔f3 g5 42.g4 line!

#### 46. ♔xf3 ♔xe5 47. ♔e3 a4!

But not 47...h6 because of 48.a4=

#### 48.a3

48. ♔f3 ♔d4-+;

White loses the pawn race after 48. ♔d3 ♔f4 49. ♔c4 ♔g3 50. ♔b4 ♔xh3 51. ♔xa4 ♔xg4 52. ♔b4 h5-+ and the h-pawn promotes first and covers the a8 square.

#### 48...h6!

The decisive tempo and White is lost!

#### 49. ♔e2

49. ♔d3 ♔f4 is the same as in the 48. ♔d3 line.

#### 49... ♔e4 50. ♔f2 ♔d3 51. ♔f3 ♔c3 52. ♔e4

White resigned! An instructive endgame to learn from.

#### 52... ♔b3 0-1