

**Chess Canada**

**Cerberus**







## Chess Canada

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### submissions

*Chess Canada* is looking for contributions: tournament reports, photos, annotated games. For examples, see this issue.

### suggestions

If you have an idea for a story you would like to write, email me:

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# Chess Canada Cerberus

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## Cover: Cerberus

The three-headed hell hound. A monster for a monster issue featuring three hellishly strong players who bite in the Opening, Middlegame, Endgame, *and* when you time is up!

## editor's note

Our main annotators this month are **one GM** and **two IMs**... with an **average age of 17** !

The cliché about young players is that they are all about tactics and deep computer prep in sharp positions. The games here show that winning requires more: **stamina**. There are a *lot* of long games here: six 60+ movers by Shawn, four of Johnathan's five games are 50+ moves, and even the most attack-oriented player here, Anthony, has five of his six games going 40+ moves.

The dog-fight of modern chess is actually a **four-headed monster**: avoid **opening** disasters, navigate the chaos of the **middlegame**, then survive or convert an **endgame**, and cope with all of this under **time pressure**. Our annotators know this from the inside, and write about it for you here.

I'd like to thank Shawn, Johnathan, and Anthony for their contributions: real insights into modern tournament chess. It was more fun to work *with them* than play *against* them!

- John Upper  
editor *Chess Canada*

**Next:**  
**Toronto 2024 &  
New York 1924**

## Q&A

10 quick questions  
for our top young  
player/annotators!

### GM Shawn Rodrigue-Lemieux

Birthdate: **March 22, 2004**

**Q: How and when did you start chess?**

I started playing at 6 years old. I saw my classmates playing during lunch and I wanted to learn and join them, so I signed up for the chess activity at school!

**Q: Favourite game?**

Either my game against Ivanchuk, or my game with 3 Knights against Vidyarathi! It's very hard to choose.

**Q: Favourite players?**

Magnus Carlsen by far. I also liked Vishy Anand when I was growing up.

**Q: Favourite book?**

*Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual*. I usually bring it to my tournaments, it's my lucky book!

**Q: Books or databases?**

Books.  
Databases can be more useful to prepare quickly, but less interesting in general.

**Q: favourite TV show and/or movie?**

*The Office*, followed by *Friends*.  
I don't really watch movies.

**Q: favourite non-chess activities?**

I like to play table tennis as well as tennis.  
I also really like geography.

**Q: current school & educational plans?**

I'm currently studying in the US, at the University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, near Mexico. I finished the first of 4 years of my Bachelor's in Biomedical Science. After those 4 years, I'm planning to go to Medical School, most likely in Canada.

**Q: Your chess goals?**

For now I'm not studying chess at all, so I don't have plans to get better at the moment. I'd like to spend more time on chess in the future, and I'd love to be 2600 at some point.

### IM Johnathan Han

July 25, 2009

I was first introduced to chess from one of my friends and I started playing when I was around 6 or 7 years old.

The most recent one I can think of was the game against Shawn Rodrigue-Lemieux in the Gatineau Open. Of course, when the time got low, I started making some mistakes but I think overall it was a very nice positional game.

My favourite players are Magnus Carlsen and Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. Magnus for his overall versatility and endgame conversions and MVL for his dynamic and fighting spirit.

*My System* by Aaron Nimzowitsch. It was one of the first books that I really looked at and although a few things are somewhat outdated, it is still a very complete book with many interesting ideas.

I use databases more often when learning.

Sports.

Math, basketball.

Currently at Merivale High School and I'm not exactly sure about future academic plans.

Hopefully I can become a grandmaster as soon as possible.

### IM Anthony Atanasov

January 30, 2008

My older brother taught me how to play chess when I was 4 and a half years old.

Atanasov-Burke, Silicon Valley Super Swiss, 2023.

*Past:* Harry Nelson Pillsbury.  
*Present:* Arjun Erigaisi.

*New York, 1924*

Databases.

I don't have a favourite TV show as I don't really watch TV. My favourite movie is probably *Whiplash*.

Table tennis, running, learning history.

I am currently in high school. Grade 11 starts in September, 2024.



In the short term I'd like the GM title, in the long term I'd like to have chess as my career.



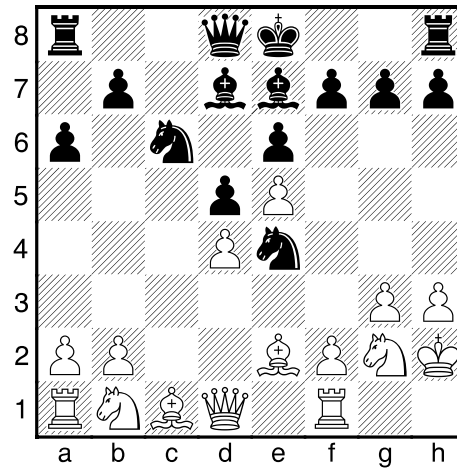
The following diagrams are **critical positions** from this issue of *Chess Canada*. You can treat them as exercises or as a teaser introduction to what you'll find this month. Critical positions usually feature significantly more analytical commentary than the rest of the game.

These critical positions can be:

- winning combinations
- surprising tactics
- endgames requiring precise play
- simple calculation exercises
- variation-rich middlegames
- moments when one player went badly wrong.

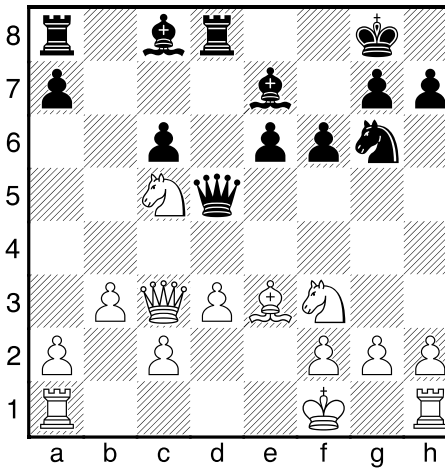
The  and  squares next to each diagram indicate the player to move. Some have leading questions, some don't.

**Solutions** appear in the game *analysis* **below the red diagrams** in the articles named under the diagram.



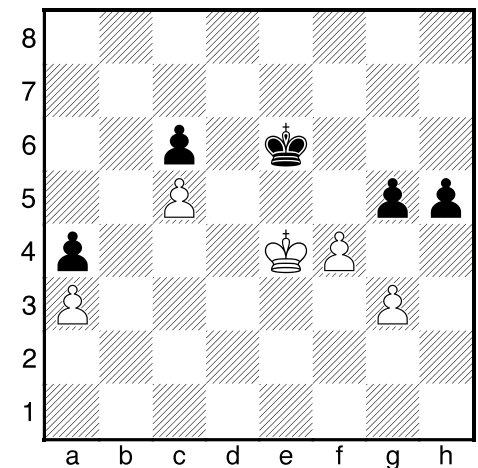
What happens if ...♔b6?

see: SRL

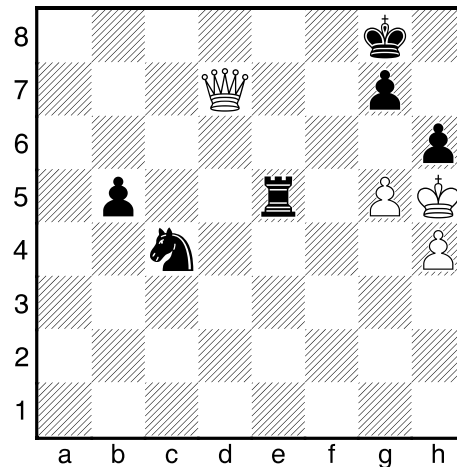


...e5 or ...f5 or does it matter?

see: SRL

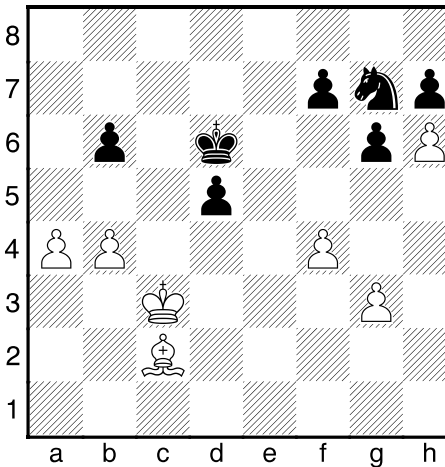


see: SRL

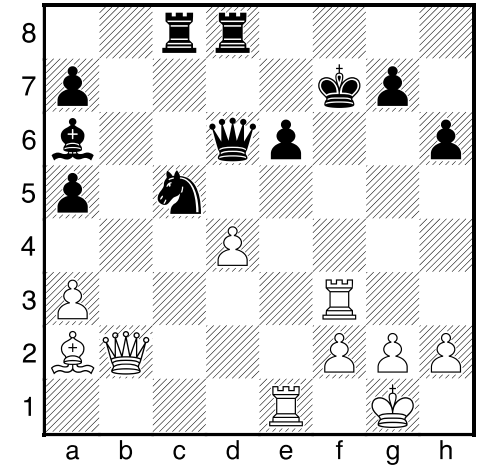


White pushed the g-pawn to break Black's fortress. What can Black do?

see: SRL



see: SRL

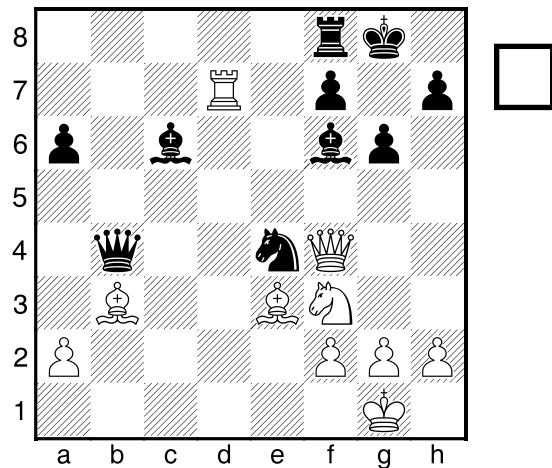


see: SRL



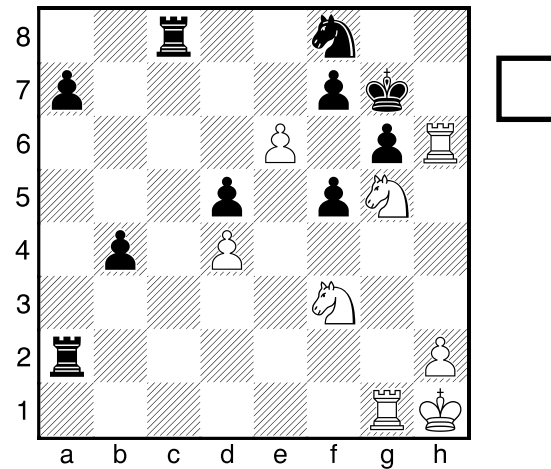


# Chess Canada Critical Positions



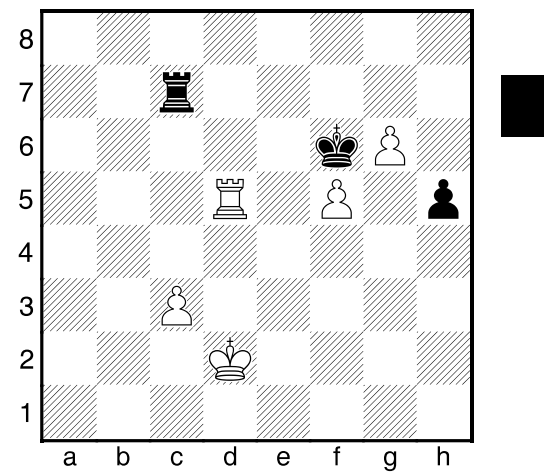
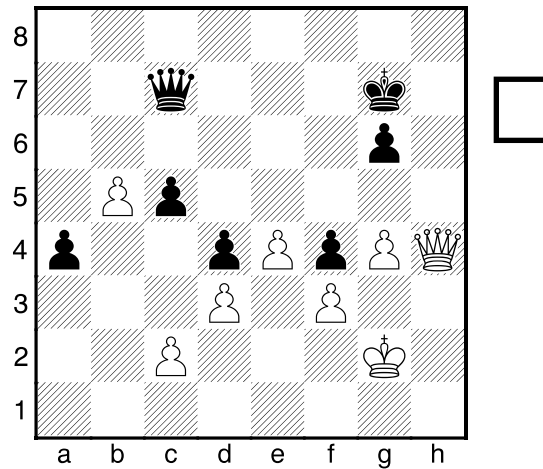
Attack the ♔ with ♖c7 or the pawn with ♗a7?

*see: SRL*



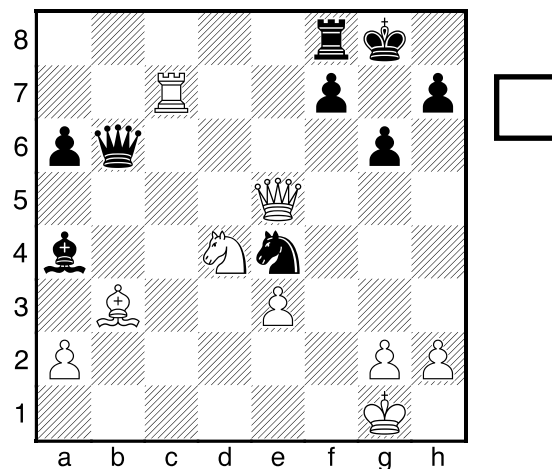
Find the best combination of the past year.

*see: SRL*

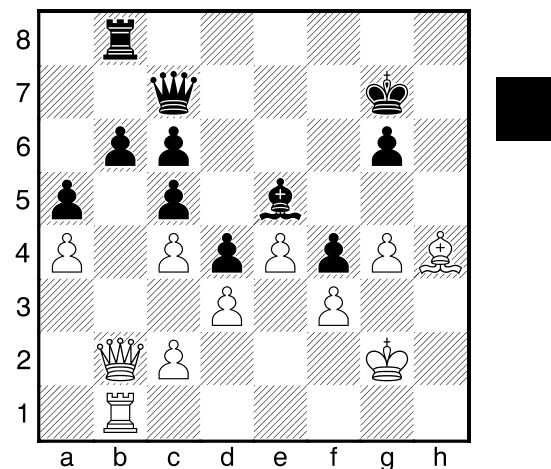


What happens after ...♖c8?

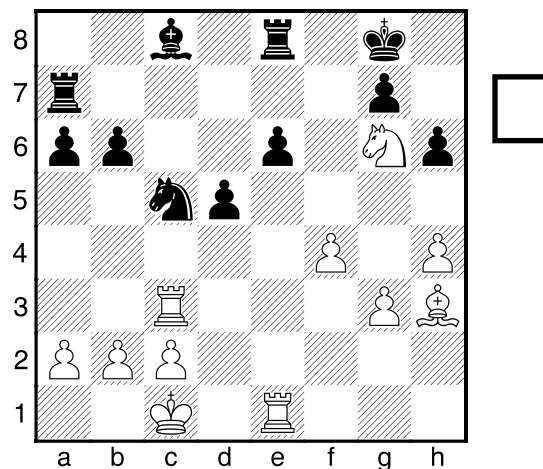
*see: Han*



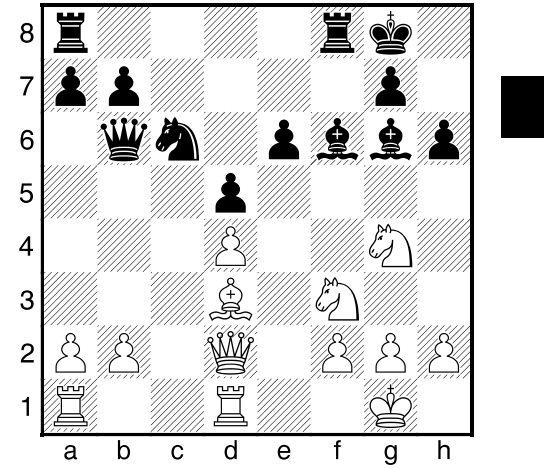
*see: SRL*



*see: SRL*



*see: Han*

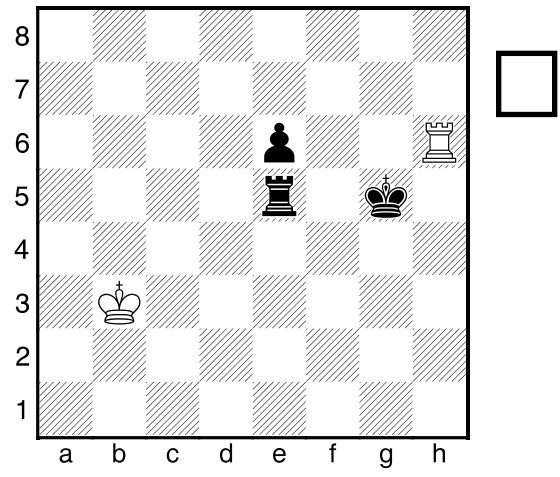


Is ...♗h5 any good?

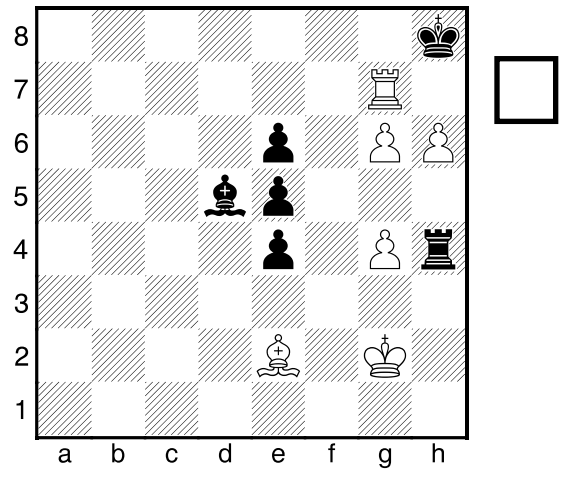
*see: Han*



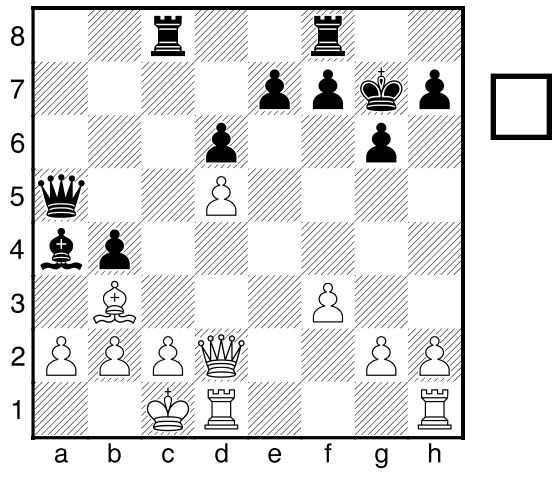
**Chess Canada  
Critical Positions**



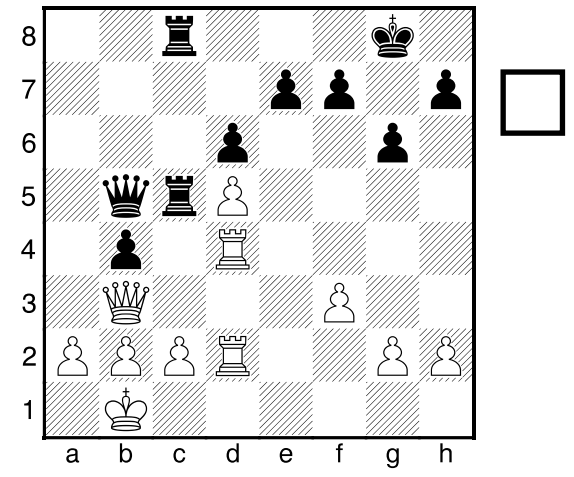
see: Han



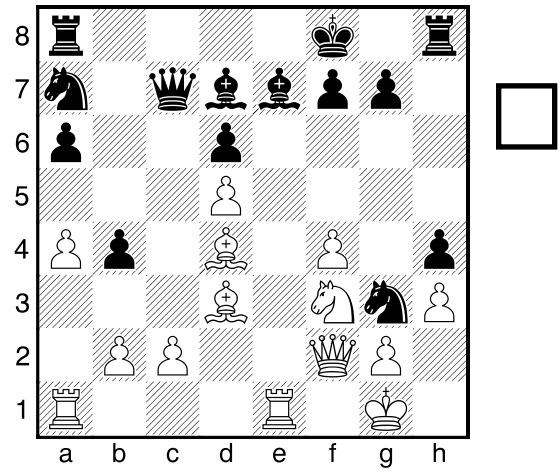
see: Atanasov



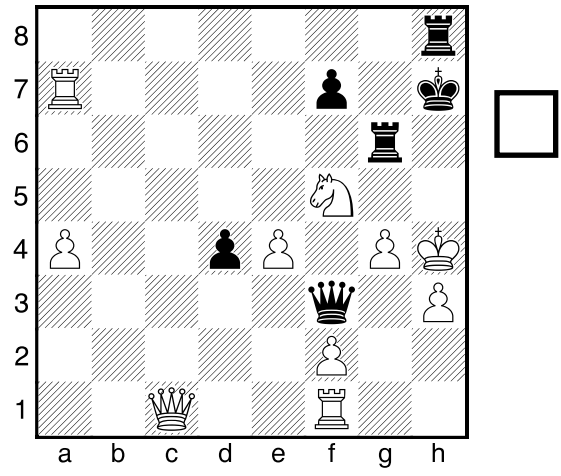
see: Across Canada



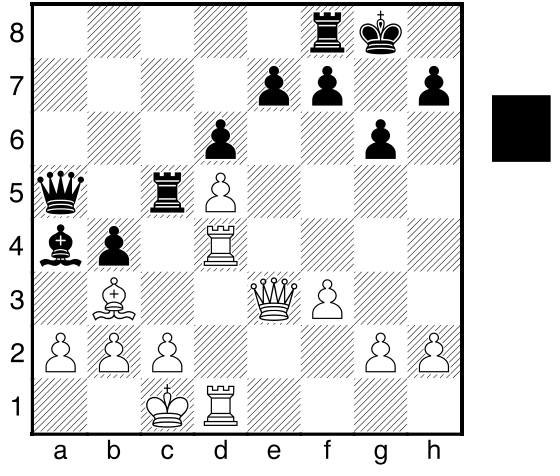
Black threatens ...♔f1+, and maybe even ...♖xc2.  
see: Across Canada



see: Atanasov

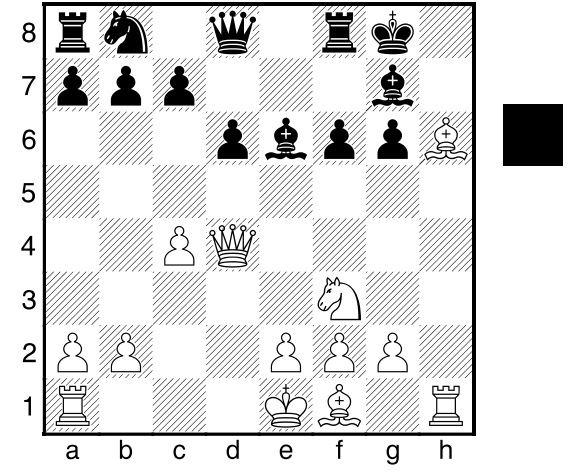


see: Atanasov



...♖a8, ...♖fc8, or ...♗xb3?

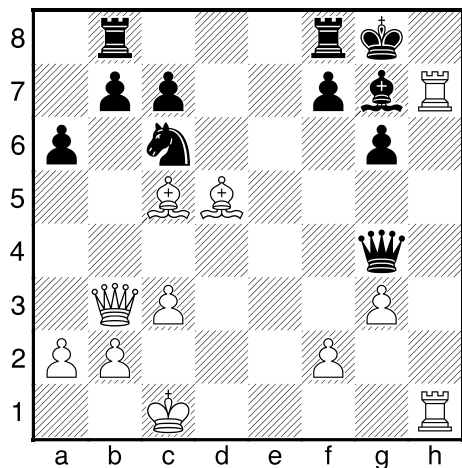
see: Across Canada



Bring a piece to defend with ...♔e7-g7, or ...♗xh6 then ...♔g7 to fight for the h-file?

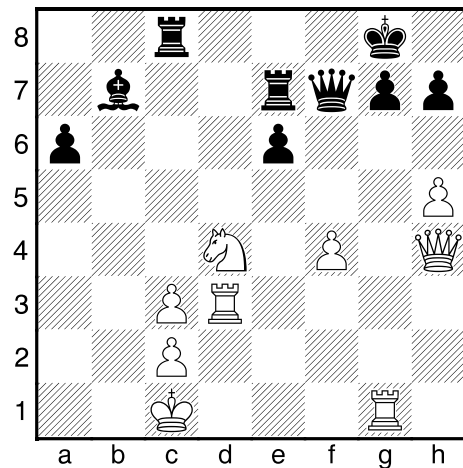
see: Across Canada



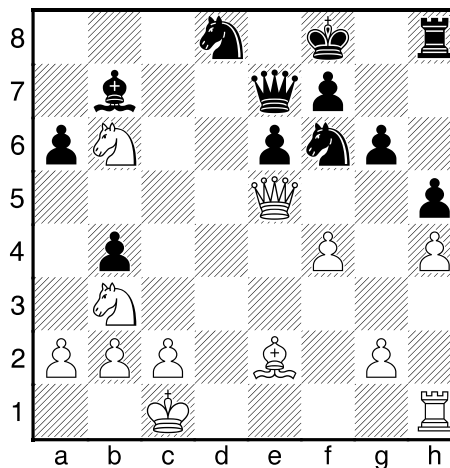


What happens after ...♘a5?

see: Across Canada

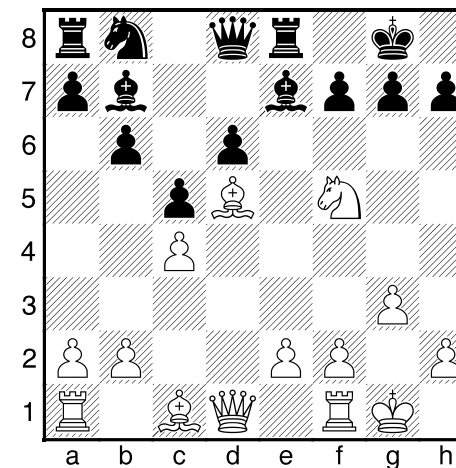


see: Across Canada



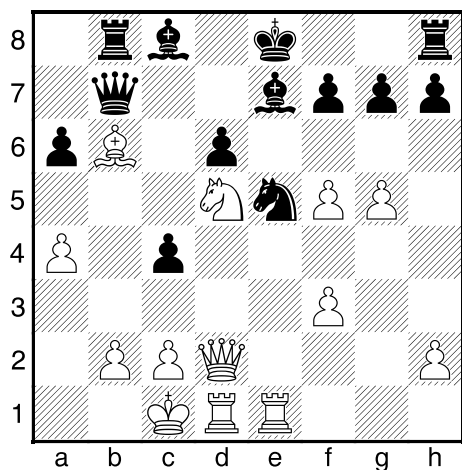
...♙g7 or ...♙xg2

see: Across Canada



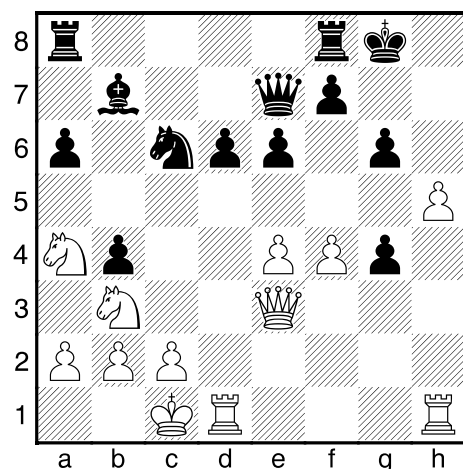
...♙xd5 or ...♙c6

see: Across Canada



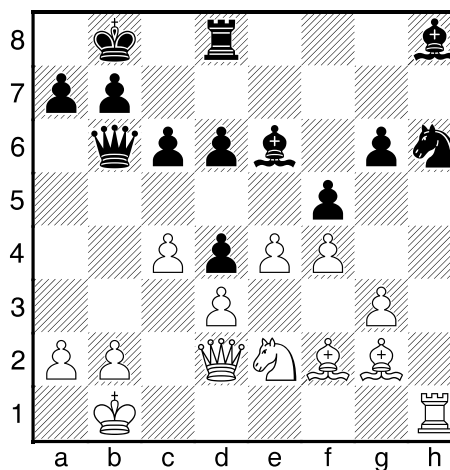
White to play and win in the old style.

see: Across Canada



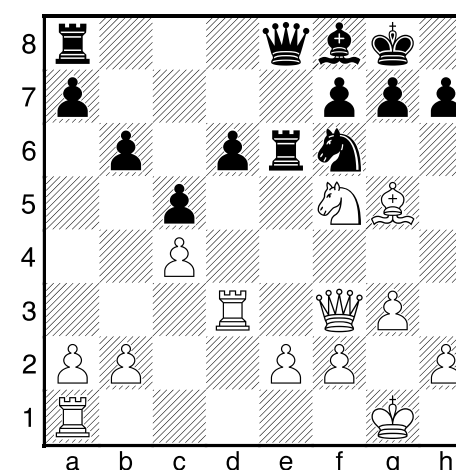
Is Black busted?

see: Across Canada



Black's ♘h6 is attacked. Which move should Black NOT play: ...♙g7, ...♙g4, or ...fxe4?

see: Across Canada



"petite combinaison", SVP

see: Across Canada



Shawn Rodrigue-Lemieux's 2022 was arguably **the best chess year in Canadian history**:

- 1<sup>st</sup> WYCC U18
- =1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Zonal
- 1<sup>st</sup> CYCC U18 (7/7)
- =1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Open
- 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Open Blitz
- 1<sup>st</sup> Charlotte CC IM Norm RR
- IM Title ratified.

And those are just the highlights. Along with *that* was a full diet of smaller events regularly pitting him against titled players, where listing *only his wins* would make it an enviable year for any player:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Chambly Open (5/5)
- 1<sup>st</sup> Montreal CC Ch. (5/5)
- =1<sup>st</sup> Ch. Ouvert de Laval
- 1<sup>st</sup> RA Fall Open
- 1<sup>st</sup> National Capital Open
- =1<sup>st</sup> Maplewood Rapid
- 1<sup>st</sup> RA December Open

Despite being a university student, Shawn continued this torrid pace in **2023: 151 FIDE-rated classical games**, including 16 Canadian tournaments! His **GM title** was ratified at the 1<sup>st</sup> FIDE Congress of 2024. At 20 years of age, he is currently **Canada's youngest Grandmaster**.

I asked Shawn to annotate some of his favourite and most memorable games from this stretch, as well as a couple of games which either caught my eye (vs Han) or seemed to me to most clearly represent Shawn's chess style and strengths (vs Hebert).

His style puts the lie to the suggestion that young players are all about tactics, computer analysis, and deep opening prep. While Shawn *can* do that, a more typical SRL game has a calm positional opening — the Caro or a Bb5 anti-Sicilian — and grinding endgame extending beyond move 60. Years ago, that kind of play would have been derided as “old man chess”; nowadays, we say it is “Carlsen-like”.

Please enjoy the following 15 games, with notes by GM Shawn Rodrigue-Lemieux.

- editor



...plus that 9/9, 3037 TPR, but I can't squeeze in *everything*.

photo: Charlotte CC

## SRL (2421) Hebert, Jean (2402) B51

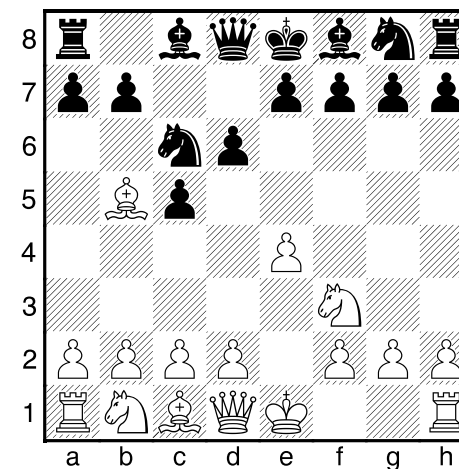
Tournoi ouvert de Chambly (4),  
03.04.2022

**Notes: GM Shawn Rodrigue-Lemieux**

### 1.e4 c5

First surprise of the game, as I was hoping for a French. At that time, I didn't have good knowledge of the Sicilian!

### 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 d6



This move came as a pleasant surprise to me. In my opinion, ...g6 and ...e6 are both better

tries than this move, which gives White many interesting options.

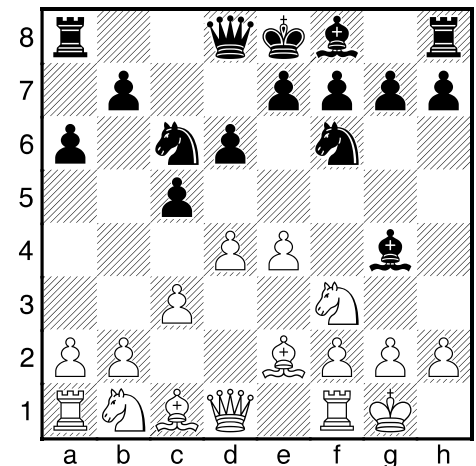
### 4.0-0 ♙g4

Black generally plays 4...♙d7 5.♖e1 ♘f6 6.c3 a6 7.♙f1 ♙g4.

### 5.c3 a6 6.♙e2

Keeping the Bishop pair. I knew that 6.♙xc6+ was better, but I expected that my opponent would be familiar with this move, so I wanted to do something different.

### 6...♘f6 7.d4



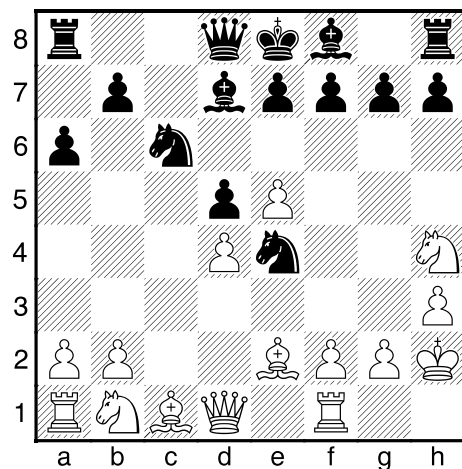
### 7...cxd4

*editor* – 7...♘xe4?? falls into the trap, since 8.d5 and ♖a4+ wins one of the ♘s.



8.cxd4 d5 9.e5 ♘e4 10.h3  
10.♔h1 e6 11.♞g1 is a very  
creative idea for White, and it's  
not easy for Black to save the  
e4-Knight.

10...♙f5 11.♞h4 ♙d7 12.♔h2

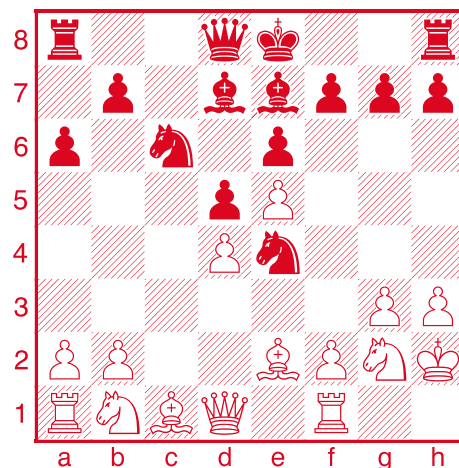


I knew that this was probably  
not a great idea, but I wanted to  
try something creative, to force  
him out of his comfort zone. It  
looks very odd, but I couldn't find  
a great way for him to escape.

12...e6

*editor* – turns out to be a French  
anyway!

13.g3 ♙e7 14.♞g2



14...f6

14...♙b6! is a brilliant way  
to sacrifice the Knight: 15.f3  
♞g5 16.h4 h6!! 17.♙e3! (White  
can't afford to open the h-file:  
17.hxg5?? hxg5+ 18.♔g1 ♞xd4  
19.♙e3 ♞xe2+ 20.♙xe2 d4  
21.♙f2 ♙b5+) 17...♙xb2 18.♞d2  
♞xd4 19.♙b1 ♙c3 20.♙c1  
♙b2 21.♙b1= with a draw by  
repetition.

15.f3 ♞g5 16.♞c3

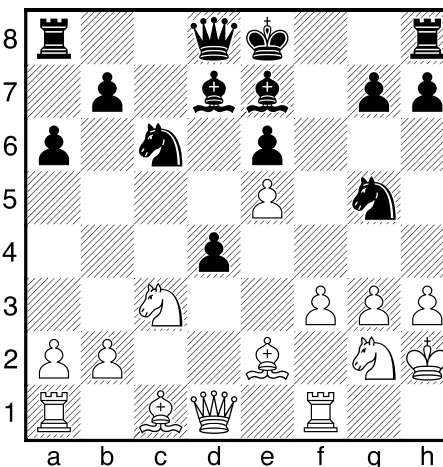
16.♙e3 is better, but I didn't  
want to lose a tempo in case he  
eventually plays ...d4.

16...fxe5

16...♙b6 17.f4 ♞f7 18.f5 fxe5  
19.fxe6 ♙xe6 20.dxe5± was my  
idea. White's pieces will quickly

come into the game after an  
eventual ♞f4.

17.dxe5 d4



I was surprised when he played  
this move, since I get a great  
position after that.

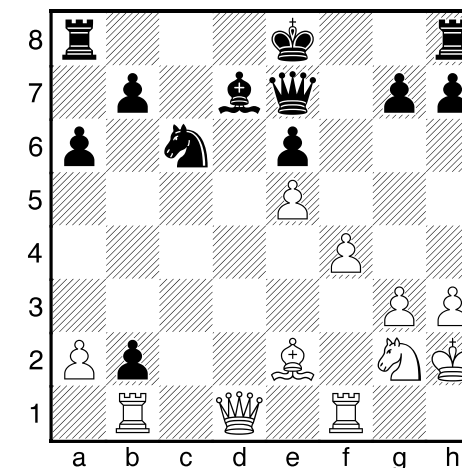
18.♙xg5 dxc3

18...♙xg5 gives me a great  
square for my Knight after  
19.♞e4 ♙e7 20.f4 0-0 21.a3!±.

19.♙xe7 ♙xe7 20.f4

20.bxc3 ♞xe5 21.f4 was also  
possible, but I wanted to keep  
my e5-pawn.

20...cxb2 21.♙b1



I felt quite happy with my position  
here, since I have a solid pawn  
chain protecting my King. Black  
also has many weaknesses,  
such as the d6-square.

21...0-0 22.♙xb2 b5 23.♙d2  
♙ad8 24.♙f3?

I saw 24.♙c2 but I rejected it  
because of 24...♞b4.

24.♙c1± is much better, as it  
makes ...♞a5-c4 less appealing  
for Black.

24...♞a5!

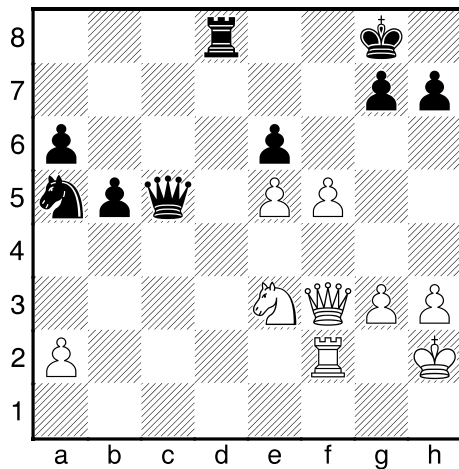
I overlooked this idea. Black's  
Knight quickly jumps to c4.

25.♞e3 ♙c6 26.♙ff2 ♙xf3  
27.♙xf3 ♙c5 28.♙xd8 ♙xd8





29.f5



29...♖f8

29...♖xe5 30.♘g4? (30.fxe6 ♖xe6 31.♘f5= maintains the balance.) 30...♖d5 31.♖c3 exf5 32.♘h6+ gxh6 33.♖xa5 h5̄ is better for Black

30.f6 ♖xe5 31.♘g4

31.f7+ ♖h8 32.♘g4 ♖c7?? (32...♖d6! prevents ♖a3; 32...♖c5? 33.♖e4±) 33.♖a3 ♖d8 34.♘e5 ♘c4 35.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 36.♘d7+- was another idea I considered. Unfortunately, Black doesn't have to enter this variation!

31...♖c7?

31...♖d6 is totally fine for Black. The idea is that 32.f7+ can be

met with 32...♖h8 without allowing ♖a3.

32.f7+ ♖xf7

32...♖xf7

33.♖a8+#2;

32...♖h8 33.♖a3+-.

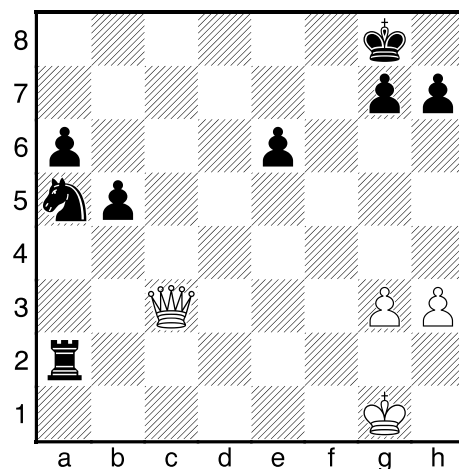
33.♖c3

With a double-attack on the ♖ and ♘. Black has no choice.

33.♖a3 doesn't work because of 33...♘c4.

33...♖xf2+ 34.♘xf2 ♖xf2+

35.♔g1 ♖xa2



White is the one pushing, but Black should hold.

...one of my first wins which gave me more confidence in endgames and against high-rated players.

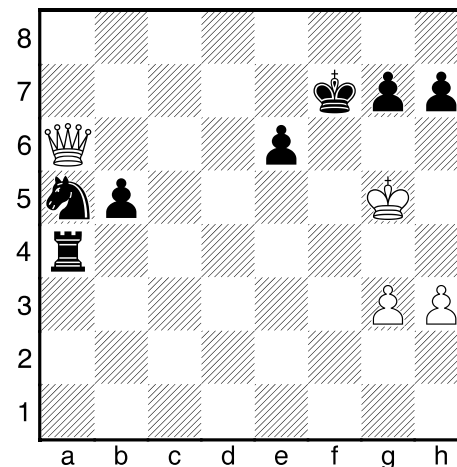
We now have a complex endgame where White is the one pushing, but Black's position should hold. White has

to act quickly before Black can coordinate their pieces.

36.♖c8+ ♔f7 37.♖xa6 ♖a1+

38.♔f2 ♖a2+ 39.♔f3 ♖a3+

40.♔f4 ♖a4+ 41.♔g5



41...♘c4?!

41...h6+! 42.♔h5 ♘c4 43.♖b7+ ♔g8 44.♖c8+ and now White might even lose this game! (44.

g4=) 44...♔h7 45.♖xe6 ♘e5!! 46.g4 (46.♖xe5?? g6#) 46...♖e4 47.♖b6 ♖e2 48.♖a7 ♖h2 49.♔h4 ♖g2 50.♔h5 ♖g3 51.♔h4 ♖b3 52.g5 ♘g6+ 53.♔h5 ♖xh3+ 54.♔g4 ♖h4+ 55.♔g3 h5̄.

42.♖b7+ ♔f8 43.♖c8+ ♔f7

44.♖d7+ ♔f8 45.♖xe6 ♖a3

46.♔h4?!

46.♖f5+ ♔g8 47.♔f4 h6

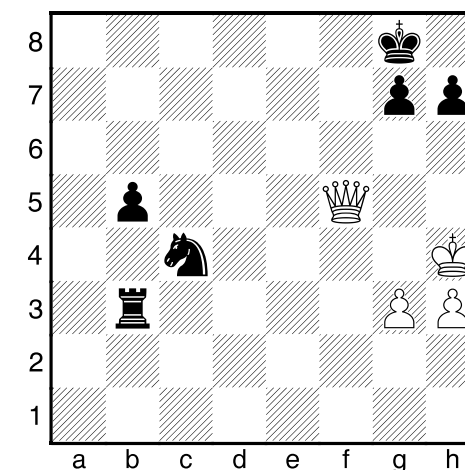
48.♖xb5± gives White some

hope, although Black should still hold.

46...♖b3

46...h6! is the best way to play for Black. 47.♖f5+ ♔g8 48.♖xb5 ♘e3 and White has no way to make progress.

47.♖f5+ ♔g8







# Chess Canada Rodrigue-Lemieux

48. ♖e4?

⊔48. ♖d5+ ♔f8 49. g4 h6 50. ♔h5 puts a lot of pressure on Black, and it's not clear if Black can still hold: 50... ♖e3 51. ♔g6 ♘e5+ 52. ♔h7 ♘f7 53. h4 ♖e5 54. ♖d7±.

48...h6 49. ♖e8+ ♔h7

50. ♖e4+ ♔g8 51. ♖e6+ ♔h8

52. ♔g4 ♔h7 53. ♖e4+ ♔g8

54. h4 ♘e3+ 55. ♔h5 ♘c4

56. ♖e8+ ♔h7 57. ♖g6+ ♔g8

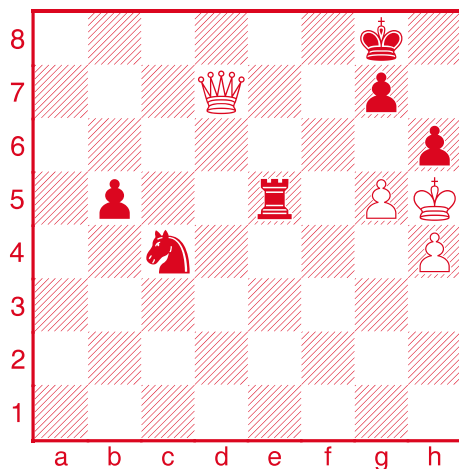
58. ♖e8+ ♔h7 59. ♖e4+ ♔g8

60. g4 ♖e3 61. ♖d5+ ♔h7

62. ♖f5+ ♔g8 63. g5 ♖e5

64. ♖d7

The final trick.



White has just pushed the g-pawn to break Black's fortress.

What can Black do?

64...hxc5??

And Black fell for it! After defending well for many moves.

An interesting defense was

64... ♔h8! after which the natural 65. ♔g6?? loses the game to 65... ♖xc5+ 66. hxc5 ♘e5+-+.

editor – repeating with 64... ♔h7 is the simplest draw.

65. ♔g6

This was a very satisfying game. It felt nice winning this important game, especially this way. This was one of my first wins which gave me more confidence in endgames and against higher-rated players.

1-0

## Stop the Press!

while I'm proofreading, SRL is having a great start to the Olympiad, including wins in RN v RN vs a 2587, and a 103-mover over a 2661 in a QvQp. So... something something *endgames!*

SRL (2451)

Nogerbek, Kazybek

(2457)

B30

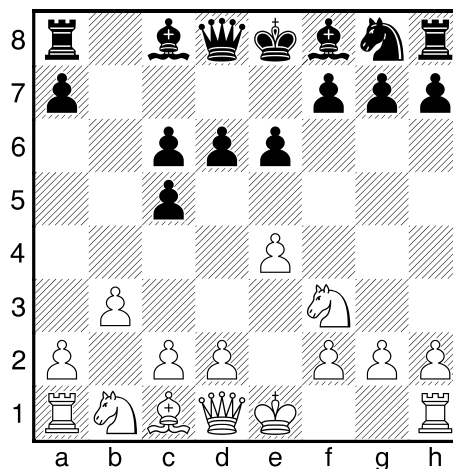
WYCC 2022 (9), 14.09.2022

**Notes: GM Shawn Rodrigue-Lemieux**

I first played Kazybek in 2013 in the U10 section of the same tournament, and both games were just as eventful!

1. e4 c5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. ♖b5 e6

4. ♖xc6 bxc6 5. b3 d6

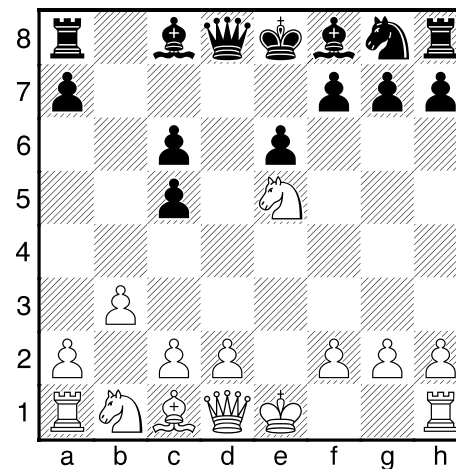


I suddenly got scared after this move, since I couldn't remember my preparation! I remembered that I should play 6.e5, but then I realized that Black could play

...dxe5 ♘xe5 with either ... ♖d4, ... ♖d5 or even ... ♖g5, and I was not a fan of any of these positions. At the end of the day, I decided to trust my memory and go for it!

6.e5 dxe5 7. ♘xe5

7.d3 is an interesting idea tried by Magnus Carlsen at the World Cup a year later: 7... f6 8. ♘bd2 ♘h6 9. ♖g1!? ♖a6 10. g4! ♘f7 11. ♖e2 ♖e7 12. ♖b2± in [Carlsen, M \(2835\)–Abasov, N \(2632\) Baku, 2023](#).



7... ♖d5

Black has a lot of options here.

7... ♖d4? looks amazing for Black, but the Queen will be in huge danger!



8. ♖b2! is promising for White after 8... ♔xb2?? 9. ♘c3 ♖a3 10. ♗f3 ♘e7 11. ♗xf7+ ♔d8 12. 0-0+ and Black can't handle the initiative; Tishin, P (2420)–Sevdimaliyev, U (2242) Suvorov, 2012.

*editor* – For the piece, White has a pawn, a huge development lead, and weak squares for the ♘s near Black's ♔.

8. ♘c4 ♖xa1 9. ♘c3 ♖a6 10. 0-0 ♖xc4 11. bxc4 ♖d6 12. ♗e2 ♘f6 13. ♖a3 ♖xf1+ 14. ♔xf1+- with a big advantage for White, since Black's pieces cannot coordinate. Zhao, J (2434)–Zhang, P (2579) Moscow Aeroflot op–A 2004 (2) with so many loose pawns the ♗ is better than ♖♖;

7... ♗g5 is another interesting try:

*editor - Bonus Canadian content:* 8. ♘f3 ♖xg2 9. ♖g1 ♗h3 10. ♖g3N ♗f5 11. ♖b2 f6 12. d3 g6 13. ♘bd2 e5 14. ♘e4 ♗h5? 15. ♘xe5!+- 1-0 *Mendes, A (2309)–Naudin, Y (1912) Reykjavik op 2024 (6) spearing the ♖h8.*

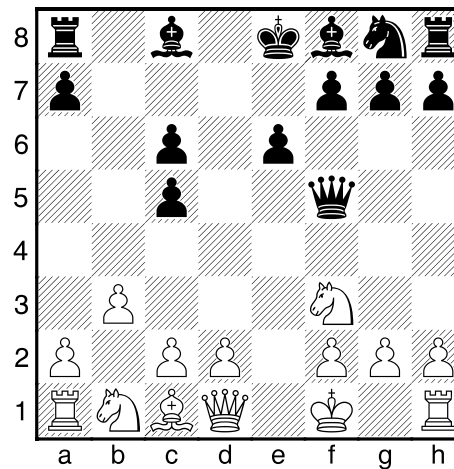
but White can simply defend with 8. ♘g4 ♘h6 9. ♘e3 ♘f5 10. 0-0

♘xe3 11. fxe3 ♖d6 *editor* – and somehow Black's activity makes up for the bad structure, e.g. 12. ♖b2 (12. ♗f3! 0-0 13. ♗xc6? ♗e7!! 14. ♗xa8? ♖b7 15. ♗xa7 ♗h4+) 12... 0-0 13. ♗f3 f5 14. ♘a3 ♖a6 15. d3 ♖ac8 16. ♘c4 ♖xc4 17. dxc4 ♗h6= *Vidit, S (2719)–Abasov, N (2632) FIDE World Cup Baku, 2023.*

8. ♘f3 ♗e4+ 9. ♔f1

This looks scary, but White is still quite solid and can try to target Black's weaker pawn structure. 9. ♗e2 ♖xc2 10. 0-0=.

9... ♗f5

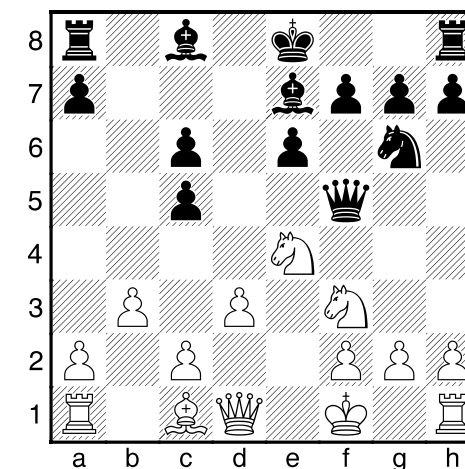


10. ♘c3

White can also develop the Knight to c4 with 10. ♘a3 ♘f6

11. d3 ♘d5 12. ♘c4 ♖a6 13. ♗e2 ♖xc4 14. bxc4 ♗f6 15. ♖b1 ♘c3 16. ♖b2 ♖b8 17. ♗e1 ♖d6 18. ♖xc3 ♖xb1 19. ♖xf6 ♖xe1+ 20. ♔xe1 gxf6= *Grischuk, A (2761)–Radjabov, T (2784) Moscow, 2012.*

10... ♘e7 11. d3 ♘g6 12. ♘e4 ♖e7



13. ♖g5?!

13. ♖e3 0-0 14. h4!±.

13... f6

I somehow underestimated this move. There was no need to provoke it, as Black wants to play ...e5 and ...f5 anyway!

13... 0-0?? is what I was hoping





for, as White wins after 14. ♖h4+- ♗xh4 15. ♕xe7.

**14. ♕e3 0-0 15. ♖d2**

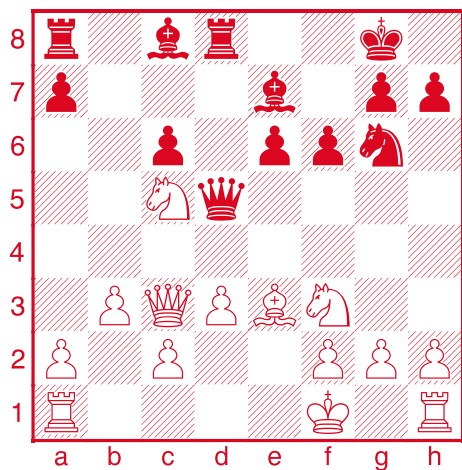
Looking to attack Black's queenside.

15. h4! is a very strong idea, trying to play h5. White can also activate the Rook via h3 in the future.

**15... ♖d8 16. ♖c3 ♖d5!**

A strong move, as Black would love to play ...e5 without leaving the Queen misplaced on f5.

**17. ♗xc5**



...e5 or ...f5 or does it matter?

**17... f5?**

I was extremely relieved to see this move! 17... e5= was dangerous, since my Bishop is now less active. Black's pawns will roll like an avalanche.

**18. ♕g5!**

An extremely effective idea, which he missed. After this forced trade, White's position becomes much easier to play.

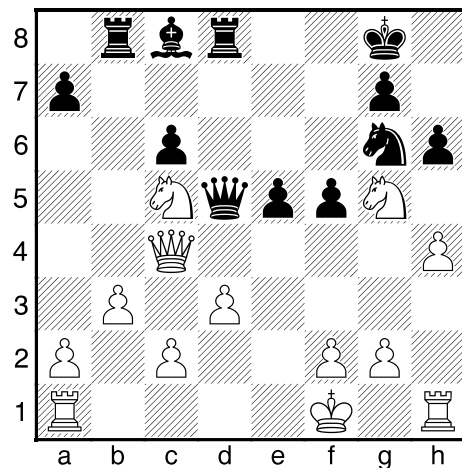
**18... ♕xg5**

18... ♕xc5 19. ♕xd8 e5 20. ♖c4±.

**19. ♗xg5 e5 20. ♖c4?**

Unnecessary. 20. ♖e1± is better, simply activating another piece.

**20... ♖b8 21. h4 h6**

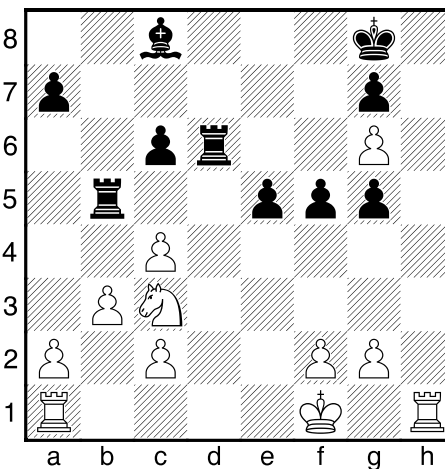


**22. ♗f3?**

22. h5! hxg5 23. hxg6 ♖b5 24. ♗a4± is a better way to play, as the g6-pawn proves to be quite unpleasant for Black to deal with. Black can eventually win the g6-pawn, but it will require an important loss of time, which White can use to create quick counterplay. If Black ignores the pawn, the King might soon end up in a mating net.

*editor* – at first glance, it looks like the g6-pawn is a goner after 24... ♖d6 but White has tactics that keep it alive: 25. ♗c3 ♖xc4 26. dxc4 and no matter where the ♖b5 goes White gets active play:

*Analysis Diagram*



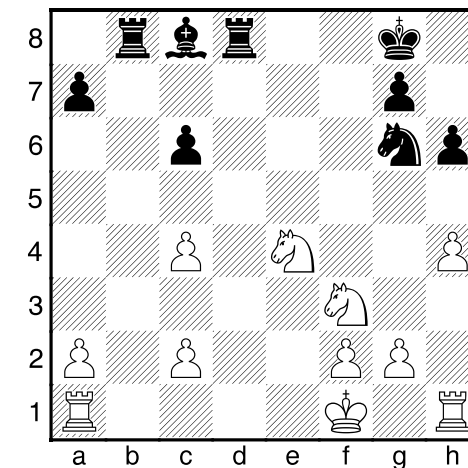
26... ♖a5 27. a4 ♕d7 (27... ♖xg6?! 28. ♖d1 ♕e6 29. ♖d8+ ♖f7

30. ♖hh8+-) 28. ♖h5 g4 29. ♖d1 ♖d4 30. ♖xd4 exd4 31. ♗e2 c5 32. ♗f4+- and ♗e3 or ♗d5. Black's ♖ and ♕ are useless.

26... ♖b8 27. ♖e1! e4 28. ♖d1! ♖xd1+ 29. ♗xd1 ♕d7 30. ♖h5!+- g4 31. g3 and ♗e3, and although Black can win the g6-pawn with ... ♖f8-f6, it will cost the f5-pawn, leaving Black with 5 isolated pawns.

**22... e4 23. dxe4 ♖xc4+**

**24. bxc4 fxe4 25. ♗xe4**



Even though I'm up 2 pawns, Black has enough compensation to equalize. However, they must play actively and accurately.

**25... ♖b2?**



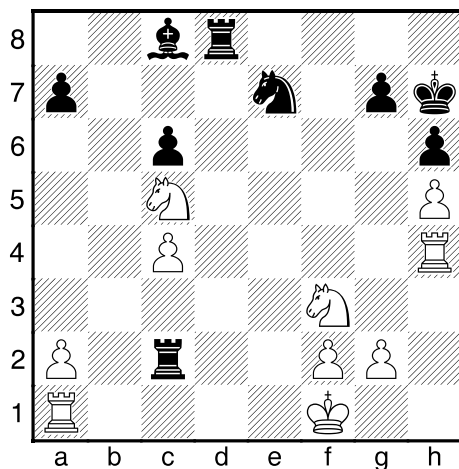
Winning the c5-pawn, but allowing White to activate. 25...♔g4 was better, forcing me to retreat. 26.♖ed2 ♘e7=.

**26.h5! ♘e7 27.♖h4 ♖xc2**

**28.♘c5**

The h1-Rook has finally activated!

**28...♔h7**



**29.♖f4?**

Trying to play g4, but this runs into a nice tactical idea.

29.♔g1+- was the way.

**29...♘g8??**

29...♘d5! allows Black to stay in the game! 30.cxd5 ♖xc5 31.dxc6 ♖xh5 32.♔g1 ♖c5 33.♖a4 ♖xc6 34.♖xa7±.

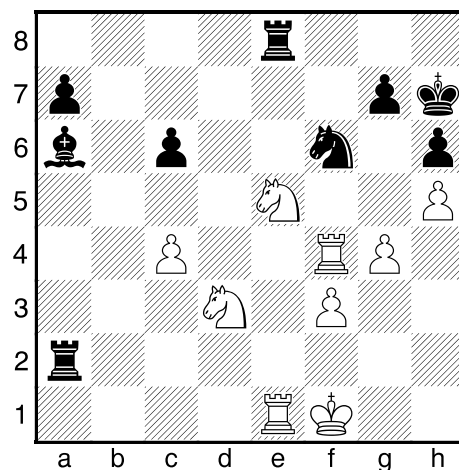
**30.♘e5??**

30.♘e4!+- was much stronger, preventing Black from activating.

**30...♘f6 31.g4 ♖e8 32.♘cd3 ♖d2**

Black's pieces are suddenly active.

**33.f3 ♔a6?! 34.♖e1 ♖xa2**



**35.♘b4**

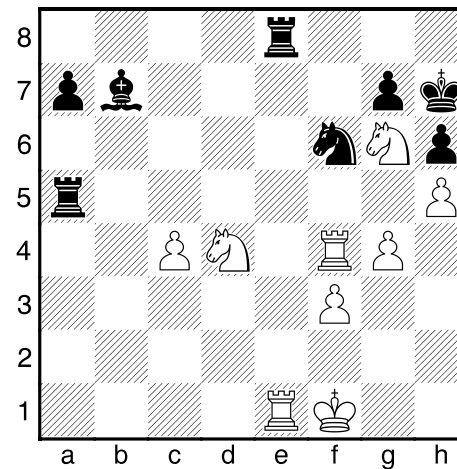
35.♘xc6 simply taking the pawn was stronger!

**35...♖a4**

35...♘d5 was a strong move, forcing more trades. Black has great chances to hold.

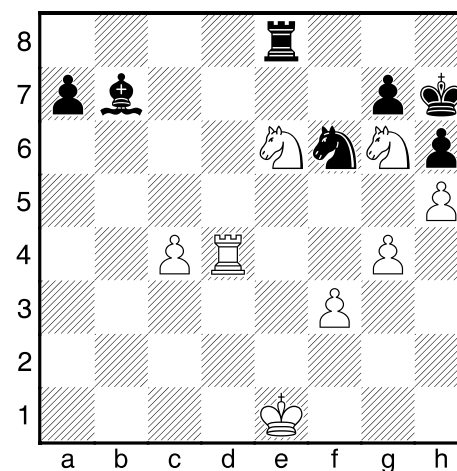
**36.♘bxc6 ♔b7 37.♘d4 ♖a5**

**38.♘g6**



Putting the Black King in a chokehold. It's not easy to escape this mating net.

**38...♖xe1+ 39.♔xe1 ♖c5  
40.♘e6 ♖c8 41.♖d4 ♖e8**



**42.♔f2!**

Defending everything.

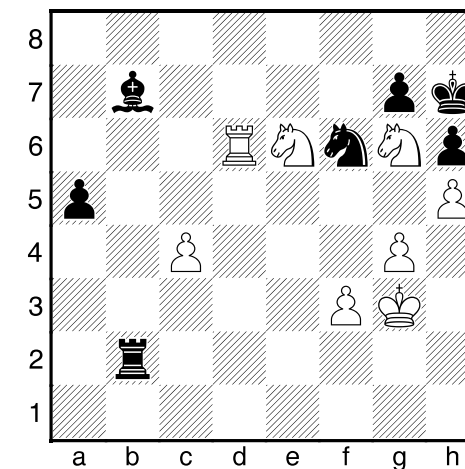
**42...a5**

42...♖xe6 43.♘f8+ wins.

**43.♘c5 ♔a8 44.♖d6 ♖c8**

**45.♘e6 ♖b8 46.♖a6 ♖b2+**

**47.♔g3 ♔b7 48.♖d6**



**48...♔g8**

*editor* – 48.♖d6! was so much better than the (also winning) ♖xa5: the mating attack leaves Black no time to attack f3, since 48...♖b3 49.♖d8 ♖xf3+ (49...♘g8 50.♘ef8#) 50.♔h4 ♘g8 51.♖d7 is another mating net.

**49.♖d8+ ♔f7 50.♘c5**

50.♘c7 led to an even faster checkmate!

**50...♘h7 51.♖d7+ ♔f6**







# Chess Canada Rodrigue-Lemieux

## 52. ♖xb7

This was certainly one of, if not *the* most important win of my life. This win allowed me to gain a half-point lead heading into the final 2 rounds, and it came against one of the most dangerous players of the tournament

1-0

**Gines Esteo, Pedro Antonio (2505)**

**SRL (2451)**

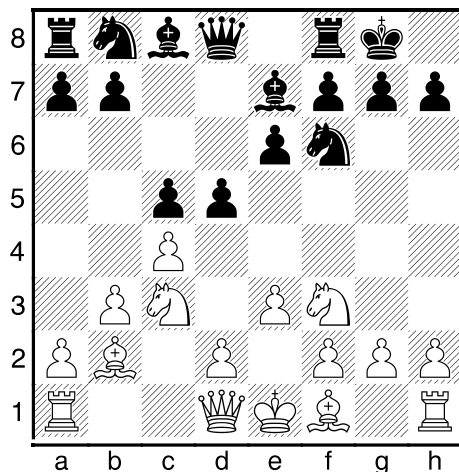
**A13**

WYCC 2022 (10), 15.09.2022

**Notes: GM Shawn Rodrigue-Lemieux**

Heading into this game, I was half a point ahead of my rivals. A draw with Black against the top seed would be a good result, but I wasn't in the mood to play for a draw!

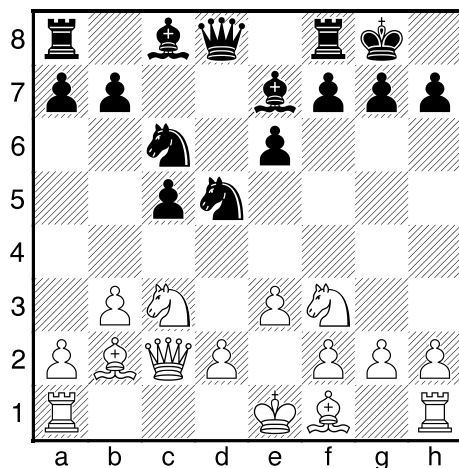
1. ♖f3 ♘f6 2. c4 e6 3. b3 d5  
4. ♕b2 ♕e7 5. e3 0-0 6. ♘c3 c5



## 7. cxd5 ♖xd5

7...exd5 is certainly the safer approach, but I had looked at ...♖xd5 before the game and felt quite comfortable in this double-edged position.

## 8. ♕c2 ♘c6



9. h4

**SRL v Nakamura**  
Annex Chess Club

An aggressive approach, preparing a kingside attack.

*editor* – A year later, Shawn got outmaneuvered on the Isle of Man by the 2022 European Chess Champion: 9.a3 b6 10.h4 f5 11.♖d1 ♕d7 (♞11...♕b7) 12.♕c4 ♘c7 13.h5 h6 14.d4 cxd4 15.exd4 ♘a5 16.♕e2 ♖c8 17.b4 ♖b7 18.♗e5 ♕f6 19.♗b3 ♘d6 20.0-0 and it is getting uncomfortable for Black; (1-0, 43) **Bluebaum, M (2668)**–**Rodrigue Lemieux, S (2488)** Douglas IoM, 2023.

## 9...f5

Positionally risky, but I was still in preparation and found this idea creative. I usually hate such moves, as I find them weakening, but I knew that I shouldn't argue with Stockfish!

## 10.a3 ♕d7

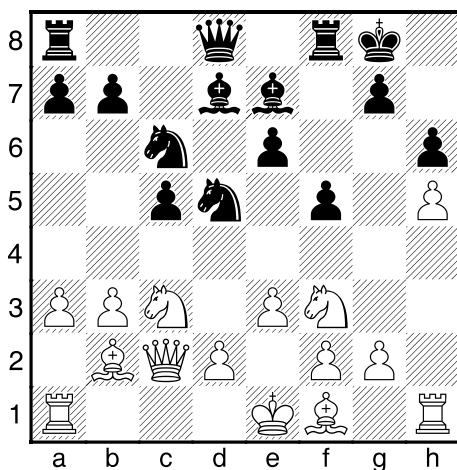
*editor* – Here's a Naka game which shows just how quickly even a GM can go wrong against White's modest-looking setup: 10...♖a5 11.♗xd5 ♗xd5?! 12.♖b1 ♗xb3 13.♗xb3?! ♖xb3 14.♕c3 (*Black has to*



*It's a good year when your OTB blitz draw with Naka didn't even make the short list.*

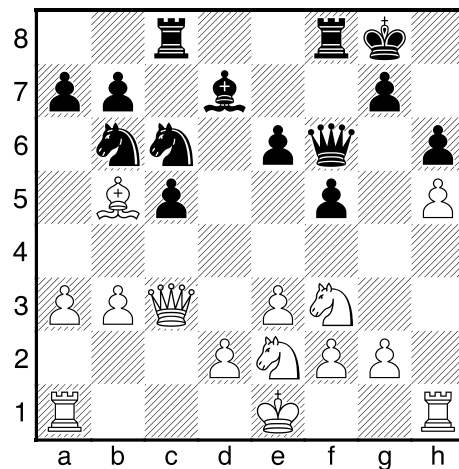
immediately give back the pawn to save his ♘.) 10... c4 15.♙xc4 ♘c5 16.♘d4 f4 17.♙b4 ♖f6 18.♘b3+- d2-d4 is coming, and untangling will cost Black at least a pawn and the bishop pair; Nakamura,H (2754)-Hess,R (2581) Chess.com, 2019 (1-0, 40).

11.h5 h6



This was the last move of my preparation. I knew it was around equal and that both players had chances.

12.♙c4 ♘b6 13.♙b5 ♙f6  
14.♘e2 ♖c8 15.♙xf6 ♙xf6  
16.♙c3



16...♘d4

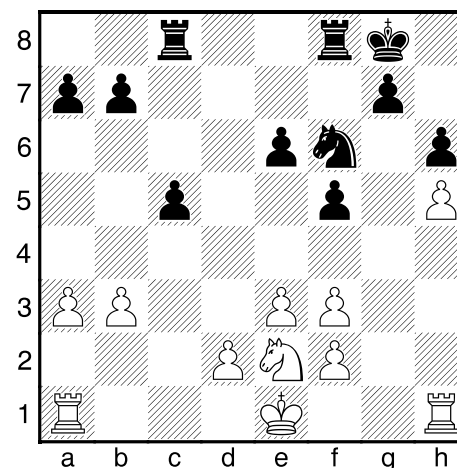
A very forcing move, which I wasn't sure about.

16...a6 17.♙xc6 ♙xc6 18.♙xf6 gxf6 gives Black a better endgame than the one I chose. For some reason I was scared and chose to avoid this line!

17.♙xd7

17.exd4 ♙xb5 18.dxc5 ♖xc5! gives Black a small edge.

17...♘xf3+ 18.gxf3 ♘xd7  
19.♙xf6 ♘xf6



We are now in an endgame where Black is quite comfortable.

White has a weaker pawn structure (doubled f-pawns, potentially weak h5-pawn) but the position remains relatively balanced. This is exactly the type of position I was looking for.

20.♘f4 e5 21.♘g6 ♖fe8

22.♙e2

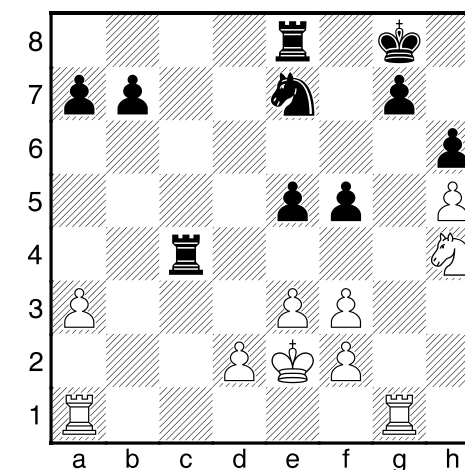
22.f4 is an important move for White, fixing the pawn structure.

22...♘d5

22...f4 is also an important move for Black, preventing White from playing f4 himself!

23.♘h4 ♘e7 24.♖hg1 c4

25.bxc4 ♖xc4



26.♖h1



Gines v SRL  
screencap



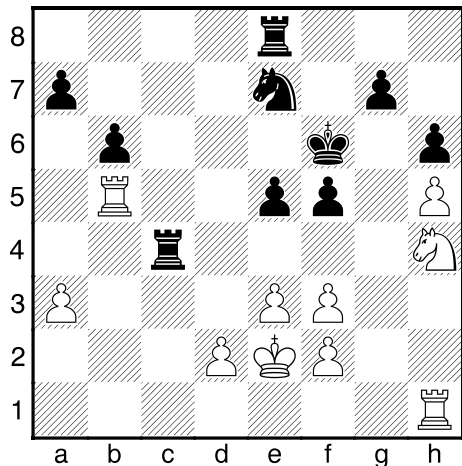
Chess Canada  
Rodrigue-Lemieux



Too passive! White must play actively, as in most endgames.

26. ♖g6 would've been more natural, but I suspect that my opponent was afraid of losing h5. 26... ♗xg6 27. ♖xg6 (27. hxg6 is also possible, although this gives Black a passed pawn.) 27... ♖h4 may look unappealing for White at first, but it's a losing blunder, since he now has 28. ♖ag1! winning, since 28... ♖e7 29. ♖xh6! winning the game. *editor* - Ironically, Black does not even win the h5-pawn, since White untangles with ♖g5 then moving the other rook.

26... ♔f7 27. ♖ab1 b6 28. ♖b5 ♔f6



I started to feel more confident in

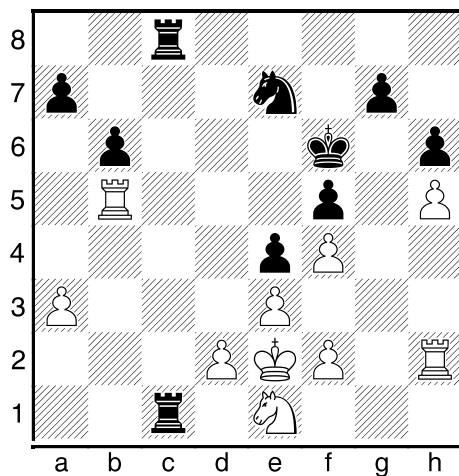
my chances here, as my pieces are becoming more and more active, while White is still not coordinated.

29. ♖g2 ♖d8 30. f4

Another move I was happy to see, as White's Knight is now in jail.

30... e4 31. ♖e1 ♖c1 32. ♖h2  
Now the Rook is also in jail!

32... ♖dc8



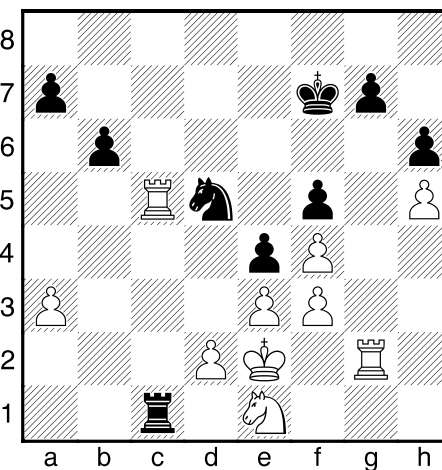
33. ♖b2?!

*editor* - Another choice between active and passive defence. The game move allows White to defend a3 after ... ♖a1 with ♖c2, but gives Black more of a free hand.

OTOH, 33. f3! creates a passer or a target for White to attack: 33... exf3+? 34. ♖xf3 solves all White's problems;

33... ♖a1 34. fxe4 fxe4 35. ♖b4! ♖cc1! 36. ♖h1 (only move, since 36. ♖g2? ♖f5-g3 tightens the screws.) 36... ♖xa3 37. ♖xe4 ♖aa1 White is still badly tangled, but might escape after 38. f5!?

33... ♖d5 34. f3 ♖8c4 35. ♖g2 ♔f7 36. ♖b5 ♖c5 37. ♖xc5



37... bxc5?!

37... ♖xc5 was much better, but to me it seemed like a difficult decision during the game.

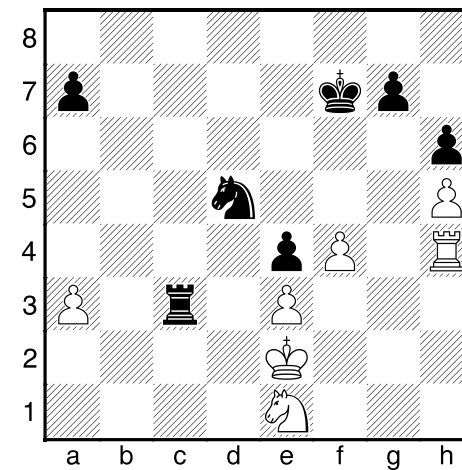
38. ♖h2?

This move is simply too slow! White had to punish ...bxc5 with 38. ♖g6! threatening to infiltrate 38... ♖f6 39. d3 since my Knight is now more passive.

38... c4!

The idea behind ...bxc5. White is now completely stuck.

39. fxe4 fxe4 40. ♖h4 c3 41. dxc3 ♖xc3



42. ♖g2 ♖xa3 43. f5 ♖a2+

44. ♔f1 ♖f6 45. ♖f4 a5

46. ♖e6 a4 47. ♖c5 a3

48. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 49. ♖xe4 ♖b2 and White cannot prevent Black from promoting.

0-1





My game against Gines was most likely the second most important win of my life! After 10 rounds, I was now a full point ahead of my rivals, with one game remaining. This meant that I only needed a draw with White in the last round to clinch the title, which I accomplished the next day!



# Chess Canada Rodrigue-Lemieux



left: screencaps | right: Mark Livshitz

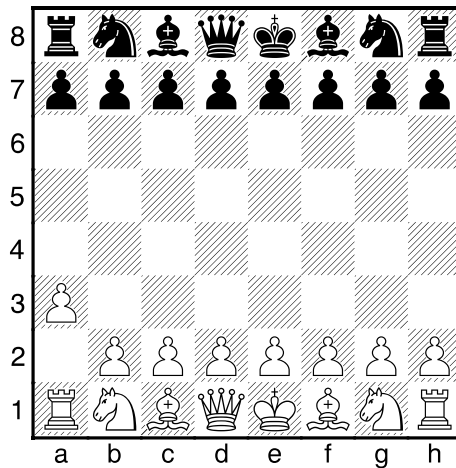


**SRL (2509)**  
**Ouellet, Maili-Jade**  
**(2351)**  
**A00**

Père Noël (5), Montreal,  
 30.12.2022

**Notes: GM Shawn**  
**Rodrigue-Lemieux**

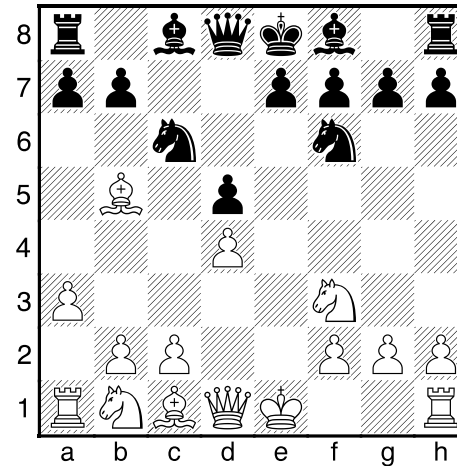
**1.a3**



Without a doubt, one of my favorite weapons! Playing against a friend of mine, who is extremely well-prepared, I wanted to avoid theory at all cost. And there is no better way of doing that than playing 1.a3!

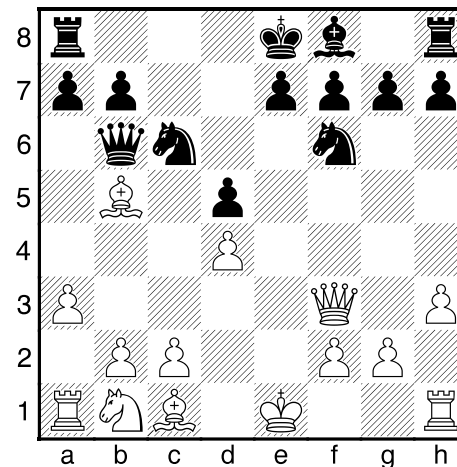
**1...d5 2.♘f3 c5 3.e3 ♘f6**

**4.d4 cxd4 5.exd4 ♞c6 6.♙b5**



We transpose into a reversed Ragozin, with the addition of the move a3.

**6...♙g4 7.h3 ♙xf3 8.♙xf3**  
**♙b6**



**9.♙d3**  
**9.c4!?:**

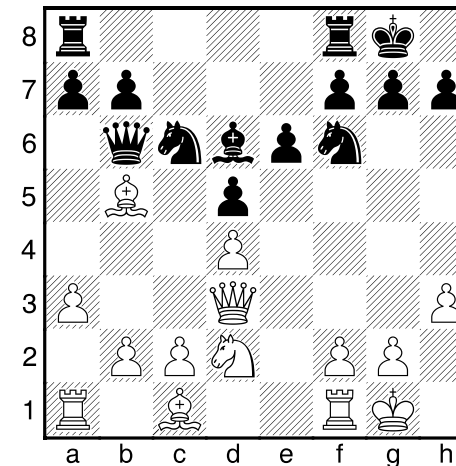
**9...dxc4 10.♙xc6+ ♙xc6 (10... bxc6 11.0-0=) 11.♙xc6+ bxc6**  
**12.♘d2 ♖d8 13.♘xc4 ♖xd4**  
**14.♘a5=;**

**9... e6 10.♘c3 dxc4 11.♙e3**  
**0-0-0 12.d5 ♘e5 13.♙xb6 ♘xf3+**  
**14.gxf3 axb6 15.dxe6 fxe6**  
**16.♙xc4 ♙c5=.**

**9...e6**

**9...a6!?** 10.♙a4 (10.♙xc6+ ♙xc6  
 11.0-0 e6=) 10...♙a5+ 11.♘c3 b5  
 12.♙b3 e6=.

**10.0-0 ♙d6 11.♘d2 0-0**



**12.♘f3**

**12.c3!?** e5?! (12...a6 13.♙a4=)  
**13.♙xc6 ♙xc6 (13...bxc6 14.dxe5**  
**♙xe5 15.♘f3 ♙d6 16.c4±; 13...**  
**e4?? 14.♘xe4+-) 14.dxe5 ♙xe5**

**15.♘f3±.**

**12...♖ac8 13.♙a4 ♘a5**  
**13...♘e4!?** 14.c4?? this move  
 looks natural, but it allows  
 a nasty tactic! 14...♘xd4!-+  
**15.♘xd4 (15.♙xd4 ♙c5-+)**  
**15...♖xc4 16.♙e3 ♙c5□-+.**

**14.c3 ♘b3 15.♖b1 ♘e4**

**15...♘xc1** is the move I  
 expected, after which Black is  
 solid. 16.♖fxc1 a6=.

**16.c4?**

Once again allowing the same  
 tactic, which we both missed!  
**16.♙e3** would've been  
 preferable.

**16...♘xc1?**

**16...♘xd4! 17.cxd5! (17.♘xd4?**  
**♖xc4-+; 17.♙xd4 ♙xd4 18.♘xd4**  
**♖xc4-+) 17...♘xf3+ 18.♙xf3**  
**exd5±** with a clear pawn  
 advantage for Black.

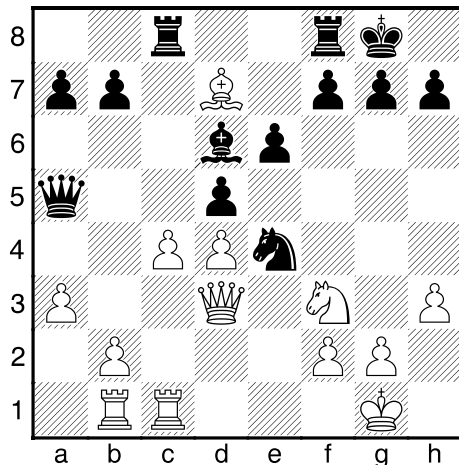
**17.♖fxc1 ♙a5**

**17...♙f4 18.♖c2 ♙a6 19.♙b5 ♙b6**  
**20.♙d7 ♖cd8 21.♙a4=.**

**18.♙d7!**



This strange-looking move gives White a crucial tempo.



**8...Rb8**

18...Rc7?? 19.b4+-;

18...Rcd8 19.b4 Qxb4??

(19...Qc7 20.Qxe6! fxe6 21.cxd5

Nxf2 22.Qxf2 Qe7 23.dxe6

Qxe6 24.Qb3 Qxb3 25.Rxb3±)

20.axb4 Qa2 21.cxd5 Qxf2+

22.Qh1 exd5 23.Qf5+-.

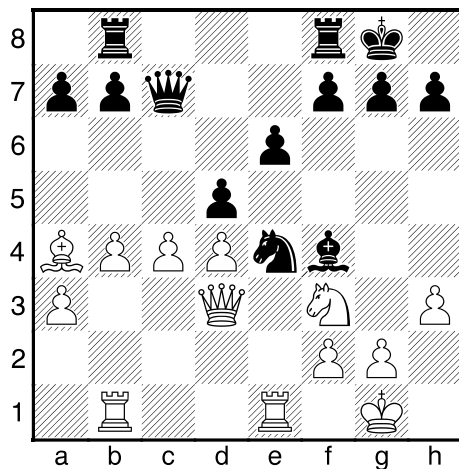
**19.b4 Qd8 20.Qa4 Qf4**

**21.Re1**

White's position is suddenly more pleasant, mostly due to the space advantage.

**21...Qc7**

21...Rc8! 22.Qb3±.



**22.cxd5?!**

Releasing the tension too early.

22.Rb2! was better, keeping all

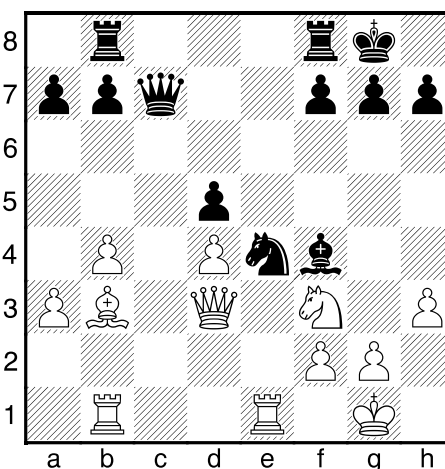
the options available:

22...Nf6 23.c5! Ne4 24.Rc2±;

22...Rbc8 23.Rc2 Qd8 24.Qb3±.

**22...exd5**

**23.Qb3**



Even though this position is more pleasant for White, thanks to the weak d5-pawn, Black has great chances to equalize due to the symmetrical nature of the position.

**23...Rbc8?!**

23...Rfe8! = is a nice way to equalize. 24.Qxd5 Nc3.

**24.Rb2 Nf6**

24...Qc3! 25.Qb1 Rcd8 26.Qxd5

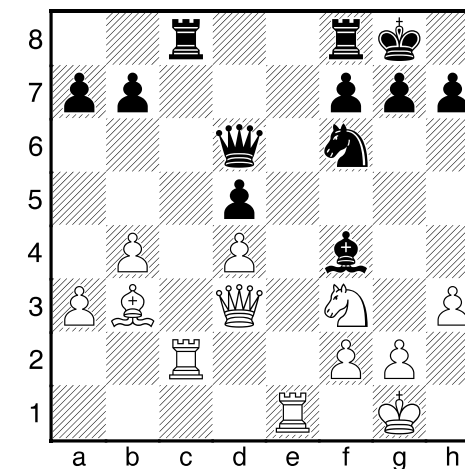
Nd2 27.Nxd2 Qxd2 28.Rd1 Rxd5

29.Rbx2 Qxa3 30.Ra2 Qc3

31.Rxa7 Qc6= and Black has

more than enough counterplay to equalize.

**25.Rc2 Qd6**



**26.Ne5**

26.g3!:

26...Qh6 27.Qg2±;

26...Qxg3 27.fxg3 Qxg3+

28.Rg2 Qxh3 29.Qe3±) also

gives White an important edge, as Black's pieces lack good squares. The d5-pawn will be targeted forever.



**Chess Canada**  
**Rodrigue-Lemieux**



**SRL & MJO**  
2022 Canadian Zonal Champions

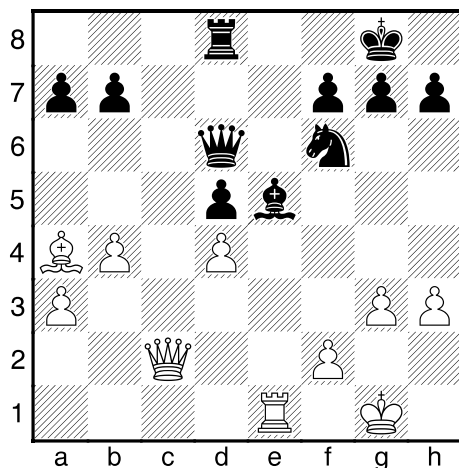


26...♖xc2 27.♔xc2 ♖e8

28.♙a4

28.g3! ♙h6 29.♖e2±.

28...♖d8 29.g3 ♙xe5



30.♖xe5?

30.dxe5! is much stronger, but I was afraid to create an imbalance. With the Bishop against the Knight, this structure is undoubtedly better for White. 30...♔e7 31.♙b3 ♖e8 (31...♖e4?? 32.♖d1+-) 32.h4 ♖c7 33.♔g2± a5 (33...♖b5?! 34.♔d3 ♖xa3? 35.♙xd5+-) 34.bxa5 ♖e6 35.♔d2±.

30...♖d7?!

30...♔a6= is very unpleasant for White!

31.♖e3?!

31.♙xd7! ♔xd7 32.♔c5 b6

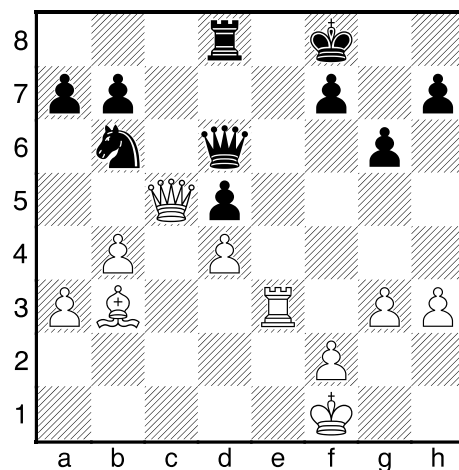
33.♔e7±.

31...♖b6 32.♙b3 g6 33.♔c5

♔f8

33...♔f6!= or 33...♔d7=.

34.♔f1



34...♔xc5?!

Trading Queens under favorable circumstances for White. The symmetrical structure usually favors the Knight, compared to asymmetrical positions where the Bishops can shine. 34...♔g7=.

35.dxc5 ♖a8?!

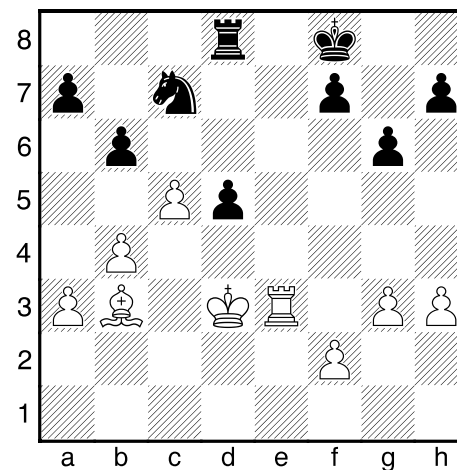
Black's best chance is to play

actively: 35...♖c4! 36.♙xc4 dxc4

37.♖c3 ♖d4 38.♔e2 f5! 39.♔e3

♖e4+ 40.♔d2 f4=.

36.♔e2 ♖c7 37.♔d3 b6



38.cxb6!

It doesn't seem too natural to trade this strong pawn, but it's what White should do in the bigger picture. In such endgames with Bishop vs Knight, the Knight isn't great at defending against outside passed pawns. With this trade, White now has the chance to play a4-a5, creating a dangerous pawn in the long run.

38...axb6 39.♔c2! ♖e8?!

A bad trade for Black, although it's hard to be critical of this move.



**40. ♖xe8+ ♔xe8 41.a4**

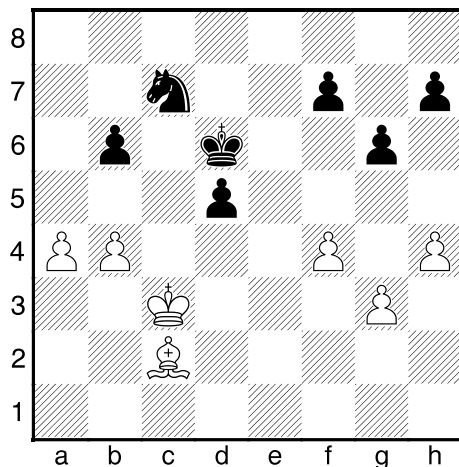
We now see the potential danger of the a-pawn. And with all the kingside pawns on light squares, Black is in a precarious position.

**41... ♔d7 42. ♖c3 ♔d6 43.f4?**

43. ♖c2! ♖e6 44.h4+-. If Black now plays 44...h5 there will be too many problems for Black to deal with, with all the pawns being stuck on light squares. 45.f4 f5 46.a5 bxa5 (46...b5 47.a6 White now has time to push the pawn up to a7!) 47.bxa5+-.

**43... ♖a6?**

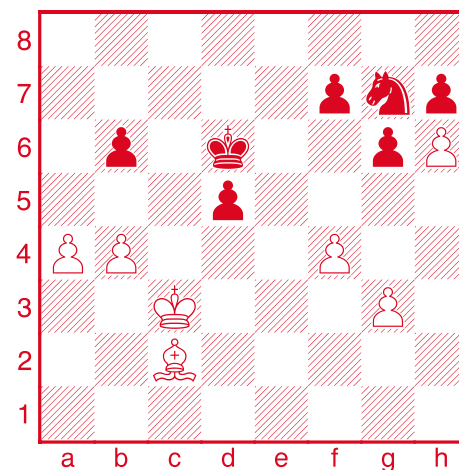
43...b5! 44.a5 f5! 45. ♖c2 h5! 46. ♖d3 ♔c6± and somehow Black has a blockade! It was important to start with h4 before playing f4.

**44. ♖c2 ♖c7****45.h4****45... ♖e6**

45...f5!? 46. ♖d3! ♖e6 47. ♖a6 ♖c7 48. ♖c8 ♖e8 49. ♔d4 ♖g7 50. ♖b7 ♖e6+ 51. ♔c3+-.

**46.h5?**

46.f5! ♖c7 47. ♖d3+- wins, since Black will not be able to defend the kingside and queenside at the same time.

**46... ♖g7! 47.h6****47... ♖e8??**

Too passive!

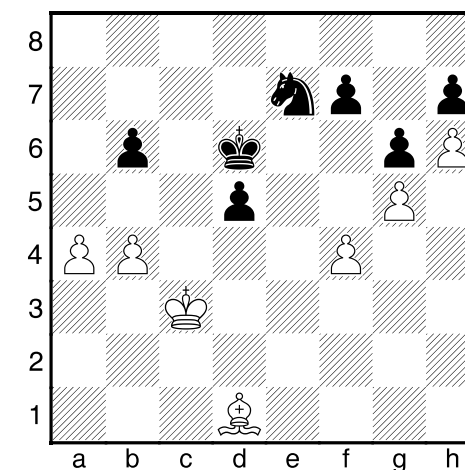
47... ♖h5□ saves the game for Black! 48.f5 ♖f6! (48...g5?? 49. ♔d4 ♖f6 50.a5 bxa5 51.bxa5+-) 49. ♔d4 (49.fxg6 fxg6 50. ♔d4 ♔e6 51.a5 (51. ♖d3 ♔d6=) 51...bxa5 52.bxa5 ♔d6=) 49...gxf5 50. ♖b3 (50. ♖xf5 ♖g8=) 50... ♔c6 51. ♖d1 ♔d6 52. ♖f3 ♖e4 53.a5 bxa5 54.bxa5 ♔c6 55.a6 ♔b6 56. ♖xd5 ♖f6+ 57. ♔e5 ♖g8 58. ♖xf5 ♖xh6+

59. ♔g5 ♖g8 60. ♖e2 ♖e7 61. ♔f6 ♖d5+ 62. ♖xf7 ♖c3 63. ♖d3 ♖d1=.

*editor* – 47... ♖f5? gives White a trivially winning pawn ending after 48. ♖xf5 □ gxf5 49. ♔d4+-.

**48.g4 ♖f6 49. ♖d1**

49.g5 ♖h5 50.f5 ♖f4 51.a5+-.

**49... ♖g8 50.g5 ♖e7****51. ♖c2**

51.a5! bxa5 52.bxa5 ♔c5 53.a6+-.

**51... ♔e6**

51... ♖c6 52. ♖d3+-.

**52.a5 bxa5 53.bxa5 ♖c6**

**Next stop: Cannes**

photo: Cannes Open facebook

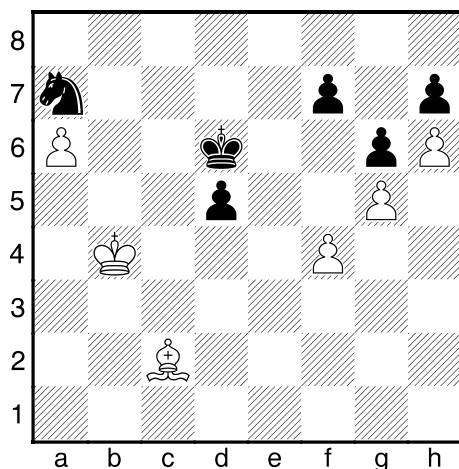




**54.a6**

These pawns are too much for Black to handle.

54...♞a7 55.♔b4 ♔d6

**56.♙xg6!**

A nice touch to finish this game, showing the Knight's inability to defend efficiently against outside passed pawns.

56...fxg6 57.f5 ♞c6+

58.♔a3 ♔c7 59.fxg6 ♞e7

60.g7 d4 61.g6

Too many pawns!

61...d3 62.♔b2

1-0

**Seemann v SRL**

**Seemann, Jakub (2425)**

**SRL (2457)**

**D38**

Open de Cannes (6), 23.02.2023

**Notes: GM Shawn  
Rodrigue-Lemieux**

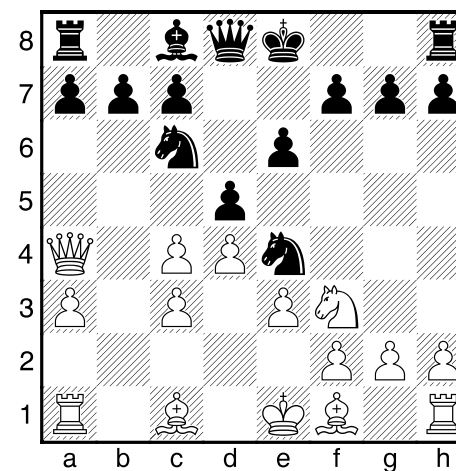
I wasn't totally confident against this opponent, as he is an extremely talented junior player!

1.d4 ♞f6 2.c4 e6 3.♞f3 d5

4.♞c3 ♙b4 5.♙a4+ ♞c6 6.a3



♙xc3+ 7.bxc3 ♞e4 8.e3



A modern approach against the Ragozin, sacrificing a pawn for the initiative.

8...♞xc3 9.♙c2

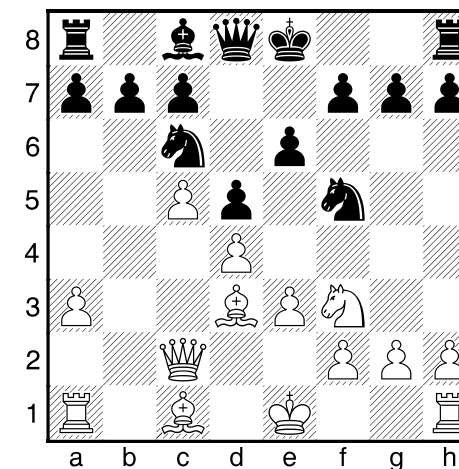
♞e4

This was pretty much all I knew about this line! Unfortunately, my opponent was clearly better prepared.

10.♙d3 ♞d6 11.c5

♞f5

photo:  
Cannes Open facebook

**12.h4**

A more direct move than Topalov's choice against Anand. It's quite intimidating when the opponent blitzes out such aggressive moves!

12.0-0 h6 13.♙b1 0-0 14.♙c3 ♞fe7 15.♙d2 b6 16.♙fc1 ♞a5 17.♙c2 ♞c4 18.♙xc4 dxc4 19.♙xc4 [Topalov, V \(2760\)](#)–[Anand, V \(2779\)](#) Saint Louis blitz, 2016.

**12...h5**

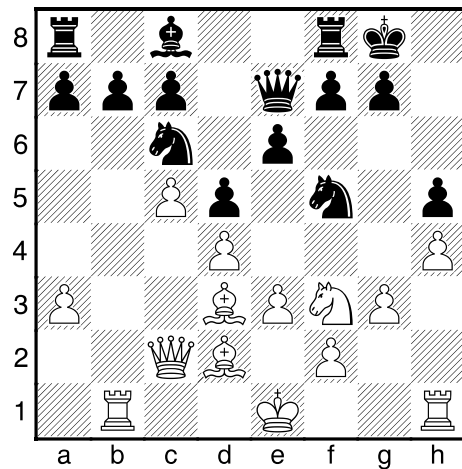
This move seemed logical to me, stopping White from gaining too much space on the kingside. It does weaken g5, but it feels more important to stop g4 and h5.

13.♙d2 ♙e7 14.♙b1 0-0



**Chess Canada**  
**Rodrigue-Lemieux**

15.g3



15...♔f6

15...f6 would've been much better, solidifying the kingside and preparing a future ...e5 break.

16.0-0

Unfortunately, Black has no good discoveries, since all four possible captures would allow White to protect the Knight:

- 16...♘xh4?? 17.♘xh4+-;
- 16...♘fxd4?? 17.♘xd4+-;
- 16...♘xe3?? 17.fxe3+-;
- 16...♘xg3?? 17.fxg3+-.

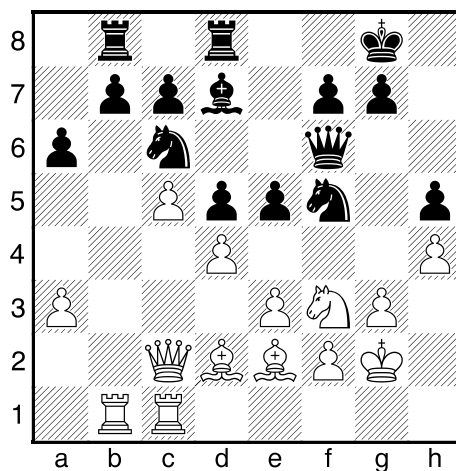
16...♖b8

In such positions, opening the position too early helps White, who is better developed. Black

should be patient and slowly develop while White has no clear threats. Here, 16...e5 fails to 17.dxe5 ♘xe5 18.♘xe5 ♔xe5 19.♗c3 and White's Bishop is way too active.

17.♔g2 ♗d7 18.♗b5 ♖fd8

19.♖fc1 a6 20.♗e2 e5

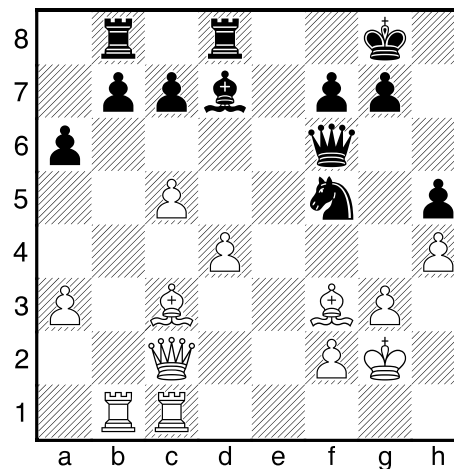


My pieces are now perfectly positioned for this break. ♗c3 won't come with such devastating effect anymore.

21.dxe5 ♘xe5 22.♗c3 d4!

The key behind ...e5. Black now gets rid of the strong Bishop, while Black's Bishop will be active on c6.

23.exd4 ♘xf3 24.♗xf3

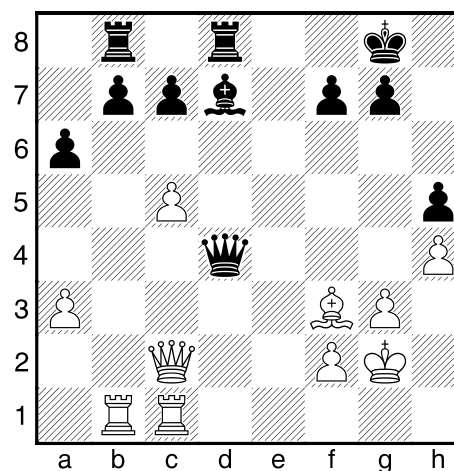


24...♘xd4

Simplifying too much, and White's pieces are now active.

24...♔g6 would've been even stronger, threatening ...♘h4. 25.♔h2 fails to 25...♘xd4 26.♗xd4 ♗f5 27.♔b2 ♗xb1 with a big advantage for Black.

25.♗xd4 ♔xd4



26.♖b4

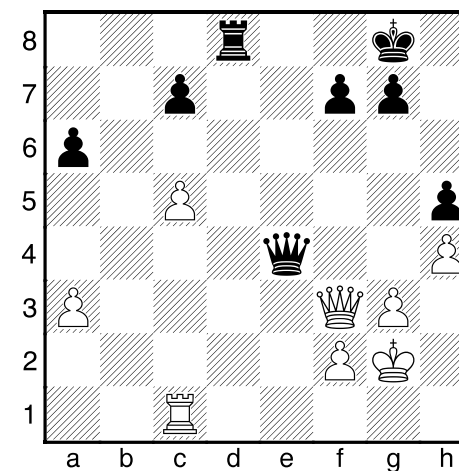
26.♖d1 ♔e5 27.♖xb7 was a much better way to proceed, since White now controls the important d-file.

26.♖xb7 ♖xb7 27.♗xb7 ♗e6 gives Black a stable position with more active pieces.

26...♔e5 27.♖xb7 ♖xb7

28.♗xb7 ♗f5 29.♔c3 ♗e4+

30.♗xe4 ♔xe4+ 31.♔f3



31...♔xf3+

This endgame seems like a dead draw, and two moves later my opponent offered me a draw, thinking that the draw would be inevitable... but it's not so easy for White!







# Chess Canada Rodrigue-Lemieux

32. ♖xf3 ♜d5 33. ♖e4 c6

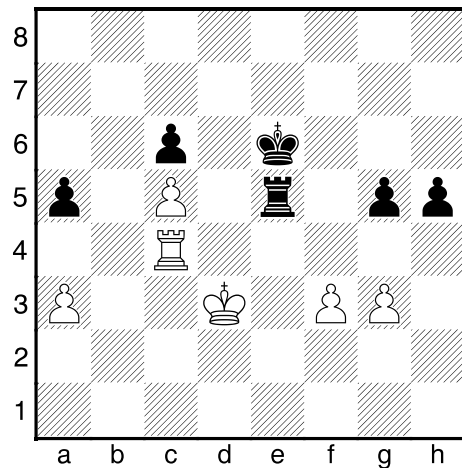
34. ♜c4 a5

All of a sudden, White is now in big danger of losing. The White Rook must remain passive while Black can keep improving the position.

35. f3 f6 36. ♖f4 ♖f7 37. ♖e3

♖e6 38. ♖e4 g5 39. hxg5

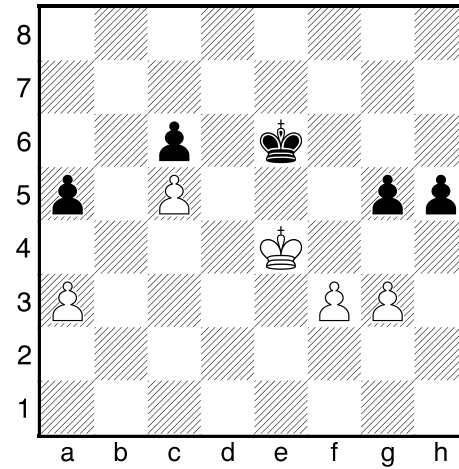
♜e5+ 40. ♖d3 fxg5



41. ♜e4??

After spending a lot of time (we just reached move 40), my opponent made a huge blunder. In his defense, the win is extremely hard to see!

41... ♜xe4 42. ♖xe4



42... a4!

Gaining space, fixing pawns, but most importantly giving White the move and Black the opposition.

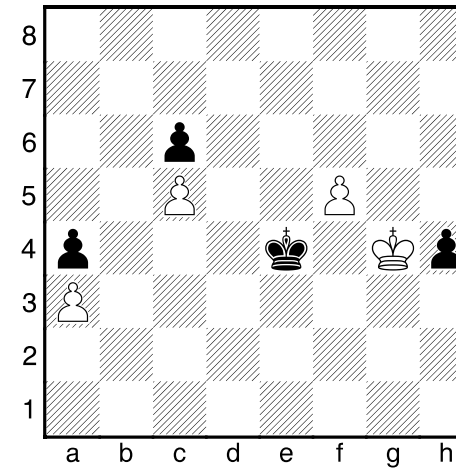
42... ♖f6 wouldn't work as well, since 43. f4 ♖= h4?? (43... g4?? 44. f5+-) 44. fxg5+- comes with check.

42... h4 also gives Black great practical winning chances after 43. gxh4 gxh4 44. ♖f4

*editor* – this line is *vastly* more difficult than the win Shawn plays in the game — without 7 piece tablebases it is even beyond

SF16's ability. Here's the main line: 44... a4 ♖ 45. ♖g4 ♖e5 46. f4+ ♖e4 ♖ 47. f5:

*Analysis Diagram*



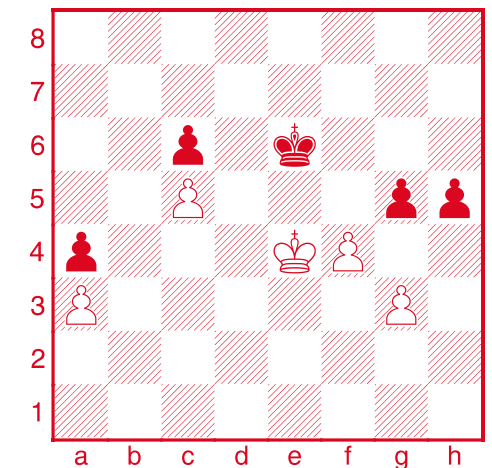
47... ♖e5 48. ♖g5 h3 49. f6 ♖e6 50. ♖g6 h2 51. f7 h1 ♖ 52. f8 ♖ ♖e4+ 53. ♖g5 ♖d5 with a winning endgame, although it will take some time to convert. I did see this position during the game and it was my first idea, thinking it should be winning. However,

there was something more concrete!

47... h3 48. f6 h2 49. f7 h1 ♖ 50. f8 ♖ ♖g2+ ♖ preventing ♖ checks from f2. 51. ♖h4! (51. ♖h5?! ♖f3+- is easy.) 51... ♖d4 is similar. [SRL]

*editor* - I had to see more: 52. ♖f6+ ♖d3! (52... ♖xc5? 53. ♖c3+=) 53. ♖d6+ ♖c3 54. ♖e5+ ♖b3 55. ♖e1 ♖xa3 56. ♖c3+ ♖a2 White can win the a4-pawn, but Black gets a fork on f2, with a winning ♖v ♖ ending... if you've studied your Dvoretzky ;) SF16 can't find a mate, but the 7-piece tablebase verifies this is a win for Black.

43. f4



This is why I bring  
*Dvoretzky's Endgame Manual* to tournaments!

**43...h4** 44.f5+

44.gxh4 gxh4 45.♔f3 ♕f5 wins for Black.

44.fxg5 hxg3 45.♔f3 ♕f5

46.♔xg3 ♕xg5 also wins, although it eventually transposes to the game.

**44...♔f7!!**

The move missed by my opponent!

44...♔f6?? is the most natural move, and the one my opponent expected. The difference is that after 45.g4 Black can never gain access to e5. 45...♔e7 (45...h3 loses to 46.♔f3+-) 46.♔f3 ♕f7 47.♔e3 ♕f6 48.♔e4= and neither side can make progress.

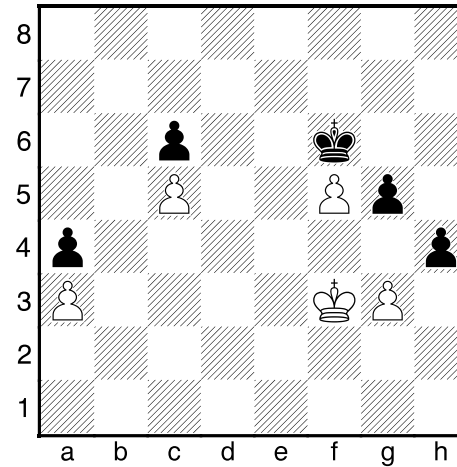
**45.♔f3**

45.g4 ♕f6 46.♔f3 ♕e5-+ would also lead to a losing position.

45.gxh4 gxh4 46.♔f4 ♕f6

47.♔g4 h3 48.♔xh3 ♕xf5 transposes to the game.

**45...♔f6**



**46.gxh4**

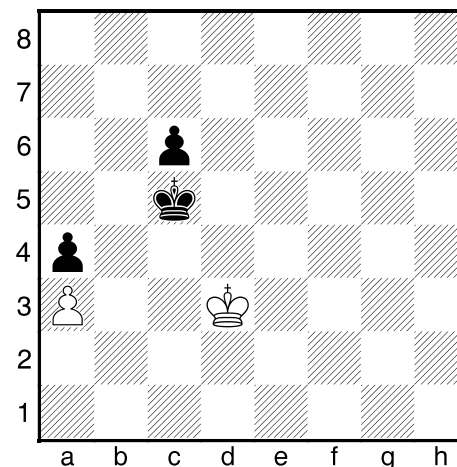
46.g4 can now be met by 46...♔e5 and Black's King can collect the c5-pawn without getting too far from the f5-pawn.

**46...gxh4 47.♔g4 h3**

**48.♔xh3 ♕xf5 49.♔g3 ♕e4**

**50.♔f2 ♕d4 51.♔e2 ♕xc5**

**52.♔d3**

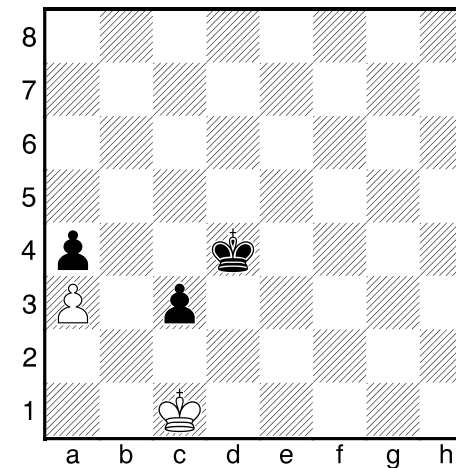


This endgame is not so easy to win! Black needs to know a specific technique to win it.

**52...♔d5 53.♔c3 c5 54.♔d3**

**c4+ 55.♔c3 ♕c5 56.♔c2**

**♕d4 57.♔d2 c3+ 58.♔c1**



It's not easy for Black to make progress at first glance. If it were White to move, White would have to choose between ♔c2, allowing ...♔c4, and ♔d1, allowing ...♔d3. In case of ♔b1, Black can respond with ...♔d3, and White doesn't have ♔d1 in response.

**58...♔c5!**

We have to triangulate! We lose a tempo and get to the same

position with the opponent to move.

58...♔d3 is met by 59.♔d1 c2+? 60.♔c1 ♕c3=;

58...♔c4 is met by 59.♔c2 and Black still needs to play the triangulation maneuver to win.

**59.♔d1 ♕d5**

This is why I bring *Dvoretsky's Endgame Manual* to tournaments!

**60.♔c1 ♕d4**

It's now White to move, and his ♔ has to step on a bad square. Trading Rooks into a King endgame is extremely risky, and it's usually best to keep the Rooks on the board when in doubt.

**0-1**





## Sambuev, Bator (2514) SRL (2539)

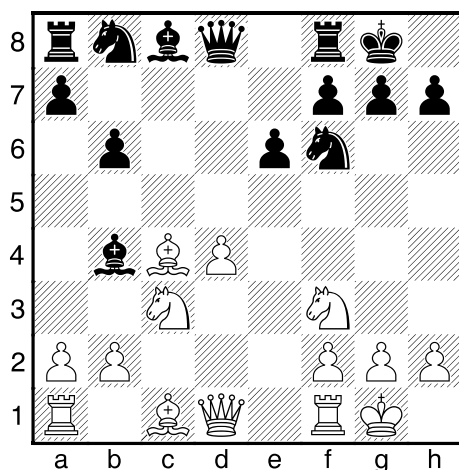
E54

Canadian Closed (7), 10.04.2023

**Notes: GM Shawn  
Rodrigue-Lemieux**

This game was crucial for me in this tournament, as Bator was leading with 5.5/6 while I had 4.5/6. It was a must-win for me.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4  
4.e3 0-0 5.♙d3 d5 6.♘f3  
c5 7.0-0 cxd4 8.exd4 dxc4  
9.♙xc4 b6



Bator and I have both played this line many times, and we have

analyzed it many times together as well, so it was a preparation battle.

10.♙e2 ♙b7 11.♞d1 h6

This move is quite important, as it prevents ♙g5.

*editor* – this is a well-explored position, where Black's most frequent moves are ...♙xc3 and ...♘bd7. Here are two prominent examples:

11...♙xc3 12.bxc3 ♖c7 13.♙b2  
♙xf3!? 14.♙xf3 ♖xc4! 15.♙xa8  
♘c6 16.♙b7 ♘d5 17.♞e1?! ♞b8!  
18.♙d7 ♞d8!-+ 19.♙b7 h5?!  
(♠19...♘a5-+) 20.♙c1? ♘a5!-+  
21.♙xa7 ♖c6 22.♙a6 ♘c4  
23.♞b1 ♘c7 0-1 **Vladimirov, Y**  
(2612)–**Kasparov, G** (2838),  
**Batumi (rapid), 2001.**

11...♘bd7 12.d5 ♙xc3 13.dxe6  
♙xf3 is a drawing line:

14.gxf3 fxe6 15.bxc3 ♖c7  
16.♙xe6+ ♔h8 17.♙c4 ♖b7  
18.♙xd7 ♘xd7 19.♙d5 ♖xd5  
20.♞xd5 ♘c5 21.♙a3 ♞xf3  
22.♙xc5 bxc5 23.♞xc5= with  
several GM draws from here,

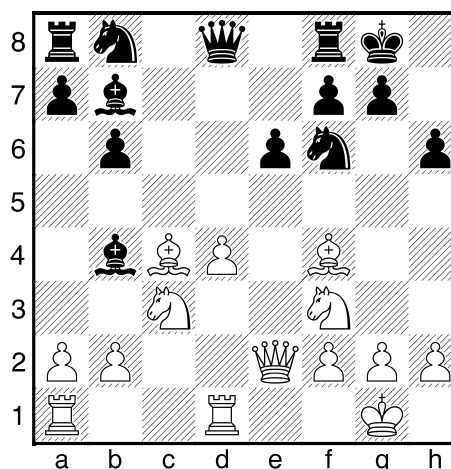
including **Ivanchuk, V** (2738)–  
**So, W** (2812) **Leuven, 2017.**

14.♙xf3 ♘e5 15.exf7+ ♔h8  
16.♞xd8 ♘xf3+ 17.gxf3 ♞axd8  
18.bxc3 ♘d5 19.♙g5 ♞d7 20.♞e1  
h6 21.♙xd5 ♞xd5 22.♞e8 ♔h7  
23.♞xf8 ♞xg5+ 24.♔f1 ♞f5 also  
with several GM draws, including  
**Tal, M**–**Gipslis, A** **Riga, 1965** and  
**Sarana, A** (2706)–**So, W** (2757)  
**Chess.com rapid, 2024.**

12.h3

12.♙f4 was chosen by Bator  
earlier in the same tournament.

*Analysis Diagram*



*editor* – ...and several other  
times in 2023:

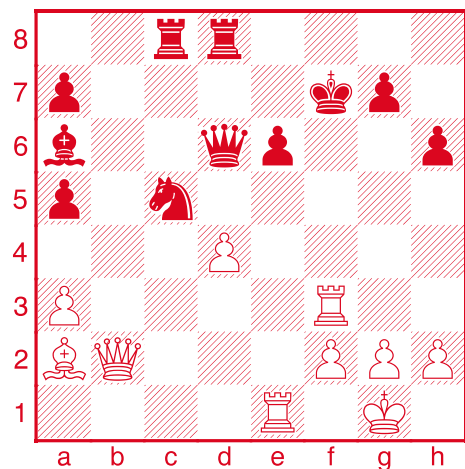
a) 12...♞e8 13.♘e5 ♘bd7 14.♞d3

♙xc3 15.bxc3 ♘xe5 16.dxe5 ♘d5  
17.♙g4 (17.♙xh6 is something  
*IQP fans should study.*) 17...h5  
18.♙g3 ♖c7 19.♙h6 g6 20.♙xd5  
♙xd5 21.♙g5 ♞ac8 22.♙f6±  
♖c4 23.♞ad1 ♙g4 24.♙xg4  
hxg4 25.♞d4 ♞c4 26.♞xc4  
♙xc4 27.♞d4 ♞c8 28.♞xg4+–  
**Sambuev, B** (2487)–**Tanaka, T**  
(2357) **Ottawa, 2023.**

b) 12...♘d5 13.♘xd5 ♙xd5  
14.♙d3 ♘d7 15.a3 ♙e7 16.♙a6  
♘b8 17.♙b5 ♙d6 18.♘e5 ♖e7  
19.♞ac1 a6 20.♙d3 ♖b7 21.♙g4  
(21.♙xh6!!±) 21...f5 22.♙g3 ♙xe5  
23.dxe5 b5 24.♙e2 ♔h7 25.♙f3  
♙xf3 26.♙xf3 ♖xf3 27.gxf3  
**Sambuev, B** (2480)–**Moses, N**  
(1913) **Toronto, 2023.**

c) 12...♘c6 13.a3 ♙xc3 14.bxc3  
♞c8 15.♙a2 ♖e7 (♠15...♘a5  
with the idea ...♙xf3 and  
...♘c4.) 16.c4 ♞fd8 17.♞d3  
♘h5 18.♙d2 ♘f6 19.♞e1 with  
a similar but more effective  
piece arrangement as in the  
main game: 19...♙d6 20.♙c3  
♙a6 21.♙b2 ♘a5 22.♙xa5 bxa5  
23.♘e5 ♘d7 24.♘xf7! ♔xf7  
25.c5 ♘xc5 26.♞f3+:

*Analysis Diagram*



In the 2024 Zonal, Black went wrong with: 26...♔g6?? 27.dxc5 ♖xc5 28.♙b1+- ♜f5 29.♙xf5+ (29.g4 also wins.) 29...exf5 30.♖g3+ ♔h5 31.♚xg7 1-0 Sambuev,B (2433)–Latorre,V (2066) Toronto, Can Ch. 2023.

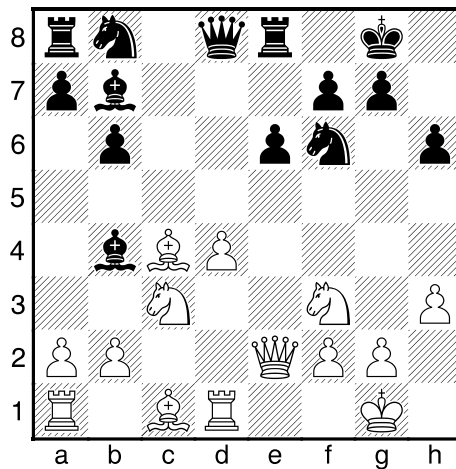
Instead, Black has a highly tactical save: 26...♔g8□ 27.dxc5 ♖xc5□ 28.♖xe6 ♚d1+□ 29.♗e1+ ♙c4□∞ (29...♔h8?? 30.♖f8+□+-).

*editor* – back to Shawn's notes...

## Sambuev v SRL

*Head-to-head, again.  
Here playing in the  
2016 Gatineau Open.*

12...♖e8



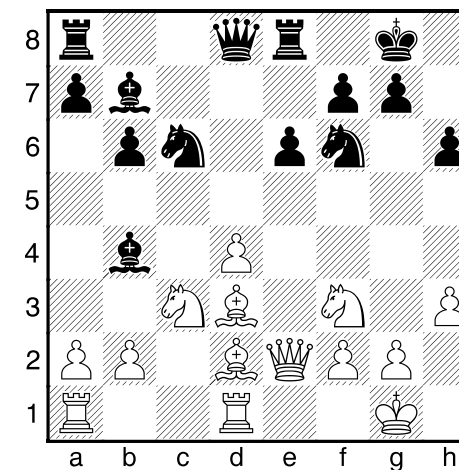
A waiting move, making it harder for White to play d5, which would force a mass liquidation.

13.♙f4 ♞d5 14.♙d2 ♞c6

15.♙d3

15.♙xd5 exd5 16.♚d3 is a safe way to play for White, but it gives Black easier play with the pair of Bishops.

15...♞f6



Even though my opponent is well-known for his mastery of isolated pawn positions, this variation gives Black very good winning chances. Here, it is not so easy for White to create attacking chances, while Black easily blockades the isolated pawn. If White cannot create play quickly, Black is better in the long run due to the pawn structure.

16.a3 ♙f8 17.♖ac1 ♖c8

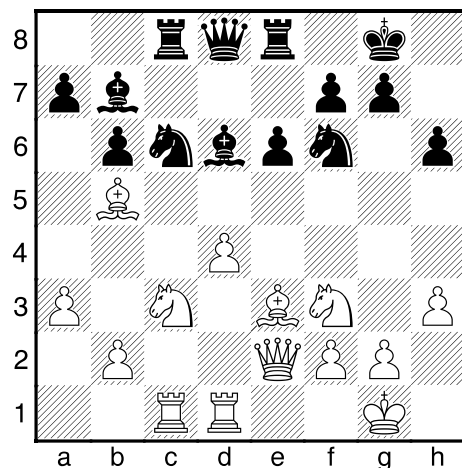
18.♙b5

This pin is slightly unpleasant, so I had to look for a way to move my Rook in order to play ...♞e7. So...

18...♙d6! 19.♙e3







### 19...Rf8!

A counterintuitive maneuver, but an extremely powerful one. White's pieces aren't perfectly positioned for this structure, as the b5-Bishop should be on the b1-h7 diagonal. After ...Nf5-f5, White has no play at all.

### 20. Nf5 Nf7

It's important for Black to prevent d5, otherwise White would get rid of their weakness.

### 21. Rf3

21. Qa6 Qxa6 22. Qxa6 Nfd5 is still slightly better for Black, but White has great chances to hold. Trading a few pieces stabilizes the position.

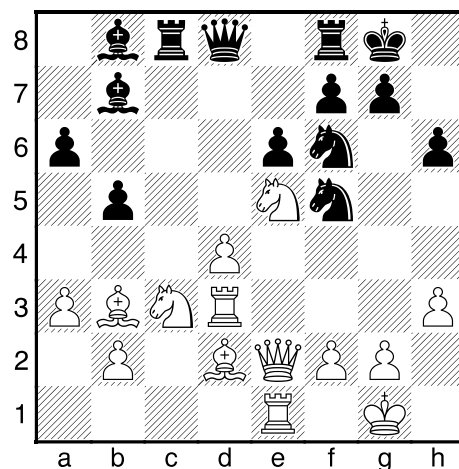
### 21...Nf5 22. Qd2?!

*editor* – SF16 prefers giving up on the hopes of swinging the R to the kingside and coordinating with 22. Rdd1.

### 22...Qb8 23. Re1

White's pieces aren't looking great!

### 23...a6 24. Qa4 b5 25. Qb3



### 25...Nxd4! 26. Qd1 Qxe5

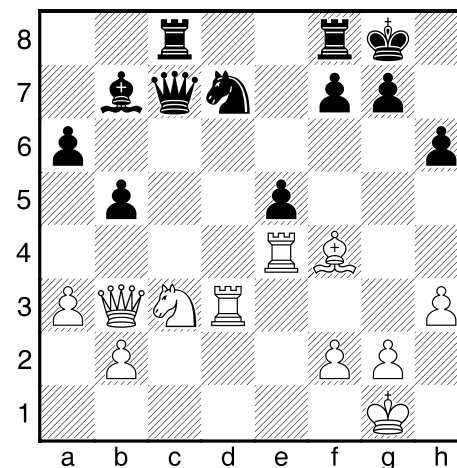
### 27. Rxe5 Qc7 28. Qf4 Nxb3

### 29. Qxb3 Nd7 30. Re4

### 30. Re1 Qxf4 31. Rxd7 Qc6

32. Rdd1 is another way to play for White, but Black is simply dominating with the extra pawn.

### 30...e5



### 31. Qd1??

31. Nd5! is a nice move to keep the game going:

a) 31...Qd6 32. Qd1 is the key idea, after which 32...exf4?? is met with 33. Ne7+-;

b) 31...Qc2 32. Ne7+ Kh7  
33. Nxc8 Qxb3 34. Rxb3 Qxe4  
35. Nd6 Qxg2 36. Qxe5 Nxe5  
37. Qxg2 Rf8 wins for Black;

c) 31...Qxd5 32. Qxd5 Rcd8  
33. Rf3 Qb6 34. Qe3 Qg6 is obviously unpleasant for White, but there is no clear win for Black.

### 31...Qxe4 32. Rxd7 Rfd8

Forcing even more trades.

### 33. Rxd8+ Rxd8 34. Qe2 exf4

### 35. Qxe4 Qd6

Probably my best game ever in terms of precision, and it came at an important moment. After this game, I was tied with Bator Sambuev and Nikolay Noritsyn, and we all ended up tying for first place with 7.5/9, with Nikolay winning the national title on tiebreaks.

### 0-1

**SRL (2469)**  
**Woodward, Andy**  
**(2466)**

### B52

Transnational Championship (7),  
10.06.2023

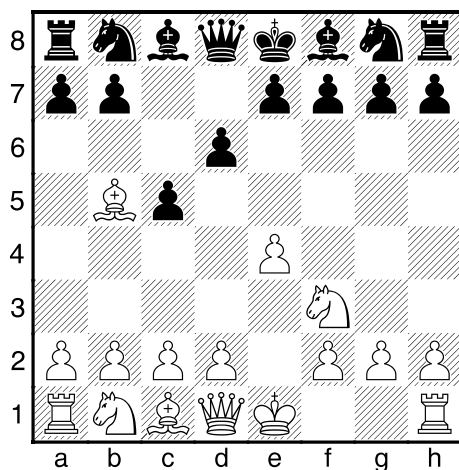
**Notes: GM Shawn**  
**Rodrigue-Lemieux**

This tournament was truly a great experience for me, as I got the chance to face my first two opponents rated over 2600, as well as a future star in Andy Woodward. It was definitely one of the strongest tournaments in Canadian history!



After a solid draw with Black against Awonder Liang in round 6, I was paired against another American prodigy in round 7, Andy Woodward, this time with the White pieces. I had 4.5/6, and I most likely needed 1.5/3 in the final rounds to earn a Grandmaster norm.

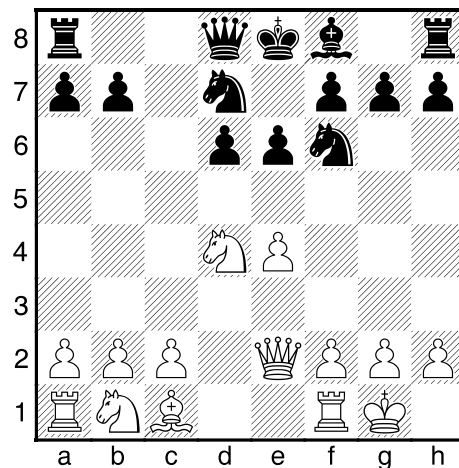
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♙b5+



Avoiding the Najdorf was by far my best chance against such a strong and fast calculator!

3...♙d7 4.♙xd7+ ♘xd7 5.0-0  
♘gf6 6.♚e2 e6 7.d4 cxd4  
8.♘xd4

**SRL v Woodward**



My preparation ended here, and I was satisfied with this position. White has a space advantage and an easy development,

while Black's plans seem less straightforward.

8...♖c8 9.c4

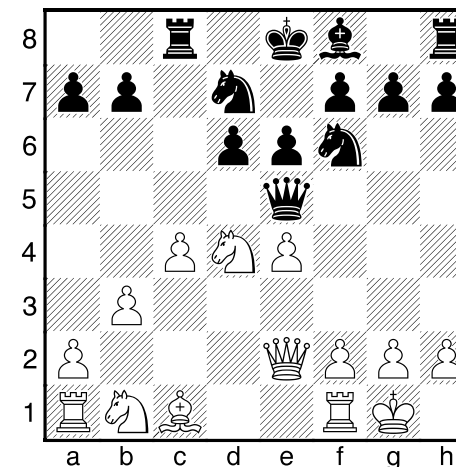
Establishing a Maroczy Bind, one of the most solid structures in chess. With the light square Bishops already traded, I thought I was better since my central pawns don't block my Bishop anymore.

9...♚a5

After my opponent blitzed out this move, I started to get worried! I had not expected this

idea, and Andy was clearly still familiar with this position.

10.b3 ♕e5



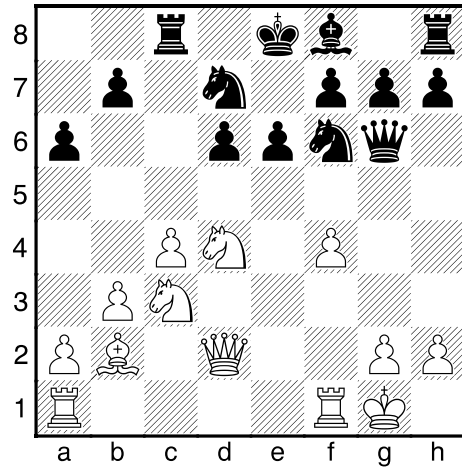
The idea behind Black's last move. White will lose the e4-pawn, but will get a huge development lead to compensate. My opponent later confessed that he had played this position before, and that he knew the position was still equal. Even though I was losing a pawn, I also knew that White could not be worse with accurate play, due to the development and space advantage.

11.♙b2 ♕xe4 12.♚d2 ♕g6  
13.♘c3 a6 14.f4



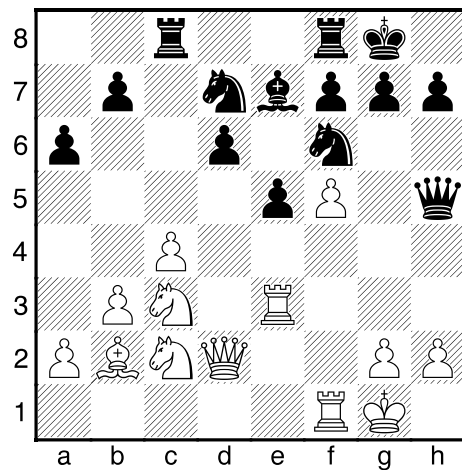
photo: Melanie Belcadi, facebook





White must create counterplay as quickly as possible, otherwise Black will simply consolidate his extra pawn!

**14...♔h5 15.f5 e5 16.♖ae1  
♙e7 17.♘c2 0-0 18.♖e3**

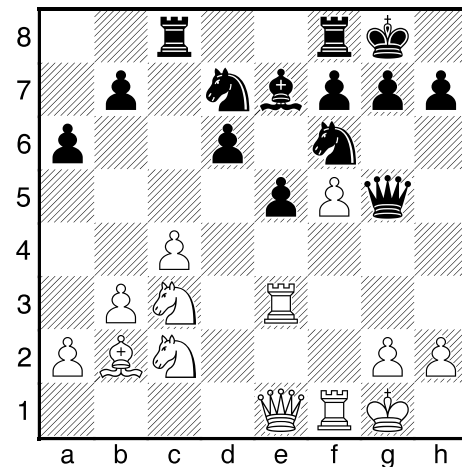


**18...♔g5?!**

18...d5! is a very powerful move for Black, opening up the center

and threatening ...♙c5. 19.♖h3 (19.cxd5?? loses to 19...♙c5+)  
19...♔g4 20.♔e1 (20.cxd5? gives Black a solid advantage after 20...♘e4 21.♔e1 ♘xc3 22.♖xc3 ♖xc3 23.♙xc3 ♖c8 since Black's pieces join the game extremely quickly.) 20...d4 (The engine recommends 20...g5!?, an incredible move that prevents ♖h4, trapping the Queen; and somehow White has no way to take advantage of Black's weakened position!) 21.♖h4 ♔xh4 22.♔xh4 dxc3 23.♙xc3 b5 Black sacrifices a Queen, but gets a Rook and a Knight for it, as well as some quick counterplay on the Queenside. With White's poor coordination, the position is simply equal.

**19.♔e1**



My opponent forgot about this strong maneuver. The idea is to play ♙c1, and the Queen is quickly running out of squares to escape!

**19...h5**

19...♘h5! was a better way to deal with the threat of ♙c1: 20.♙c1 d5! 21.♖e2 ♙c5+ 22.♔h1 ♔d8 23.♘xd5 ♘hf6 24.♙g5 h6 25.♙h4 ♙e7 26.♘xe7+ ♔xe7 27.♘e3 White has won the pawn back and maintains a better position due to his initiative, but Black remains totally in the game.

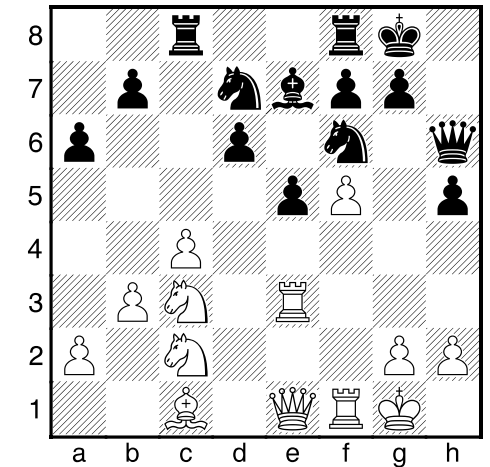
Black does not have time for 19...b5 since the Queen is trapped after 20.♖g3 ♔h5



**Maplewood Chess Club**

(20...♔h4 is impossible due to 21.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 22.♔xh4+-) 21.♖h3 ♔g4 22.♖h4 ♔g5 23.♙c1 and the Queen is trapped.

**20.♙c1 ♔h6**



**21.♖xe5?!**

Too materialistic. 21.♖h3 would've been a better way to proceed, forcing the Queen to a passive square: 21.♖h3 ♔h7 22.♔d1 b5 23.♘e3 bxc4 24.bxc4 White is still down a pawn, but the initiative and activity are overwhelming.

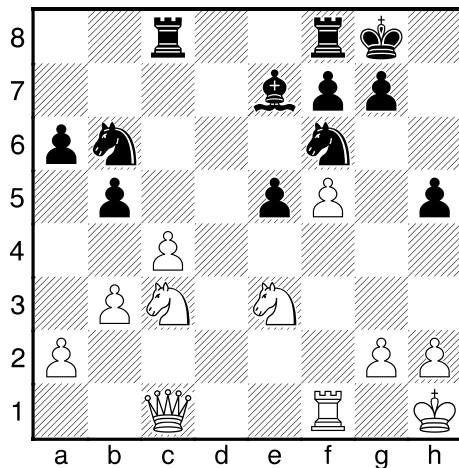
**21...♔xc1 22.♔xc1 dxe5**

**23.♔h1 b5**

Black suddenly gets a lot of counterplay very quickly,

and I don't have enough time to consolidate my material advantage.

24.  $\text{N}e3$   $\text{N}b6$ ?



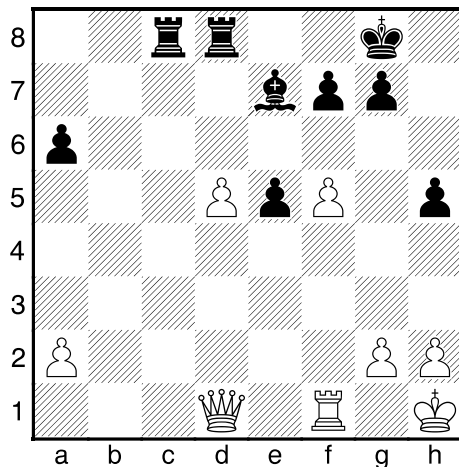
25.  $\text{Q}d1$ ?

$25.g4!$  is a great opportunity that we both missed during the game. The idea is that White gets a strong attack without wasting any time, and Black doesn't have time to execute counterplay on the Queenside!  $25...hxg4$   $26.\text{R}g1$  is devastating, with  $\text{N}xg4$  coming next.

25...  $\text{bxc4}$  26.  $\text{bxc4}$   $\text{R}fd8$

27.  $\text{N}cd5$   $\text{N}bxd5$  28.  $\text{N}xd5$

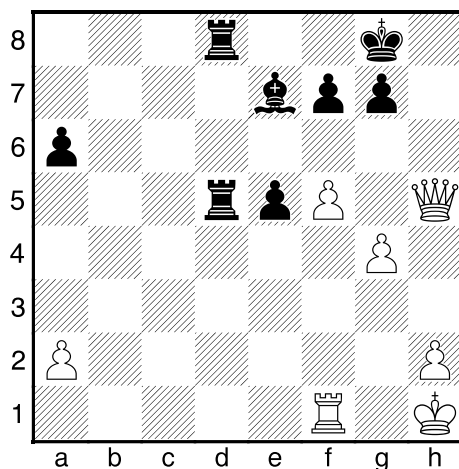
$\text{N}xd5$  29.  $\text{cxd5}$



29...  $\text{R}c5!$

Holding onto the h-pawn with  $29...h4$  would be inaccurate, since White would now be in time to defend his d5-pawn with:  $30.\text{Q}d3$   $\text{R}c5$   $31.\text{R}d1\pm$ .

30.  $\text{Q}xh5$   $\text{R}cxd5$  31.  $g4$



31...  $e4!$

The idea which I missed. Black generates counterplay while preventing my attack. The key is that it will take White some time to play  $g5$  and  $f6$ , since the Rook on d5 pins the g-pawn.

32.  $g5$   $e3$

After this move, I realized that the position was getting tricky and that my attack was not as powerful as anticipated.

33.  $h4$

$33.\text{Q}f3?$  is refuted by the simple  $33...g5\mp$ .

$33.f6$  is ineffective due to  $33...gxf6$ .

$33.g6$  most likely leads to a draw after  $33...fxg6$   $34.\text{Q}xg6$  ( $34.fxg6??$  is impossible because of  $34...Rhx5+$ )  $34...gxf6$   $35.\text{R}g1$   $\text{R}d1$   $36.\text{R}xd1$   $\text{R}xd1+$   $37.\text{Q}g2$   $\text{R}d2+$   $38.\text{Q}f3$   $e2$   $39.\text{Q}e8+$   $\text{Q}h7$   $40.\text{Q}g6+$  and White has nothing better than a draw.

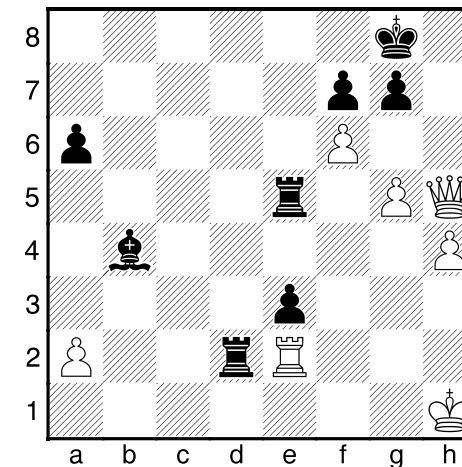
33...  $\text{R}e5$

A strong move, maintaining the pin along the 5th rank.

34.  $\text{R}e1$   $\text{Q}b4$  35.  $\text{R}e2$   $\text{R}d2$

$35...Rxf5$   $36.\text{R}xe3$   $g6$   $37.\text{Q}g4$  should be a draw, although Black is probably the one putting pressure.

36.  $f6$



Trying to create attacking chances on Black's King.

36...  $gxf6$ !

I was very happy to see this move on the board, since it gives me legitimate play on Black's King.

I was hoping for  $36...Rxe2??$ , which loses after  $37.fxg7$   $\text{Q}xg7$   $38.\text{Q}h6+$   $\text{Q}g8$   $39.g6$   $fxg6$   $40.\text{Q}xg6+$   $\text{Q}h8$   $41.\text{Q}f6+$   $\text{Q}h7$   $42.\text{Q}xe5$  with a winning

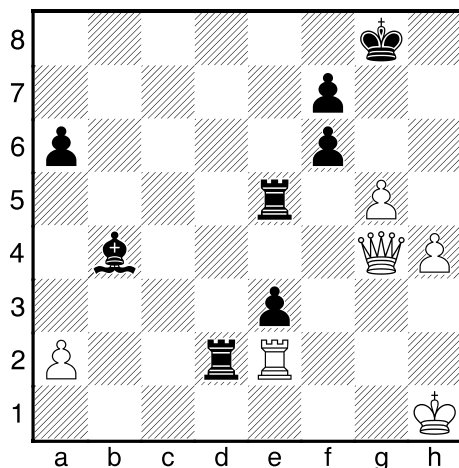




endgame for White, since Black has an exposed King and a lack of coordination.

36...g6 37.♔f3 ♖xe2 38.♔xe2 a5= was probably the simplest option, where neither side can play for more than a draw.

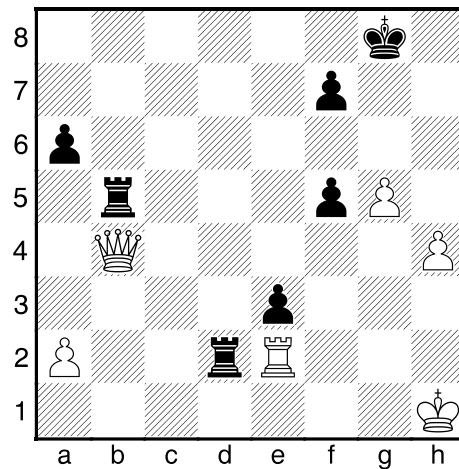
37.♔g4!



37...f5?

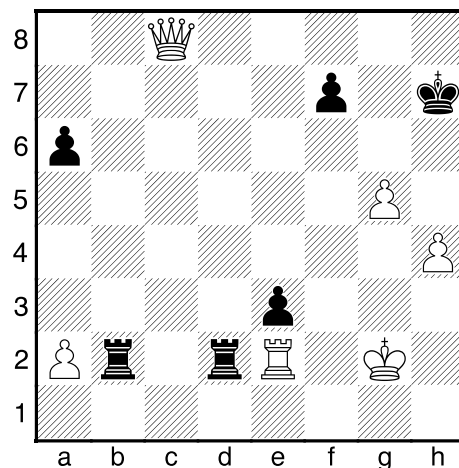
37...♙f8 is the only move to stay in the game. However, my opponent understandably rejected it in view of 38.gxf6+ ♔h7 39.♖xe3 ♖xe3 40.♔f5+ ♔h8 41.♔h5+ ♔g8 42.♔g5+ ♔h8 43.♔xe3; but Black is somehow holding after 43...♖xa2 44.♔b3 ♖a1+ 45.♔g2 ♔g8.

38.♔xb4 ♖b5



A very resourceful idea that does not work because of one detail.

39.♔c4 ♖b1+ 40.♔g2 ♖bb2  
41.♔c8+ ♔h7 42.♔xf5+ ♔g8  
43.♔c8+ ♔h7



44.g6+!

The idea missed by my opponent when he played 36...gxf6.

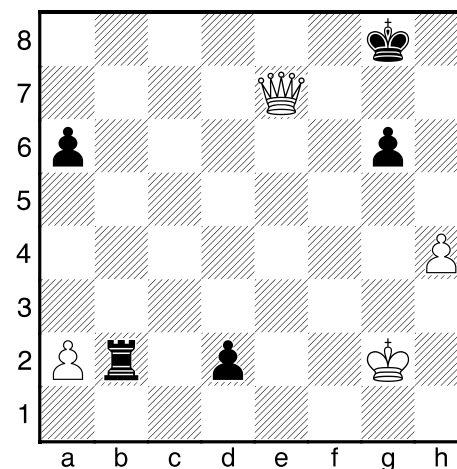
44.♖xd2 exd2 and White cannot stop d1=♔ without playing g6, since 45.♔d7 fails to 45...d1♔+-+ with a devastating discovered check.

44...fxg6

44...♔g7 allows White to simplify with 45.♔c3+ ♔xg6 46.♔xb2+-.

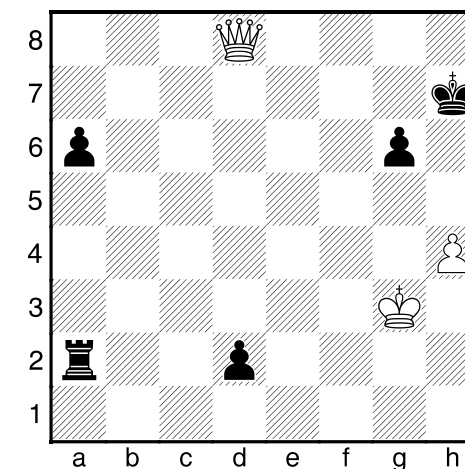
44...♔xg6 also allows White to simplify, this time with 45.♔g8+ ♔h6 46.♔h8+ ♔g6 47.♔xb2 ♖xb2 48.♖xb2+-.

45.♔c7+ ♔h6 46.♔f4+ ♔h7  
47.♔f7+ ♔h6 48.♔f8+ ♔h7  
49.♔e7+ ♔g8 50.♖xd2 exd2



The key idea was to give a check on the d-file, in order to move the King away from the second rank.

51.♔d8+ ♔h7 52.♔g3 ♖xa2  
53.♔e7+ ♔h6 54.♔d8 ♔h7



55.♔f3?

More accurate was 55.♔e7+ ♔h6 56.♔f8+ ♔h7 57.♔f7+ ♔h8 (57...♔h6 58.♔g8! forces 58...g5 59.♔xg5+ ♔h7 60.♔e7+ ♔h6 61.♔d6+ ♔g7 62.♔f3+-) 58.♔d7! forcing Black's King to the back rank. White's threat to bring the ♔ to h6 or g6 forces Black to give up the d2-pawn. 58...♖a5 59.♔xd2 ♖h5 (Black ideally wants to play 59...♖f5 and ...♔g7 in order to make the win more difficult, but simply doesn't





# Chess Canada Rodrigue-Lemieux

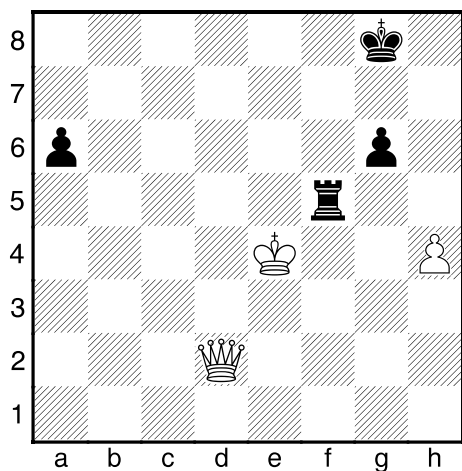
have time to do so because of 60. ♖h6+) 60. ♔g4 and Black doesn't have enough time to consolidate. It now becomes clear why it was important to force Black's King to the back rank!

55... ♖a5! 56. ♖d7+ ♔g8

57. ♖xd2 ♖f5+

This is the problem with 55. ♔g3: the ♖ gets a safe post with check giving Black time to prevent ♖h6!

58. ♔e4



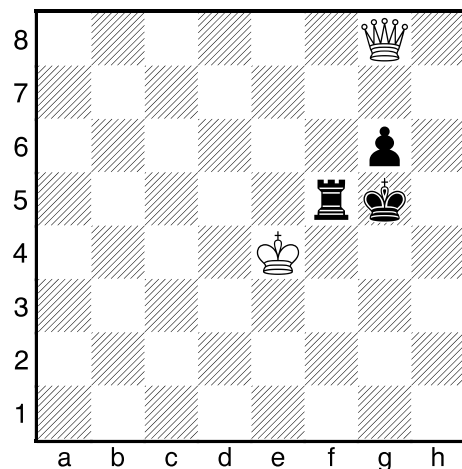
58... a5?

The final mistake, which allows White to win on the spot.

58... ♖h5 would've made

White's position much more difficult to convert: 59. ♖d7 ♔f8 (59... ♖xh4+? 60. ♔e5 and White's King will win the g6-pawn.) 60. ♔f3 ♖f5+ 61. ♔g4 ♔g8 62. ♖c8+ ♔g7 63. ♖xa6 ♔h7 64. ♖b7+ ♔h8 65. ♖d7 ♔g8 66. ♖e7 ♔h8 (66... ♖h5 67. ♖f6+-) 67. h5! The only way to make progress. 67... ♖xh5 68. ♖f8+ ♔h7 69. ♖f7+ ♔h6 (69... ♔h8 70. ♖xg6 ♖h4+ 71. ♔f5 ♖f4+ 72. ♔e6 and there is no stalemate!) 70. ♖g8 ♖g5+ 71. ♔f4 ♖f5+ 72. ♔e4 ♔g5:

Analysis Diagram

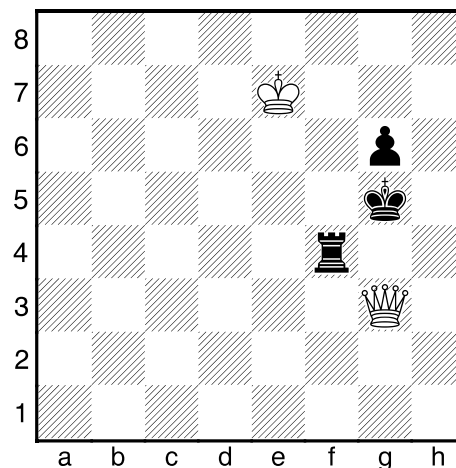


This position is technically winning for White, since the Black King is not on g8 anymore. Whenever the Queen is behind Black's King like this, the position is almost always winning, since fortresses are impossible

and White can usually force Black into a zugzwang. I was calculating this during the game and I knew this position was winning, but I was seriously hoping that I wouldn't have to convert it!

73. ♖h8 ♖f1 74. ♔e5 ♖e1+ 75. ♔d5 ♖d1+ (75... ♖f1 76. ♔e6+-) 76. ♔e6 White's main idea is to get the King behind Black's pawn, and then to force Black into a zugzwang. 76... ♖f1 77. ♖e5+ ♖f5 78. ♖h2 ♖f6+ 79. ♔e7 ♖f5 80. ♖h3 ♖f4 81. ♖g3+:

Analysis Diagram 2



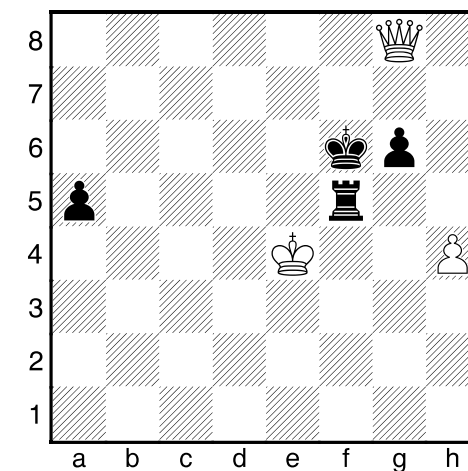
81... ♔f5 82. ♔f7 g5 83. ♖d3+ ♔e5+ 84. ♔g6 g4 85. ♔g5+-;

81... ♖g4 82. ♖e5+ ♔h4 83. ♔f6

♔h3 84. ♖e6 ♔g3 85. ♖e2 ♔h3 86. ♖f3+ ♖g3 (86... ♔h4 87. ♖e3 g5 88. ♖e1+ ♔h3 89. ♔f5+-) 87. ♖h1+ ♔g4 88. ♔xg6+-.

editor – Whew!

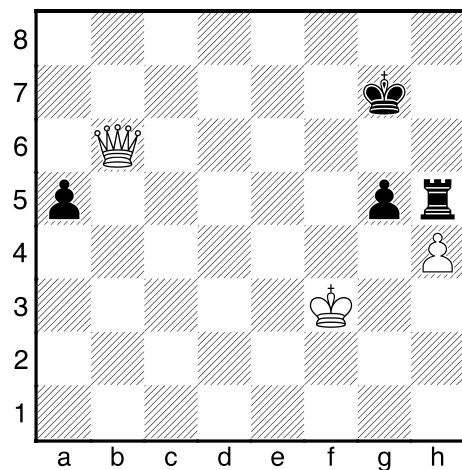
59. ♖h6! ♔f7 60. ♖h7+ ♔f6 61. ♖g8



We now get a similar ending to the one analyzed, except that White still has a pawn on h4, which makes the winning task much easier.

61... ♖h5 62. ♔f3 g5 63. ♖d8+ ♔g6 64. ♖d6+ ♔f5 65. ♖c5+ ♔g6 66. ♖b6+ ♔g7





67. ♔g4

67. ♖xa5?? would be a monumental blunder because of 67...g4+ 68. ♔xg4 ♖xa5-+ winning the Queen. When I was calculating this line a few moves prior, I intended to play ♖xa5, but luckily I saw ...g4+ before it was too late!

67... ♖xh4+ 68. ♔xg5 ♖b4

69. ♖c7+ ♔h8 70. ♔f6

Threatening mate while preventing all the checks.

70... ♖g4 71. ♖c8+ ♖g8

72. ♖h3#

After this game, I drew my final 2 games and finished in a tie for 2nd place with 6.5/9, earning my 2nd GM norm. **1-0**

**SRL (2495)**  
**Sambuev, Bator (2457)**  
**C88**

Championnat de la Francophonie  
(7), 09.07.2023

**Notes: GM Shawn  
Rodrigue-Lemieux**

Just like in our game at Canadian Closed a few months earlier, Bator was leading the tournament and I was in a must-win situation! He was on 5.5/6 while I had 5/6.



## Two GM Norms!

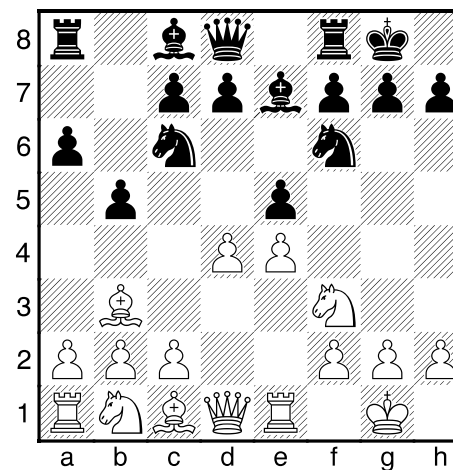
*SRL and Nikolay Noritsyn scored GM Norms. Here with Organizer Salim Belcadi.*

*photo: Melanie Belcadi, facebook*

1.e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. ♙b5 a6  
4. ♙a4 ♘f6

Bator usually plays the Delayed Steinitz with 4...d6 but it's a rather risky choice when the opponent has a lot of time to prepare.

5.0-0 ♙e7 6. ♖e1 b5 7. ♙b3  
0-0 8.d4



Not the main move — (*editor* – 8.c3 or 8.a4) — but I was not expecting this line, so I wanted to avoid main lines. I had played this move once, but I wasn't familiar at all with any of the lines or ideas of this variation.

8... ♘xd4

8...d6 is a more solid choice, but it gives White a lot of space in the center after 9.c3 ♙g4 10. ♙e3 exd4 11.cxd4±.

9. ♘xd4

9. ♙xf7+ is an interesting tactical idea, but Black is usually fine after 9... ♖xf7 10. ♘xe5 ♖f8 (10... ♘e6? loses to 11. ♘xf7 ♔xf7 12.e5+- threatening a fork with ♖f3+ if the attacked ♘f6 moves.) 11. ♖xd4 c5:

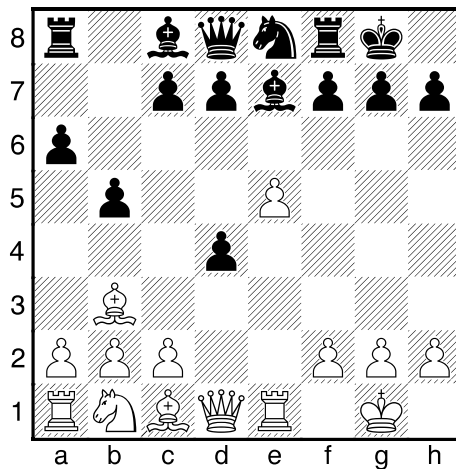
12. ♖d1 ♖c7 13. ♘g4 ♘xg4  
14. ♗xg4 d5∞ Ivanchuk, V (2751)–  
Leko, P (2753), Morelia/Linares,  
2008;

12. ♖c3 ♖c7 13. a4 ♘b7 14. axb5∞  
Kamsky, G (2725)–Anand, V  
(2791), Nice, 2009.

**9...exd4 10.e5**

10. ♗xd4 loses to a well-known  
trap with 10...c5 11. ♖d1 c4.

**10...♘e8**



**11. ♖xd4**

11.c3 is certainly the most  
aggressive attempt, as  
suggested by my opponent after  
the game. As I was not familiar  
with this move, I decided to keep  
it simple.

11.c3 dxc3 12. ♘xc3 d6:

13. ♘d5 ♖b8 14. ♘e3 ♘e6 15. ♘a7  
♘xd5 16. ♘xb8 ♘b7 17. ♘a7 ♖a8∞  
Dominguez Perez, L (2717)–  
Aronian, L (2750) Wijk aan Zee,  
2009.

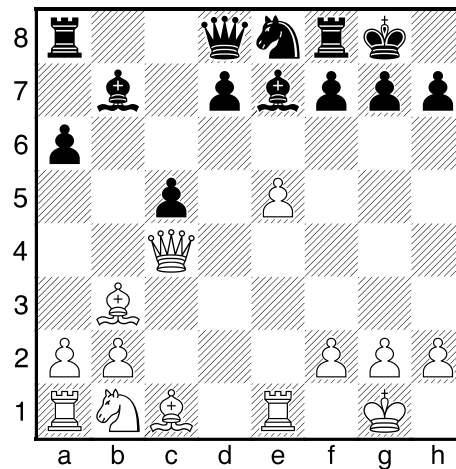
13. ♖f3 ♘e6 14. ♘d5 ♖c8 15. ♘f4  
dxe5 16. ♘xe7+= Leko, P (2756)–  
Aronian, L (2768) Jermuk, 2009.

**11...♘b7**

11...c5 12. ♖e4 ♖b8 13.c4  
♘b7 14. ♖e2 leads to an equal  
position.

**12.c4 c5 13. ♖g4 bxc4**

**14. ♖xc4**



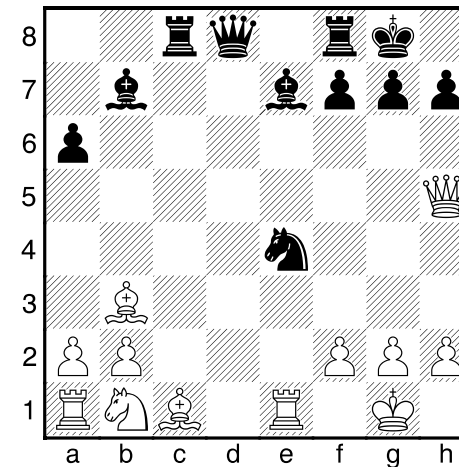
**14...d5!**

A strong move by Black, who  
needs to play actively to maintain  
the balance. 14...♖c8 is too  
passive and allows White to  
consolidate with 15. ♘c3.

**15.exd6 ♘xd6 16. ♖xc5**

White wins a pawn, but Black  
has tremendous compensation.  
Their pieces are more active,  
while my pieces are severely  
underdeveloped. My Queen is  
also vulnerable, and Black will  
gain time by attacking it.

**16...♖c8 17. ♖h5 ♘e4**



**18. ♘e3**

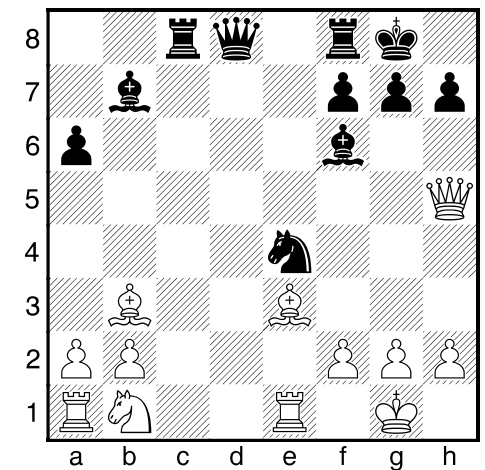
18. ♘c3 looks strong, but Black  
can respond with 18...♘xf2!:

19. ♖xf2 ♖c5!? deserves

attention (19...♘c5+ 20. ♘e3  
♖d2+ 21. ♖e2 ♘xe3+ 22. ♖f1  
♖d4 with a pleasant position.)  
20. ♖d1 ♖f5+ 21. ♖g1 ♘c5+  
22. ♘e3 (22. ♖h1?? ♘xg2+! with  
a winning attack: 23. ♖xg2 ♖f2+  
24. ♖h1 ♖h4-+) 22...♖g5 23. ♖d2  
♖d8 24. ♘d5 ♘xd5 25. ♘xd5  
♖fxd5 26. ♖f2 was not something  
I wanted to go into!

19. ♘e3 ♘d3 20. ♖ed1 ♘c5!  
21. ♘xc5 (21. ♖xd3 ♖xd3 22. ♘xc5  
♖d2 gives Black enough play  
after 23. ♘e2 ♖xc5 24. ♖xc5  
♖xe2 with equality.) 21...♖xc5  
22. ♖xc5 ♘xc5 23. ♖xd8 ♖xd8  
leads to an equal position.

**18...♘f6**



**19. ♖e2**





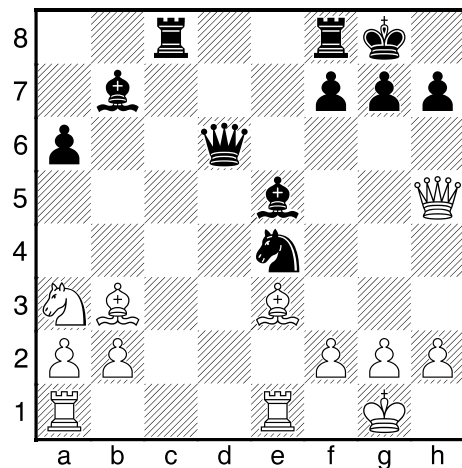
19. ♖d2 was another option:

19... ♘xd2 20. ♖ad1 ♙xb2  
21. ♖xd2 ♚f6 22. ♖ed1 gives  
White a slight initiative, but  
nothing serious;

19... ♙xb2 20. ♖ad1 ♚f6 is  
equal, but I wanted to keep an  
imbalance.

19... ♙e5 20. ♘a3 ♚d6

21. ♚h5



21...g6

21... ♙xb2 22. ♘c4 ♖xc4 23. ♙xc4  
♙xa1 24. ♖xa1 is slightly better  
for White because of the Bishop  
pair.

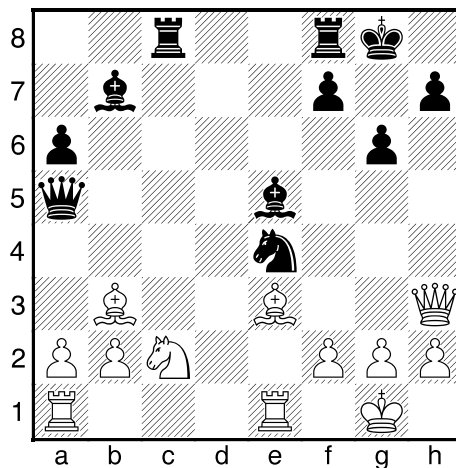
21... ♘f6 22. ♚h3 ♙xb2 23. ♘c4  
♖xc4 24. ♙xc4 ♙xa1 25. ♖xa1

♙d5 also gives White the Bishop  
pair, but Black's activity should  
be enough to compensate.

22. ♚h3 ♚b4

22... ♙xb2 23. ♘c4 ♖xc4 24. ♙xc4  
♙xa1 25. ♖xa1 h5 restricts  
White's pieces enough to  
equalize. Although it looks risky,  
Black needs to gain the pawn  
back.

23. ♘c2 ♚a5



24. ♘d4?!

24. ♙h6 was stronger, and it's  
now difficult for Black to find  
compensation for the missing  
pawn:

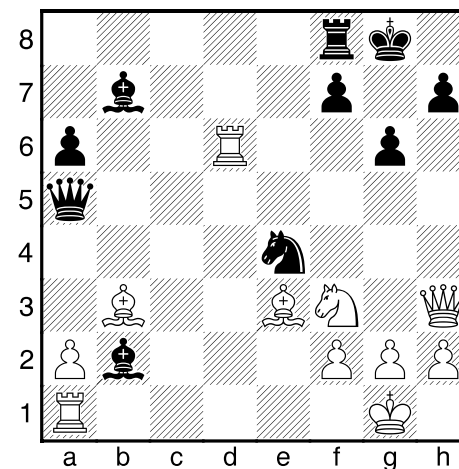
24... ♖fd8 25. ♘e3 ♙xb2 26. ♖ab1  
is strong for White, since all my

pieces come into the game in  
perfect harmony!

24... ♙g7 25. ♙xg7 ♚xg7 26. ♖ad1  
♘d2 27. ♘d4 ♘xb3 28. ♚xb3 is  
better for White, although the  
strong Bishop should give Black  
good chances to hold.

24... ♖cd8 25. ♖ed1 ♖d6

26. ♘f3 ♙xb2 27. ♖xd6



27... ♙xa1

This isn't the best way to  
capture a Rook, although it's  
very natural.

♘27... ♘xd6 28. ♘g5 h5 29. ♖d1  
♙f6! was the only way to keep  
the game balanced. (But not  
29... ♘f5??, which loses to  
30. ♘xf7 ♖xf7 31. g4! hxg4

32. ♚xg4 ♚g7 33. ♙xf7 ♚xf7  
34. ♖d7+ ♚f8 35. ♖xb7+- with a  
winning advantage.)

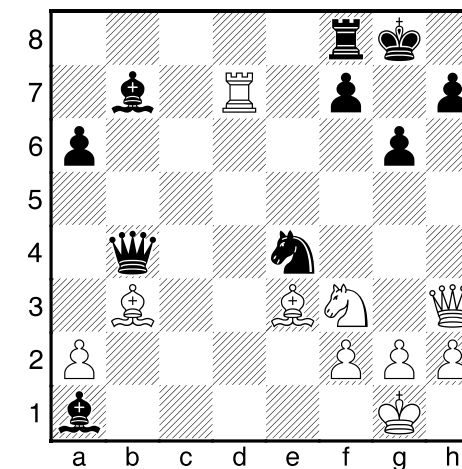
28. ♖d7?

It turns out that White should  
vacate the d7-square for the  
Queen.

28. ♖d1! was much stronger,  
with the idea of playing 28... ♙g7  
29. ♚d7 ♙a8 30. ♚e7 with strong  
threats such as ♖d7.

28... ♚b4?

28... ♚b5! is strong because it  
controls the d5-square. 29. ♖c7  
can be met with 29... ♙d5  
blocking the strong Bishop.



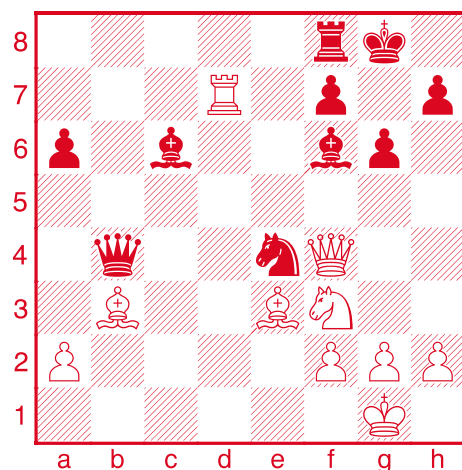
29. ♚h4

Not a bad move, but there was



something more direct: 29.♖c7!  
A strong move threatening ♕h6,  
and it's very difficult for Black  
to cope: 29.♖c7! ♘f6 30.♕h6  
♞d8 31.♖xf7 ♕d5 32.♕d2± ♞d6  
33.♕xd5 ♞xd5 34.♖e7+- works  
out for White, and the pawn  
advantage will decide the game.

29...♕f6 30.♞f4 ♕c6



31.♖c7??

A huge mistake, which I realized  
as soon as I played it. It looks  
natural to attack the Bishop, but  
it gives Black a way to force a  
draw.

31.♖a7! is much better, allowing  
the Queen to infiltrate via c7.

31...♕g5!

The only way to deal with all the  
threats.

32.♞e5

32.♘xg5?? ♞e1#.

32.♕xf7+ ♖h8 33.♞xc6 (33.♞xe4  
♕xe4 34.♕d4+ ♞xd4 35.♘xd4  
♞d8 36.f3 ♕b1 gives Black a  
lot of counterplay.) 33...♕xf4  
34.♕d4+ ♞xd4 35.♘xd4 ♞xf7  
36.♞c8+ ♖g7 37.♘e6+ ♖h6  
38.♞c4 ♞d7 doesn't give White  
any winning chances.

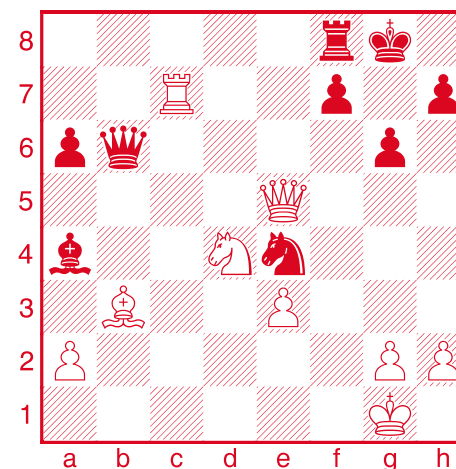
32.♞xf7 ♕xf4 33.♞xf4+ ♞xb3  
34.♞xf8+ ♖xf8 35.axb3 does  
give White a stable pleasant  
position without risk, but the  
presence of opposite colour  
Bishops gives Black great  
drawing chances.

32...♕xe3??

32...♕f6! is the move that I had  
missed when I played 31... ♖c7.  
My Queen has no squares!  
White would be forced to play  
33.♞f4 ♕g5 and White has to  
try something from the previous  
note or agree to the repetition.

33.fxe3 ♞b6 34.♘d4 ♕a4

After this move, I spent almost  
10 minutes trying to find a  
solution, as I couldn't find  
anything convincing. The solution  
was right in front of my eyes.



35.♕xf7+ ♖+/-

I was extremely happy and  
relieved to spot this sequence,  
but I was disappointed that I  
almost missed it.

35...♞xf7 36.♞c8+ ♖f8

37.♞d5+ ♖g7 38.♘e6+ ♖

♖h6 39.♞xe4 ♖

Not 39.♞xf8?? which loses to  
39...♞xe3+-.

Now White threatens ♞h4#,  
but most importantly, prevents  
...♞b1. Black is out of defenses.

This win allowed me to finish the  
tournament with better tiebreaks,  
as Bator and I finished tied for  
first place with 7.5/9.

1-0

SRL (2493)

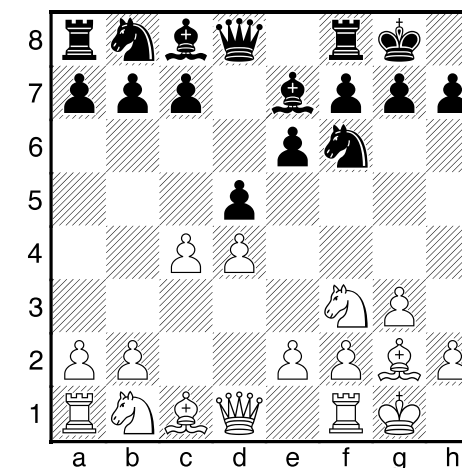
Vidyarathi, Vyom (2429)

E09

4th International Mohamed VI  
Cup lichess.org (5), 16.08.2023

**Notes: GM Shawn  
Rodrigue-Lemieux**

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6  
4.♕g2 ♕e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.d4

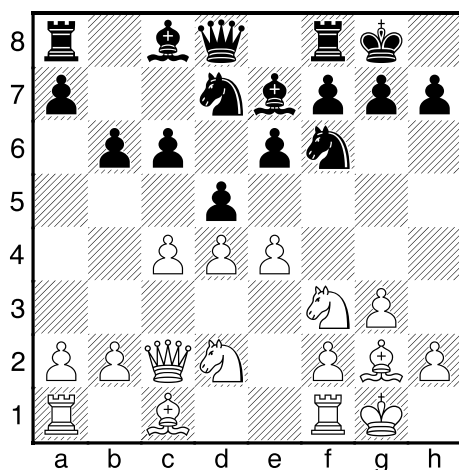




6...♘bd7

6...c6 7.♖c2 b6 8.♘bd2 ♘b7  
9.e4 ♘a6 is a better way to play, in my opinion. ...♘b4 might come with tempo at some point, and the Knight supports the c5-break as well. Another important point is that 10.e5 can be met with 10...♘d7.

7.♖c2 c6 8.♘bd2 b6 9.e4



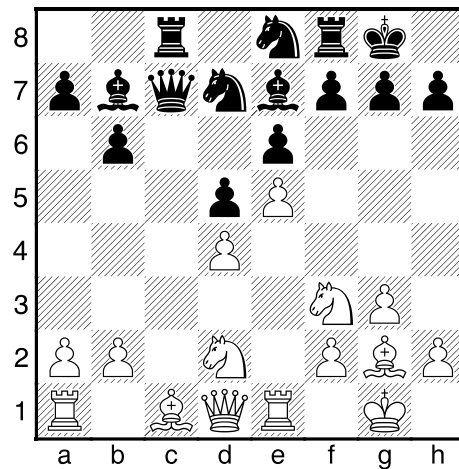
After this move, I believe that White's position is already extremely comfortable.

9...♘b7 10.e5 ♘e8

Now ...♘d7 was not possible, since the other knight was blocking this square!

11.cxd5 cxd5 12.♖e1 ♖c8

13.♖d1 ♖c7



14.♘b1!

A counterintuitive move, but a very strong one.

14...b5

14...♖c2 can now be met with 15.♖xc2 ♖xc2 16.♘c3 trapping the Rook.

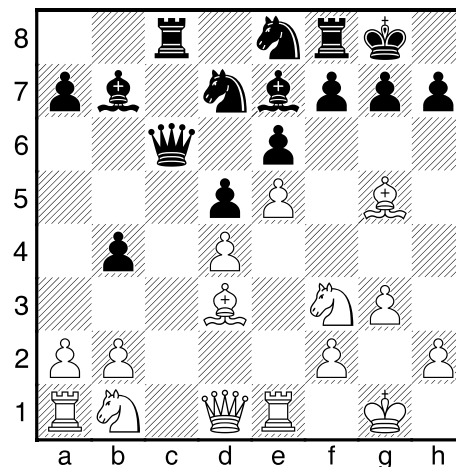
15.♗f1

Another counterintuitive move! I remembered having analyzed and played this position, but couldn't remember the exact details. The idea is to bring the Bishop to d3, where it will control an important diagonal.

In a previous game against the talented Ilia Batorshyn,

I chose: 15.a3 a5 16.♗f1 b4  
17.♗d3 (17.axb4!±) 17...♘b6  
18.a4± **Rodrigue-Lemieux, S**  
(2510)–**Batorshyn, I** (2164) CEM  
Mercredi, 2023.

15...b4 16.♗d3 ♖c6 17.♗g5



Trying to trade my Bishop for one of Black's best defenders.

17...♗xg5

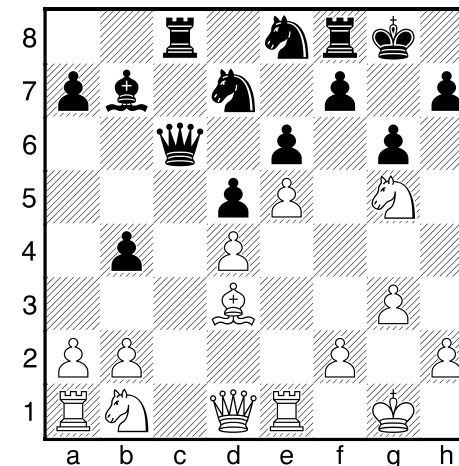
17...f6 18.exf6 ♘exf6 19.♘bd2 was also possible, even though White is still much better thanks to the e–file control. All of White's pieces are active, and Black doesn't have an easy plan.

18.♘xg5

The tempting 18.♗xh7+ doesn't work because of 18...♔xh7

19.♘xg5+ ♔g8 20.♖h5 ♖c2 and Black's Queen saves the day.

18...g6



White's position is now much better. Black's King is quite weak and lacks defenders, while Black's queenside attack doesn't seem too dangerous. h4 is one typical idea, and ♖g4-h4 is also typical.

19.♖g4?

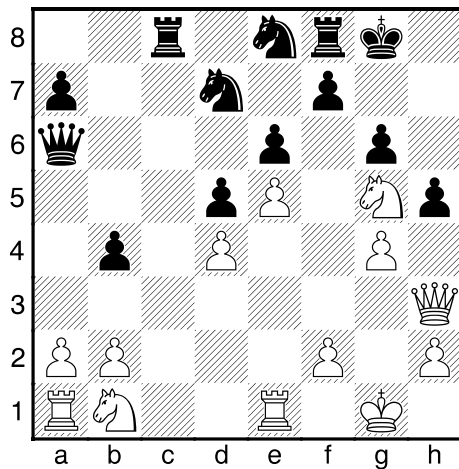
An inexplicable mistake, allowing him to trade Bishops.

19.♘d2! would've been much stronger, intending to meet 19...♗a6 with 20.♗b1.

19...♗a6! 20.♗xa6 ♖xa6



21. ♖h3 h5 22.g4



Going for the immediate attack, but Black seems to have enough defensive resources for now.

22... ♞g7

22... f6 23. exf6 ♞exf6 was also interesting, since I cannot play 24. ♖xe6 due to 24... ♖c1+.

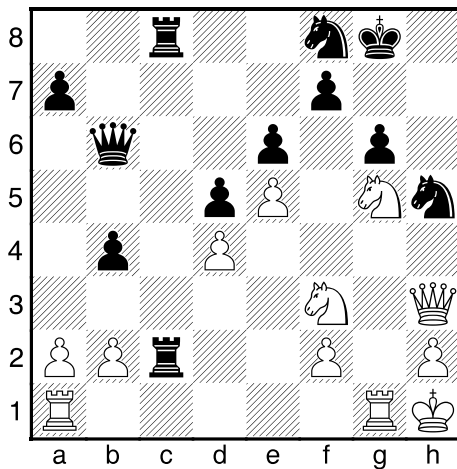
23. ♞d2 ♖b6 24. ♞df3

24. gxh5 ♞xh5 25. ♖g4 ♖c2 26. ♞f1 was a better plan, intending to play 26... ♖xb2 27. ♞g3 and remove the Knight from h5.

24... ♖c2 25. ♔h1 ♖fc8

Black is already taking over the initiative!

26. ♖g1 ♞f8 27. gxh5 ♞xh5



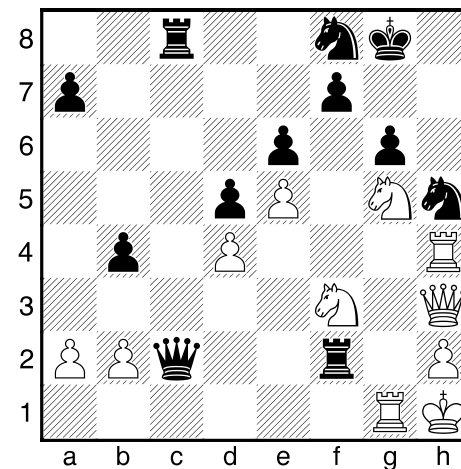
28. ♖ad1

28. ♞xe6! was objectively stronger, but I felt that I would lose some of my winning chances. 28... ♞xe6 29. ♖xh5 ♖xf2 30. ♖g3 is still slightly better for Black.

28... ♖xf2 29. ♖g4 ♖c6?

29... ♖cc2 30. ♖dg1 ♖b5 would've been extremely strong, trying to infiltrate with ... ♖d3.

30. ♖h4 ♖c2 31. ♖g1

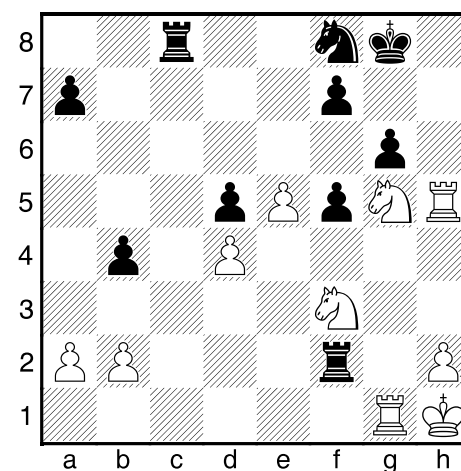


White's attack is suddenly dangerous!

31... ♖f5 32. ♖xf5

32. ♖xh5 ♖xh3 33. ♖xh3 ♖xb2 was also possible, but Black's pawns are suddenly looking dangerous.

32... exf5 33. ♖xh5

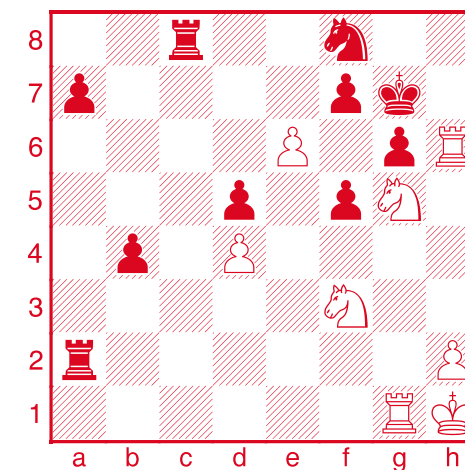


I decided to go for this version of the Knight vs 2 pawns endgame. The main difference is that now I have more ideas, such as e6!

33... ♖xb2 34. ♖h6 ♖xa2 35. e6 ♔g7??

A big mistake, which can only be exploited with a very nice sequence!

35... fxe6 36. ♞e5 ♔g7 37. ♖h3 ♔g8! would've held the balance for Black. (37... ♖cc2?? would be a disaster after 38. ♞xe6+ ♞xe6 39. ♖xg6+ ♔f8 40. ♖h8+ ♔e7 41. ♖h7+- with checkmate soon.)



36. e7 ♖+-

The only way to break through Black's position.







# Chess Canada Rodrigue-Lemieux

36...♔xh6 37.♘xf7+♚♔g7

38.♘d8♚

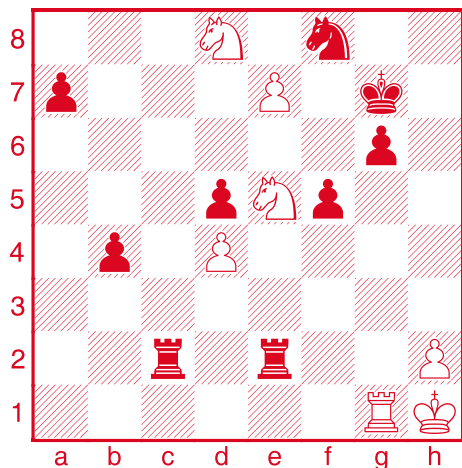
The entire idea, blocking Black's Rook and threatening to promote.

38...♖e2 39.♘e5♚

Once again blocking the Rook!

39...♖cc2

This is the move my opponent was counting on.



Critical Position (*continued*)

40.♘e6+♚+-

40.e8♚ ♖xh2#.

40...♔h7

40...♘xe6 now fails because of 41.♖xg6+ ♔h7 42.e8♚+- and

Black doesn't have a checkmate.

41.exf8♘+!!

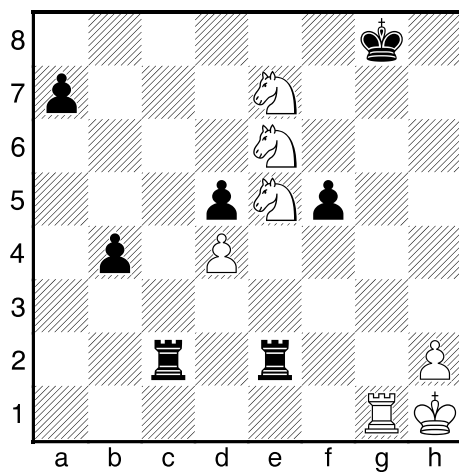
A third Knight! White has to keep giving checks.

41.♘xf8+ ♔h8 42.♘fxg6+ ♔g7

43.♘f4+ also wins, but it's a bit slower, and not as beautiful!

41...♔h8 42.♘fxg6+ ♔g8

43.♘e7+



A beautiful study-like finish!

1-0

SRL (2520)

Han, Johnathan (2266)

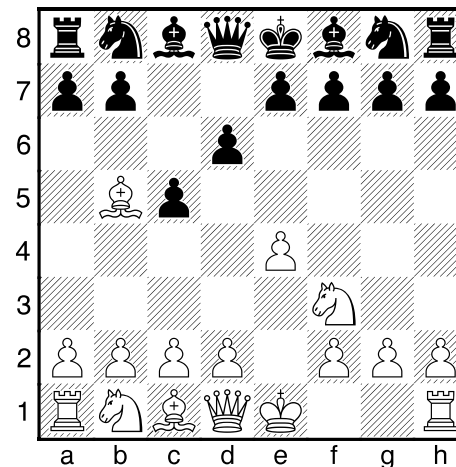
B51

RA March Open (2), 04.03.2023

**Notes: GM Shawn Rodrigue-Lemieux**

Playing against Johnathan is always a tough challenge, and he's always up for a fight!

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♙b5+



My pet line, trying to avoid complications against such a young and talented opponent.



**Side-by-side**

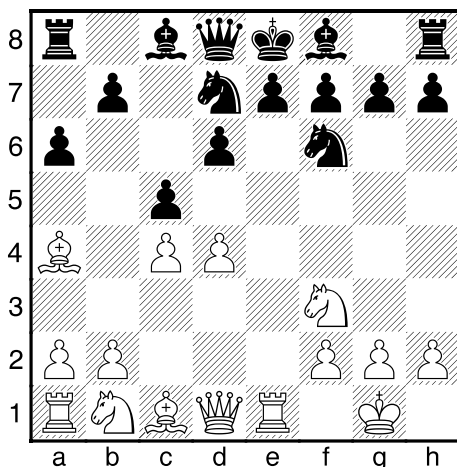
SRL & Johnathan Han  
2022 NAYCC, Mexico

3...♘d7 4.♙a4 ♘gf6 5.0-0 a6

6.c4 ♘xe4?!

Somehow he *still* managed to enter complications! However, this is very dubious line for Black, and White gets a massive advantage with correct play. 6...g6 is a safer approach.

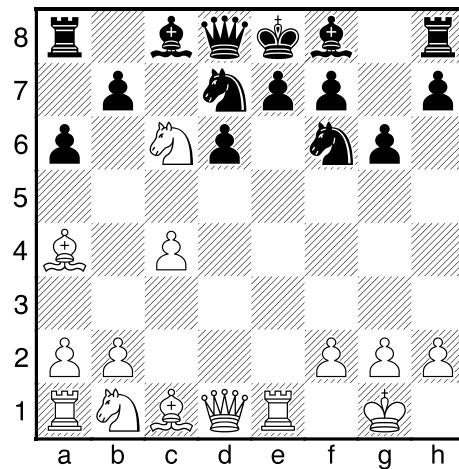
7.♖e1 ♘ef6 8.d4



8...cxd4

Black can also play 8...e6, but White maintains pressure after 9.d5 e5 10.♘xe5 ♙e7 11.♘c6!? bxc6 12.dxc6 0-0 (12...♘e5?? 13.c7+ wins the Queen.) 13.cxd7 ♙xd7 14.♘c3 with a better position due to the activity and favorable pawn structure.

9.♘xd4 g6 10.♘c6!?



A very interesting idea that I knew from analyzing this pawn sacrifice, but this wasn't the correct position! I had a better (and safer) option at my disposal.

♠10.♙f4 e5 (10...♙b6 11.♘a3 ♙g7 12.c5! ♙xc5 13.♖c1+- and White's initiative is simply too powerful.) 11.♘c3 ♙g7 12.♘c6! bxc6 13.♙xd6+- is crushing for White.

10...♙c7!

After this move, I started doubting myself and I realized that my ♘c6 idea was actually in a different position.

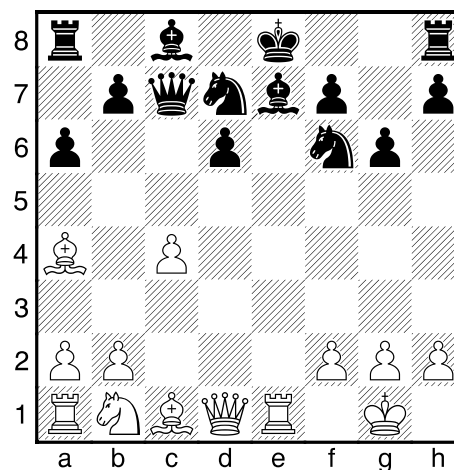
10...bxc6 11.♙xc6 ♖a7 (11...♖b8

12.♙xd6 leads to a similar fork, where there are pins everywhere!) 12.♙d4!! is the idea behind this sequence! White wins with a highly unusual fork, as the f6-Knight is surprisingly hanging. 12...♖c7 13.♙xf6+-.

11.♘xe7

I didn't fully believe in this sacrifice, but what else! I couldn't retreat with ♘d4 at that point. I still thought that White had a lot of pressure and that I should be able to get enough compensation. As it turns out, this is objectively very strong for White.

11...♙xe7



12.♙g5?

12.♙f4 was stronger, threatening ♙xd6. 12...♙d8 is the move I was worried about during the game, but White apparently gets sufficient compensation after the simple 13.♘c3 ♖e8 14.♖c1 and Black is running out of useful ideas!

12...b5!

A very strong defensive resource, giving Black some important time.

The immediate 12...♙c5 doesn't work because of 13.♙xf6.

12...♙d8 fails to a very nice sequence: 13.♖xe7 ♙xe7 14.♘c3 ♙f8 15.♙xd7 ♘xd7 16.♘d5 and despite being down a full Rook, White is completely winning. 16...♙xc4 17.♖c1 ♙e4 18.♙h6+ ♙g8 19.♙d4! is an example of the danger of Black's position.

13.cxb5 ♙c5!

Another strong move, attacking my Bishop.

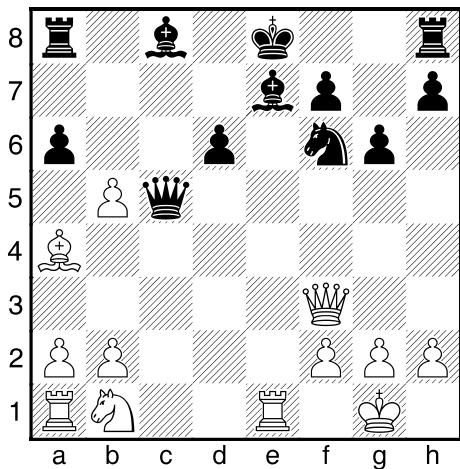
14.♙xf6 ♘xf6 15.♙f3







# Chess Canada Rodrigue-Lemieux



## 15...Nd5??

It was extremely difficult to evaluate this position, but Black should have given up the material in order to gain activity:

15...0-0! gives up the Rook, but allows Black to get the initiative. 16. ♖xa8 ♘g4 17. ♖f3 ♙h4 18. g3 ♙f6 and Black is the one asking questions. 19. ♘d2 ♙xb2 20. ♘e4 (20. ♖ab1 ♘xf2 and White's King isn't feeling so safe anymore!) 20... ♖h5 21. h4 ♙xa1 22. ♖xa1 axb5 and Black ends up with a material advantage.

## 16. ♘c3+-

Black is still up a piece at the moment, but the King safety is more important. It is now impossible for Black to castle,

and the pressure will decide the game.

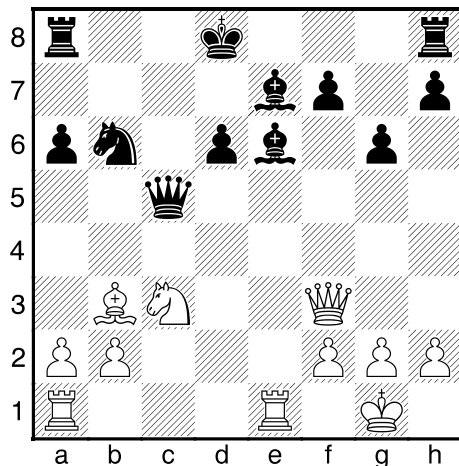
## 16... ♙e6

16... ♘xc3 17. ♖xa8 0-0 18. bxc3+- is another way to sacrifice the exchange, but it's much less convincing than on the previous move.

## 17. b6+

17. bxa6+ ♔d8 18. ♖ac1 is even stronger, but I didn't necessarily want to activate Black's Rook.

## 17... ♔d8 18. ♙b3 ♘xb6



## 19. ♘a4!

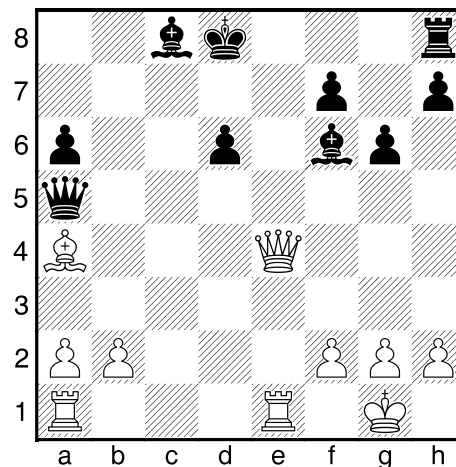
The key behind b6 and ♙b3: White is gaining the material back, with interest.

## 19... ♖a5 20. ♖b7

20. ♘xb6 ♖b8 21. ♙xe6 fxe6 22. ♘c4 also works. Black's King is in too much danger to survive.

## 20... ♘xa4 21. ♖xa8+ ♙c8

## 22. ♖e4 ♙f6 23. ♙xa4



With a material advantage and a huge initiative, Black has no chances of surviving.

## 23... ♙e5 24. ♖ad1 f6 25. f4

## ♖b6+ 26. ♔h1 ♙b7 27. ♖e2

## ♙d4 28. b4 d5 29. ♖c1

With devastating threats. This opening perfectly illustrates the danger of grabbing such pawns in the opening. King safety is the priority!

1-0

## Guseinov, Gadir (2661) SRL (2493)

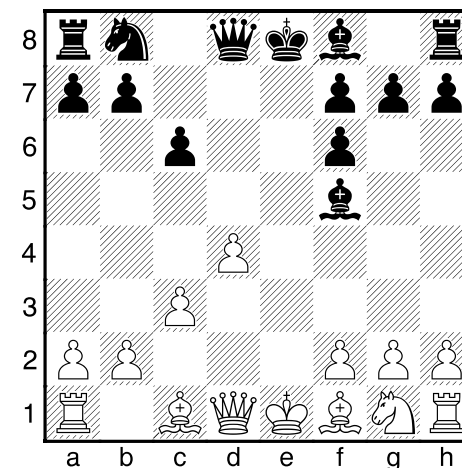
### B15

4th International Mohamed VI Cup (6), 17.08.2023

**Notes: GM Shawn  
Rodrigue-Lemieux**

This game was very important to me, as he was my highest-rated opponent ever at the time!

1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. ♘d2 dxe4  
4. ♘xe4 ♘f6 5. ♘xf6+ exf6  
6. c3 ♙f5



My pet line, which has worked very well for me since 2022. I like to keep the game more positional and less theoretical.

The main line is 6...♔d6 7.♔d3 0-0 8.♔c2 ♖e8+ 9.♘e2 h5 is the modern approach for Black, which leads to complex positions.

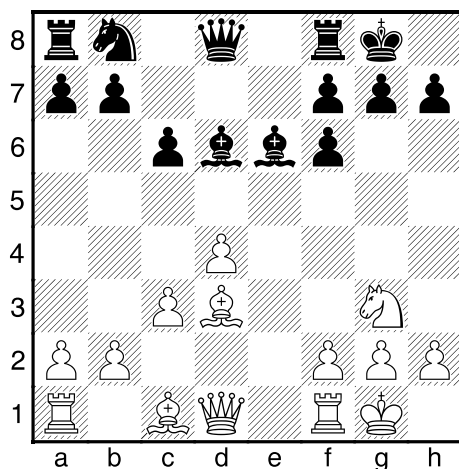
### 7.♘e2 ♔d6 8.♘g3

The most challenging line, and the Knight is well placed on g3, eyeing important squares such as f5 and e4.

### 8...♔e6

8...♔g6 is also possible, but it allows the unpleasant 9.♔e2+ ♔e7 (9...♔e7 10.♔xe7+ ♔xe7 11.♔d2 is also slightly better for White and doesn't give Black great winning chances.) 10.h4 h5 11.♔f3± with some pressure.

### 9.♔d3 0-0 10.0-0



### 10...g6

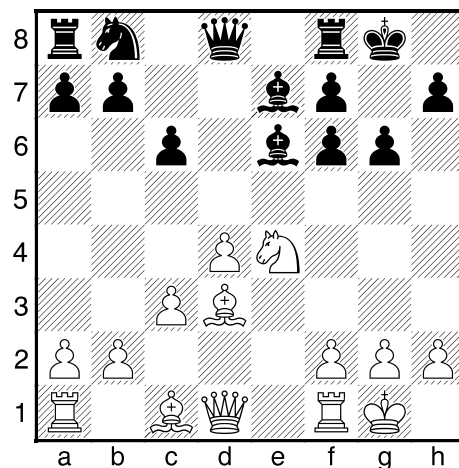
A surprising but important move.

10...♘d7 looks natural but allows 11.f4 ♘b6 12.♔h5 g6 13.♔h6 with a strong attack for White.

### 11.♘e4

11.f4? can now be met with 11...f5.

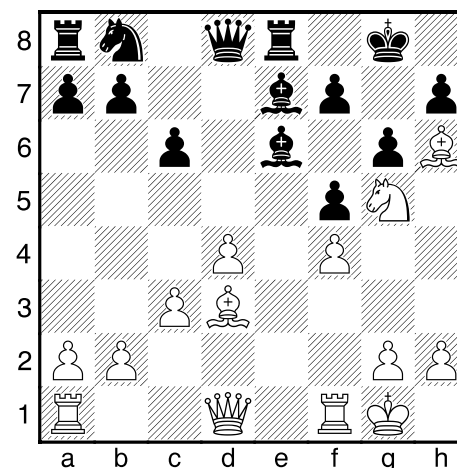
### 11...♔e7



### 12.♖e1

12.♔h6 was played twice by Sai Krishna against me before this game. 12...♖e8 13.f4 f5 14.♘g5∞:

### Analysis Diagram



*editor* – Both the games Shawn mentioned reached this position, and now diverged (my notes):

14...♔f8? actually just loses a pawn! 15.♔xf8 ♔xf8□ (15...♔xf8? makes it worse 16.♘xe6 (16.g4!?) 16...fxe6 17.♔b3 ♔d7 18.♖ae1 ♖e8 19.♖xe6+-) 16.♘xh7+ ♔g7 17.♘g5 and White was up a pawn, but blundered after move 30 and lost in Sai,K (2396)–Rodrigue Lemieux,S (2465) Waterloo, 2022.

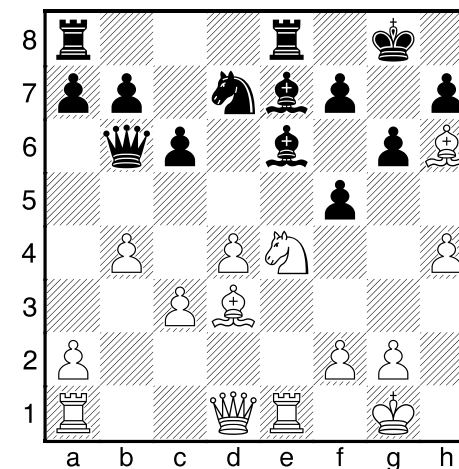
In a later game, Shawn improved with: 14...♔xg5! 15.♔xg5 ♔d6 16.g4 ♔d5 17.♔c2 ♘d7 18.♖f2 f6 19.♔h4 ♔g7∞ Black had equalized, and won when White

blundered after move 30 in Sai,K (2385)–Rodrigue Lemieux,S (2456) Montreal, 2023.

### 12...♘d7 13.♔h6 ♖e8 14.h4 ♔b6

14...c5 is a typical plan, but in this variation it's much harder to achieve because of 15.♔b5 cxd4 16.♔xd4 with strong pressure in the center.

### 15.b4 f5



### 16.♘g5

16.♘c5 seems natural, but gives Black a lot of play after 16...♘xc5 17.bxc5 ♔a5 with c3 and h4 hanging. 18.♖xe6 fxe6 19.♔b3 ♔f6 20.♔c4 ♔h8 21.♔xe6 ♖e7 is interesting, but it's hard to see how White can make progress.





16...♙f8 17.♙xf8  
17.♘xe6 ♙xh6 doesn't lead  
anywhere for White.

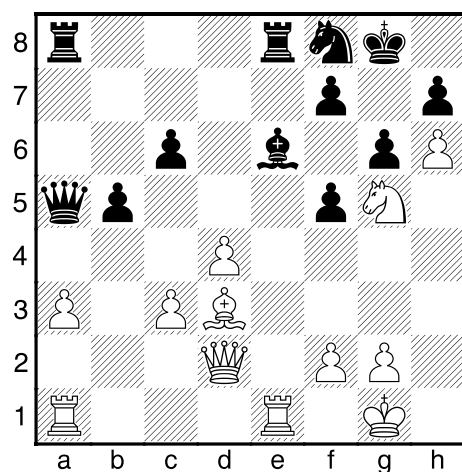
17...♘xf8

The dark squares seem  
extremely weak, but somehow  
everything is solid. It's hard for  
White to exploit them.

18.♙d2 a5 19.a3 ♙c7 20.h5  
b5 21.bxa5?!

A surprising move, giving  
Black long-term play on the  
queenside. It was better to  
keep the queenside closed and  
prevent ...c5.

21...♙xa5 22.h6



22...♙c7

An inaccuracy, allowing White  
to unleash a nice idea. 22...♙d5  
would've equalized the position.

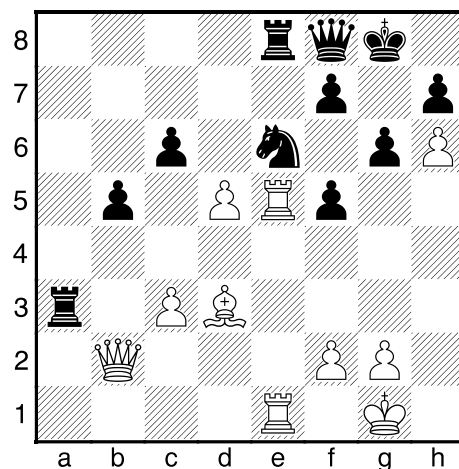
23.♘xe6

The immediate 23.c4! was quite  
powerful:

23...bxc4? 24.♘xe6 ♘xe6  
25.♙xc4 and White's activity is  
dominant. The h6-pawn will be  
tough for Black to deal with;

23...♙xc4 24.♙xc4 bxc4 25.♖xe8  
♗xe8 26.a4 surprisingly gives  
White a decent advantage with  
the outside passed pawn.

23...♘xe6 24.♖e5 ♙d6  
25.♖ae1 ♖xa3 26.♙b2 ♙f8  
27.d5

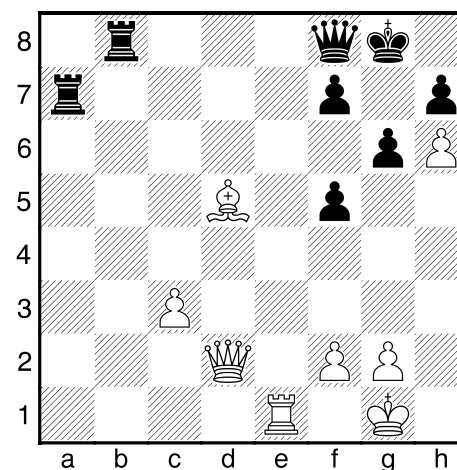


27...cxd5 28.♙xb5 ♖b8

29.♖xd5 ♖a7!

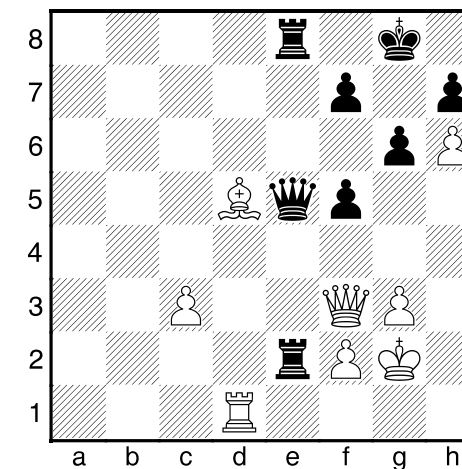
A strong consolidating move,  
after which White has some  
coordination problems: h6  
is loose, while ...♘c7 is a  
dangerous threat.

30.♙d2 ♘c7 31.♙c4 ♘xd5  
32.♙xd5



White is now down an exchange,  
but the strong Bishop as well  
as the h6-pawn seem to give  
enough compensation.

32...♖e7 33.♖d1 ♖be8 34.g3  
♖e2 35.♙f4 ♙e7 36.♙g2 ♙e5  
37.♙f3



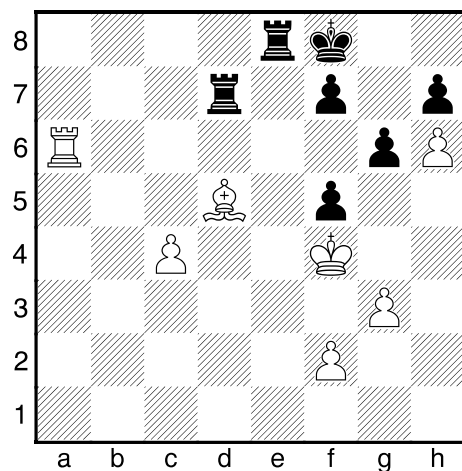
I could sense that a win was  
close, but time was getting very  
low and I couldn't gather my  
thoughts and calculate properly!

37...♖c2?

37...♖e1!-+ is the move I wanted  
to play, but I got scared and  
chose not to go for it. 38.♖d3 ♙f6  
gives Black a winning position,  
as the h6-pawn will eventually  
fall after ...g5 or ...♙g5.

38.c4 ♙e2 39.♖a1 ♙xf3+  
40.♙xf3 ♖ce2 41.♖a6 ♙f8  
42.♖a7 ♖2e7 43.♖a6 ♖d7  
44.♙f4



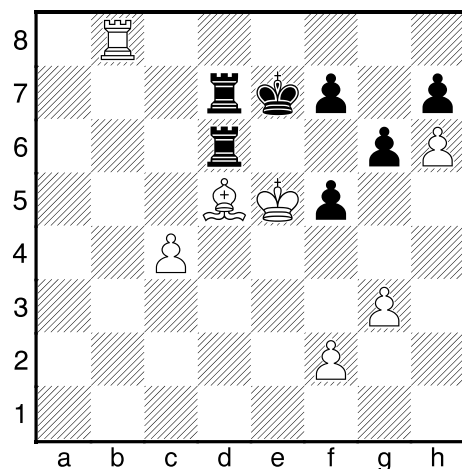


#### 44...Rd8?

44...Rd8? 44...Re2 45. Kg5 f4! was the winning idea, but it's extremely hard to find under time pressure: 46. Kf6 is met with 46...fxg3, and 46.gxf4 Rxf2 prevents Kf6.

45. Ke5 Ke7 46. Rb6 Rd6

47. Rb7+ R8d7 48. Rb8

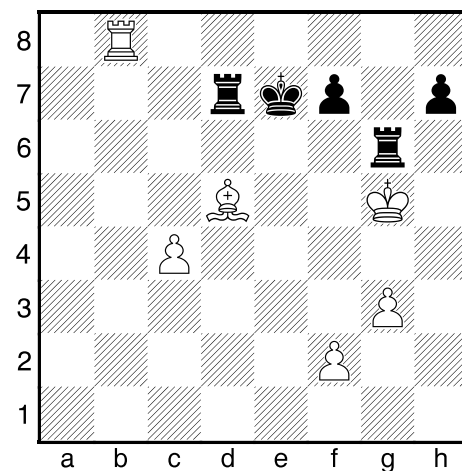


#### 48...g5

editor – !? Black gives up a pawn to get the annoying one on h6, which reduces White's options. Another choice was ...Rd8, asking White how he intends to make progress, since trading rooks would end White's ability to fight for the dark squares and lose the game.

49. Qxf5 Rxh6 50. Qxg5

Rg6+

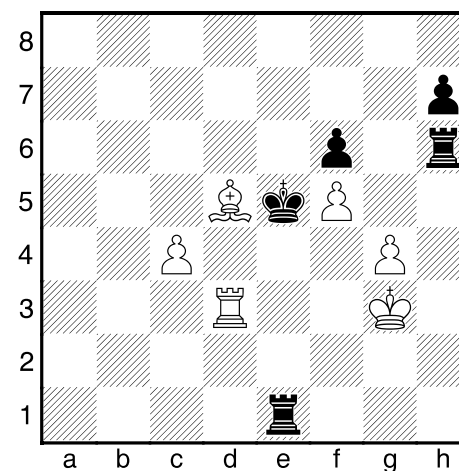


At this moment I offered a draw, knowing that I had given up the advantage. To my surprise, he declined!

51. Qh4 Qd6 52. g4 Re7 53. f4 f6 54. Rb3

Here I started to think that White had to be careful to avoid a worse position.

54...Re1 55. f5 Rh6+ 56. Kg3 Qe5 57. Rd3



Now I realized that I was in danger too!

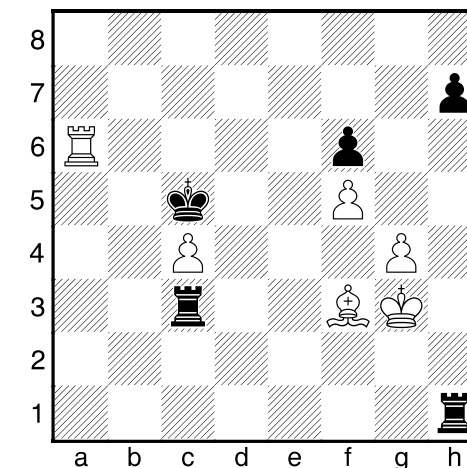
57...Qd6

Luckily, White has no good discovery.

A natural move like 57...Rc1 loses immediately to 58. Qg2 Rxc4 59. Rd5#.

57...Ra1 58. Qg2 Ra5 also defends, but Black has no coordination whatsoever.

58. Ra3 Rg1+ 59. Qg2 Qc5  
60. Ra4 Rc1 61. Ra6 Rc3+  
62. Qf3 Rh1



Now I knew for sure that White was in big danger of losing this game. My h6-Rook finally activated, and White's pawns are all fixed.

63. Rc6??

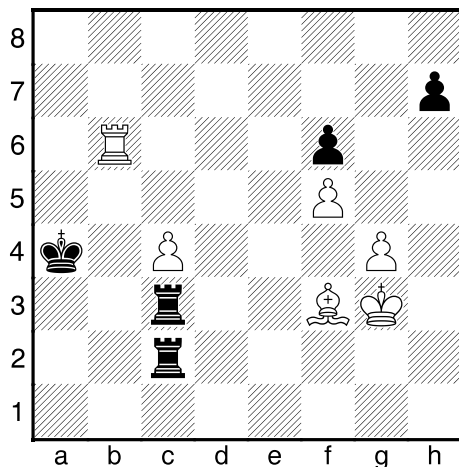
63. Qg2! is the only way to hold: 63...Rb1 64. Rxf6 Rb2+ 65. Qg3 Rbb3 66. Rc6+ Qb4 67. Rb6+ Qxc4 68. Rxb3 Rxb3 with a drawn endgame.

63...Qb4 64. Rb6+ Qa5

64...Qxc4?? loses to 65. Rc6+ Qb4 66. Rxc3 breaking the pin 66...Qxc3 67. Qxh1+-.



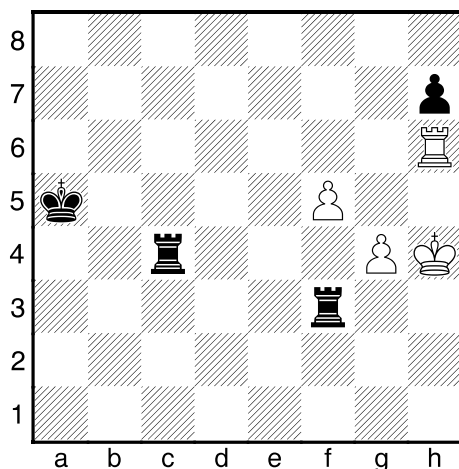
65. ♖b5+ ♔a4 66. ♕g2 ♜hc1  
67. ♜b6 ♜1c2+ 68. ♕g3



68... ♜d2

White can't really get rid of the pin!

69. ♜a6+ ♔b4 70. ♜b6+ ♔a5  
71. ♜xf6 ♜dd3 72. ♜h6 ♜xf3+  
73. ♕h4 ♜xc4



This endgame still looks somewhat dangerous, but the Rooks are strong enough to stop the pawns.

74. ♕g5 ♜c7 75. ♕f6 ♔b5  
76. ♜h1 ♔c6 77. g5 ♕d5  
78. g6 hxg6 79. ♕xg6 ♜g3+  
My highest rated win to this day!

0-1

**Gledura, Benjamin**

(2633)

**SRL (2488)**

**E06**

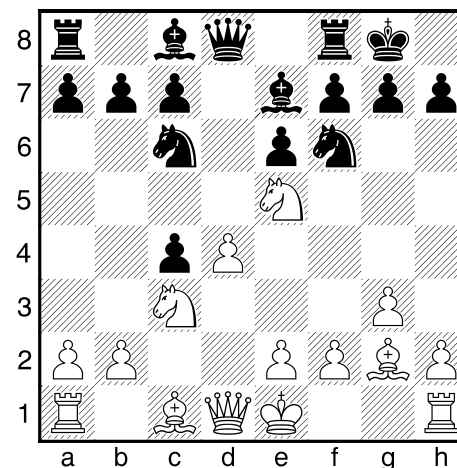
FIDE Grand Swiss (3),

27.10.2023

**Notes: GM Shawn  
Rodrigue-Lemieux**

After starting off with 0.5/2 against an average opposition of 2640, I wanted to be solid and avoid another loss. I was quite happy to play against a rather positional opponent who wouldn't try to checkmate me!

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♘f3 d5  
4. g3 ♙e7 5. ♙g2 0-0 6. ♘c3  
dxc4 7. ♘e5 ♘c6



An extremely solid line, where Black has very little winning chances. With my tournament situation, I was more than happy to play this way.

8. ♙xc6 bxc6 9. ♘xc6 ♙e8  
10. ♘xe7+ ♙xe7 11. ♙a4 c5  
12. dxc5  
12. ♙a3?? loses to 12... ♙b7!

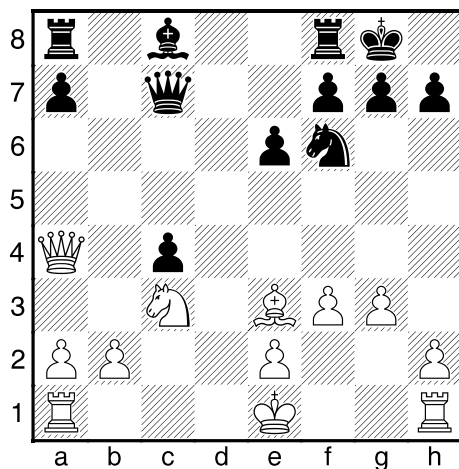
12... ♙xc5 13. ♙e3 ♙c7 14. f3

**Grand Swiss**





# Chess Canada Rodrigue-Lemieux



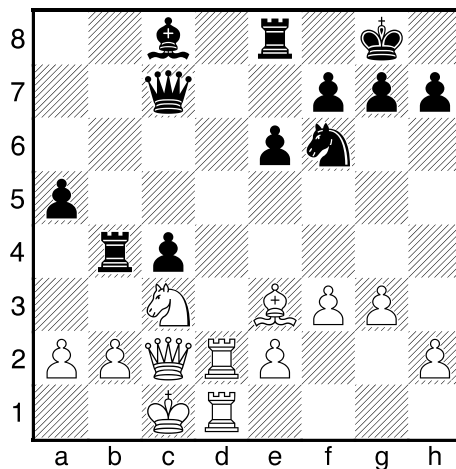
## 14...a5

I had previously played the inaccurate 14...e5 which gives White too many important squares, such as d5. 15.0-0-0 ♖e6 16.♙a6! e4!? 17.♙f4 (♘17. fxe4) 17...♙c5± and Black held the endgame in [Meskovs,N \(2573\)–Rodrigue Lemieux,S \(2469\) Montreal, 2023](#).

## 15.0-0-0

White's plan is simple: to blockade the queenside and slowly build an attack on the kingside with g4 and h4.

15...♞b8 16.♞d2 ♞b4 17.♙c2 ♞e8 18.♞hd1



The main problem in this variation is that Black has virtually nothing to do. Patience is key, because any active plan would most likely backfire due to White's active pieces and lack of weaknesses.

## 18...h6

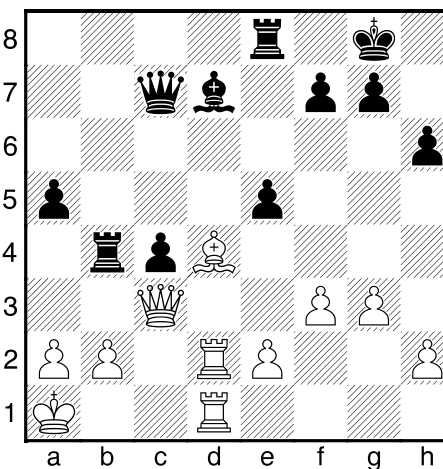
Attempting to simplify the position with 18...♞d5 fails to 19.♞xd5 exd5 20.♞xd5 ♞xe3 21.♞d8+.

19.♙b1 ♙d7 20.♙a1

♞d5 21.♙d4

21.♞xd5 exd5 22.♞xd5? fails to 22...♙a4 23.b3 ♞xe3.

21...♞xc3 22.♙xc3 e5



## 23.♙e3

23.♙xe5 ♙xe5 24.♞xd7 ♙xe2 is perfectly fine for Black.

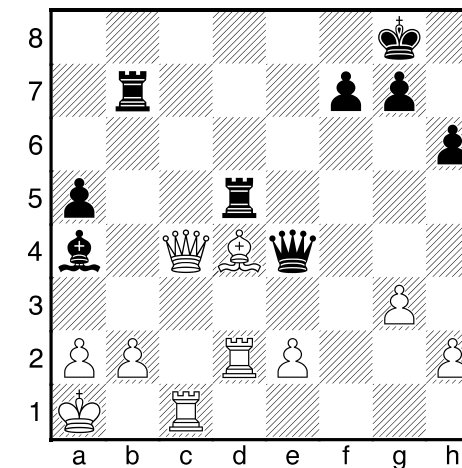
## 23...♙a4

23...♙e6 gives Black a very stable position with a lot of activity.

24.♞c1 ♙c6 25.f4 ♙e4

26.♙c5 ♞b7 27.fxe5

♞xe5 28.♙d4 ♞d5 29.♙xc4



I was quite unhappy here, since I lost a pawn for no reason. I knew that my position should still be totally fine objectively, but I expected to have a tough defensive task ahead of me.

*editor* – This comment is another good example of the difference between a human GM and a strong computer: the human sees it is drawable but difficult, while Stockfish doesn't work harder at attacking or defending, and rates it 0.00.

29...♞b4 30.♙c8+ ♙h7  
31.e3 f6 32.♙c7 ♙d7  
33.♙f4?!

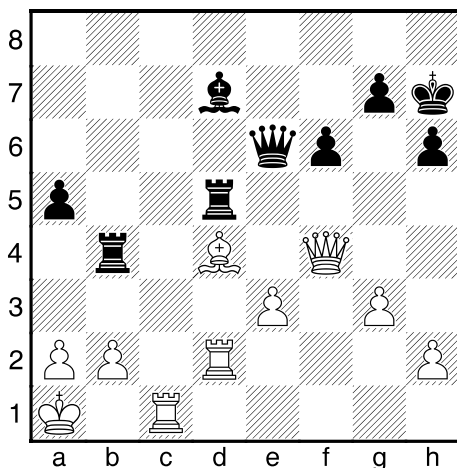
**I was happy to learn even such strong GMs can make horrific blunders!**



Placing the Queen on an awkward square.

I expected 33. ♔c2 forcing a Queen trade, after which Black should still be fine but White gets long-term winning chances. 33... ♕xc2 34. ♖cxc2 a4.

33... ♕e6



Despite being down a pawn, I started feeling that I could get some chances. The White Queen is severely misplaced, and White's King starts feeling unsafe, especially with ... ♕e8-f7 on the horizon. b3 will always be met with a4.

34. ♖c7??

As I wrote down this move, I

noticed that his idea was to meet ... ♕e8 with ♕xf6. And as I looked at the board, I realized that there was something wrong with White's position... and I couldn't believe it!

34... ♖f5!

And White simply has no moves due to the back-rank problems. I was happy to learn that even such strong grandmasters can make horrific blunders!

0-1

## Legend

FIDE Grand Swiss

Oct. 24 - Nov. 5, 2023.

Douglas, Isle of Man.

An 11-round Swiss, with the top two players in both the Open and Women's sections qualifying for the 2024 Candidates in Toronto. Those prizes guaranteed an extreme level of competition, making it an excellent opportunity for Norms.

Shawn's +3 =4 -4 score might not look impressive, but his *lowest* rated opponent was 2631, earning him a GM Norm with a round to spare!

**Ivanchuk, Vasyi (2653)**  
**SRL (2488)**

**E51**

FIDE Grand Swiss (5),  
29.10.2023

**Notes: GM Shawn**  
**Rodrigue-Lemieux**

I was extremely happy with this pairing! Playing an absolute

legend of the game was a dream come true for me, and I was extremely motivated to face him.

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗f3 d5  
4.♗c3 ♕b4 5.e3 0-0 6.a3  
♕xc3+ 7.bxc3 c5 8.♕b2 ♗c6  
9.♕e2

Ivanchuk had already played this position earlier in the tournament, so I was luckily familiar with it.



*Ivanchuk v SRL, closest to camera.*

*photo: Anna Shtourman/FIDE*

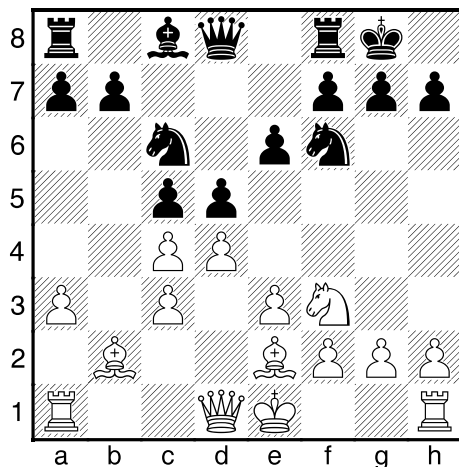


**Chess Canada**  
**Rodrigue-Lemieux**





# Chess Canada Rodrigue-Lemieux

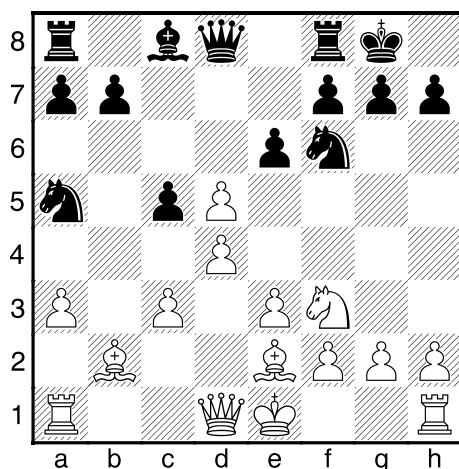


**9...Na5**

Forcing White to make a decision in the center.

Ivanchuk's game from earlier in the tournament went: 9...dxc4 10.♙xc4 b6 11.♙d3± *Ivanchuk, V (2653)–Mareco, S (2606) Douglas, 2023.*

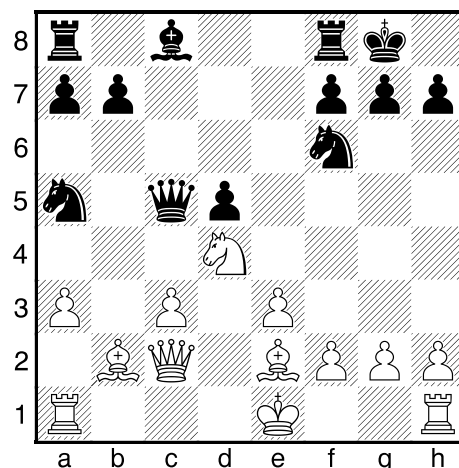
**10.cxd5**



**10...♙b6!**

A nice intermediate move, asking White a difficult question. 10...exd5 is also playable, but it allows 11.dxc5.

**11.♙c2 exd5 12.dxc5 ♙xc5  
13.♘d4**

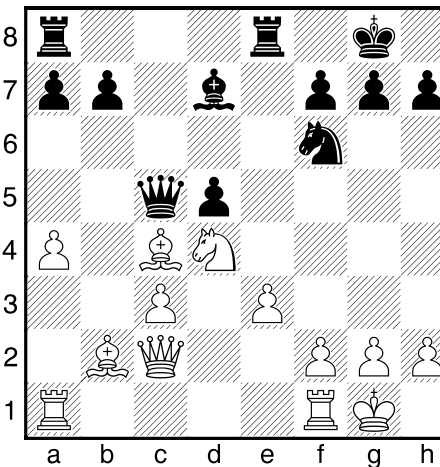


Black's position already seems quite pleasant. Despite having the Bishop pair, White lacks activity and ideas. Meanwhile, Black's Knights are ready to jump to e4 and c4.

**13...♘c4 14.0-0 ♙d7 15.a4  
♖fe8 16.♙xc4**

## Isle of Man

*Good luck spotting the non-GM*



I now had a difficult decision to make.

**16...dxc4**

I thought this move would give me more winning chances, and

I was ready for a fight in this game.

16...♙xc4 is also totally fine, and I felt that it was the safer option. However, I also thought it might give White a bit more stability.

**17.♙a3 ♙c7 18.♖fd1**

*editor* – 18.♖fb1?! ♘g4 19.g3□ (19.♘f3? ♙c6-+; 19.h3? ♙h2+ 20.♙f1 ♖xe3!-+) 19...♖ad8 or ...♙c6 and Black is clearly better.

**18...♘g4?!**

Not such a bad move, but a bit



*photo: Anna Shtourman/FIDE*



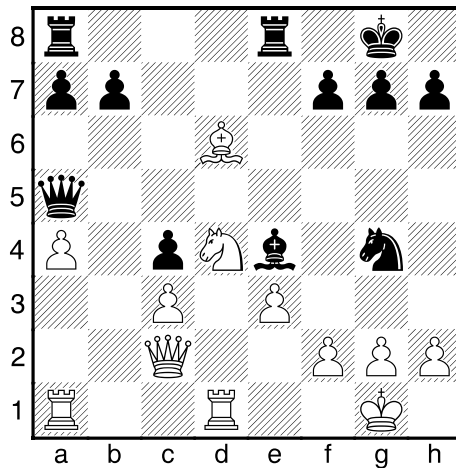
unnecessary. It was better to start with 18...♖ad8 activating my last piece.

**19.♘f3 ♕c6 20.♕d6**

For some reason I completely underestimated this move.

White's Bishop is powerful on d6.

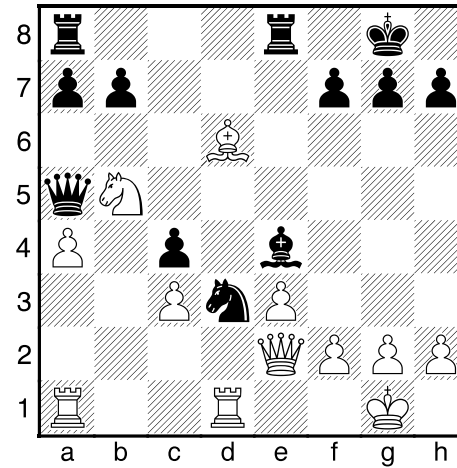
**20...♔a5 21.♘d4 ♕e4**



**22.♔e2**

White can create problems with 22.♔b2 ♖ad8 23.♔b5 ♔xb5 24.♘xb5± with a slightly unpleasant endgame for Black: a7 is hanging, and ♘c7 is a threat as well.

**22...♘e5 23.♘b5 ♘d3**



**24.♕c7**

24.♘c7 doesn't quite work due to 24...♖ed8 25.♘xa8?? (♘25.♕g3 ♖ac8±) 25...♖xd6-+ 26.♔g4 ♕xg2! 27.♔c8+ ♖d8 28.♔xc4 ♔g5 29.♔c7 ♕c6+ 30.♔g3 ♔d5 31.f3 ♖xa8-+.

**24...♔a6?**

Played too quickly. 24...b6 was totally fine for Black after 25.♘d6 ♖e6.

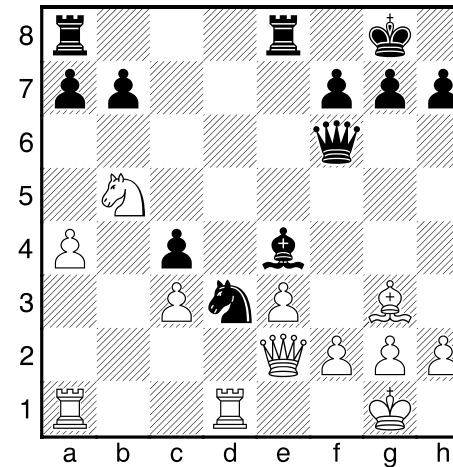
**25.♕g3!**

I completely missed this move! White is now threatening the unstoppable ♘c7, winning an exchange.

25.♘d6 ♖e6 is what I was counting on. 25...♕xg2 is

interesting, but doesn't quite work after 26.♘xe8 ♖xe8 27.♔xg2 ♔c6+ 28.♔f3 ♔xc7 29.♖ab1 with an equal position.

**25...♔f6**



Luckily, the exchange sacrifice gives me enough compensation.

**26.♔g4**

26.♘c7 ♔xc3 27.♘xa8 ♖xa8 28.f3 ♕c6 29.e4 is around equal, but I expected him to go for it.

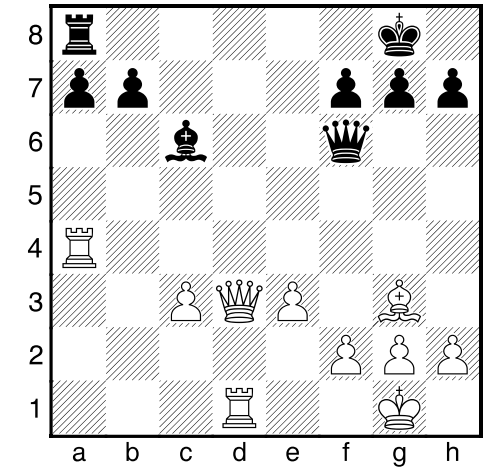
**26...♕c6 27.♘d6**

27.♘c7 doesn't work so well anymore after 27...♖e4.

27.♔xc4?? ♘b2-+ wins the exchange.

**27...♖e6 28.♘xc4 ♖e4**

**29.♔e2 ♖xc4 30.♔xd3 ♖xa4 31.♖xa4**



In this position, **Ivanchuk offered me a draw!** But I really wanted to win this game, and I thought my position had a lot of potential.

**31...♕xa4 32.♖a1 ♖d8**

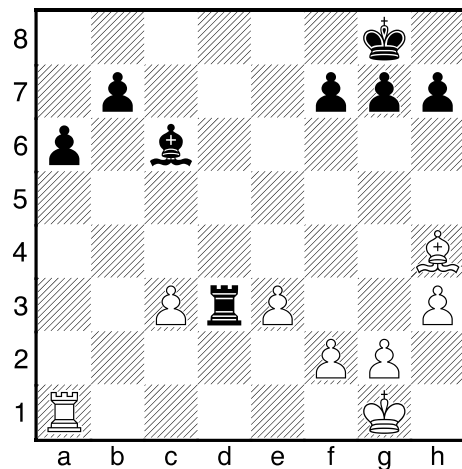
**33.♔c4 ♕c6 34.♔h4?!**

This Queen trade is in my favour, since White's pieces will be uncoordinated. 34.h3 is a more stable move, keeping the Queens on the board.

**34...♔xh4 35.♕xh4 ♖d3**

**36.h3 a6**



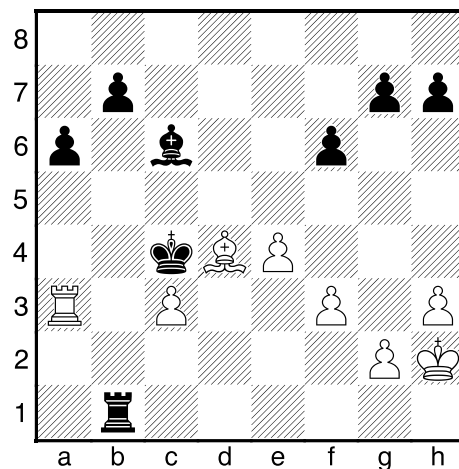


This outside passed pawn gives me great winning chances in the long run. My Bishop is also perfectly positioned, while my Rook is already very active.

37.♖a3 f6 38.♙g3 ♔f7  
 39.♙c7 ♔e6 40.♙b6 ♔d5  
 41.♙d4 ♖d1+  
 Forcing the King away.  
 42.♔h2 ♔c4 43.f3 ♖b1  
 44.e4

**GM Norm 3**

photo: FIDE

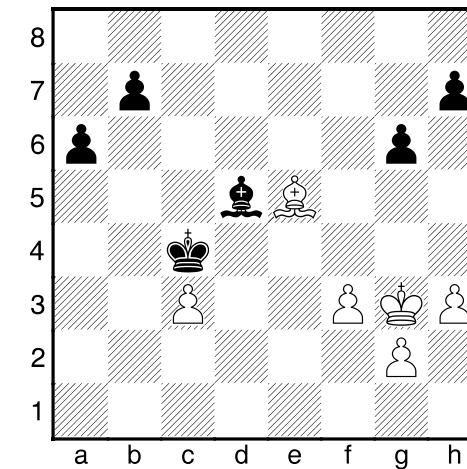


44...♙b5  
 44...♖b3 45.♖a1 ♖xc3 was an interesting sacrifice which I

initially intended to play. 46.♙xc3 ♔xc3 47.♔g3 ♔b2 48.♖a5 is the move I missed at first! (48.♖e1? a5 wins for Black.) 48...♙b5? (⊔48...♙b3=) 49.f4! and White now wins, e.g. 49...b6 50.♖xb5+! axb5 51.e5 and White is faster.

45.e5 fxe5 46.♙xe5 g6  
 47.♙c7 ♙d5 48.♖a5+ ♔c4  
 49.♙e5 ♖b5 50.♖xb5  
 50.♖a1 ♙xf3 also leads to a winning endgame.

50...♔xb5 51.♔g3 ♔c4



I thought this endgame should be winning, but my opponent seemed quite confident after the Rook trade, and I started having some doubts.

52.♔f2  
 52.♔f4 ♔d3! blocks White's King.

52...♔d3 53.♙c7  
 Necessary, otherwise it will become impossible to stop the pawns. 53.♔e1 ♔c2 also cuts off the King.

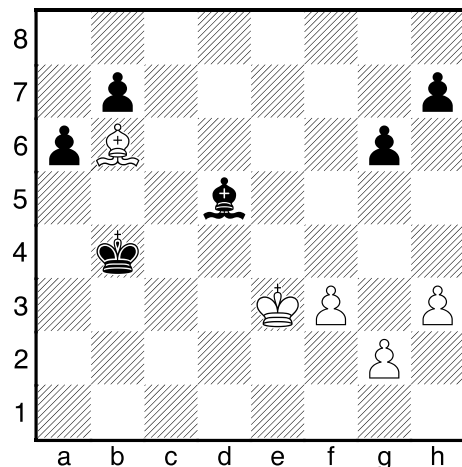
53...♔xc3 54.♙b6  
 I completely missed this idea when we traded Rooks, and I started thinking that this might be a draw.





54. ♖e3 b5+ and the pawns quickly roll down the board.

54... ♖b4 55. ♖e3



55... ♖b5

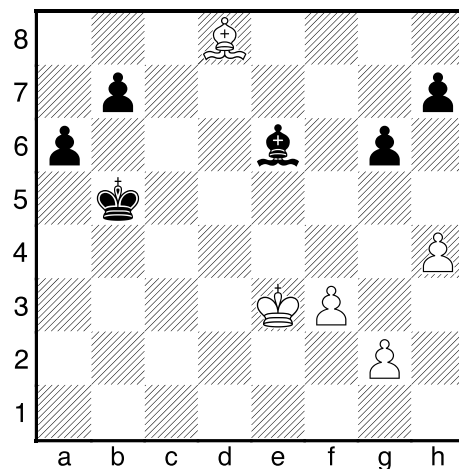
I wasn't sure how to win, since this King retreat gives White a lot of time to bring their own King.

56. ♗d8 ♖c4

*editor* – Ivanchuk is realistically playing on because it's easy for Black to throw away the win; e.g. 56... ♖c5 57. ♖d3 b5?? (57... ♖b4!-+) 58. ♗e7+ ♖ and it's a draw! 58... ♖c6 59. ♖d4! a5 60. ♗d8 a4 61. ♗e7=.

57. ♗b6 ♗e6 58. h4 ♖b5

59. ♗d8



59... ♖b4

Shuffling around to gain time while thinking about a winning approach.

59...b6 might seem logical to start pushing pawns, but this allows White to blockade everything. 60. ♖d4 a5 61. ♖c3 and Black can never really make progress! 61... ♖a6 62. ♖d4 b5 63. g4 b4 64. ♖c5! b3 65. ♗f6 and Black can no longer make any progress.

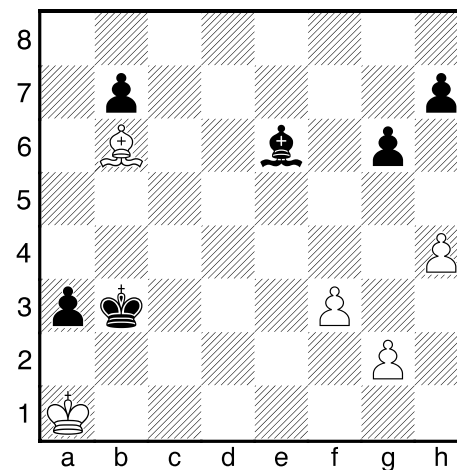
60. ♗e7+?

This move allows me to win instantly, as White cannot prevent ...b5 anymore.

60. ♗b6 is still losing, but it forces me to come up with a winning

plan. 60...a5 61. ♖d3 a4 62. ♖c2 a3 63. ♖b1 ♖b3 64. ♖a1:

*Analysis Diagram*



From a distance, I couldn't find a way to make progress here. As it turns out, I can simply play waiting moves and force White into a *zugzwang*, where they have to move their Bishop! 64... ♗c4 65. ♖b1 ♗d3+ 66. ♖a1 ♗f1 67. g3 ♗g2 68. f4 ♗h3 *zugzwang!* 69. ♗c5 b5+ and the pawns are coming in.

60... ♖c4 61. ♗d8 b5

White simply cannot stop the pawns!

Certainly one of the most memorable games of my career. Growing up watching Ivanchuk's

games, I never imagined facing him in a tournament game, let alone beating him!

0-1

**SRL (2502)**  
**Bharathakoti, Harsha**  
**(2565)**

**B31**

Pan-American Team  
Championships (3), 05.01.2024

**Notes: GM Shawn**  
**Rodrigue-Lemieux**

This game was played during the Pan-American University Championship, which determines which 4 schools will fight for the National Championship later in the year. I was playing for the University of Texas at Rio Grande Valley, which is right next to the Mexican border. I just finished my first of four years, as I'm doing a bachelors in biomedical sciences.

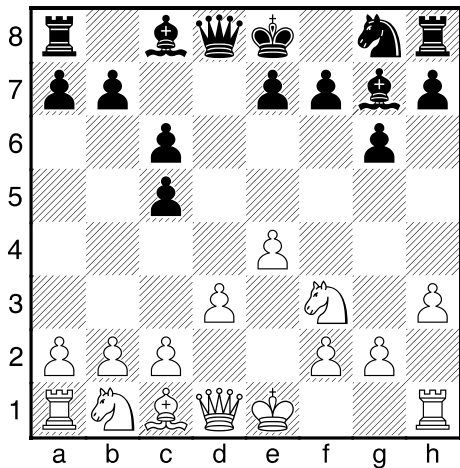
1.e4 c5 2. ♖f3 ♗c6 3. ♗b5 g6





# Chess Canada Rodrigue-Lemieux

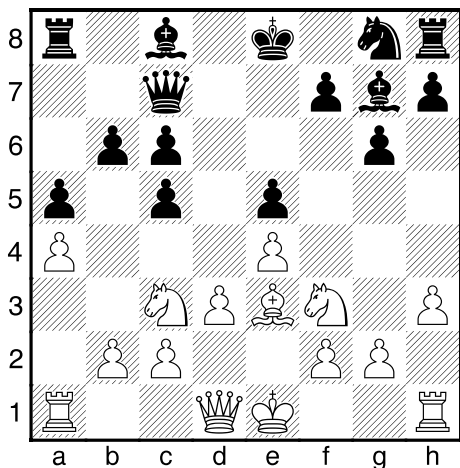
4. ♖xc6 dxc6 5. d3 ♗g7 6. h3



A strategic opening, where both sides slowly carry out their plans.

6... ♖c7 7. ♘c3 e5 8. ♗e3 b6

9. a4 a5



10. ♘d2

10. ♖d2 was most likely the best idea. The plan is to meet

10... ♘e7 (or 10... ♘f6 11. ♗h6) with 11. ♗h6 trading off Black's Bishop pair. f4 is also one of the main ideas, with the support of ♖d2.

10... ♘f6 11. ♘c4

This looks like a nice square, but the Knight is in fact vulnerable. It was much more practical to simply put the Knight on h2 to prepare f4!

11... ♗e6 12. ♖d2 ♘h5

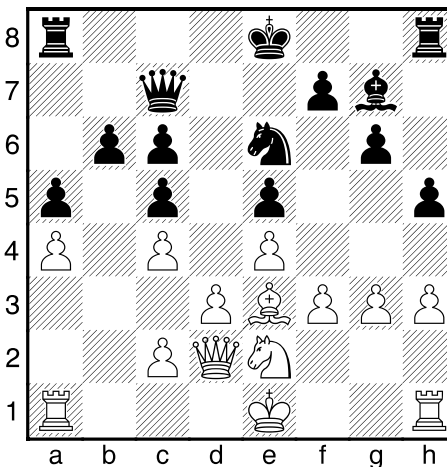
This strong move makes f4 much harder to achieve.

13. b3

13. ♗h6 is also less efficient now because of 13... ♗xh6 14. ♖xh6

♗xc4 15. dxc4 0-0-0 with a great position for Black.

13... ♘f4 14. f3 h5 15. g3 ♗xc4 16. bxc4 ♘e6 17. ♘e2



This position is slightly passive for White, but it's also very solid. It's not easy for Black to break through.

17... f5

The only way to create play.

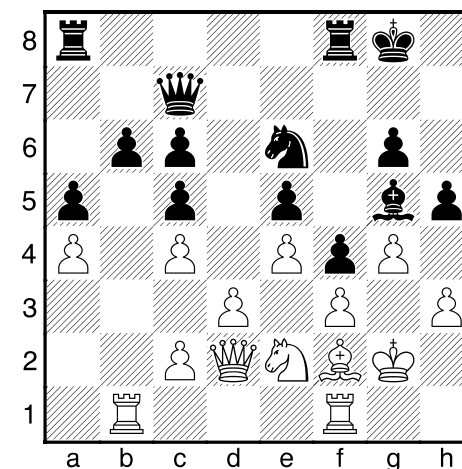
18. ♖b1 0-0 19. 0-0 f4 20. ♗f2 ♗h6

Black should probably open up the kingside with 20... fxf3 21. ♗xg3 ♖f7 with heavy pressure on the f-file. 22. ♖g2 ♖af8 23. ♖e3 is solid for White, but Black clearly has the upper hand.

21. ♖g2 ♗g5

Threatening ...fxg3 now that the Bishop is defended.

22. g4



It now becomes much more difficult for Black to open the position and create chances.



UTRGV Chess Team

photo: UTRGV facebook

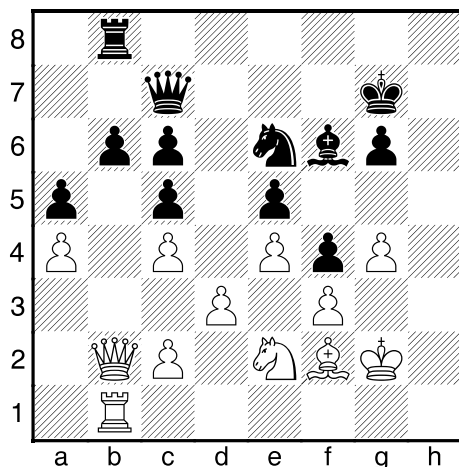




## 22...hxg4?!

There is no reason for Black to release the tension so early! It was more logical to keep the pressure and prepare an eventual ...hxg4 with 22...♙f6 23.♖h1 ♖f7 24.♖h2 ♖h7.

23.hxg4 ♔g7 24.♙c3 ♖h8  
25.♙b2 ♖ab8 26.♖h1 ♖xh1  
27.♖xh1 ♙f6 28.♖b1



## 28...♘d4

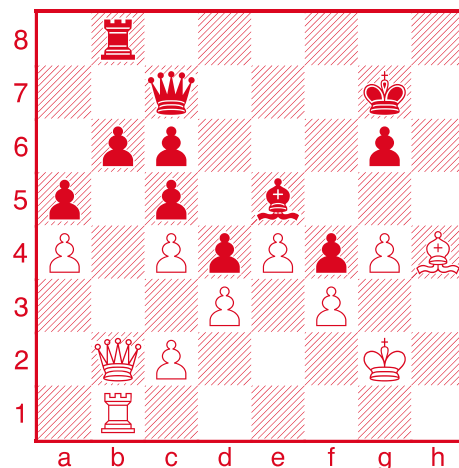
This move seems natural, but it somehow gives White chances. 28...♙e7 29.♙e1 ♙d6 was safer for Black, and the game should end in a draw soon. Neither side can make progress.

## 29.♘xd4 exd4

29...cxd4 30.♙e1 is dangerous, since it's difficult to stop ♙xa5. 30...♙a7 runs into 31.c3 and Black has tough questions to answer.

## 30.♙e1 ♙e5 31.♙h4!

With the idea of ♙g5 and ♖h1. Suddenly, Black isn't so comfortable anymore.



## 31...♙f6?

A losing mistake! Black trades Bishops under bad circumstances.

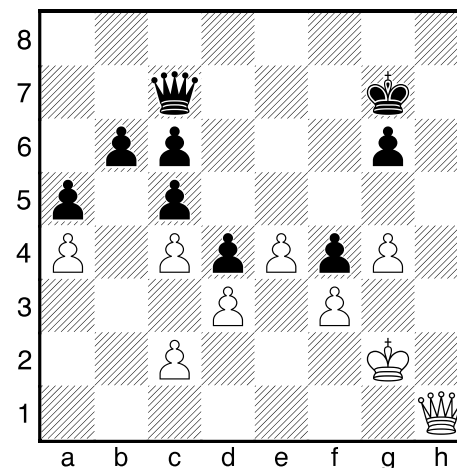
31...♔h6!= was the best defensive move, since Black will now play ...g5 himself. 32.♖h1 g5 33.♙f2+ ♔g6 and White won't be able to make any progress.

## 32.♙xf6+ ♔xf6 33.♖h1 ♔g7

Black has to spend a lot of time to occupy the h-file. White can use this time to maneuver the Queen.

## 34.♙b1 ♖h8 35.♖xh8 ♔xh8

## 36.♙h1+ ♔g7



## 37.♙h4?

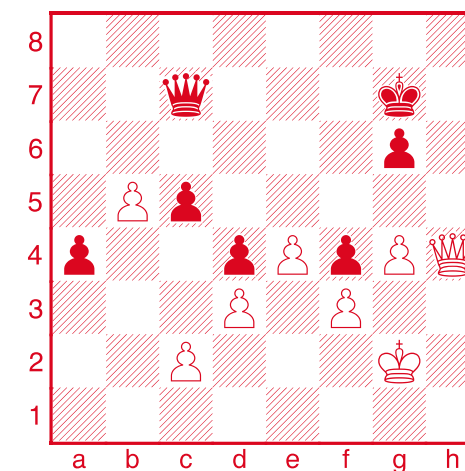
37.g5! would've been much stronger! This gives White a strong threat with ♙h6, and it also opens the h3-c8 diagonal. 37...♔g8 38.♙h3 and White will infiltrate, since Black cannot control c8, d7, and e6 at once.

*editor* – Exactly right! If the Black ♙ controlled these squares (from e8) White would have no advantage at all.

## 37...b5?

37...♙d6! was the only move to maintain the balance. 38.g5 is now met with 38...b5! creating just enough counterplay after 39.cxb5 cxb5 40.axb5 a4 41.b6 ♙xb6 42.♙xf4 a3=.

## 38.cxb5 cxb5 39.axb5 a4



## 40.b6□

The key! Black has to either allow this dangerous pawn to remain on the board, or allow the Queen to infiltrate and pick up a4.

## 40...♙xb6

40...♙d6 leaves White with a choice of wins:  
41.b7 a3 42.g5 a2 43.♙h6+ ♔g8 44.b8♙+ ♙xb8 45.♙xg6+

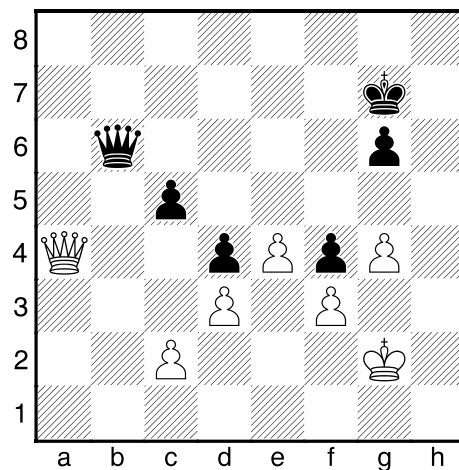
♔h8 46. ♖h6+ ♔g8 47. ♕e6+  
♔h8 48. ♖xa2 wins;

41. ♖g5 a3 42. e5 ♖xb6 (42... ♖f8  
43. ♖f6+ ♖xf6 44. exf6+ ♔xf6  
45. b7 a2 46. b8 ♖ a1 ♖ 47. ♖xf4+  
with a winning advantage.)  
43. ♖e7+ ♖ ♔h6 44. ♖f8+  
♔h7 45. ♖f7+ ♔h6 46. e6 a2  
47. ♖xf4+ ♔g7 48. ♖f7+ ♔h6  
49. e7 a1 ♖ 50. e8 ♖+/- and Black  
has no checks!

**41. ♖e7+ ♔g8**

41... ♔h6 loses to 42. g5+ ♔h5  
43. ♔h3! and Black cannot stop  
White's checkmating threat: 43...  
a3 44. ♖h7+ ♔xg5 45. ♖h4#.

**42. ♖e8+ ♔g7 43. ♖xa4**



White is now up a pawn and has

a safer King.

**43... ♖b1 44. ♖a7+ ♔h6**

**45. ♖xc5 ♖c1**

Trying to create counterplay, but  
it's not enough: Black is losing  
too many pawns.

**46. ♖xd4 ♖xc2+ 47. ♔h3**

**♔h7 48. ♖d7+ ♔h6 49. g5+**

Forces checkmate: 49. g5+ ♔xg5  
50. ♖d8+ ♔h6 51. ♖h8+ ♔g5  
52. ♖h4#.

**1-0**

## Dukic, Zachary (2266) SRL (2506)

**B11**

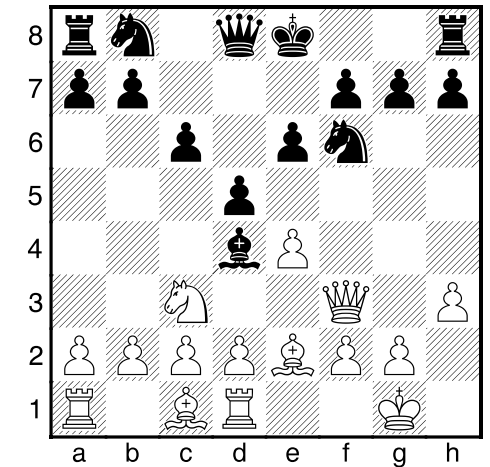
Canadian Zonal 2024 (2),  
28.03.2024

**Notes: GM Shawn  
Rodrigue-Lemieux**

Playing against such a dynamic  
and well-prepared player is  
never easy! **Zachary is extremely  
strong in openings, and I always  
want to stay away from theory  
against him, which is quite**

difficult with the black pieces!

**1. e4 c6 2. ♘c3 d5 3. ♘f3 ♙g4  
4. h3 ♙xf3 5. ♖xf3 ♘f6 6. ♙e2  
e6 7. 0-0 ♙c5 8. ♖d1 ♙d4**



**9. ♖f4**

I had seen this line before, but  
I completely forgot about the  
existence of this move when I  
chose to play this variation over  
the board!

I thought his intention was to  
play 9. exd5 cxd5 10. ♘b5 ♙b6  
11. d4 ♘c6 12. ♖a3 with an  
interesting position.



## 2024 Zonal

L2R: Panjwani, Dukic,  
SRL, N. Doknjas



# Chess Canada Rodrigue-Lemieux



**9...e5**

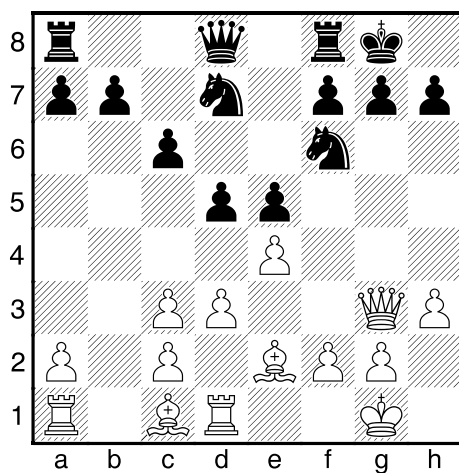
Inferior, but at least it gets the opponent out of preparation.

I was aware of the main line with 9...♙xc3 10.bxc3 ♘xe4 11.♙a3 ♘d7, but I knew that it was extremely dangerous and that my opponent would be totally ready for this, with many more moves of preparation.

After the game, he showed me his preparation in this line, and it was a good decision to avoid going into it!

10.♙g3 0-0 11.d3 ♙xc3

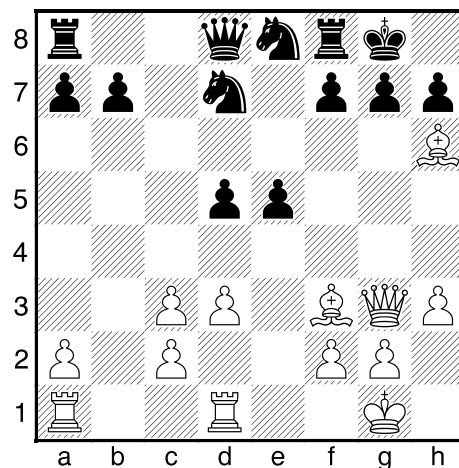
12.bxc3 ♘bd7



Black's position is clearly objectively bad, mainly due to the Bishop pair and the lack of

activity. However, I thought that it was quite playable, and that I could potentially get a good position if White didn't play accurately.

13.♙h6 ♘e8 14.exd5 cxd5  
15.♙f3

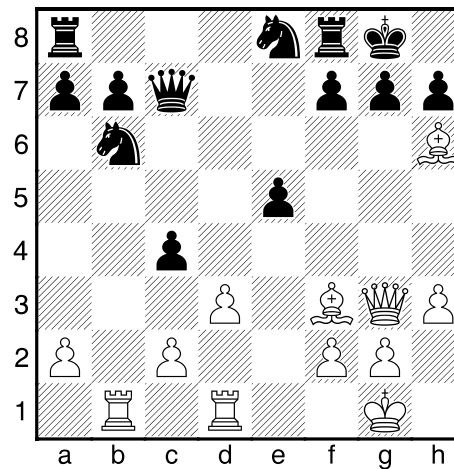


White needs to play actively to maintain the advantage, and he is doing exactly that.

15...♙c7 16.♖ab1  
16.♙xd5 loses a piece to  
16...♙d6.

16...♘b6 17.c4!?

A blunder, which turned out to be the best move!

**17...dxc4****18.♙d2!**

18.dxc4? was my opponent's initial intention, but this gives Black the advantage after 18...e4! 19.♙f4 (19.♙xc7?? ♘xc7 20.♙f4 ♘e6+ and both Bishops are hanging.) 19...♙xc4 20.♙h5 ♘f6 with a small edge.

Realizing that he couldn't play dxc4, he found a new idea which is still very strong for White. Despite being down a pawn, White's activity is overwhelming.

18...c3 19.♙e1?

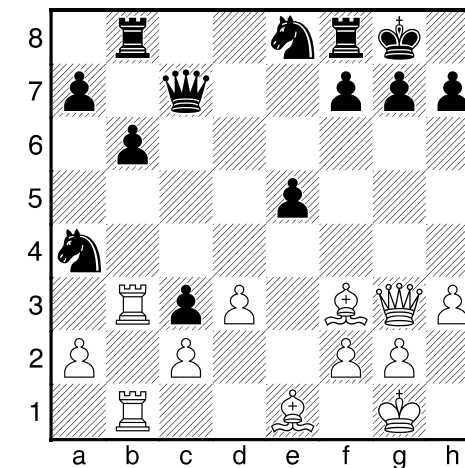
Keeping the pressure on c3, but putting the Bishop on a passive square.

19.♙c1! would've been extremely strong, since the Bishop will exert pressure from a3. 19...♘f6 20.d4 is now powerful.

**19...♖b8?!**

19...♖d8 20.♖b3 ♘d5 21.d4 exd4 22.♙xc7 ♘exc7 23.♖xd4 b6 24.♖b1 can be quite unpleasant for Black, as the Bishop pair will shine in the open position.

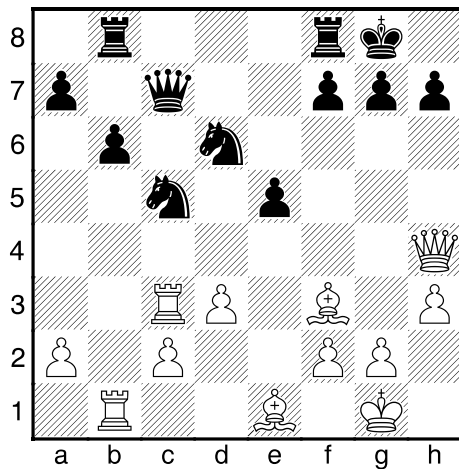
20.♖b3 ♘a4 21.♖db1 b6

**22.♙h4?!**

The mysterious 22.♖b5! f6 23.♖d5 was the engine's best suggestion to maintain a strong advantage, but it's safe to say that neither one of us considered it!



22...♘c5 23.♖xc3 ♘d6



White was able to gain the pawn back, but at what cost? Black's pieces are now activating quickly, as the Knights are jumping on good squares. Meanwhile, White's pieces are now inactive and somewhat uncoordinated.

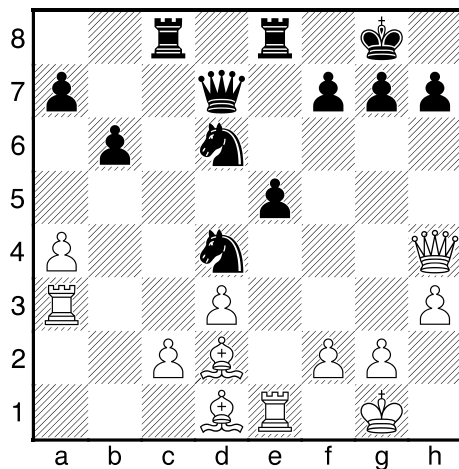
24.a4 ♔d7 25.♖a3 ♖fe8

26.♙d2 ♘e6

Heading towards d4.

I can try to bring this Knight to d4 with 26...♘f5, but I was afraid of 27.♔g4 with a potential Queen trade.

27.♖e1 ♘d4 28.♙d1 ♖bc8



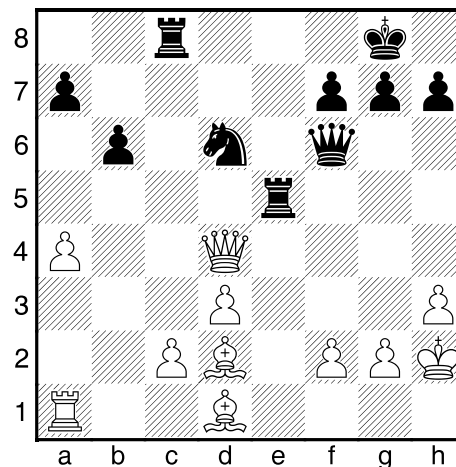
The position is now getting harder and harder to play, and White keeps making backward moves.

29.♖xe5?!

Sacrificing the exchange, hoping to get more activity. With time getting lower for both sides, this decision is hard to criticize. 29.♖a2 would've maintained stability.

29...♖xe5 30.♔xd4 ♔e7

31.♖a1 ♔f6 32.♔h2



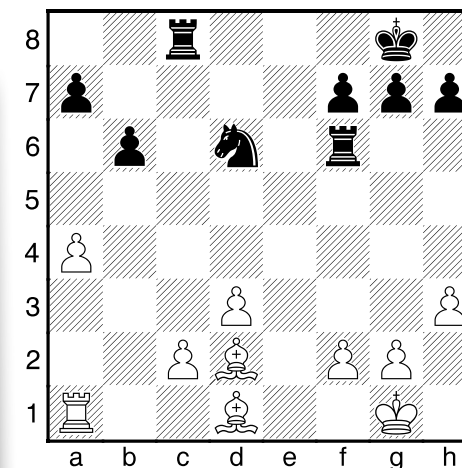
32...♖e6?

The Queen trade gives White much more stability. One of my plans going into this game was

to enter an endgame as much as possible, but I should've been more objective!

32...♘f5 would've been very strong! 33.♔b2 (33.♔f4 ♖d5 34.♖a2 ♖d4 35.♔f3 ♖cd8 maintains a grip on White's position.) 33...♘h4 34.f4 is what I was worried about in time pressure, but I simply panicked and decided to be safe. This position was completely winning, with a move such as 34...♔c6.

33.♔xf6 ♖xf6 34.♔g1



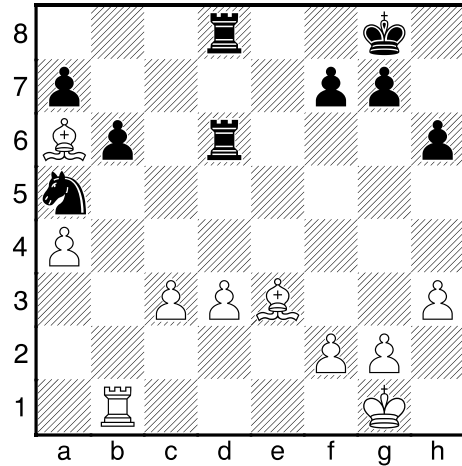
The Bishop pair and the central pawns are a very dangerous combination, and Black has to be precise.

*"... then he ground me down."  
Zac reviews game between rounds.*



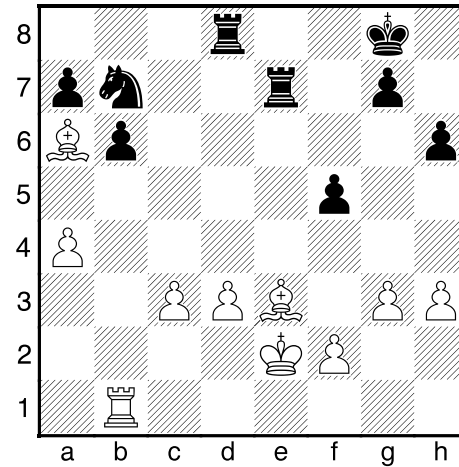


34...♞f5 35.c3 h6 36.♙b3  
 ♞e7 37.♙c4 ♞c6 38.♙a6  
 ♖d8 39.♙e3 ♞a5 40.♖b1  
 ♗fd6



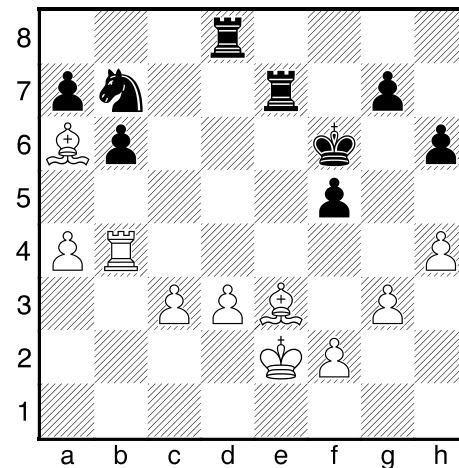
After shuffling a bit to reach move 40, it was now time to relax and calculate. Unfortunately, calculating made me realize that I have absolutely no advantage! My best chance was to keep making normal moves and wait for him to get back in time pressure.

41.♙f1 ♖c6 42.♙d2 ♖c7  
 43.♙e2 ♖e7+ 44.♙e3 f5  
 45.g3 ♞b7



46.♖b4  
 46.♙xb7 ♖xb7 47.a5 b5 48.a6  
 ♖c7 49.♖xb5 ♖xc3 50.♙xa7  
 ♖a3 51.♖xf5 ♖xa6 52.♙c5 was  
 another way to play, which would  
 lead to a draw.

46...♙f7 47.h4 ♙f6



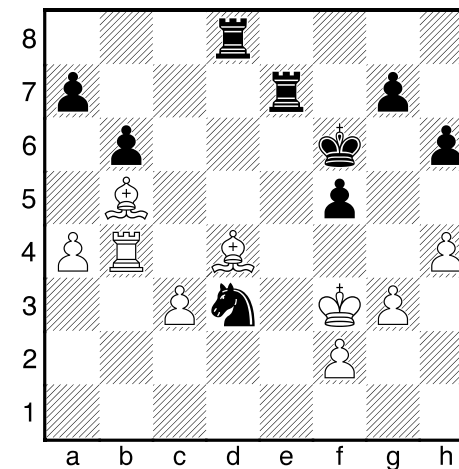
48.♙f3??  
 Allowing Black to activate!

After a move like 48.h5 White might be the one putting pressure on Black! The Bishop pair controls everything, and Black lacks any pawn breaks.

48...♞c5! 49.♙b5

49.♙xc5 bxc5 50.♖b1 ♖d6  
 51.♙b5 ♖de6 will allow Black to infiltrate, and the Rooks will prove to be too strong. White is now unable to generate any counterplay.

49...♞xd3 50.♙d4+



When he played 48.♙f3, my opponent was relying on this resource, thinking that he was winning a Knight. After I played 48...♞c5, he realized that I could now save the Knight

with 50...♞e5+ 51.♙g2 ♙g6 and thought that he still had compensation, which is the correct judgment. Unfortunately for him, Black had an even stronger option...

50...♖xd4!

White's King ends up in a mating net! Taking the Rook will lead to checkmate after 51.cxd4 ♞e1+ 52.♙f4 g5+ 53.hxg5+ hxg5#.

0-1



Is it cake?



Chess Canada  
 Rodrigue-Lemieux



# Grandmaster Forks King!



**Chess Canada**  
**Rodrigue-Lemieux**



**GM Shawn**  
has his cake and eats it too!

*Everyone at the Excelsior Chess Camp enjoys Mikhail Egorov's inspired idea of a celebratory cake with icing featuring the critical position from SRL v Warmerdam, (Grand Swiss, rd.10).*



# How I won... 2024 Gatineau Open



by IM Johnathan Han



At 15 years of age, **Johnathan Han** is **Canada's youngest International Master**. In 2022 he earned the FM title, and in 2024 the IM title was conferred for his win at the 2023 NAYCC U18. He is the **current Canadian Junior Champion**, and multi-time CYCC winner.

He is a prolific tournament player: with 125 CFC and FIDE-rated classical games in 2022, and 112 in 2023, he plays nearly one classical tournament game every three days. During the school year, most of his competitions are near home, at the RA Chess Club or the regular tournaments in the Ottawa/Gatineau region. These tournaments attract other FIDE-titled players and CYCC winners, making them a cut above any average weekend Swiss. The **2024 Gatineau Open** was one of them: with 2 GMs, 2 IMs, and one WIM, the path to victory would go through several masters and at least one titled player.

IM Johnathan Han annotates his five wins *en route* to his perfect score at the 2024 Gatineau Open. - editor

# Chess Canada Johnathan Han

## Notable Tournament Wins

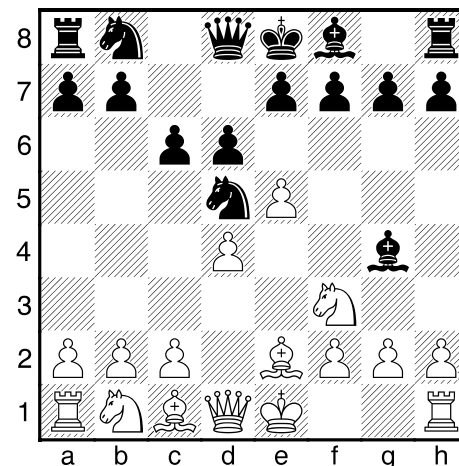
- 2024 CYCC U18 1st (7/7)
- 2024 Easter Ontario Open (=1st)
- 2024 Open de Gatineau 1<sup>st</sup> (5/5)
- 2023 NAYCC U18 1st
- 2023 Canadian Junior Champion
- 2023 Ontario Open (over 3 GMs)
- 2022 FIDE World School U13 Ch.
- 2021 CYCC U12 (=1st)
- 2019 CYCCU10

**Han, Johnathan (2407)**  
**Cova, Ramon J (1934)**  
**B05**

Open de Gatineau (1),  
24.05.2024

**Notes: IM Johnathan Han**

1.e4 ♘f6 2.e5 ♘d5 3.d4 d6  
4.♘f3 ♙g4 5.♙e2 c6



6.h3?



A pretty big mistake for such a normal move. Before this game, I did not have much time to prepare as it was the first round of the tournament and pairings usually come out very late due to people registering last second. I could not remember what the right move was so I just played h3, which turns out to be a waste of time since Black's plan is to play ♙xf3 and ...dxe5 anyways.

6.c4 ♘b6 7.♘bd2± is probably the most testing line as it prevents Black's main idea. 6.exd6 exd6 7.0-0± also leads to a slightly better position as White's development is easier

6...♙xf3 7.♙xf3 dxe5 8.dxe5 e6±

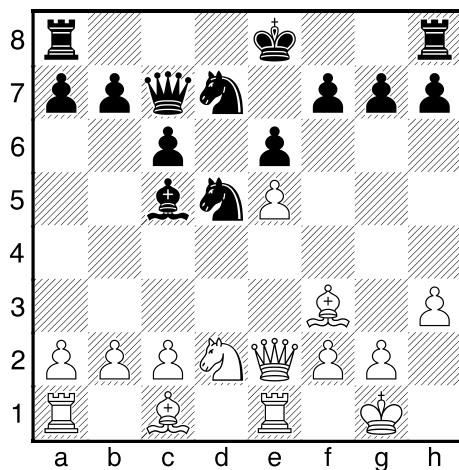
Black's plan is to simply attack e5 as much as possible. If White can activate their pieces, White should be better.

9.0-0 ♘d7 10.♙e2 ♙c7  
11.♖e1 ♙c5 12.♘d2

**2021 NAYCC**  
U12, 2nd place



# Chess Canada Johnathan Han



I thought a long time on this move because I realized that my pawn on e5 is very weak and I wasn't sure what to do after Black tries to take it.

## 12...Nf4!?

Black tries to attack my e5 pawn immediately but playing something simpler was probably better.

12...a5!= is a very typical idea, to:

1. gain space, and
2. prevent White from expanding on the queenside.

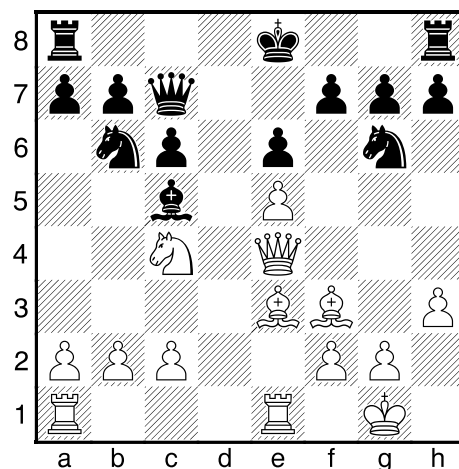
## 13.Qe4

13.Qc4 Ng6 14.Qh5 is an interesting way to defend the e5 pawn as if 14...Nxe5

15.Qxe6+-.

13...Ng6 14.Nc4 Nb6

15.Qe3!



This was my idea when I played 12. Nd2. Without this move, Black's position is very good.

## 15...Qe7!

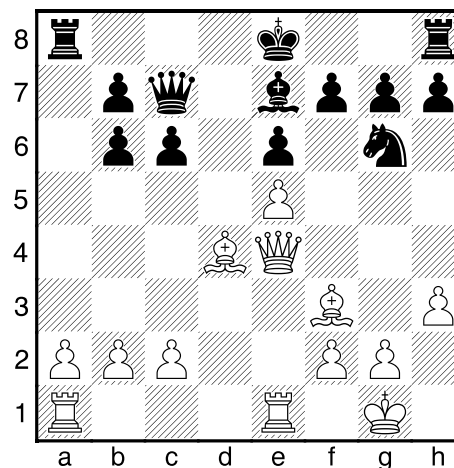
It is way too dangerous to go pawn-grabbing with 15...Nxc4 16.Qxc5 Ncxe5 17.Rad1± Black's king is stuck in the center.

## 16.Nxb6

16.Nd6+ is an interesting line which leads to a relatively forcing variation: 16...Qxd6 17.exd6 Qxd6 18.Rad1 Qe7. This is

why I rejected 16.Nd6+, but apparently now 19.b4!± is a very strong move preventing Black from castling: 19...Nd7 20.b5 0-0 21.bxc6 bxc6±.

## 16...axb6 17.Qd4±



Here I felt pretty good about my chances as even though the position is only slightly better, I have more space which allows me to have many ideas like expanding on the queenside and kingside.

## 17...0-0

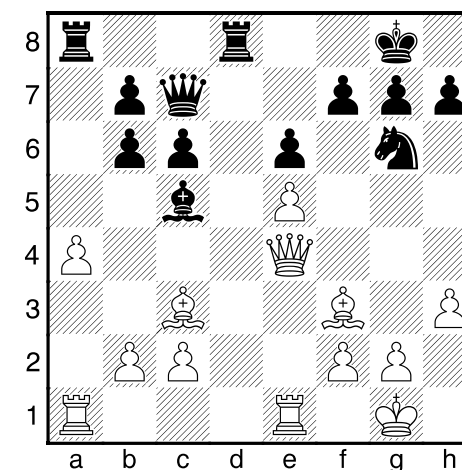
0-0 is not necessarily a bad move but 17...b5! is strategically a better move to prevent a4 creating a weakness on b6.

## 18.a4!

Fixing the weakness on b6.

## 18...Qc5 19.Qc3 Rfd8

19...b5 is a more energetic way to play the position but leaves doubled pawns on the b-file 20.b4 Qa7 21.axb5 cxb5 22.Qb2±.



## 20.h4?!

Not a bad move, but I didn't see Black could activate their knight with ...Ne7-d5.

I should have started with 20.b4 Qf8 21.h4 Ne7 22.h5 Nd5 23.Qd2 with the point being that Black does not have ...Nxb4 and ...Rd4 since the bishop is on f8.

## 20...Rd7?





# Chess Canada Johnathan Han

This move really doesn't accomplish much. Black's idea was most likely to play ... $\text{R}ad8$  and ... $\text{Q}d4$ , but White is going to play  $b4$  before that happens. Additionally, Black needs to play quickly and this move is just too slow and allows White to gain a lot of tempi.

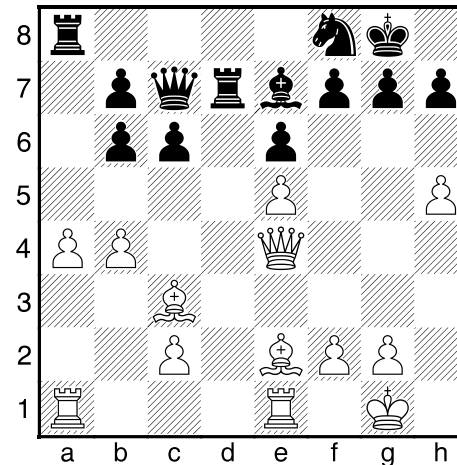
$20... \text{N}e7!$  was more consistent with his past few moves. After  $21. b4 \text{ N}d5!$  This idea comes up on the next move as well, but it was even better here as the rooks protect each other. My opponent probably didn't like  $22. \text{Q}d2?$  but missed that he has  $22... \text{N}xb4!$  since  $23. \text{Q}xb4? \text{ R}d4+$ .

$20... b5$  is another good option. Once again, Black needs to find a way to play quickly or else his position will be very passive.  $21. h5$  ( $21. axb5 \text{ Q}b6$ = White's pawns on  $b5$ ,  $f2$ , and  $h4$  are all super loose)  $21... b4!$   $22. \text{Q}xb4 \text{ Q}xb4$   $23. \text{Q}xb4 \text{ N}xe5\pm$  is slightly better for White, but already Black's pieces are very active.

**21. h5**  $\text{N}f8$

$21... \text{N}e7$   $22. b4 \text{ N}d5$   $23. bxc5 \text{ N}xc3$   $24. \text{Q}e3 \text{ N}xa4$   $25. cxb6 \text{ N}xb6$   $26. \text{R}xa8+$  Now we see why  $20... \text{R}d7$  was a bad move: the knight is forced to retreat.  $26... \text{N}xa8$   $27. h6\pm$ .

**22. b4**  $\text{Q}e7$  **23. Qe2**



Trying to reroute the bishop to  $d3$  as it doesn't really achieve much on the  $h1$ - $a8$  diagonal.

**23... c5?**

Black's position is already very passive so my opponent tries to create some counterplay. The engine doesn't like this move but I think practically, it is a good try.

The computer recommends  $23... \text{R}dd8$   $24. \text{Q}d3\pm$  to sit still;

but this is very hard to do as a human.

**24. b5 c4** **25. Qg4±**

My idea was to play  $\text{Q}f1$ ,  $\text{R}e4xc4$  and Black doesn't have a good way of defending the pawn.

**25... Rc8** **26. Qf1 Rd5**

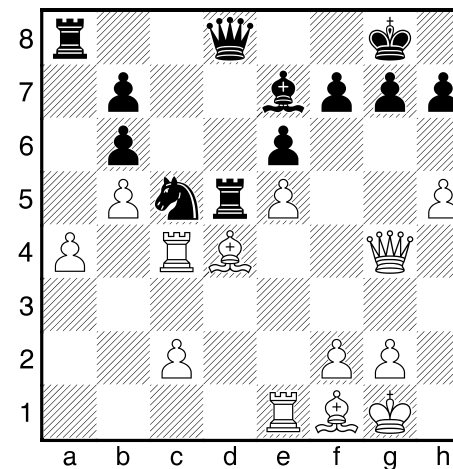
Black's only chance is to activate the knight and attack White's pawns.

**27. Re4 Nd7** **28. Rae1 Nc5**

**29. Rxc4 Qd8**

Black is threatening ... $\text{N}xa4$ .

**30. Qd4 Ra8**



**31. Qe3?**

I thought Black was getting counterplay so I tried to play

something concrete but this just gives him even more counterplay.

I should have just consolidated with  $31. \text{Q}b2$  and White is completely winning.

**31... Nd7**

$\text{Q}31... \text{R}xe5$   $32. \text{Q}h6 \text{ Q}f6$   $33. \text{Q}xg7 \text{ R}g5$   $34. \text{Q}xf6 \text{ Q}xf6$   $35. \text{Q}h4 h6!\pm$  White should still be better but the position is more double-edged than after what my opponent did in the game.

**32. Qh6+- g6** **33. hxg6 hxg6**

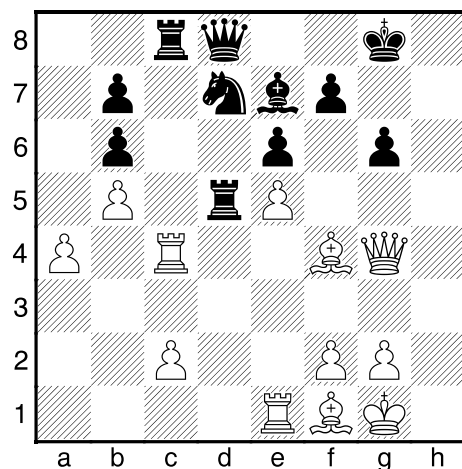
**34. Qf4?!**

$34. \text{Q}g3!$  Hard to see why it is better than  $34. \text{Q}f4$ , but the bishop on  $h6$  controls the  $f8$  square which could be important.

**34... Rc8!?**

Very strange. What is the point to take the rook off the  $a$ -file?

$\text{Q}34... \text{Q}f8!\pm$  threatening ... $\text{Q}g7$  and it is hard to defend the  $e5$ -pawn.



### 35. Rxe3?

My opponent was low on time, so I wanted to make things complicated. However, even if I get a rook to the h-file it is still very hard to checkmate Black.

In hindsight, I should have spent more time to try and consolidate my position with something like 35. Qd3 which also forces Black to go passive with 35... Nf8 36. Rce4 and White is able to protect all their pawns.

### 35... Rxc4??

35... Rcc5!= makes it very hard for White to defend their pawns.

### 36. Qxc4 Rxd4

editor – 36... Rxc5 37. Qxe6!+-

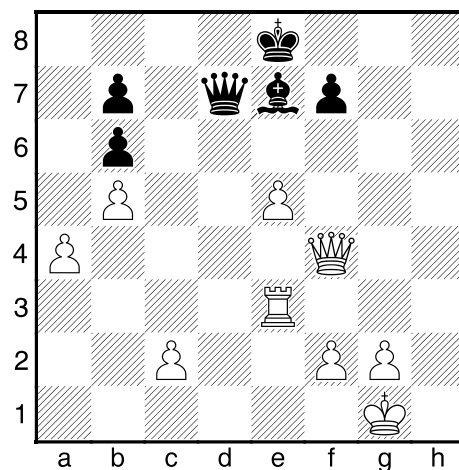
wins, as in the game. The problem with 35... Rxc4 was entirely tactical: giving White a tempo for the skewer combo on e6.

### 37. Qxe6 Q+- Rxf4

### 38. Qxg6+ Q f8 39. Qh6+ Q

### e8 40. Qxd7+ Qxd7

### 41. Qxf4+-



### 41... Qd1+ 42. Qh2 Qxc2

### 43. e6 f5 44. Qb8+ Qd8

### 45. e7 Qc7+ 46. Qxc7 Qxc7+

### 47. Qh3 Qd6 48. Qh4 Qxe7+

### 49. Rxe7+ Qxe7 50. Qg5 Qe6

### 51. f4

Not the best game by me. I played pretty well in the beginning but I let my opponent

have a lot of counterplay.

## 1-0

**Saha, Ananda (2259)**

**Han, Johnathan (2407)**

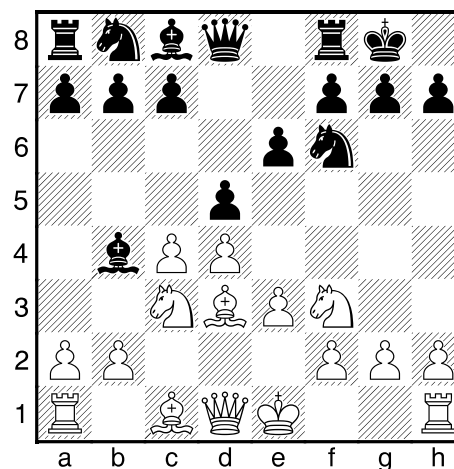
**E52**

Open de Gatineau (2),  
25.05.2024

**Notes: IM Johnathan Han**

### 1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Qb4

### 4. e3 0-0 5. Qd3 d5 6. Nf3



### 6... b6

I did not expect my opponent to allow the Nimzo, as at the time, my opponent was playing

a lot of 1. Nf3; so I decided to go for something slower than the typical isolated pawn positions after ...dxc4 and ...c5; e.g. 6...c5 7. 0-0 cxd4 8. exd4 dxc4 9. Qxc4 is the main starting position that arises from these Nimzo positions. Even though I knew the positions pretty well, I knew that if my opponent voluntarily played this line, he would have something prepared.

### 7. 0-0 Qb7 8. cxd5!

White takes on d5 as soon as Black puts the bishop on the long diagonal to prevent Black from taking on c4 and having a good light-squared bishop.

### 8... exd5 9. a3

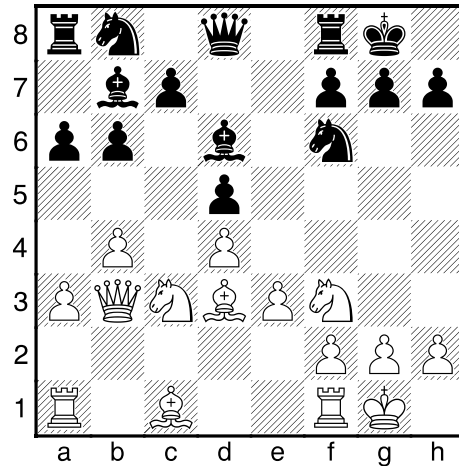
9. Ne5 is White's other idea to go for f4 and some type of kingside attack.

### 9... Qd6 10. b4

White's main idea is to play b5 and create a weakness on c7. Black wants to find a way to prevent this for as long as possible to maneuver their pieces.



10...a6 11.♔b3



11...♔e7

I was trying to delay White from playing a4-b5 for as long as possible but maybe it isn't such a big deal.

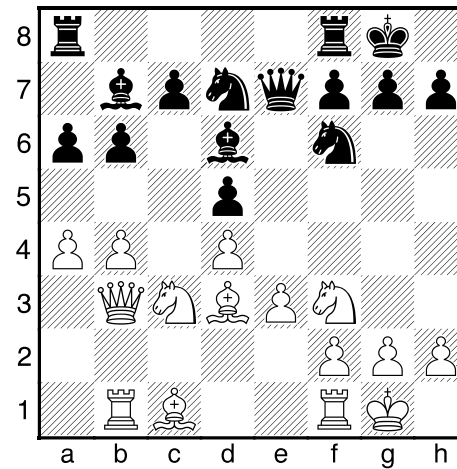
11...♘bd7 12.a4 c6. The computer thinks that this pawn structure is very solid, as if White ever plays b5, Black will play ...axb5 and ...c5. I rejected putting my pawn on c6 since I thought if White could get a quick e3-e4, the pawn on c6 would be very weak and my bishop on b7 very passive.

12.♖b1 ♘bd7

12...♖e8 13.a4 ♘c6!? A very interesting idea that I had never

seen before; the point being that if 14.b5 (14.♘xd5 ♘xd5 15.♔xd5 ♘xb4 16.♔xb7 ♘xd3=) 14...♘a5 and the knight is more active than on its typical d7 square.

13.a4



13...♘e4?!

Too rushed, allowing White a very strong exchange sacrifice.

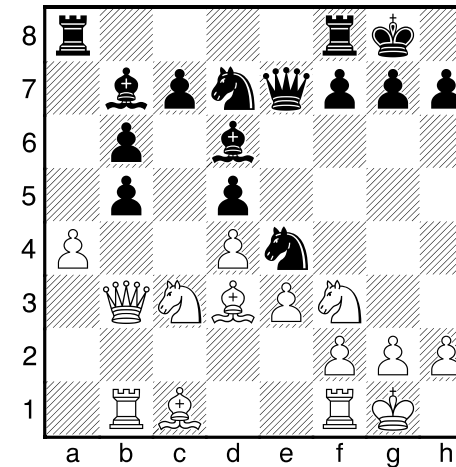
13...c6 again is the computer's top line with the same idea of 14.b5 axb5 15.axb5 c5∞.

14.b5

I vaguely remembered a line with 14.♘xd5 ♘xd5 15.♔xd5 ♘c3 16.♔b3 ♘xb1 17.♔xb1± but it didn't look too bad for me. White has the advantage for sure, but it

would be a complicated position where I thought I had chances to win.

14...axb5=



15.♘xb5

White can also play 15.axb5 and try to attack the weakness on c7 to take over the a-file with ♖b2-♖a1.

15...♖fc8

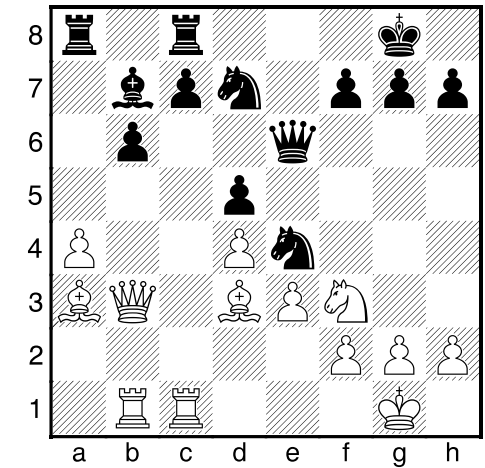
15...c5 is also an option but my pawns seemed kind of delicate on c5 and d5.

16.♘xd6 ♔xd6 17.♔a3

A slight inaccuracy. The bishop looks strong on a3 but 17.♘d2, getting rid of my e4 knight was a

better plan for White.

17...♔e6 18.♖fc1



18...♔a6

A very strong move, eliminating White's bishop pair.

19.♔xe4

19.♔c2 is White's only way to try and prevent the bishop exchange but Black has 19...♔e2 with the threat of ...♔xf3 and ...♘d2.

19.♔b5!? is an interesting try to get a pawn on b5, but Black can simply play 19...c6 forcing 20.♔xa6 ♖xa6±.

19...♔xe4 20.♘d2 ♔e6±

At this point, I started to think I

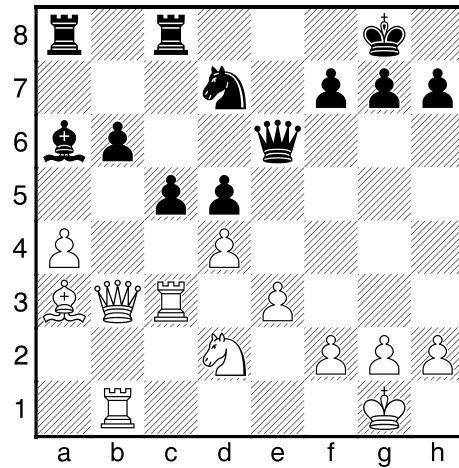


had winning chances if I could get a quick ...c5 in.

### 21. ♖c3

21. ♗b2! anticipating c5 21...c5  
22.dxc5 bxc5 23.a5=.

### 21...c5



Now that White's knight is on d2, even if White plays dxc5 and I get hanging pawns, these pawns are not so weak anymore as I can go for a quick ...c4 and ...♗e5 without worrying about White's knight going to d4.

### 22. ♗f3?

A bad move but White's position is already very passive. ♖22. ♕c2! cxd4 23.exd4

Black is slightly better due to having more active pieces, but this is better than the game continuation.

### 22...♗e2!?

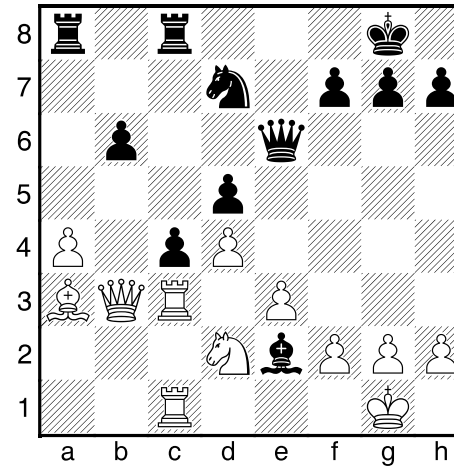
A move I didn't even see at first, but when I did see it, I played it immediately as it is a very annoying move for White to deal with. My opponent was also starting to get low on time, so I was trying to put on time pressure as well.



### 23. ♗d2

A sad move to play but there is no way for White to defend the knight anyways. 23. ♗e1! is better than ♗d2, covering the d3 square.

### 23...c4+ 24. ♖bc1



### 24...♗f6

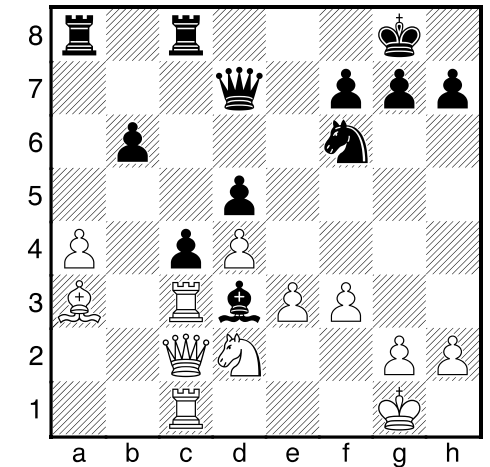
I didn't even see 24...♗c5! as I was blitzing out moves due to my opponent's time pressure, but it pretty much wins immediately: 25. ♕c2 ♗xa4-+.

### 25. ♕c2

White is going to lose the a4 pawn anyway, so White should focus on blockading the queenside pawns as with

opposite-coloured bishops: 25. ♕b2! ♖xa4 26. ♗b4. I thought it could still be somewhat hard to win.

### 25...♕d7 26.f3 ♗d3



Before taking on a4, I knew that my opponent wanted to complicate the position so I wanted to prevent White from playing any e4 nonsense.

### 27. ♕d1 ♖e8 28. ♗f2 ♕e6

Still completely winning but I completely missed 29. ♗f1, so in hindsight taking on a4 was a lot simpler: 28...♖xa4-+ with the idea of ...b5-b4.

### 29. ♗f1 ♕d7 30. ♗b2 ♖xa4

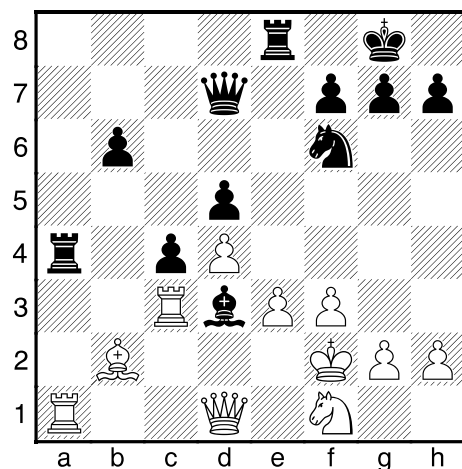
### 31. ♖a1

**Ananda Saha**  
2024 Labour Day Open



**Chess Canada**  
**Johnathan Han**





Pretty much anything wins in this position, but since my opponent was low on time, I didn't want him to get easy moves and blockade my queenside pawns.

### 31...Rb4?!

Very strange move.

31...Rxa1 32.Wxa1 b5 was my plan at first, but I didn't like how White could blockade with something like 33.Qa3 with Wb2 coming next move. However, I could shift my pieces to the kingside and Black is completely winning: 33...Wf5-+.

*editor* - After 33...Wf5 Black threatens both ...De4+ and ...Dg4+, and defending with 34.Dg3 steps into a crushing

attack: 34...Dg4+! 35.Qg1 Wg5! and White has no good way to defend against both ...Dxh2 and ...Dxe3.

### 32.Qa3 Rb5

This was my plan behind 31...Rb4 and my idea was to double on the a-file. I thought White was paralyzed but I missed what White could do on the next move. D32...Ra4 I should have just accepted that ...Rb4 was a bad move and gone back.

### 33.g4

White misses an opportunity to try and get back into the game: D33.Qc1! and it's hard to say what my rook is doing on b5. Black is still winning, but it's a lot harder to find a plan now.

### 33...Ra8-+

After this move, White's queenside is completely paralyzed and I will simply double on the a-file.

### 34.Dg3 Rba5

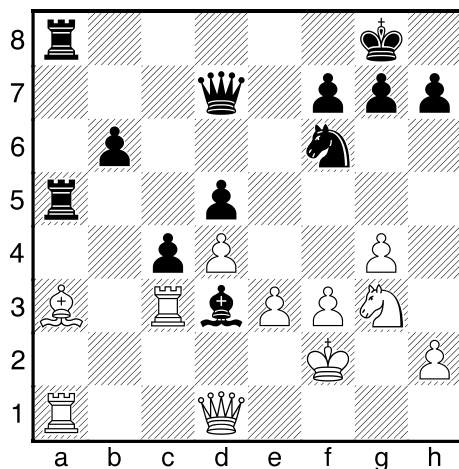
## Johnathan Han



*Watched by omnipresent GM at the 2023 Canadian Junior Ch., Excelsior CC.*



# Chess Canada Johnathan Han



**35.g5**

White can't play 35.♙b2 ♖xa1  
36.♙xa1 ♖a2+ 37.♙g1 b5+.

**35...♞e8 36.♙c1 ♞c7**

**37.♙b2 ♖xa1 38.♙xa1 ♞b5**

**0-1**

**Han, Johnathan (2407)**

**Sowa, Ryan (2310)**

**C11**

Open de Gatineau (3),  
25.05.2024

**Notes: IM Johnathan Han**

**1.e4 e6**

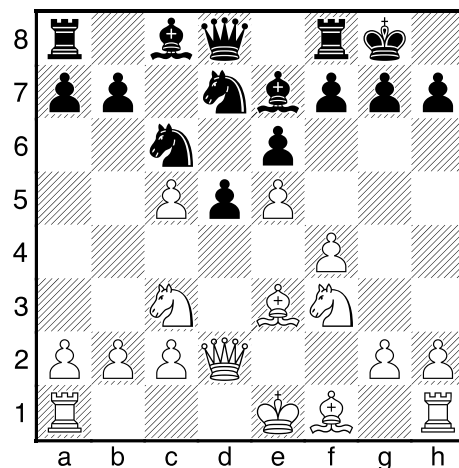
I was already surprised as I

didn't know my opponent played  
the French.

**2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♞f6 4.e5**

**♞fd7 5.f4 c5 6.♞f3 ♞c6**

**7.♙e3 ♙e7 8.♙d2 0-0 9.dxc5**



**9...♞xc5**

9...♞xc5 is an option that usually  
leads to quick liquidations; e.g.

10.0-0-0 ♙b6 11.♞d4 ♞xd4

12.♙xd4 ♙xd4 13.♙xd4 ♙xd4

14.♖xd4.

**10.0-0-0 a6±**

At this point, I knew I was still in  
theory but I wasn't sure what the  
right move was.

**11.♙f2?**

This forces ...b6 and stops ...b5

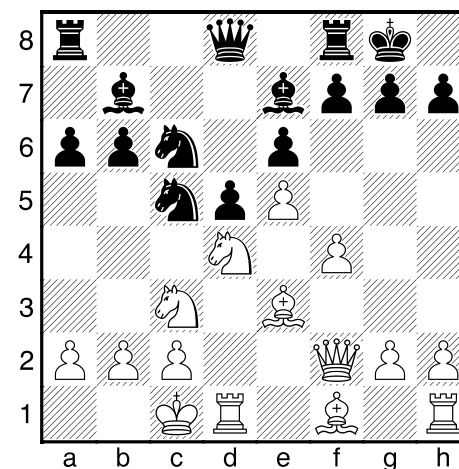
for a few moves, but ...b5 itself is  
not much of a problem.

I could have been more  
aggressive with 11.h4, or 11.♙b1  
b5 12.♙xc5 ♙xc5 13.♙d3, setting  
up ♙xh7 ideas.

**11...b6 12.♞d4?!**

Blockading the d4 square  
shouldn't be a priority. The knight  
on f3 is also on a very good  
square to support my kingside  
attack. 12.♙b1 ♙b7 13.f5 was  
better.

**12...♙b7**



**13.h4**

*editor* – still a known position!

13.♞xc6 ♙xc6 14.♙d4 ♙c7

15.♙e3 ♖fc8 16.♙d3 ♞xd3+

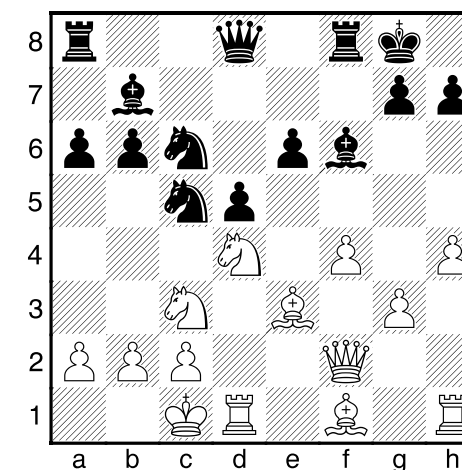
17.♙xd3 b5 18.♞e2 b4 19.♙d2!  
♙a4!? 20.b3 ♙b5 ♖ Robson,R  
(2656)–Shankland,S (2661)  
USA–ch Saint Louis, 2015.

**13...f6**

Black can also prepare ...b5 with  
13...♖c8 14.♙b1 ♞xd4 15.♙xd4  
b5.

**14.exf6 ♙xf6 15.g3?!**

15.♞xc6 ♙xc6 16.♙d4 now,  
Black can't play ...e5: 16...e5?  
17.♙xc5 bxc5 18.♙xc5+- and the  
bishop on c6 is hanging.



**15...♙xd4?**

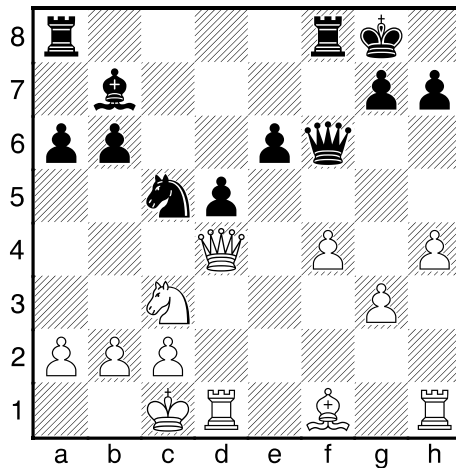
My opponent chooses to simply  
accept a worse position.

15...♞xd4 16.♙xd4 e5 17.♙xc5  
bxc5 with the bishop on b7 now,



♔xc5 is less of an issue for Black (18. ♔xc5 exf4). 18. ♕c4 I thought this was good for me but somehow after 18...exf4 19. ♖xd5 ♕d4 20. ♗xf4+ ♔h8 I think I overestimated my position, but it is about equal.

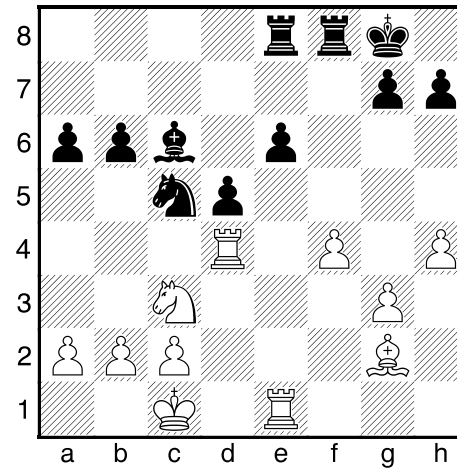
16. ♕xd4± ♖xd4 17. ♔xd4  
♔f6



18. ♕g2

I wanted to prevent any nonsense on the a8-h1 diagonal, but 18. ♕h3 puts more pressure on the e6 pawn which is the main weakness in Black's position.

18... ♔xd4 19. ♖xd4 ♖ae8  
20. ♖e1 ♕c6



21. ♖e3!?

My idea was to play ♖e2. If 21. ♖e2 immediately, Black might be able to play 21...e5.

I could have also played 21. ♖d2. The knight probably belongs on d4 instead of e5 since it will target the e6 pawn 21...g6 22. ♖e2.

I believe 21. h5! is the best move. I should have played this many times during this game as it essentially stops Black from ever playing ...g5. If Black plays ...g6, in some lines, White also can go h6 creating a weakness on h7. 21...g6 22. h6±.

21... ♔f7

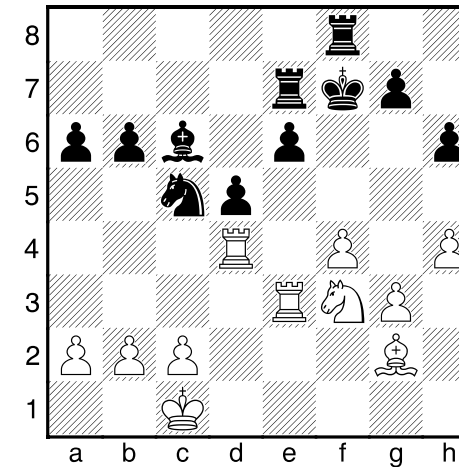
This doesn't accomplish much.

Black should've played 21...g6 to prevent me from playing h5.

22. ♖e2 ♖e7 23. ♖g1 h6?

This weakens the g6 square too much. Again, 23...g6!, preventing h5. Black should try to sit still and create as little weaknesses as possible.

24. ♖f3



24... ♖d7

I could tell that my opponent was going full-passive defense.

The e6-pawn is a weakness but Black shouldn't require all his pieces to defend it. 24...♖c7 25. ♖d1 ♔f6 26. ♖d4 ♕d7 If I ever try to attack the e6 pawn with 27. ♕h3 at the very least,

Black can block the e-file with 27...♖e4.

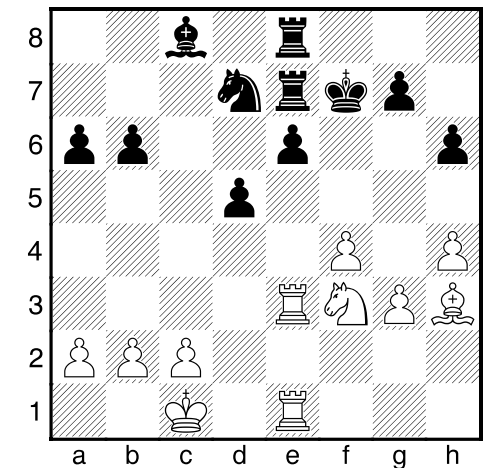
25. ♖d1

♖25. h5 again, this is a move that I should play automatically.

25... ♕b7 26. ♕h3?! ♕c8?!

26...g6± Now, Black has ideas to go ...♔f6 and prepare ...g5. If I had played h5, all these options are gone.

27. ♖de1 ♖fe8+-



After a few improving moves I've built up my advantage to a pretty much winning position, but Black is preparing to play ...♖c5 with some counterplay, so I realized I kind of need to do something quick.





# Chess Canada Johnathan Han

**28.♖c3**

Threatening ♖c7.

**28...♘c5**

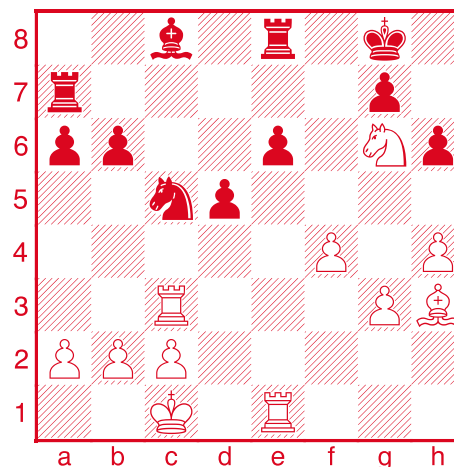
My opponent chooses to go down a forcing variation.

28...♙b7 prevents ♖c7 for the time being and was probably a better defense; e.g. 29.♖c7 ♘c5 30.♖xe7+ ♖xe7± trading one pair of rooks would massively benefit Black as it relieves some pressure.

**29.♘e5+ ♔g8**

This pretty much leads us down a forcing line. The other option is to move forward with 29...♙f6 but this looks very scary and after 30.g4 (threatening checkmate) 30...g5 31.fxg5+ hxg5 32.♖f3+ ♔g7 33.h5 was probably what my opponent saw since this is what I calculated as well and he probably didn't like it.

**30.♘g6 ♖a7**



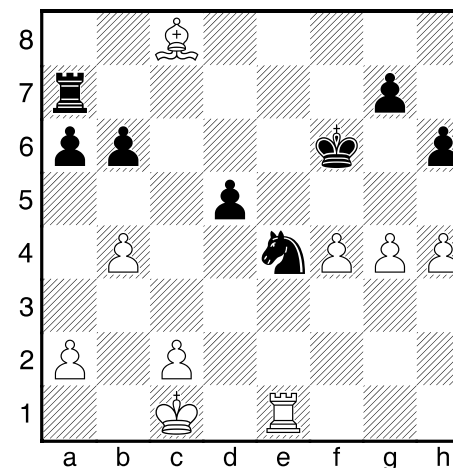
**31.b4**

*editor* – ! Removing both the guards of e6 wins a pawn and wrecks Black's center.

**31...♘e4 32.♖xc8 ♖xc8**

**33.♙xe6+ ♔h7 34.♙xc8**

**♙xg6 35.g4+- ♔f6**



**36.♙f5??**

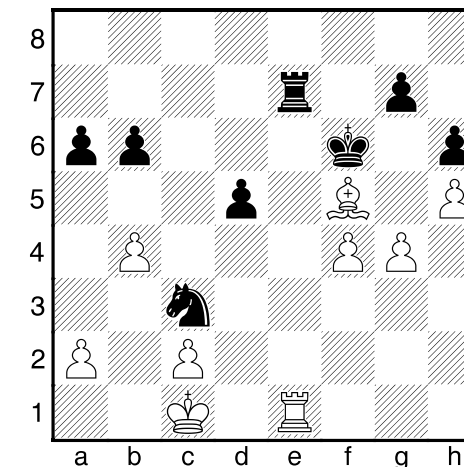
I played a nice combination, but now completely squandered my advantage with this move. 36.h5 again, this move stops any nonsense.

**36...♖e7??**

36...h5! and suddenly, there will be a liquidation into a rook endgame which should be a

draw: 37.♙xe4 dxe4 38.♖xe4 hxg4=.

**37.h5 ♘c3**



At this point, I felt like I should still be winning but I could not find the best move. I ended up spending a lot of time and playing the second-best line.

**38.g5+??**

38.♖xe7 ♔xe7 39.♔b2 ♘e2 is what I was scared of, but after 40.♙d3 ♘xf4 41.♙xa6+- White's a-pawn will win the game.

**38...♔f7 39.♙g6+ ♔f8**

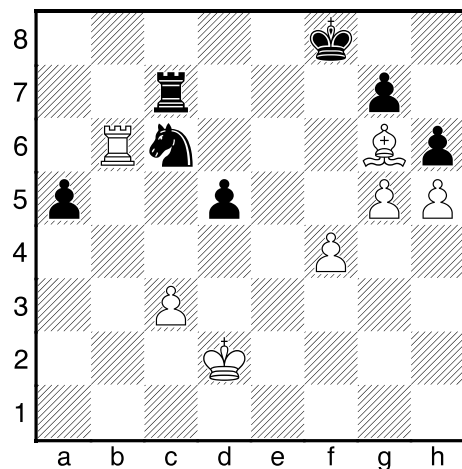
**40.♖f1± ♘xa2+ 41.♔d2**

**♘xb4 42.♖b1 a5 43.c3 ♘c6**

**44.♖xb6 ♖c7**

**en route to winning the  
2023 Canadian Junior**





### 45.gxh6?

Black is somewhat out of moves so I can keep the tension with 45.♔d3 a4 46.♖a6±.

### 45...gxh6 46.f5

If I can get the pawn to f6, I would be winning. My opponent probably didn't see a way to stop it so he went for the rook endgame

### 46...♞e5

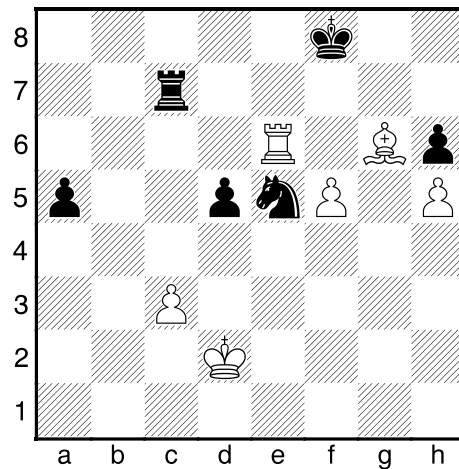
If I can get the pawn to f6, Black will be forced to put the rook on the back rank: 46...a4? 47.f6 a3 48.♖a6 ♞c8 49.♖xa3+-.

**I completely squandered my advantage with this move...**

**...suddenly, it's a draw!**

**...of course, we both missed it.**

### 47.♞e6



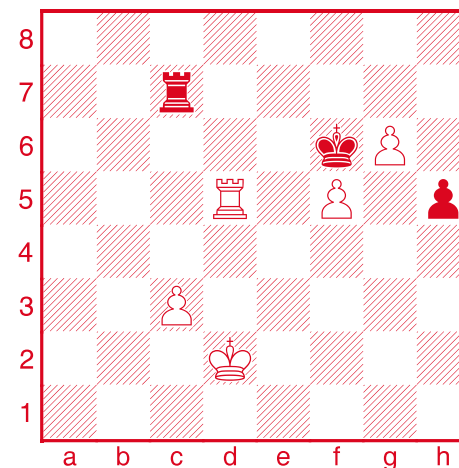
### 47...♞xg6??

47...♞f3+ 48.♔d3 ♞c6!! = and suddenly, it's a draw. This was actually the only way to save the game and of course, we both missed it. 49.♖xc6 ♞e5+.

### 48.hxg6+-

This endgame is tricky, but I evaluated that it was winning. I thought Black had to push the h-pawn so it makes the calculation pretty straight-forward, but apparently Black has many tricky ideas.

### 48...♔g7 49.♖a6 h5 50.♖xa5 ♔f6 51.♖xd5

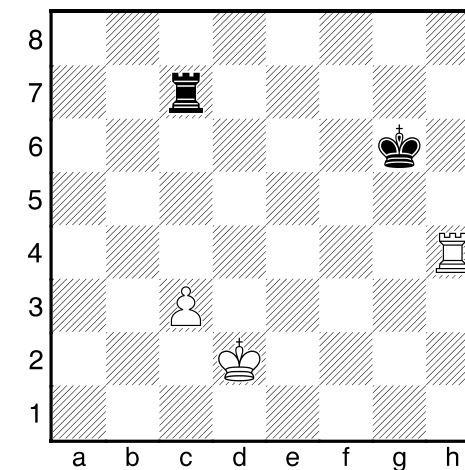


### 51...h4

**51...♖c8!?** is a very strange idea. The rook wants to go to h8 and then distract the rook from defending the pawns. At first, the computer isn't even sure if White is winning, and it turns out White somehow has to find a lot of only moves to win the game. 52.♔d3□ Bringing the king to defend the f5 pawn is apparently the only way to win. 52...h4 53.♖d4□ (53.♔e4? trying to get the ♖ to h7 only draws vs 53...♖c4+= or 53...♔g5=) 53...♞h8 (53...♔xf5 transposes to the game: 54.♖xh4□ ♔xg6 55.♖f4□+-) 54.♔e4□ h3 55.♖d6+□ ♔g7 56.♖d7+ ♔f6 (56...♔h6 57.♔f4 h2 58.♖d1□

♔g7 59.♔g5!+-) 57.♖f7+! ♔g5 58.g7! (58.♖h7+-) 58...♖g8 59.♔f3□+-.

### 52.♖d4 ♔xf5 53.♖xh4 ♔xg6



### 54.♖f4□

In rook endgames, you always want to cut off the opponent's king.

54...♔g5 55.♖f1 ♖c8 56.♔d3 ♖d8+ 57.♔e4 ♖e8+ 58.♔d4 ♖d8+ 59.♔e5 ♖e8+ 60.♔d6 ♖c8 61.♖c1□ 61.♖f3? ♔g4=.

61...♔f6 62.c4 ♖d8+ 63.♔c7 ♖d4 64.c5 ♔e6 65.c6 ♖h4 66.♔c8



# Chess Canada Johnathan Han

Not the best game. I missed many chances to potentially win in a quicker or easier way and I allowed a lot of counterplay that my opponent luckily missed.

1-0

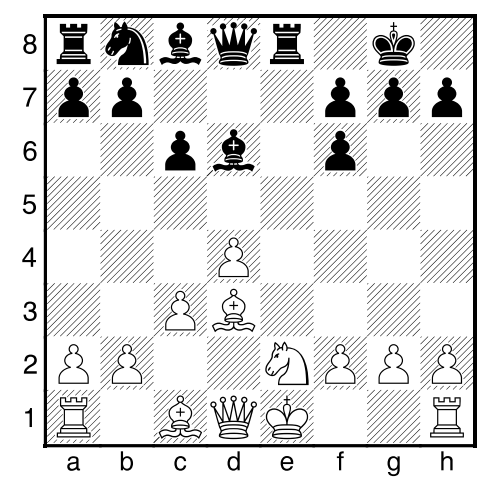
**Han, Johnathan (2407)  
Rodrigue-Lemieux,  
Shawn (2634)**

**B15**  
Open de Gatineau (4),  
26.05.2024

*Notes: IM Johnathan Han*

Going into this round, we were the only two players on 3/3. The last few times we had played. **Shawn had surprised me with different openings so I somewhat expected him to go back to the Caro-Kann.**

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 dxe4  
4.♘xe4 ♘f6 5.♘xf6+ exf6  
6.c3 ♕d6 7.♕d3 0-0 8.♘e2  
♞e8



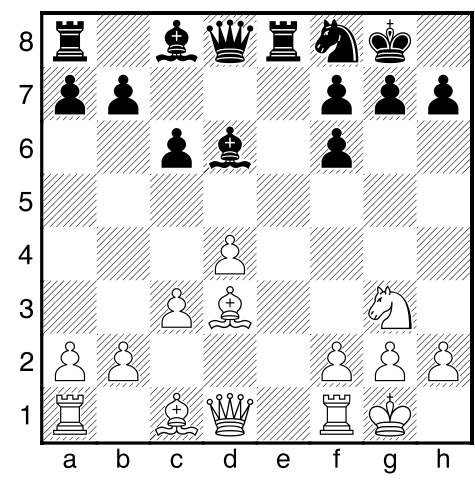
Obviously, there are many different ways White can play here. Shawn and I have played many times in positions with 0-0-0 so I decided to castle kingside.

**9.0-0 ♘d7 10.♘g3**

Black has many options here, but the game continuation requires Black to be very precise in the following moves and they aren't easy to see.

**10...♘f8**

Black can also play 10...g6 with the idea of if White plays 11.f4 (11.♕h6 f5±) 11...f5 with the idea of ...♘f6-e4.



**11.f4**

If I can get f4-f5, Black's position is going to be very passive and White also has chances at a kingside attack with ideas like ♘h5 and ♖g4.

11.a4! The engine really likes this move and says that White is slightly better. White's plan is to create a bind on Black's queenside structure. 11...♖c7 12.a5 ♕d7 13.b4±.



**Side-by-Side**

again?





### 11...c5!

Practically an only move. Black needs to generate counterplay immediately. I was pretty surprised that my opponent spent around 20-30 min since this is still somewhat theory.

To illustrate how quickly Black's position can collapse, if Black plays a normal move like 11...g6 after 12.f5± Black's position is almost paralyzed and most likely, Black has to go for 12...c5 13.♙f4 ♘xf4 14.♖xf4±.

### 12.d5 g6=

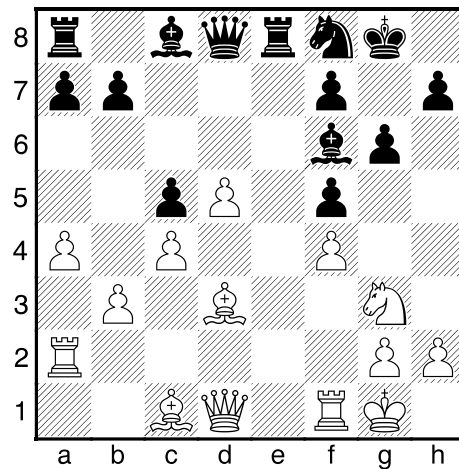
Again, pretty much forced. Black has to challenge White's idea of playing c4-b3-♙b2 by preparing ...f5 and ...♙e7-f6.

### 13.c4 f5 14.b3 ♙e7 15.a4

My preparation ended on the next move, but this was my main idea. The point is that my rook will go from a2 to e2 in the future, and a4 also prevents some ...b5 ideas.

15.♙b2 is a simpler alternative, 15...♙f6 16.♙xf6 ♖xf6 17.♘e2=.

### 15...♙f6 16.♖a2=



This position is equal, but I thought it was easier to play with White because of my pawn on d5.

### 16...♙d7

A slight inaccuracy. My opponent wanted to go for ...b5 but probably should have kept the position as is. 16...♖d6 saves a tempo for Black over the game line after 17.♗h1 ♙d7.

### 17.♖e2?!

This allows Black to play a quick ...a6-b5.

I should have started with a useful waiting move, and ♗h1 is a move I probably want to

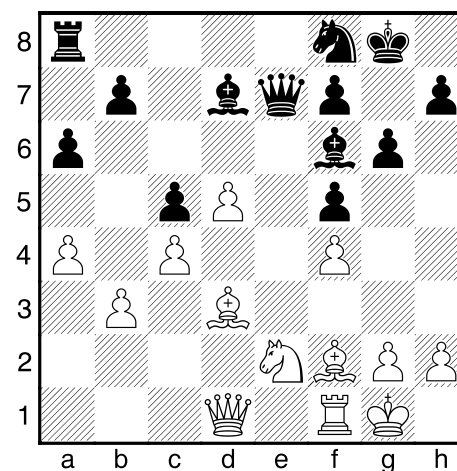
play anyway to get off the open diagonal. This also vacates the g1 square for a possible ♘e2-g1-f3 maneuver if Black doesn't do anything about it.

### 17...♖xe2

17...a6 18.♖xe8 ♖xe8 19.a5 ♖d8 20.♙d2 b5 21.axb6 ♖xb6 and without a rook on the a-file, Black can go for a quick ...a5-a4.

### 18.♘xe2 a6 19.♙e3 ♖e7

### 20.♙f2



### 20...♖d6

Black needs to prevent White from playing a5 by either playing 20...b6 or 20...a5. My opponent probably didn't like how passive this position is for him.

### 21.a5!±

A very important move and now the c5 pawn is a permanent weakness.

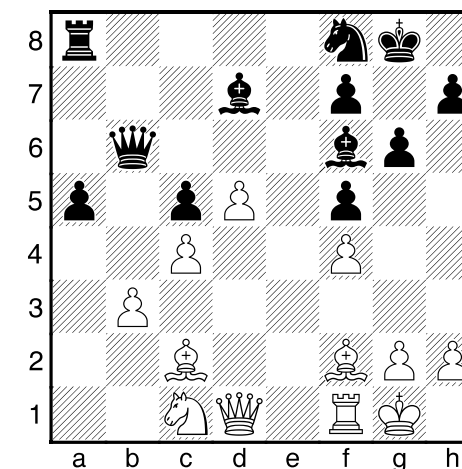
### 21...b5?

A bad move but my opponent was already committed to this plan.

### 22.axb6 ♖xb6 23.♙c2± a5

### 24.♙c1!

Rerouting to d3.



### 24...♙c8?

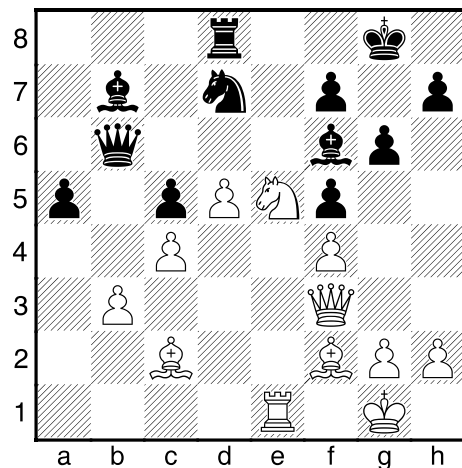
I was mostly scared of 24...a4 25.bxa4 ♖b4 26.♘d3 ♖xc4 27.♙b3 ♖c3 28.♘xc5 ♖c8 I got to this pretty much forcing line and I wasn't sure what to play. I thought at the very least I had

29. ♖xd7 ♜xd7 30. d6±.

The right move was 29. ♔c2! ♚b4 30. ♖xd7! ♜xc2 31. ♖xf6+ ♙h8 32. ♙xc2± and White should be able to win.

*editor* – At the end of this line, Black can get a piece back with the fork 32... ♚c3 but the passed a- and d-pawns are too strong when supported by White's pieces; e.g. 33. d6 ♚xf6 34. ♜d1 ♚e6 35. ♜d4! (35. a5 also wins, but is much more computerish.) 35... ♚a2 36. ♙d3!+- with excellent coordination. Critically, 36... ♖e6 fails to 37. d7±+.

25. ♖d3± ♜d7 26. ♜e1 ♙b7  
27. ♖e5 ♜d8 28. ♚f3



28... ♖b8?+-

△28... ♚d6 when it still might take more work from White to win.

My last few moves have all been pretty natural, so I'd played them quickly and accumulated a very big time-advantage. I knew I was a lot better here, so I had to find a way to convert my advantage.

29. ♚e3

A good move, but I still wasn't sure what to do after. I saw this move forced ... ♜c8, so I thought it couldn't be bad.

The computer already recommends 29. ♙xf5 gxf5 30. ♚h5 ♚c7 31. ♚xf5 ♙g7 32. ♙h4 ♜f8. I saw up to here and I wasn't sure how easy this position is. It turns out White has a brute-force win: 33. ♙f6 ♙xf6 34. ♚xf6 ♚d8 35. ♚h6 ♖d7 (35... ♙c8 36. ♜e3±+) 36. ♖xd7 ♚xd7 37. ♜e3+-.

29... ♜c8

If 29... ♖a6 30. ♖d7 ♚d6 31. ♖xf6+ ♚xf6 Without the

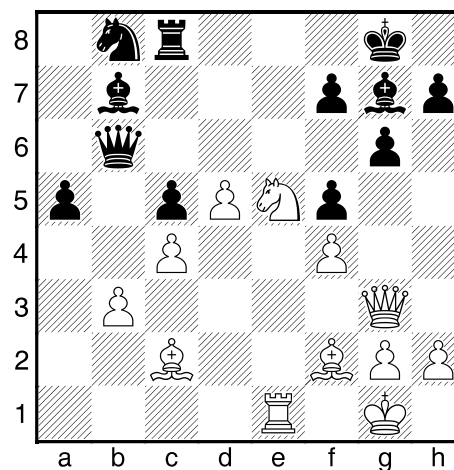
dark squared bishop, Black is completely lost.

30. ♚g3?

A step in the wrong direction. My pieces are already in great positions so I should try to open up the Black king.

I wasn't sure about opening my king's position with 30. g4! but my pieces are so well placed I should have spent more time to realize that my king isn't in danger; e.g. 30... fxf4 31. ♖xg4 ♙g7 32. f5+-.

30... ♙g7

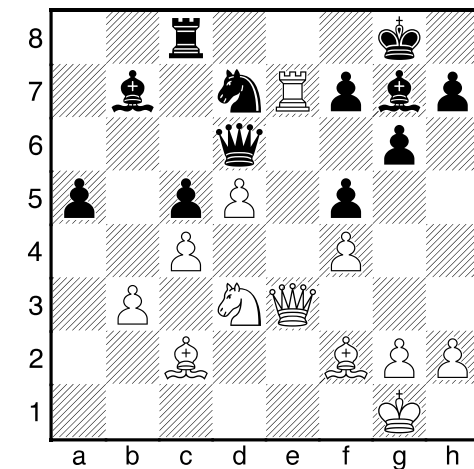


31. ♖d3??

Way too slow and allowing Black

to reactivate. I played 31. ♖d3 as I thought Black would play ... ♜e8 otherwise. But after: 31. h4 ♜e8 32. ♙h2 ♚d6 33. ♖d3 the c5-pawn is still very weak.

31... ♖d7 32. ♜e7 ♚d6 33. ♚e3



33... ♙d4??

Missing the infiltration with 35. ♚e7.

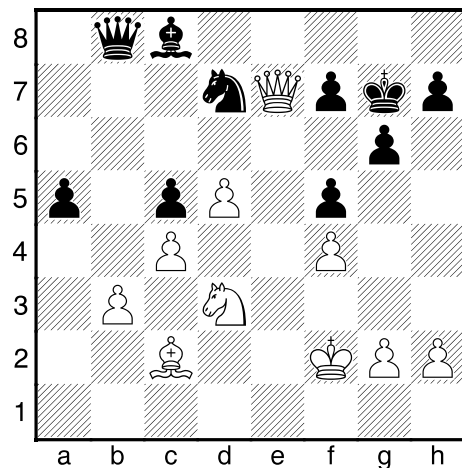
33... ♙f6 34. ♜e8+ ♜xe8 35. ♚xe8+ ♙g7± and suddenly, Black's pieces are starting to activate and this position is not clear.

34. ♜e8+ ♙g7 35. ♚e7+-

♙xf2+ 36. ♙xf2 ♚b8 37. ♜xc8 ♙xc8







### 38. ♔e2!

The top computer choice, but not for the reason I thought.

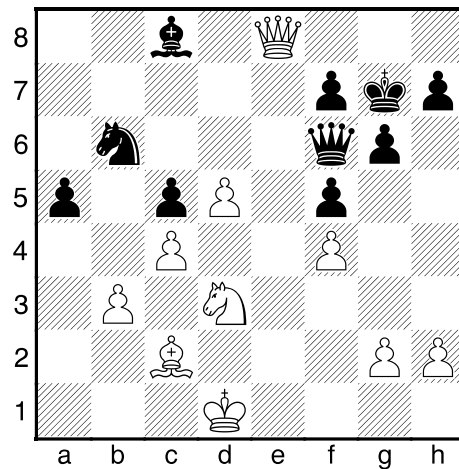
I wanted to play 38. ♘e5 but I was scared of 38... ♙b4 39. ♚xf7+ ♔h6; but I completely missed that 40. ♘f3 protects the d2 square.

Additionally, 38. ♔e2 sidesteps 38. ♘xc5?? ♙b6-+.

### 38... ♙b6 39. ♔d1?

I should have played the pretty obvious 39. ♘e5 ♙f6 40. ♚xf6+ ♘xf6 41. ♘c6 and this endgame is completely winning: 41... ♙a6 42. ♙d3+- . I thought maybe Black had some holding chances, but it should be completely winning.

### 39... ♙f6 40. ♚e8 ♘b6



At this point, **there are many ways to win. We were both almost playing off increment at this point, so I went for a zero-risk approach.** In hindsight, I gave Black many opportunities with this approach.

### 41. ♙e5

For example. in this position 41. ♘xc5 ♙d4+ 42. ♘d3 ♙g1+ 43. ♙e1 ♙xg2 44. ♙c3+ White is completely winning, but I didn't go for it since I thought Black had some counterplay.

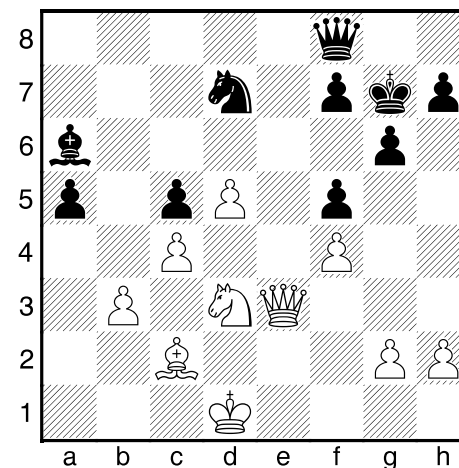
### 41... ♘d7 42. ♙e3??

42. ♙c7 ♙a1+ 43. ♘c1 ♙d4+ 44. ♙d3 White will win either the bishop or the knight.

### 42... ♙d6?

Missing a chance. Immediately after I played 42. ♙e3, I saw that Black could go 42... a4! 43. bxa4 ♙c3± and suddenly, there is only one move where White keeps an advantage: 44. ♙e8 ♘f6 45. ♙e5 (45. ♙xc8?? ♘e4-+) 45... ♙xc4 46. d6 White is still better but this is definitely not what I wanted.

### 43. ♙e8 ♙f8 44. ♙e3 ♙a6



### 45. ♘e5?

I could have won a pawn immediately with 45. ♙d2 ♙d8 (45... a4 fails to 46. bxa4 ♙xc4? 47. ♙c3+-) 46. ♘xc5 ♘xc5 47. ♙d4+-.

### 45... ♘f6?

This move basically paralyzed his knight for the rest of the game.

If 47... ♙c8 48. e6+ ♔g8 49. exf7+ ♔xf7 50. ♙h8! the only move where White has a big advantage, but this was not an easy move to see.

Much better was 45... ♙e7! 46. ♙c3 ♘xe5 47. fxe5. I thought this pawn structure would be hard for Black to defend, but the White pawns are somewhat blockaded since advancing them opens the position and gives Black some counterplay.

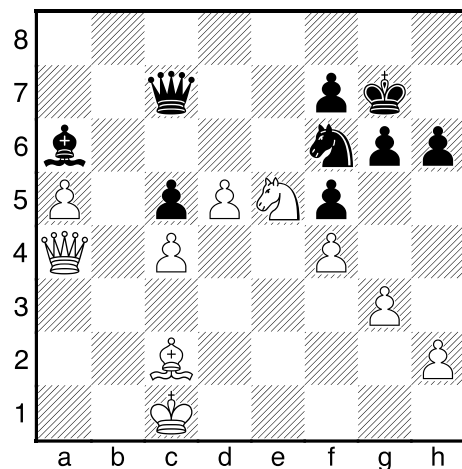
### 46. ♙c3+-

Now, I win the a5 pawn.

### 46... ♙d8 47. ♘c6 ♙c7 48. g3 a4 49. bxa4

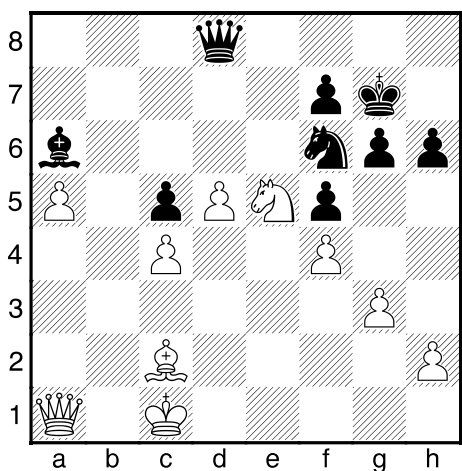
The next few moves, I just shuffled my pieces and tried to think of a plan.

### 49... h6 50. a5 ♙c8 51. ♔c1 ♙d7 52. ♘e5 ♙c8 53. ♙a1 ♙a6 54. ♙a4



I was trying to infiltrate with  $\text{Qc6}$ , but obviously Black shouldn't let that happen.

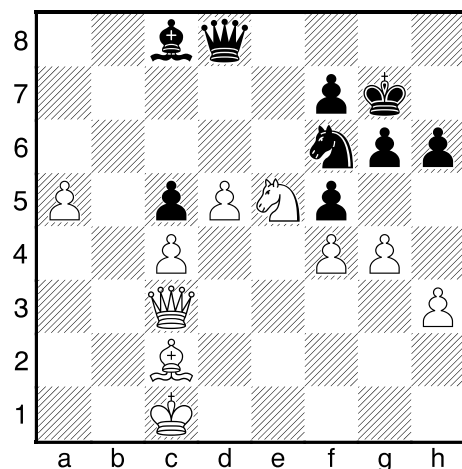
54... $\text{Qd8}$  55. $\text{Qa3}$   $\text{Qc7}$   
56. $\text{Qa1}$   $\text{Qd8}$  57. $\text{Nc6}$   $\text{Qe8}$   
58. $\text{Ne5}$   $\text{Qd8}$



At this point, I saw that it was difficult to break through on the queenside, so I focused on

playing g4-g5.

59.h3  $\text{Qc7}$  60. $\text{Qc3}$   $\text{Qd8}$   
61.g4  $\text{Qc8}$



62. $\text{Nc6}$

The immediate 62.g5 also wins, but I didn't want to allow any counterplay with: 62...hxg5 63.fxg5  $\text{Ne4}$  64. $\text{Qxe4}$   $\text{Qxg5}+$  65. $\text{Qb2}$  fxe4 66.d6+- is still winning, but there's no reason to allow this.

62... $\text{Qc7}$  63. $\text{Qe5}$   $\text{Qxe5}$   
64.fxe5  $\text{Ne8}$  65.gxf5 gxf5  
66. $\text{Ne7}$   $\text{Qa6}$  67.d6

1-0

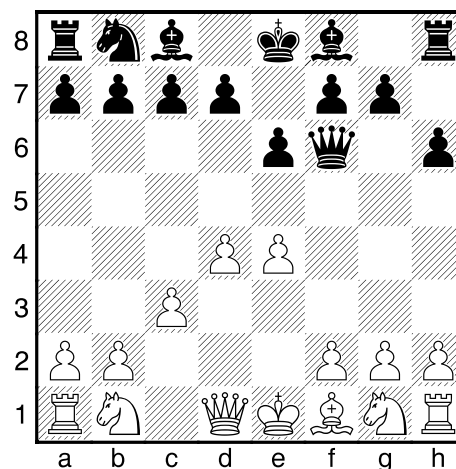
**Batorshyn, Ilya (2241)**  
**Han, Johnathan (2407)**  
**A45**

Open de Gatineau (5),  
26.05.2024

**Notes: IM Johnathan Han**

Going into the final round, my opponent was on 3.5/4 and I was on 4/4. There was another player on 3.5/4, but lost pretty quickly so **I knew that a draw would win the tournament.**

1.d4  $\text{Nf6}$  2. $\text{Qg5}$  e6 3.e4 h6  
4. $\text{Qxf6}$   $\text{Qxf6}$  5.c3



5...d5

The main line is: 5...d6 6. $\text{Qd3}$  e5 7. $\text{Ne2}$ , but White goes for

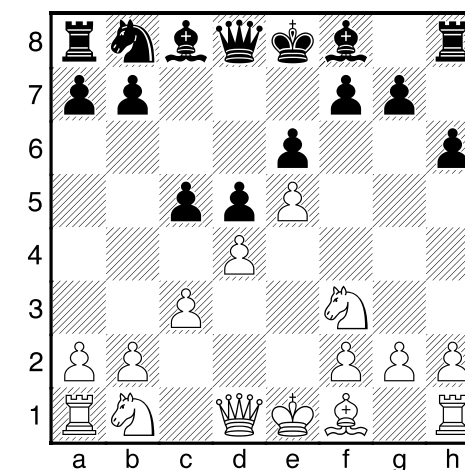
a quick castles and f4 which I didn't really like.

The alternative is: 6... $\text{Qg5}$  7. $\text{Nf3}$   $\text{Qxg2}$  8. $\text{Qg1}$   $\text{Qh3}$ , but I wanted to play it safe as I thought I could easily lose in this position.

6.e5

Keeping the tension with 6. $\text{Qd3}$  c5 7. $\text{Nf3}$ = is better, since 6.e5 turns into a good French defense for Black.

6... $\text{Qd8}$  7. $\text{Nf3}$  c5



Since there has already been a minor piece trade, Black's development is very natural as the bishop and the knight usually fight for the e7 square in a normal French.

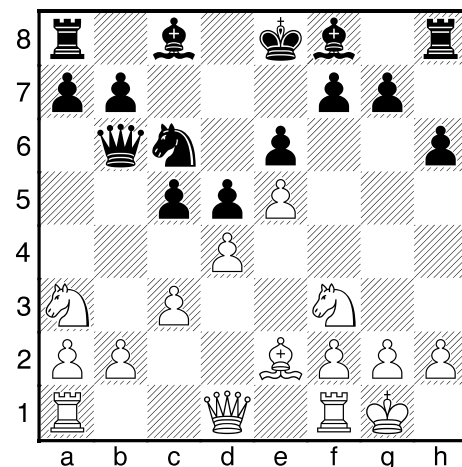




# Chess Canada Johnathan Han

8. ♖e2 ♘c6 9. 0-0 ♔b6

10. ♞a3



10...♞e7

Of course, don't play 10...♔xb2?

11. ♞b5±.

10...cxd4 Black usually should play this move after White moves the b1 knight, since the knight now can't go to c3. This also prevents White from playing dxc5 which an interesting pawn structure that Black doesn't have to allow.

11. ♔d2

11.dxc5 ♙xc5 12. ♔d2 Now, instead of a good French, it is a completely different pawn structure that is more imbalanced.

11...cxd4

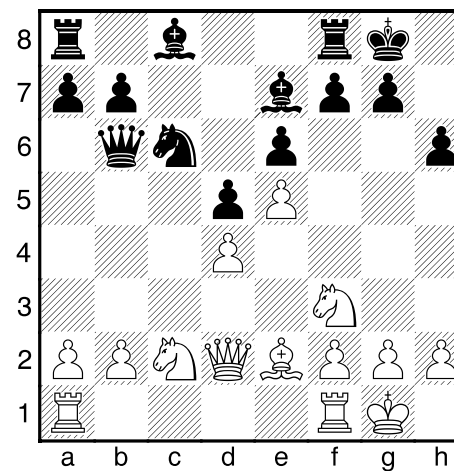
Now I see White has the option of playing dxc5 if I castle immediately.

11...0-0 12.dxc5 ♙xc5 13. ♞b5±  
Black is slightly better but there's no reason to allow this pawn structure with the knight coming to d4.



Ilia Batorshyn

12.cxd4 0-0 13. ♞c2



13...f6?

I decided to open the position with 13... f6 because I was scared that after 13...♞d7 14. ♞e3 there might be some quick ♞g4 and possibly ♞xh6. However, I have enough queenside counterplay that it shouldn't be a problem: 14...♖fc8 15. ♞g4 ♔b4 16. ♔e3 h5 17. ♞h6+ ♔f8± and there shouldn't be that much danger.

14.exf6 ♙xf6= 15. ♖fd1

My opponent was trying to go for a kingside attack. White can also try to expand on the queenside with 15.b4 ♞d7 16.a4 and Black has to prevent a5 and b5 with something like 16...a6.

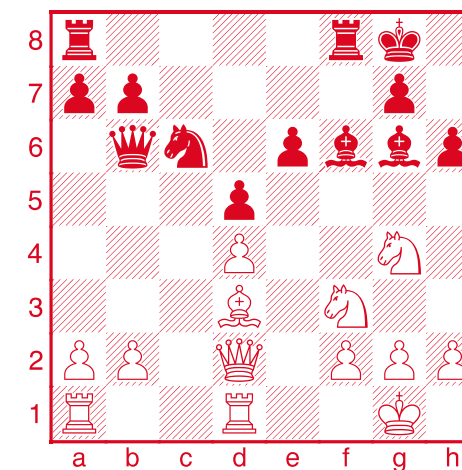
photo: FQE facebook

15...♞d7

With the idea of a quick ...♞e8-g6.

16. ♞e3 ♞e8 17. ♞g4 ♞g6

18. ♞d3?



18...♞e4

I thought White was forced to trade off a lot of pieces and I knew it would be at least a draw.

♞18...♞h5±. I immediately rejected this move because of 19. ♞xh6+, but after 19...♔h8♠-+ White's pieces are extremely uncoordinated and White also has many loose pawns.

19. ♞xe4

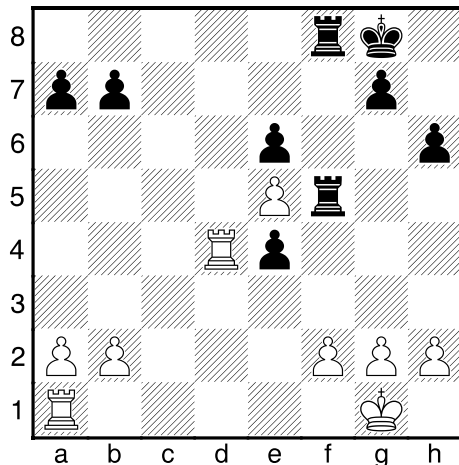
White could've tried to keep

more pieces on the board with  
 19. ♖e3 ♗xf3 20. ♖xe6+ ♔h8  
 21. gxf3 ♘xd4 22. ♖xd5 ♘e6= is  
 still equal, but this could be scary  
 for me.

**19...dxe4 20. ♗xf6+**

Not 20. ♗fe5? ♗xe5 21. ♗xe5  
 ♗xe5 22. dxe5 ♖ad8 23. ♖e2  
 ♖d3 and suddenly Black's  
 pieces are very active.

**20...♖xf6 21. ♗e5= ♗xe5**  
**22. dxe5 ♖f5 23. ♖d4 ♖xd4**  
**24. ♖xd4 ♖af8**



**25. ♖f1?!**

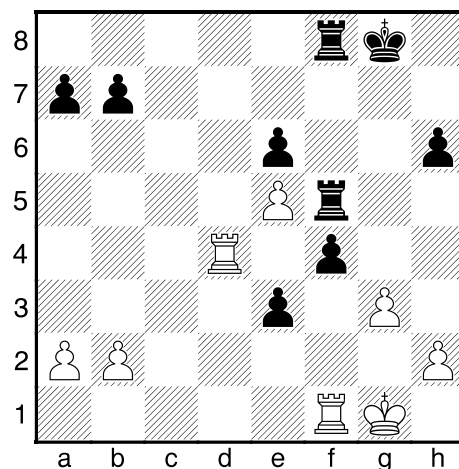
25. ♖d2 ♖xe5 26. ♖e1= White  
 will be able to win back the  
 pawn and it should be equal.  
 The game continuation is still

equal but I definitely have some  
 chances to win.

**25...e3 26. f4**

26. f3 may have been an easier  
 draw: 26... ♖xe5 27. ♖c1 White  
 should be able to bring the king  
 to e2 and win the pawn.

**26...g5 27. g3 gxf4**



**28. gxf4**

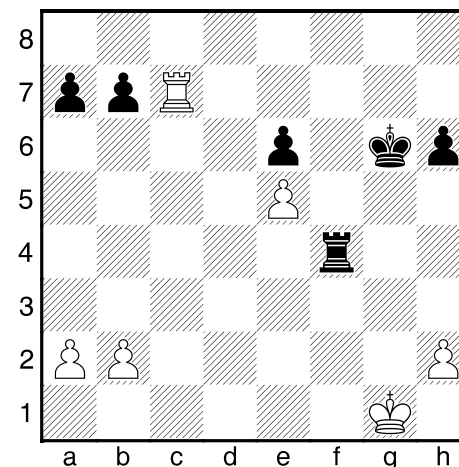
There was probably an easier  
 way to draw the game with  
 28. ♖dx4 ♖xf4 29. ♖xf4 ♖d8  
 30. ♔f1 ♖d2 31. ♖b4 b6 32. h4  
 h5=. This looks somewhat scary  
 with the pawn on e3, but Black  
 has no way to make progress.

**28...e2 29. ♖e1 ♖xf4 30. ♖xf4**

**♖xf4 31. ♖xe2 ♔f7**

With best play, this endgame  
 should be a draw, but I have the  
 more active rook and king Black  
 should have some chances.

**32. ♖c2 ♔g6 33. ♖c7**



**33...♖f7**

I should have stayed active  
 with 33... ♖b4 34. b3 h5 and it  
 remains hard for White to defend  
 e5.

**34. ♖c3?!**

Right idea, but 34. ♖c2 prevents  
 my next move 34... ♔g5 35. ♖g2+  
 and the Black ♔ can't go to the  
 f-file without ♖f2+.

White should give up a pawn to  
 keep the rook active.

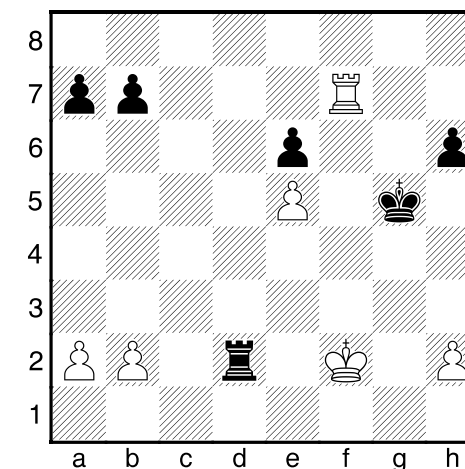
**34...♔g5!?**

Threatening ... ♔f4 and White will  
 lose a pawn at least. Again, with  
 best play, it was probably *still*  
 a draw, but now I know I might  
 have some chances.

**35. ♖c2 ♖d7 36. ♖f2!**

White's only chance of creating  
 counterplay.

**36...♖d5 37. ♖f7 ♖d1+ 38. ♔f2**  
**♖d2+**



**39. ♔g3**

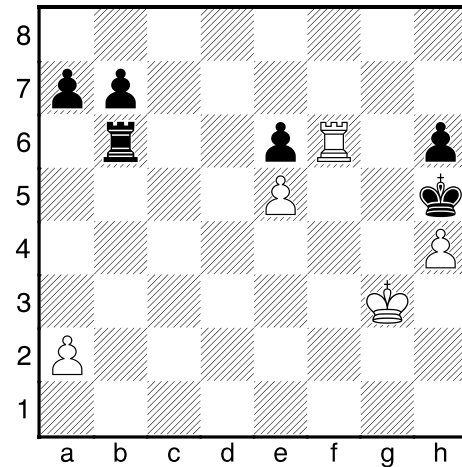
39. ♔e3! also should lead to  
 a draw after 39... ♖xb2 40. ♖f6  
 ♖xh2 41. a3!! (not 41. ♖xe6?? ♔f5  
 42. ♖e7 ♖xa2+). If my opponent  
 had seen this move, I believe he  
 would have played it because





it is much simpler to calculate than the game continuation. The point being that after 41...♖h3+ 42.♔d4 ♖xa3 43.♖xe6 Black can't play 43...♔f5 due to 44.♖f6+ and White's e-pawn should be able to at least draw the game.

39...♖xb2 40.h4+ ♔h5 41.♖f6  
♖b6



I was able to win a pawn but I saw how White could draw the game.

42.♔f4??

White needed to stop me from pushing my pawns on the queenside.

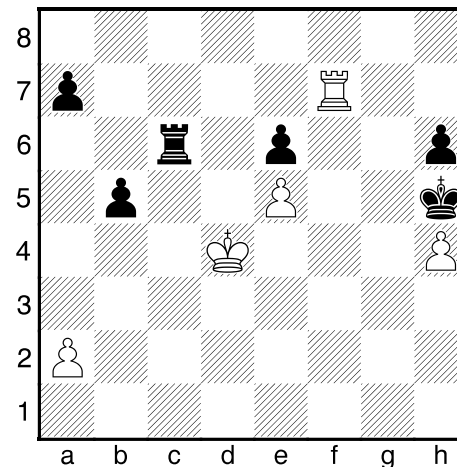
42.a4! ♖a6 43.a5! b5 (43...♖xa5

44.♖xe6 is equal; even though White is down a pawn, the e5 pawn is so advanced that Black has no winning chances.) 44.axb6 ♖xb6 45.♖f7 a5 46.♖a7 ♖b5 47.♔f4 ♔xh4 48.♖a6= White will win the e6 pawn and most likely trade it for one of Black's pawns.

42...♖a6-+

Even though my position is somewhat paralyzed, it also means that if White ever moves his rook, I should be able to play ...♔xh4.

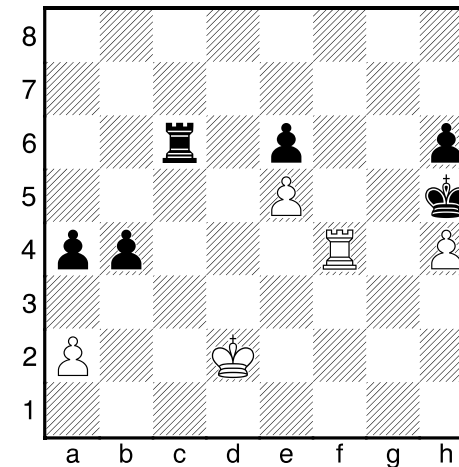
43.♔e3 b5 44.♔d4 ♖c6  
45.♖f7



45...a6

Not sure why I didn't go for 45...♔xh4 46.♖xa7 ♖c4+ 47.♔e3 ♔g5-+.

46.♖f6 b4 47.♔d3 a5 48.♔d2  
a4 49.♖f4



49...♖b6??

I wasn't too low on time, but I missed 53.♖f6 in the game continuation, which is why I played this whole variation.

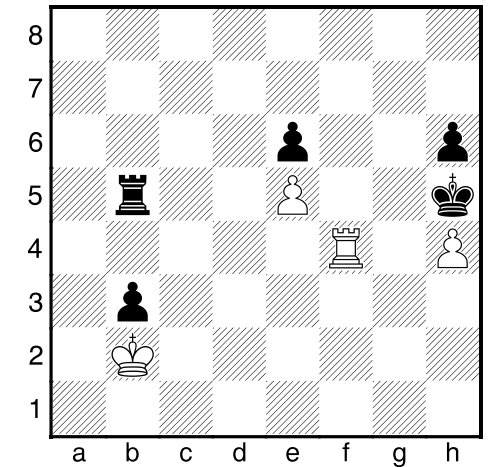
It might still be winning, but I should have spent some more time and seen the much simpler win:

49...b3! 50.axb3 axb3 51.♖b4 ♖c2+! 52.♔d3 ♖h2-+ is much more trivial.

50.♔c2 b3+??

Again, I simply thought this move was winning. Actually winning was: 50...♖b5 51.♔b2 a3+ 52.♔b3 ♖xe5 53.♔xb4 ♖e3-+.

51.axb3 axb3+ 52.♔b2 ♖b5



53.♖f6□=

The move I'd missed.

53...♖xe5

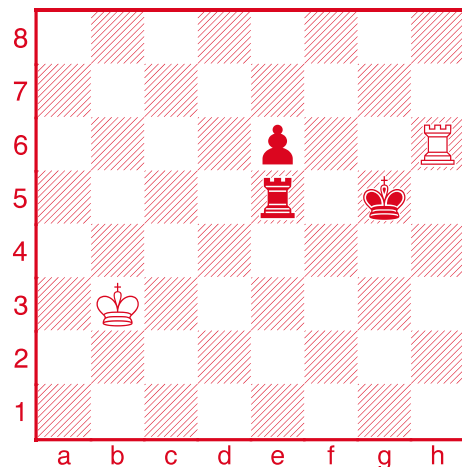
53...♖b6 54.♖f4□=.

54.♔xb3 ♔xh4

54...♖e4 55.♔c3 e5 56.♔d3 ♖xh4 57.♖f5+= White is just in time to win back a pawn.

55.♖xh6+ ♔g5





### 56. ♖h8??

56. ♖h1!= ♖c5 57. ♖e1 White's rook should go in front of the pawn. Black's pawn is too little advanced and the White king is close enough that White will continue keeping pressure on the e6 pawn. If Black ever puts the rook behind the pawn, then White will bring in their king. 57... ♖f6 58. ♖b4 ♖c8 59. ♖f1+ ♖g5 60. ♖e1 ♖f5 61. ♖f1+ ♖g4 62. ♖e1 ♖e8 63. ♖c4=.

*editor* – the even *less* natural 56. ♖h2 is the only other move that draws: 56... ♖c5 57. ♖e2 e5 58. ♖b4=.

### 56... ♖c5=+

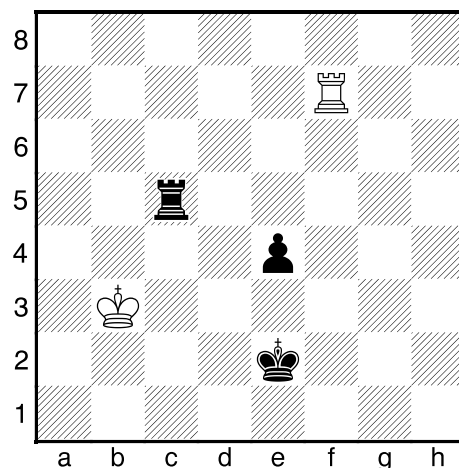
Just like game 3 against Ryan Sowa, the same idea wins:

cutting off the king. Now White is too slow if he tries to go ♖h1-e1.

### 57. ♖f8

57. ♖h1 e5 58. ♖e1 ♖f4-+ and now the pawn is too advanced 59. ♖f1+ ♖e3 60. ♖e1+ ♖f2 61. ♖e4 ♖f3 62. ♖e1 e4-+.

57... e5 58. ♖f1 e4 59. ♖g1+ ♖f4 60. ♖f1+ ♖g3 61. ♖e1 ♖f3 62. ♖f1+ ♖e2 63. ♖f7



*editor* – the rest is the Lucena win.

63... e3 64. ♖e7 ♖d2 65. ♖d7+ ♖e1 66. ♖e7 e2 67. ♖b2 ♖d2 68. ♖d7+ ♖e3 69. ♖e7+ ♖d3 70. ♖e8

70. ♖d7+ ♖e4 71. ♖e7+ ♖e5 is the textbook Lucena finish.

### 70... ♖c4

With this win, I was able to win the tournament with 5/5. This last game was definitely not very

good, but due to the tournament circumstance, I think I played it safe once I knew I didn't have any chances to lose.

## 0-1

## 2024 Gatineau Open

Name	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	Score	Old	TPR	New
1 <b>Han, Johnathan</b>	<b>+25</b>	<b>+12</b>	<b>+3</b>	<b>+4</b>	<b>+9</b>	<b>5</b>	2407	<b>2670</b>	2457
2 Sambuev, Bator	+17	-3	+16	+12	+7	4	2559	2478	2554
3 Sowa, Ryan	+10	+2	<b>-1</b>	+18	=4	3.5	2310	2541	2344
4 Rodrigue-Lemieux, Shawn	+15	+13	+5	<b>-1</b>	=3	3.5	2632	2479	2620
5 Chiku-Ratte, Olivier Kenta	+29	+20	-4	=6	+14	3.5	2425	2410	2426
6 Demchenko, Svitlana	=24	=8	+15	=5	+13	3.5	2331	2385	2336
7 Latorre, Vincent	=14	+22	+11	+20	-2	3.5	2341	2358	2354
8 Moses, Neil	+30	=6	+18	-9	+16	3.5	2185	2338	2225
9 <b>Batorshyn, Ilia</b>	=0	+26	+27	+8	<b>-1</b>	3.5	2241	2270	2256
10 Mok, Yuen Tak	-3	+29	-12	+30	+25	3	2012	2146	2038
11 Dunne, Francesco	=26	+24	-7	+27	=12	3	2219	2145	2214
12 <b>Saha, Ananda</b>	+19	<b>-1</b>	+10	-2	=11	2.5	2259	2255	2258
13 Adam, Rafael	+28	-4	=21	+22	-6	2.5	2277	2217	2271
14 Turcotte, Jonathan	=7	-16	+29	+26	-5	2.5	2032	2185	2060
15 Masse, Hugues	-4	+31	-6	+23	=19	2.5	2203	2175	2198
16 Azar, Sebastien	=31	+14	-2	+21	-8	2.5	2206	2159	2200
17 Roussikh, Maxim	-2	=28	-26	+31	+27	2.5	2097	2074	2089
18 Voloaca, Mihnea	+21	=27	-8	-3	+26	2.5	2297	2037	2275
19 St-Germain, Jack	-12	-21	+0	+24	=15	2.5	2078	2031	2071
20 Wiebe, Isaac	+23	-5	+30	-7	-0	2	2216	2105	2210
21 Labib, Daniel	-18	+19	=13	-16	=22	2	2027	2085	2039
22 Page-Fortin, Mathieu	=0	-7	+31	-13	=21	2	1966	2060	1998
23 Desjardins, Michel	-20	=0	=24	-15	+29	2	1839	2023	1865
24 Nassar, Marc	=6	-11	=23	-19	+30	2	2036	1976	2024
25 <b>Cova, Ramon J</b>	<b>-1</b>	=0	+28	-0	-10	1.5	1934	2049	1944
26 Chen, Megan	=11	-9	+17	-14	-18	1.5	1916	2017	1933
27 Mahdjoubi, Abdelaziz	+0	=18	-9	-11	-17	1.5	1772	1914	1779
28 Chipanga, Takaedza	-13	=17	-25	-29	+0	1.5	2129	1787	2074
29 Jolicoeur, Jacob	-5	-10	-14	+28	-23	1	2038	1847	1997
30 Gauthier, Denis	-8	0	-20	-10	-24	1	1813	1712	1793
31 Fiset, Anais Chloe	16	-15	-22	-17	0	0.5	1994	1818	1966



# How I won...

# Maplewood Pro Cup



by IM Anthony Atanasov



# Chess Canada Atanasov

The **Maplewood Invitational**, now in its third year, is a 10-player RR tournament in Waterloo, QC, between Montreal and Sherbrooke. This year's event (July 19-25) featured a \$10,000 prize fund and seven invited GMs: Jordan van Foreest (NED), Ivan Saric (CRO), Aryan Tari (NOR), Shawn Rodrigue-Lemieux (CAN), Toms Kantans (LAT), Bator Sambuev (CAN), and Vignir Vatnar Stefansson (ISL). This field made it the second-strongest RR in Canada in 2024, behind only the FIDE Candidates in Toronto.

The remaining three invitations went to the top finishers from the **Maplewood Professional Cup**: a 6-round Swiss, held May 31-June 2, in Montreal. The opportunity to qualify for such a strong RR attracted many strong players, including GM Razvan Preotu, and lots of IMs: Noritysn, Vettese, Chiku-Ratte, Johnathan Han, Sai Krishna, T.N Duong, Eric Lawson, and Tianqi Wang.

The three qualifiers were IM Nikolay Noritsyn and untitled Renzo Gutierrez (=2nd with 5/6), and **IM Anthony Atanasov**, who scored a **perfect 6/6**, including wins over Noritsyn, Preotu, and Vettese.

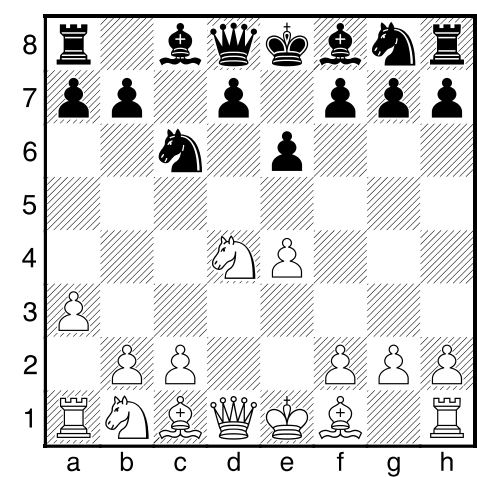
Anthony annotates all six of his games for *Chess Canada*.  
- editor

**Atanasov, Anthony (2489)**  
**Libersan, Thierry (2026)**  
**B45**  
Maplewood Qualifier (1),  
31.05.2024

*Notes: IM Anthony Atanasov*

In round 1, I had the White pieces vs a 1950 FIDE. I knew in order to finish in the top 3 I'd need to score wins against the lower-rated players, so I decided to take a fairly ambitious approach to the opening.

**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4  
4.♘xd4 ♘c6 5.a3!?**



A rare move, but it has a point. Delaying ♘c3 allows White to choose between c4, ♘c3, or even ♘xc6 based on Black's response. Perhaps if Black plays something critical here they could achieve a decent game, but the more natural moves (e.g. the game continuation) seem to let White get what they are hoping for with 5. a3.

To better understand 5.a3, let's see what happens if White plays the same way as in the game, but without inserting a3: 5.♘c3 ♕c7 6.♙e3 a6 7.f4 b5! in the game (move 8), this move wouldn't have been any good due to e4-e5, hitting the knight on f6. But here, Black gets away with ...b5, and gets a fine position.



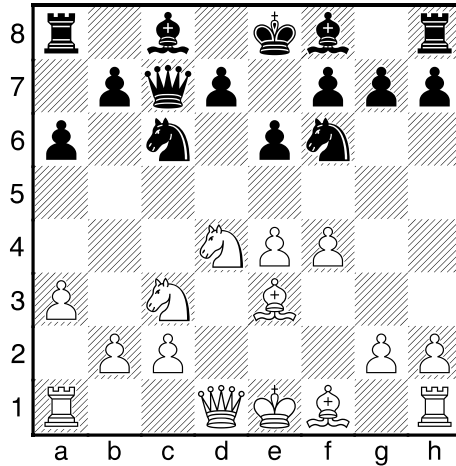
## IM Anthony Atanasov

2024 Toronto Labour Day Open, =1st.

5...♘f6

5...♙c7 6.♙e3 a6 (6...♘f6 7.♘c3 transposes to the game.) 7.c4±

6.♘c3 ♖c7 7.♙e3 a6 8.f4



8...d6

Black has now entered a Scheveningen-like position, which may be unfamiliar to a Taimanov player.

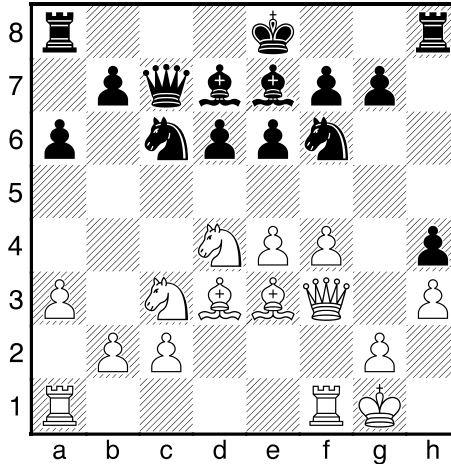
8...♘xd4 can be punished by 9.♙xd4! ♖xf4 10.g3 when e4-e5 and ♘e4 will come next.

9.♖f3 ♙d7 10.♙d3

The engine prefers to instead castle queenside and go for the attack, which is even more deadly: 10.0-0-0 and g4 next puts Black in a lot of trouble.

However, I think this approach is totally fine as well.

10...♙e7 11.0-0 h5?! 12.h3 h4

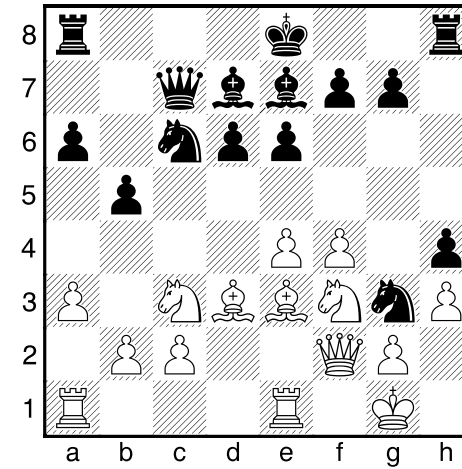


Black has prevented g4, but in doing so has created a major weakness: the h4-pawn is going to be indefensible in the long run.

13.♖f2 ♘h5?

Allows ♘f3, after which Black is borderline lost. 13...♘xd4 is probably a better try, though it's not too appealing either 14.♙xd4 ♙c6 15.e5 ♘h5 Black can at least hold on for the time being.

14.♘f3 ♘g3 15.♖fe1 b5



16.a4?

16.♘e2! After this simple move Black's position is dreadful: 16...♘xe2+ 17.♖xe2 Black's king will have nowhere to go, as the h4 weakness prevents 0-0, whereas 0-0-0 runs directly into an attack.

16...b4?

Black misses a chance to recover. The counterintuitive 16...bxa4! didn't really occur to me until after I played a4. After 17.♖xa4 ♖b7 suddenly b2 is hit and ...♘b4 is coming. If anyone's pressing now, it's probably Black!

17.♘d5?

A pretty standard idea in these positions, but ♘e2 was a lot better: 17.♘e2 ♘xe2+ 18.♖xe2+.

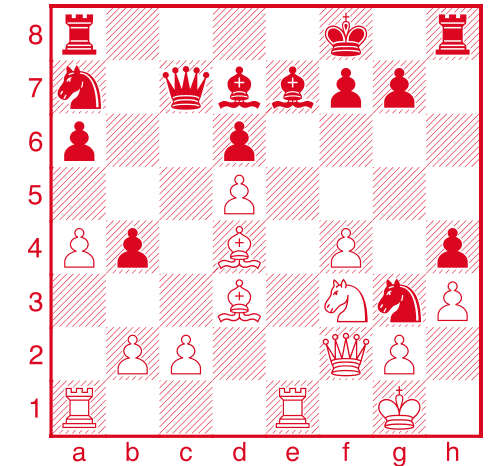
17...exd5 18.exd5 ♘a7?

Simply giving back the material was Black's best choice: 18...0-0! and White's advantage is minimal. 19.dxc6 ♖xc6 when a possible ...♙f5 could be good for Black in the future.

19.♙d4

Black's pieces have very poor coordination.

19...♖f8



White now has two tempting options: ♙xg7+ followed by ♖xe7, or ♖xe7 followed by ♙xg7.

20.♙xg7+??

The wrong choice – although Black's defense is not obvious at all.



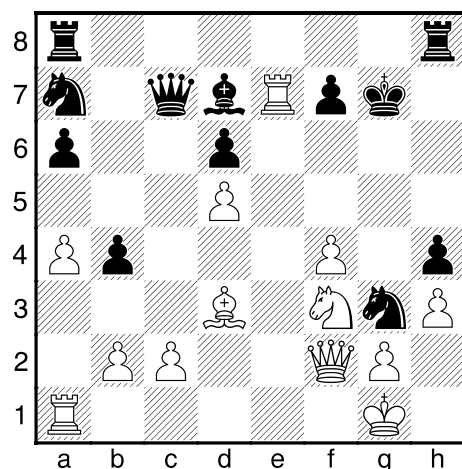




# Chess Canada Atanasov

20. ♖xe7 ♚+- ♔xe7 21. ♙xg7  
 ♙f5 (21... ♖hg8 22. ♚e1+! ♔d8  
 23. ♙f6+ ♚c8 24. ♙xa6+ ♚b8  
 25. ♚xb4+) 22. ♖e1+ ♔d7  
 23. ♚xg3!! hxg3 (23... ♙xd3  
 24. ♚g4+ f5 25. ♚g6+-) 24. ♙xf5+  
 ♔d8 25. ♙f6++-.

20... ♙xg7 ♚= 21. ♖xe7

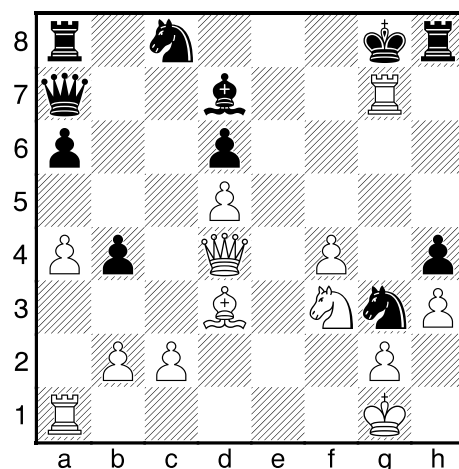


21... ♘c8??

Moving the king back to its previous square was Black's only defense, parrying the ♚d4+ threat while hitting the rook on e7. This move didn't occur to either of us during the game: 21... ♔f8 ♚ 22. ♚d4 ♖h6 ♚ (22... ♔xe7? 23. ♖e1+ ♙e6 24. ♖xe6++-) 23. ♘g5 (editor – 23. ♖ae1 ♘c8 ♚ 24. ♙h7!! threat: ♚h8 mating 24... ♖xh7 25. ♘g5 ♚

♘xe7 26. ♘h7+= ♔g8 27. ♘f6+  
 ♔f8 ♚ 28. ♘h7+=) 23... ♔xe7  
 24. ♚g7 ♚ ♚b6+ 25. ♔h2 ♚e3∞.

22. ♚d4+ ♔g8 23. ♖xf7 ♚a7  
 24. ♖g7+!



Now the h8 rook hangs. It was important to see this idea before playing 20. ♙xg7+.

24... ♔f8 25. ♖xd7

White gets the piece back with a huge material and positional advantage. Black resigned.

A shaky start to the tournament, despite obtaining an opening advantage.

1-0

**Emmanuel, Kot (2245)**  
**Atanasov, Anthony (2489)**  
**C42**

Maplewood Qualifier (2),  
 01.06.2024

**Notes: IM Anthony Atanasov**

In this game I had the Black pieces vs another lower-rated player. My strategy was to generally keep pieces on the board and to try to outplay my opponent in the middlegame.

1.e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘f6

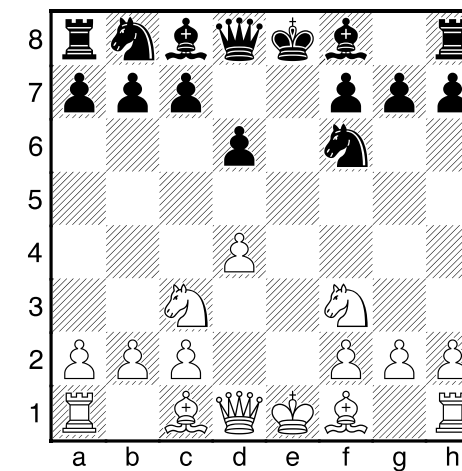
In my opinion, the Petrov — despite its reputation — is actually a surprisingly good choice for must-win games. I find that the resulting positions are usually complex enough for the stronger player to outplay their opponent.

3. ♘xe5 d6 4. ♘f3 ♘xe4

5. ♘c3 ♘f6

5... ♘xc3 is the main move here and generally considered to be more accurate than ... ♘f6, though both moves are playable.

6.d4



6...g6

A fairly uncommon move. It has been played by GM Aleksandr Rakhmanov a couple times with relative success. I played this move hoping to get White out of book. 6... ♙e7 is perhaps a better choice if Black is fine with a draw.

7. ♙d3

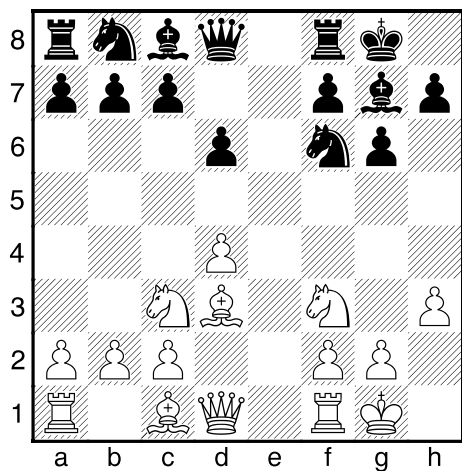
editor – here, the computer suggests an odd-looking two-step maneuver: 7. ♚e2+ ♚e7 8. ♙e3 ♙g7 9.0-0-0 0-0 10. ♚d2± when White's "triangulation" with the ♚ has put it on a useful square while luring the Black ♚ to a less useful one. It's not a maneuver that would



# Chess Canada Atanasov

likely occur to someone who hadn't seen this opening, but 11 days after this game was played it was used against a GM who regularly plays this ...g6 Petroff line: 10...♔g4 11.h3 ♕xf3 12.gxf3 d5 13.h4 c6 14.f4 (14.♘e2 and 14.♕g5 are both better.) 14...♞bd7 15.f5± Black later equalized, but blundered in time pressure in: [Vokhidov,S \(2624\)–Indjic,A \(2602\) Tashkent, UzChess Challengers, 2024.](#)

7...♕g7 8.0-0 0-0 9.h3



This is totally fine, but ...♕g4 wasn't really a big concern since after h3 Black would either have to retreat or give White the two-bishop advantage. 9.♖e1 might have been a tiny bit more accurate.

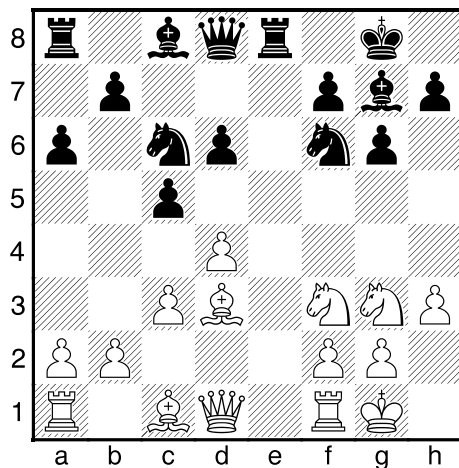
9...a6

Playing the waiting game. With this move I was hoping to provoke a4, which I thought would be slightly weakening. That said, this move is not objectively best, since Black doesn't really want to play ...b5 anyway, as it is rather committal.

10.♞e2

10.♕g5 h6 11.♕xf6! works for concrete reasons: 11...♕xf6 12.♞d5 ♕g7 13.♖e1 ♞c6 14.c3 Black's position is quite miserable, as there is no clear way to develop the rest of the pieces.

10...♖e8 11.♞g3 c5 12.c3 ♞c6

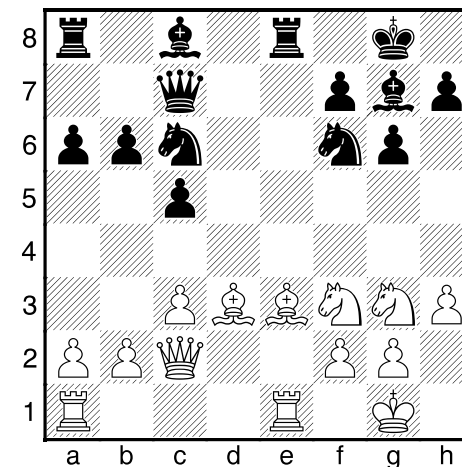


I already started to prefer my position here. White's last few moves haven't done a whole lot and now Black will complete development with no problems.

13.dxc5

13.♕e3 isn't a very fun move to play as it runs into ...♞d5 ideas, but it was perhaps White's best approach.

13...dxc5 14.♕e3 b6 15.♙c2 ♙c7 16.♖fe1



16...♞d5?!

A small inaccuracy, as I overlooked a possibility that

Emmanuel Kot





White had.

### 17. ♖d2

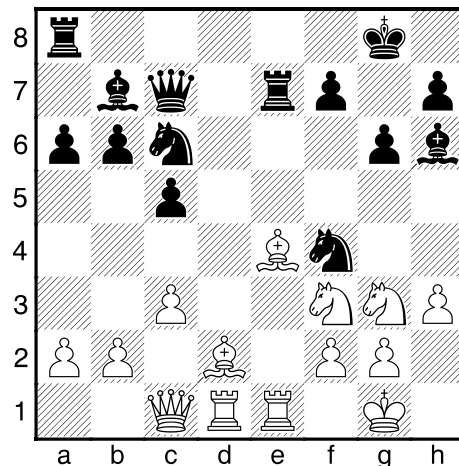
17. ♖g5 ♖b7 18. ♔d2! prevents the bishop from being kicked out with ...h6. The g5 bishop is quite annoying for Black, as it prevents ...♗ad8.

*editor* – and guarding d8 with 18...f6? loses to 19. ♖c4!+-.

### 17... ♖b7 18. ♖e4 ♘f4

18... ♘f6 I don't remember why I didn't just play this move (maybe I overlooked it?). White now has to either give up the bishop pair or go back to d3. 19. ♖d3 ♘e7.

### 19. ♖ad1 ♖e7 20. ♔c1 ♖h6



My last few moves have been

quite dubious. This type of overly ambitious play would get punished at higher levels.

### 21. ♘h2

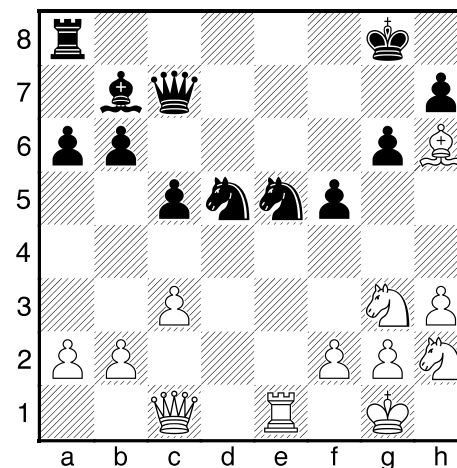
Misses a chance for an advantage: 21.h4! followed by ♘g5 and Black's position is highly uncomfortable.

### 21... f5

Forced, otherwise ♘g4 would come.

### 22. ♖d5+ ♘xd5 23. ♖xh6

### ♖xe1+ 24. ♖xe1 ♘e5

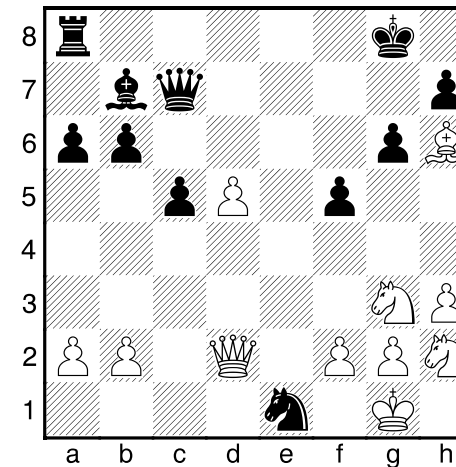


### 25. ♔d2

25.c4!? Was an interesting alternative that would force Black to enter complications. 25... ♘d3

26. ♔d2 ♘xe1 27. cxd5:

### Analysis Diagram



Regardless of what Black does here, the complications seem to end with either a repetition or an equal ending:

a) 27... ♔e5 28. ♘xf5 gxf5 29. ♔g5+ ♔f7 (29... ♔h8 30. ♘g4 ♖g8=) 30. ♔h5+ ♔g8 31. ♔g5+=;

b) 27... ♖e8 28. ♘xf5 gxf5 29. ♔g5+ ♔h8 30. ♔f6+ ♔g8 31. ♔g5+=;

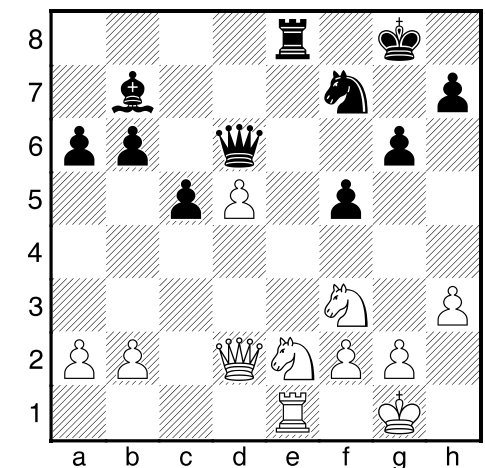
c) 27... ♔e7 28. d6 ♔e5 29. d7 ♔d5 30. ♔xd5+ ♖xd5 31. ♖g5 ♖xa2 32. d8 ♔+ ♖xd8 33. ♖xd8. Quite a strange endgame. White has a piece for two pawns, but

very poor piece coordination. Though the engine gives 0.00, in practice this is anyone's game.

d) 27... ♘xg2 28. ♘xf5 ♔f7 (28... gxf5 29. ♔g5+ ♔h8 30. ♔f6+ ♔g8 31. ♔g5+=) 29. ♘d6 ♔xd5 30. ♘xb7 ♔xd2 (30... ♔xb7? 31. ♔c3±) 31. ♖xd2 ♘h4 32. ♖g5 ♘f5 33. ♖g4. Another equal ending, though it could be argued that White's pressing. Black has a hard time activating the rook for tactical reasons.

### 25... ♘f7 26. c4 ♘xh6 27. cxd5

### ♘f7 28. ♖e2 ♖e8 29. ♘f3 ♔d6

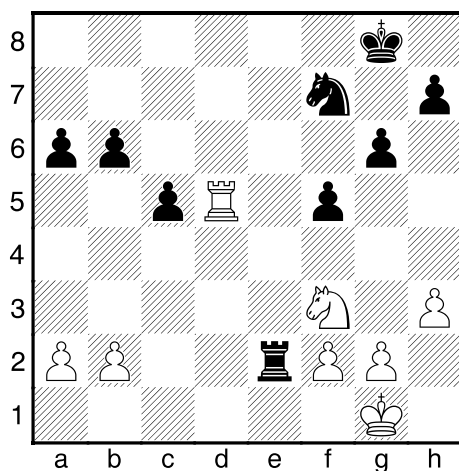


### 30. ♖d1??

Loses material.

30.♖c3 ♜xe1+ (30...♜d8  
31.♞e6±) 31.♖xe1= b5 32.b3! b4  
33.♗a4 ♘xd5 34.♗d3=.

30...♞xd5 31.♞xd5 ♘xd5  
32.♞xd5 ♞xe2-+



This endgame should be easily winning. If White had counterplay it would have been more difficult, but the knight on f7 does a good job at preventing that.

33.♗d2 ♜e1+ 34.♔h2 ♜d1  
35.♔g3 ♔f8 36.♔f3 ♔e7  
37.♔e2 ♜a1 38.a3 ♜a2  
39.♗c4 b5 40.♗d2 c4  
White resigned.

Apart from a couple dubious decisions in the early

midlegame, my play in this game was more-or-less fine.

0-1

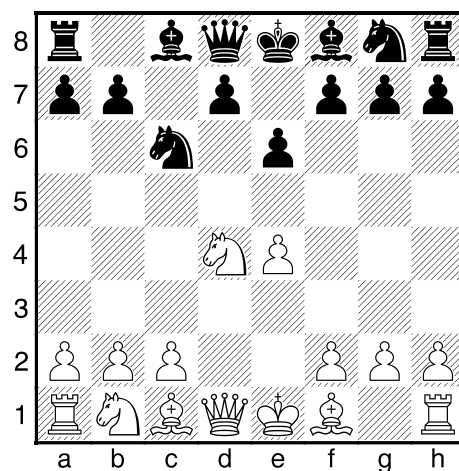
**Atanasov, Anthony (2489)**  
**Guillemette, Hugo (2171)**  
**B48**

Maplewood Qualifier (3),  
01.06.2024

*Notes: IM Anthony Atanasov*

In the third round I had the White pieces against another lower-rated opponent. **I wasn't fooled by my opponent's rating – he had just defeated an IM in the previous round.**

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4  
4.♗xd4 ♗c6



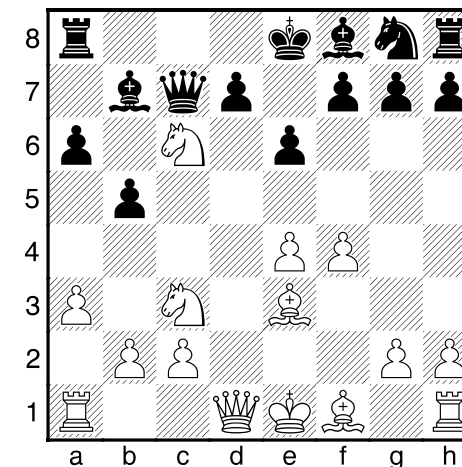
5.♗c3

I didn't really have any reason not to repeat the move order that I went for in round 1: 5.a3 ♞c7 6.♞e3 ♗f6 (6...a6 7.c4) 7.♗c3 a6 8.f4 b5? 9.e5!±. This order would have in fact avoided what happened in the game.

5...♞c7 6.a3 a6 7.♞e3 b5

The main point of a3 is to prevent ...b5 happening entirely, so I'm not exactly sure what I was going for with this move order.

8.f4 ♞b7 9.♗xc6



To be honest, I didn't really know what I was doing here. I didn't want to allow ...♗xd4, but in this case I could have just moved the knight away instead of trading. Now Black is totally fine.



**Hugo Guillemette**

2023 Canadian Junior  
Excelsior CC.



**Chess Canada**  
**Atanasov**





## 9...♙xc6

I prefer Black's position after 9... dxc6. The computer says the only way for White not to be worse involves giving up a piece, and I'm not surprised. 10.a4 ♖d8 11.♙d3 c5 12.axb5 c4 13.bxa6 ♙a8 14.♖a4 cxd3 15.cxd3=.

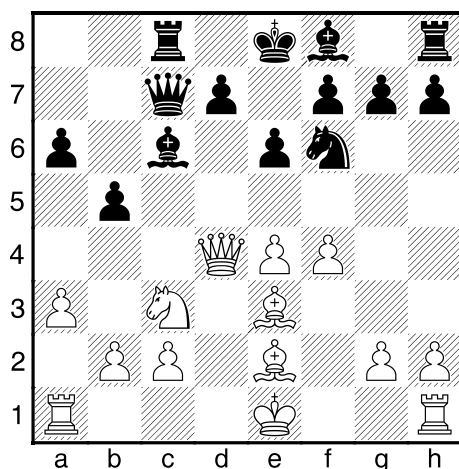
## 10.♙d4

Quite unnecessary, perhaps better would have been just ♙d3 and 0-0.

## 10...♞c8

10...♞f6 was a strong alternative: 11.♙e2 ♙e7 12.0-0 0-0 13.♞ad1 ♞fd8 ♞...d5 and ...♞e4 comes next, with advantage to Black.

## 11.♙e2 ♞f6



## 12.g4?

This move loses material. Better was: 12.0-0 ♙e7 13.e5 ♞d5 14.♞xd5 ♙xd5 15.c3=.

## 12...d5?

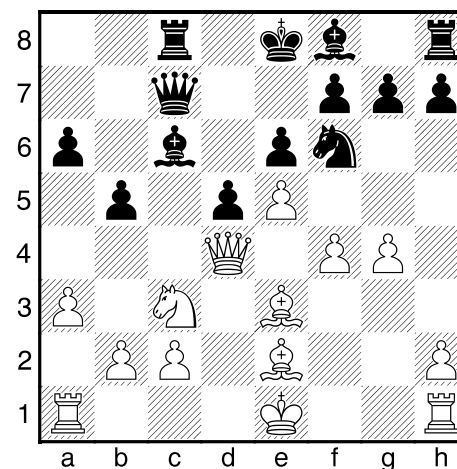
12...♞b7! 13.♙f3 b4 14.axb4 ♙xb4 ♞ and the e4-pawn will fall.

## 13.e5?

Once again giving Black an advantage.

**To be honest, I didn't really know what I was doing here.**

Better was 13.exd5, but to be fair, this move doesn't look pleasant for White either: 13...♞xd5 14.♞xd5 ♙xd5 15.♞f1. This is White's only way to remain equal, and it's quite difficult to see in advance. 15.0-0 would have run into ...♞c6 setting up ...♙c5 or even ...♙c5 outright. With the king still on e1, ...♙c5 can be met with ♞xg7 hitting the ♞ and ...♙xe3 is not check.



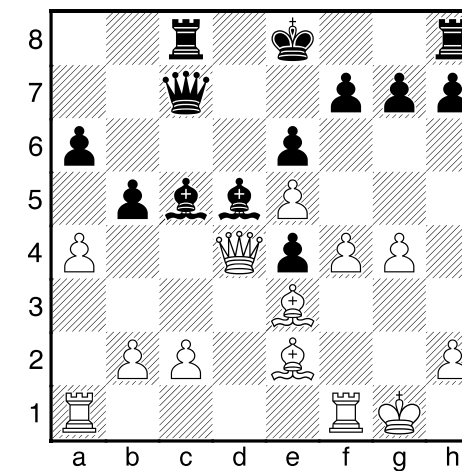
## 13...♞e4?!

This came as a pleasant surprise. 13...♞d7 was more testing: While the position may look fine at first glance, White is in serious trouble here. 14.♞f1 ♙e7 A major issue for White here is where to put the king. 0-0-0 runs into an attack with ...♞b8 and ...b4, while ♞f2-g1 would run into pawn breaks like ...g5 or ...f6.

## 14.♞xe4 dxe4 15.0-0 ♙d5?!

I was happy to see this move. Now White will get a pleasant endgame. I think the normal developing 15...♙e7 would've been more accurate. Probably followed by ...0-0 and ...♞fd8 next.

## 16.a4 ♙c5

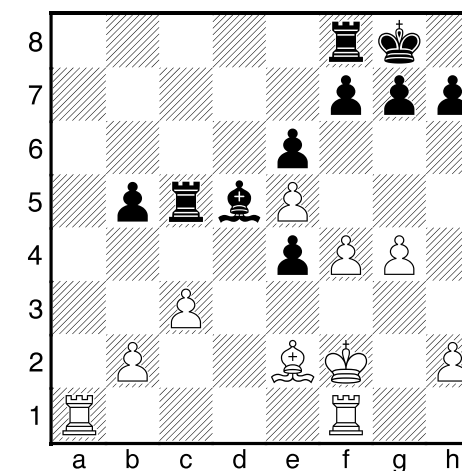


## 17.♞xc5 ♞xc5 18.♙xc5

## ♞xc5 19.c3±

White's has an edge here due to the control of the dark squares, and Black having a couple weak pawns.

## 19...0-0 20.axb5 axb5 21.♞f2

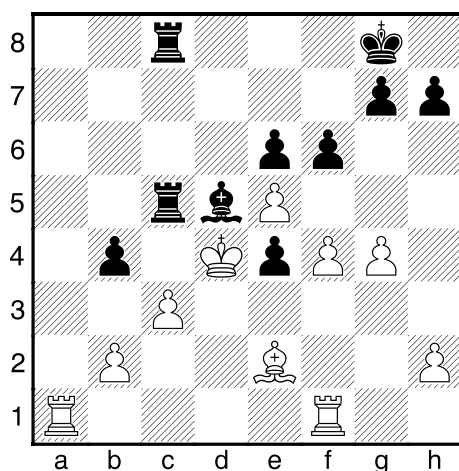


**21...f6**

Instead of this, Black had a nice concrete way of undermining White's pawns with 21...♔c4 22.♖a5 e3+! 23.♔xe3 ♘xe2 24.♔xe2 g5=.

**22.♔e3 b4 23.♔d4?**

Unnecessary. The simple 23.cxb4 gives White a clear advantage: 23...♖c2 24.♖fc1 ♖xb2 25.♖ab1±.

**23...♖fc8****24.♖fc1?**

I totally overlooked my opponent's next move.

Inserting 24.♔a6 first before ♖fc1 was my initial consideration, but I ended up dismissing it after

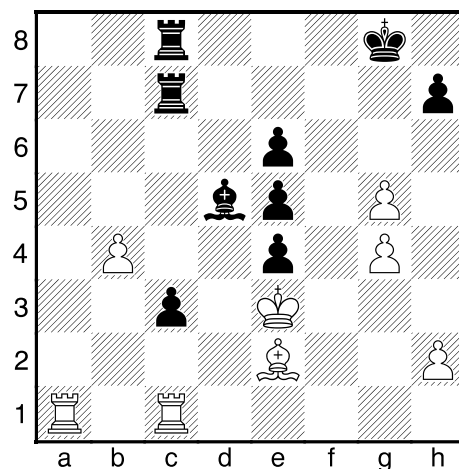
finding several ways for Black to equalize. If it weren't for ...g5, ♖fc1 would have given White an advantage: 24.♔a6 ♖8c7 25.♖fc1 g5 26.fxg5 fxe5+ 27.♔xe5 bxc3 28.bxc3 ♖xc3 29.♖xc3 ♖xc3=.

**24...g5!**

Undermining the f4 pawn – now White's structure falls apart. After this elementary oversight, White is the one fighting for a draw.

**25.fxg5**

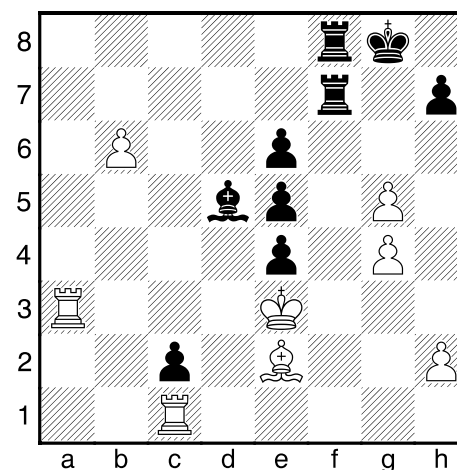
Note that I can't switch back to the ♔a6 move order: 25.♔a6 gxf4 the rook can't be captured in view of ...♖c4#.

**25...fxe5+ 26.♔e3 bxc3 27.b4 ♖5c7**

Black's tripled pawns are actually incredibly strong here.

**28.♖a3 c2 29.b5**

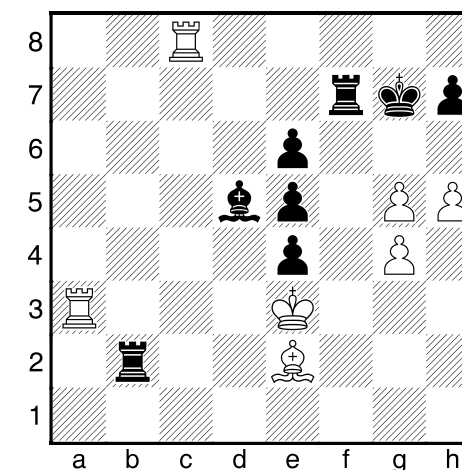
All of White's pieces are tied down here, so Black's best course of action is probably to just activate the king.

**29...♖f7 30.b6 ♖cf8**

This allows the b- for c-pawn trade which is exactly what White wants. Had the rook stayed on c8 I don't see a way for White to achieve this, since the a3 rook has a hard time getting to the c2 pawn: ♖a4-b4-b2 is too slow and would've allowed ...♖c3+.

**31.♖c3 ♖b8 32.♖1xc2 ♖xb6****33.h4**

The tripled pawns aren't as useful now, in fact they sort of cut off Black's bishop from the defense on the kingside.

**33...♖b1 34.h5 ♔g7 35.♖c1 ♖bb7 36.♖a3 ♖b2 37.♖c8****37...♖fb7?**

Things were already getting tricky for Black to defend.

37...h6 was required. After 38.g6 ♖d7 White still has a couple ways of trying to press this position. It seems the way for Black to defend here is bringing the king to g5 to stop White from breaking through with g5, and then keeping the rooks on the seventh rank. 39.♖ac3 ♖bb7







40. ♔f2 ♕f6

(40... ♖a7?

41. g5 hxg5

42. ♔g3+-)

41. ♖f8+ ♔g5

42. ♔g3 ♖a7

43. ♕f1 ♖ab7

44. ♖h8 ♖a7

45. ♖f8 ♖ab7

46. ♖e3 ♖a7

47. ♖f2. It's still not easy.

Black can't defend the

e4 pawn, so

the defense involves meeting

the eventual ♕xe4 with ... ♖f4.

47... ♖d8 48. ♕g2 ♖a4 49. ♖fe2 ♖f8

50. ♕xe4 ♖f4=.

38. h6+ ♔f7 39. ♖h8 ♖7b3+

40. ♖xb3 ♖xb3+ 41. ♔d2

41. ♔f2? e3+ 42. ♔g3 ♕e4=.

41... ♖b2+

41... e3+ 42. ♔c2 preventing ... ♕e4.

42. ♔e3?

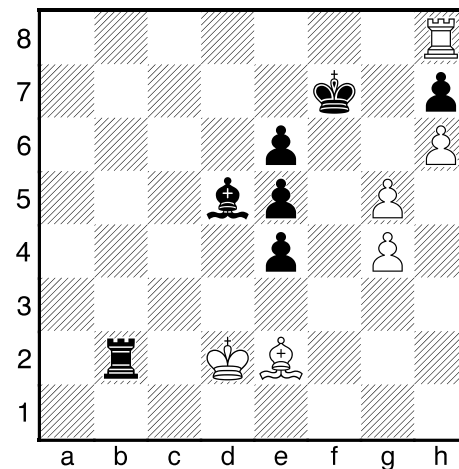
I repeated moves here to gain extra time, but missed a win:

42. ♔e1! ♖b1+ 43. ♕d1 ♕b3



44. ♖xh7+ ♔e8 (otherwise ♖d7) 45. g6 ♖xd1+ 46. ♔e2+-. The extra bishop is useless here as White is going to promote.

42... ♖b3+ 43. ♔d2 ♖b2+



44. ♔d1??

Allows Black a drawing resource. 44. ♔e1 ♖b1+ 45. ♕d1+- as above.

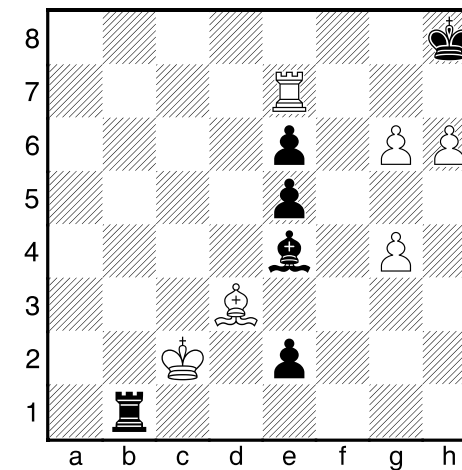
44... ♕b3+??

After a long series of only-moves, Black can salvage a draw here, starting with:

44... e3! 45. ♖xh7+ ♖ (editor – otherwise ... ♕b3+ wins easily)

45... ♔g8 46. ♖g7+ ♔h8 ♖ 47. g6 ♖b1+ ♖ 48. ♔c2 ♕e4+ ♖ 49. ♕d3 e2 ♖ 50. ♖e7:

*Analysis Diagram*



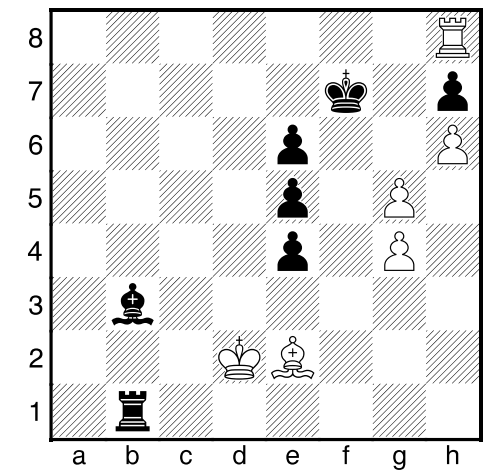
Note the importance of getting the king further from the e2 pawn: 50... ♕xg6?? 51. ♕xg6 ♖b8 (51... ♖c1+ 52. ♔d3+-) 52. ♔d2+-;

50... ♖c1+ ♖ 51. ♔b2 ♕xg6 ♖

52. ♕xg6 ♖c8 ♖ promotion cannot be stopped. Note that all three of Black's tripled pawns play a key role here: e2 promotes, and e6 and e5 block the rook from getting to the e2 pawn (if either of them weren't there, the other pawn would be taken, winning for White). 53. ♖h7+ ♔g8 54. ♖g7+ ♔h8 55. ♖h7+=.

45. ♔e1 ♖b1+ 46. ♔d2 ♖

46. ♔f2?? e3+ ♖ 47. ♔xe3 ♕c2 ♖=.



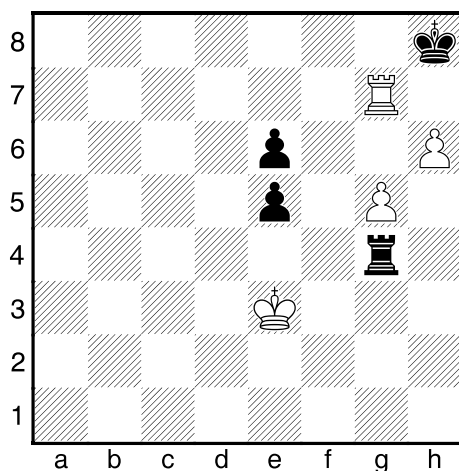
46... ♖b2+

46... e3+ was a more interesting try, but it still loses to 47. ♔d3! the only move that wins: staying close to the e3 pawn without allowing the ... ♕c2 defense.

47. ♔xe3?? ♕c2=;

47. ♔c3?? ♕d1! This line is quite fascinating, as all Black's moves are only-moves: 48. ♖xh7+ ♔g8 49. ♖g7+ ♔h8 50. ♕d3 e2 51. ♔d2 e1♔+ 52. ♔xe1 ♕c2+ 53. ♔d2 ♕xd3 54. ♔xd3 ♖b4 55. ♔e3 ♖xg4:

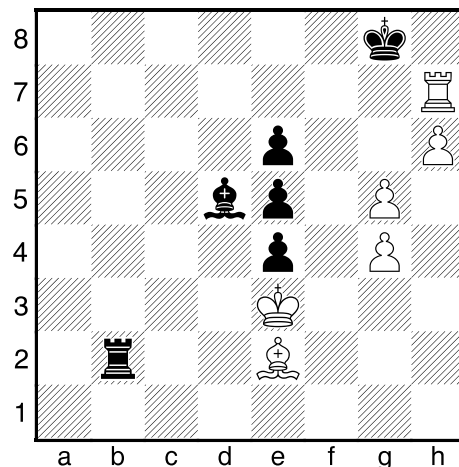
Analysis Diagram



Interestingly, this endgame is holding for Black only due to a stalemate involving the White rook on g7. White can win both Black pawns by putting Black in *zugzwang*: 56. ♔e2 ♖g2+ 57. ♔f3 ♖g1 58. ♔f2 ♖g4 59. ♔e3 e4 60. ♔f2 e5 (both pawn pushes were forced) 61. ♔e3 ♖f4 62. ♖e7 ♖g4 63. ♖xe5 ♔h7 64. ♖e7+ ♔g8 65. ♖g7+ ♔h8 66. ♔d4 e3+ 67. ♔xe3 and with the stalemate

set up, Black can go crazy with the rook: 67... ♖e4+=.

47. ♔e3 ♕d5 48. ♖xh7+ ♔g8



49. g6

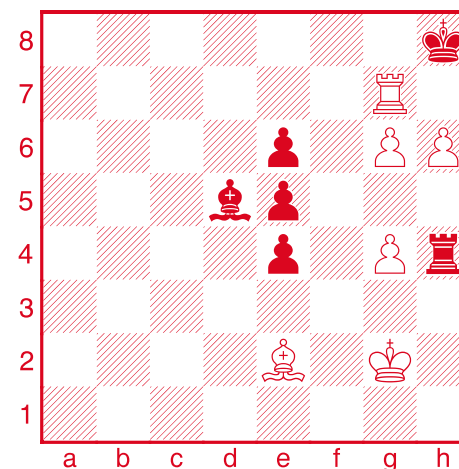
*editor* – White has *another* way to win, but apart from Karpov it is unlikely to occur to any human with the ♖ on the 7th: trade ♖s and win the same-colour ♕ endgame! e.g. 49. ♖c7 ♖b3+ Black has to stop White getting two pawns on the 6th with g5-g6 (49... ♖b7 50. ♖xb7♔+ ) 50. ♔f2 ♖h3 eyeing h6 stops g5-g6 51. ♔g2 ♖h4 52. ♖c1! threatening to win the ♖ with ♔g3 52... e3+♔ saving the ♖ 53. ♔g3 ♖h1 54. ♖xh1 ♕xh1 55. ♕f3! simplest 55... e2♔ 56. ♕xe2+- and the weakness of the tripled pawns

tells, since White's ♔ can't be kept out for long.

49... ♖b3+ 50. ♔f2 ♖h3

A resourceful trick – setting up ...e3+.

51. ♔g2 ♖h4 52. ♖g7+ ♔h8



53. g5??

Threatens to move the rook and give mate, but it allows a draw.

53. ♖h7+♔ ♔g8 54. ♔f2 ♖h3 55. g5! looks like it walks into a mating net, but White wins with precise play: 55... e3+ 56. ♔e1 ♖h1+ 57. ♕f1 ♕c4 58. ♖f7 e2 59. h7+ ♖xh7 (59... ♔h8 60. ♖f8+ ♔g7 61. ♖g8# *thank you, doubled g-pawns!*) 60. gxh7+ ♔xf7 61. ♕xe2+- ♔g7 62. ♕xc4 ♔xh7

63. ♕d3+♔+-.

53... e3+♔ 54. ♔g3 ♖a4??

Both my opponent and I completely overlooked Black's drawing resource here: 54... ♖h1♔= and the ...♖g1-h1 perpetual check is unstoppable!

*editor* – ... though it's not a *simple* perp if White risks playing with fire: 55. ♕f3!? ♖g1+ 56. ♔h4 (56. ♔h2 ♖xg5=) 56... ♖h1+♔ 57. ♕xh1 e2= White can't stop the e-pawn from promoting, but Stockfish sees only 0.00: 58. ♖h7+ ♔g8 59. ♖g7+ ♔f8 60. ♖f7+ ♔e8 61. ♕xd5 e1♔+ 62. ♔h3 exd5 63. h7= and Black has to give the perpetual.  
Chess is hard.

55. ♖f7 ♖a8 56. g7+ ♔h7

57. ♖f8

A chaotic game with a lot of blunders from both sides.

1-0





**Preotu, Razvan (2532)**  
**Atanasov, Anthony (2489)**  
**A07**

Maplewood Qualifier (4),  
 01.06.2024

**Notes: IM Anthony Atanasov**

In round 4 I had the Black pieces vs GM Razvan Preotu. I wasn't planning on taking too much risk in this game, as was the last game of a 3-round day and I felt like I wasn't going to play very well.

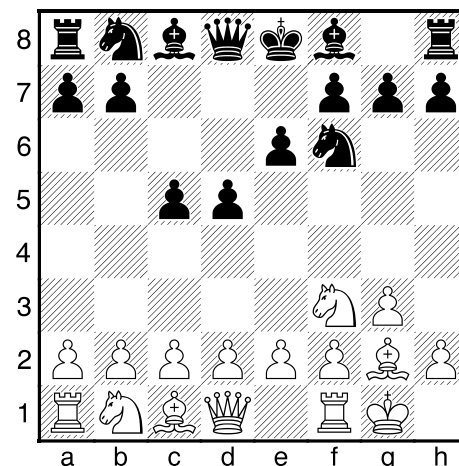
**1. ♘f3**

I noticed higher-rated players tend to avoid playing 1.e4 against me, presumably to avoid the Petrov.

**1...d5 2.g3 e6**

In the Candidates Rapid 2024, I played 2...♗f5 against him in this position. I quickly achieved a good position, so his repetition of this line suggested he had reviewed it and prepared a response if I played the same way. So, I decided to change things up with 2...e6.

**3. ♖g2 c5 4.0-0 ♞f6**



**5.d3**

5.d4 – I was more worried about this move, after which I'd have to remember some theory to avoid getting into a dangerous position.

5.c4 – I think this is generally considered to be White's best move here, 5...d4 6.e3 ♞c6 7.d3 ♗d6 8.exd4 cxd4 9.♗g5 with a balanced game.

**5...♞c6 6.♗f4!?**

A pretty unique move in this position, I am now out of book.

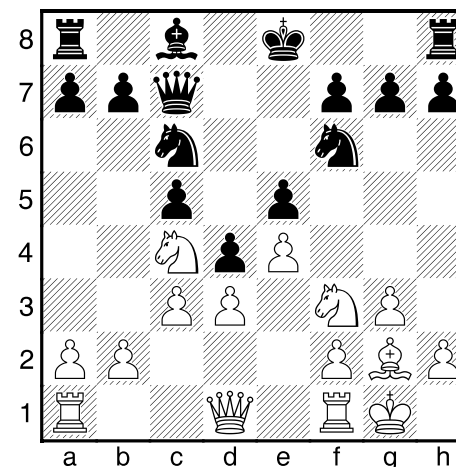
**6...♗d6 7.♗xd6 ♞xd6**

**8.♞bd2 e5 9.e4 d4**

We've now reached a King's

Indian structure, but with colours reversed and no dark squared bishops. With best play, Black should be slightly better, but I quickly misplayed the position.

**10.♞c4 ♞c7 11.c3**



**11...♗e6?**

This move is just too slow, and allows White to immediately pose Black some concrete problems.

11...♗g4 was the correct move. Black needs to avoid cxd4 cxd4 at all costs, as Black's pieces are poorly placed for an open c-file. But if now 12.cxd4?! ♗xf3! 13.♗xf3 ♞xd4 Black has a clear positional advantage.

**12.cxd4 cxd4**

12...♗xc4 13.dxe5 if it wasn't for this move, Black could keep the c-file closed and would be doing well after dxc4 ♞xd4.

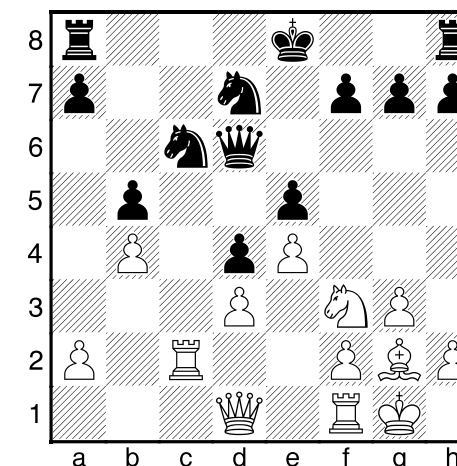
**13.♞c1 ♞d7 14.b4!**

It's important for White to start posing problems before Black castles and consolidates.

**14...♗xc4 15.♞xc4 b5**

15...♞d6 16.b5 is not too fun for Black either.

**16.♞c2 ♞d6**



**17.♞b1?**

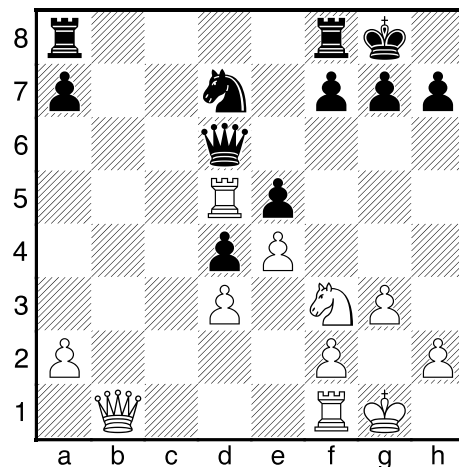
The position demanded that White play a bit faster.





17. ♖h3! 0-0 18. ♖xd7 ♔xd7  
19. ♖c5 ♕e6 20. ♖b1 ♖ab8.

Despite equal material for the time being, Black is pretty much lost here. White has full control over the only open file, and Black is stuck to passively defending weak pawns. If White finds a few precise moves, Black's position should fall apart.



17... ♞xb4 18. ♖b2

♞a6 19. ♖xb5 ♞ac5?

I underestimated how powerful ♖h3 is going to be here.

19... ♞dc5 would have been better, as this avoids ♖h3. The knights are actually quite nice here, as they guard quite a few key squares.

20. ♖h3 0-0 21. ♖xd7  
♞xd7 22. ♖d5



**GM  
Razvan  
Preotu**

Here is where I realized my position was indefensible and I should just go for counterplay.

22... ♕f6 23. ♖g2 ♖ab8

24. ♕e1!

Now the queen is threatening to go to a5, where Black will not be able to defend all the pawns.

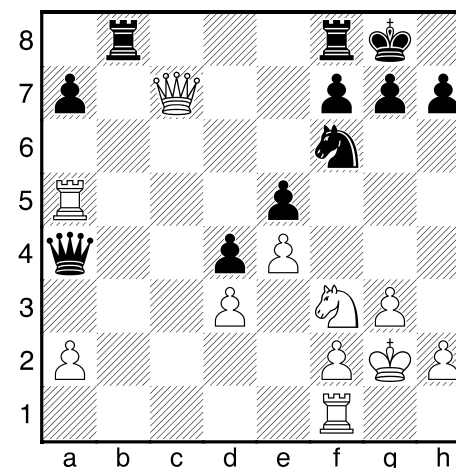
24... ♖c6 25. ♕c1!

Another precise move.

25... ♕a4 26. ♕c7+-

At this point, I am just playing for tricks. But it's the end of a 3-round day, so I knew anything could still happen.

26... ♞f6 27. ♖a5



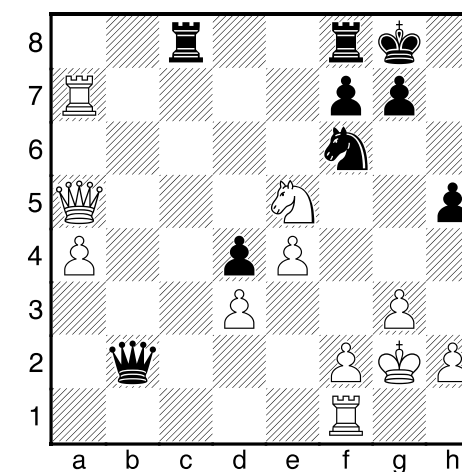
I found a way to lose both the e5 and a7 pawns for nothing in return.

To make matters worse, White still had about 20 minutes here.

27... ♕b4 28. ♖xa7 ♕b5

29. ♞xe5 ♖bc8 30. ♕a5 ♕b2

31. a4 h5

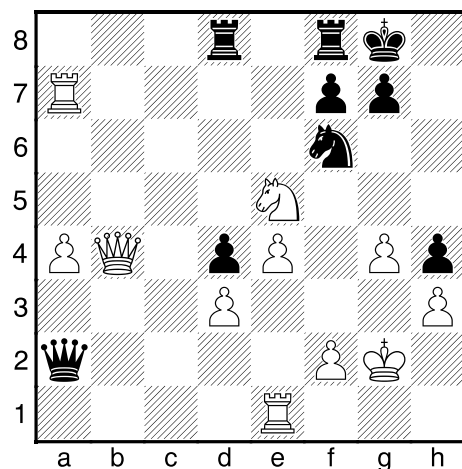


White's pieces are quite far from the king, so I knew my best shot here was to try to create counterplay with ...h5-h4-h3.

32. h3 ♕e2 33. ♖e1 ♕a2

34. ♕b4 h4 35. g4 ♖cd8





Up to this point, White's technique has been excellent, giving Black little to no chances at counterplay. Now White should simply play  $\text{Wc4}$  and force a winning endgame.

### 36. $\text{Nc6}$

$36.\text{Wc4} \text{Wxc4} 37.\text{Nxc4}$ , there is no counterplay left for Black — White will certainly win.

### 36... $\text{Nd5!}$

Now Black starts to get some counterplay,

### 37. $\text{Wb1}$

While this move is objectively best, I think it takes unnecessary risk that moves like  $\text{Ne7+}$  or  $\text{exd5}$  wouldn't have allowed.

$37.\text{exd5} \text{Wxd5+} 38.\text{Re4} \text{Wxc6} 39.\text{Wb5}$  is still totally winning, and it doesn't take much risk. Black's rooks are very passive, and White's king is very safe.

### 37... $\text{Nf4+} 38.\text{Kh3}$

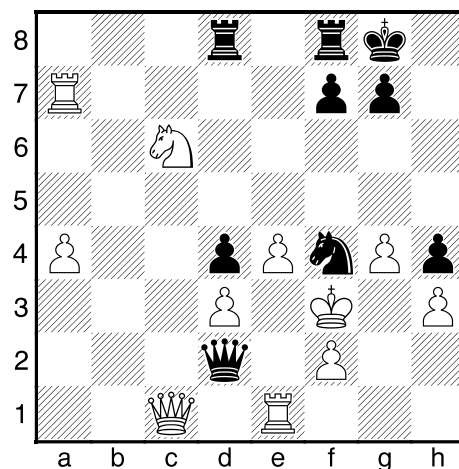
The idea of  $\text{Wb1}$ : now Black either loses material or trades queens.

### 38... $\text{Wd2} 39.\text{Wd1} \text{Wa2}$

### 40. $\text{Wb1} \text{Wd2}$

$40...\text{We6} 41.\text{Ne7+} \text{Kh8} 42.\text{Kxf4+}$  and Black has nothing. The knight will return to f5 and White's king can safely retreat.

### 41. $\text{Wc1}$



### 41... $\text{Wxd3+}$

Both sides have 1 minute left here. Although completely lost, Black now has some pretty serious chances at pulling off a swindle, due to White's vulnerable king.

### 42. $\text{Kxf4} \text{Rd6} 43.\text{Ne7+} \text{Kh7}$

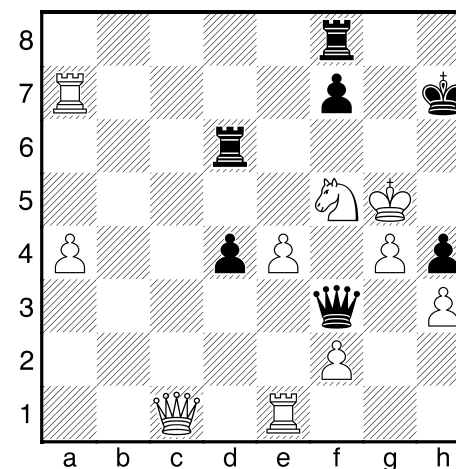
### 44. $\text{Nf5}$

Unfortunately for me, he found the best defense here. The knight on f5 shields the king very well, so I had to get desperate.

### 44... $\text{g5+}$

There wasn't really another choice for Black, as if White gets even one move to consolidate, it's game over.

### 45. $\text{Kxg5} \text{Wf3}$



When I played this move (with 3 seconds left) I believed the rook on d6 could not be captured due to  $46...\text{Rg8+} 47.\text{Kxh4} \text{Kg6}$ , with  $...\text{Rh8}$  to follow. However, this is not the case for multiple reasons:

- 1)  $...\text{Rg8+}$  can simply be met with  $\text{Kh5}$ ,
- 2)  $...\text{Kg6}$  can be met with  $\text{Kg5+}$ , both winning for White.

### 46. $\text{Rf1?}$

Still winning, but a step in the wrong direction, as  $\text{Nxd6}$  ended the game. White didn't take the rook on d6 because he didn't notice that the rook was hanging. This is actually a pretty easy mistake to make, because  $\text{Nf5}$  had other purposes besides attacking the rook. **We were also both pretty tired after a long day, so mistakes like these can happen.**

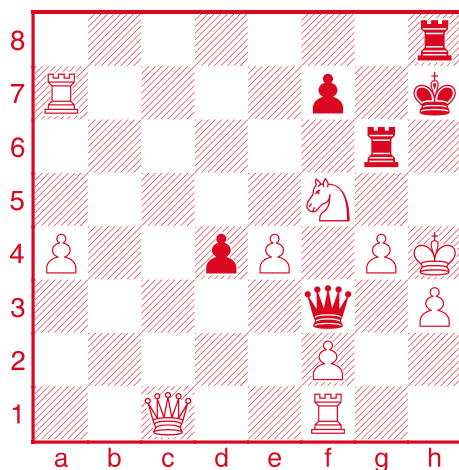
$46.\text{Nxd6} \text{Rg8+} 47.\text{Kh5+-}$ . The engine is keen to announce that White also has mate in 8 here... 😊

### 46... $\text{Rg6+} 47.\text{Kxh4??}$

Now the position is equal, and only because White has a

resource that's difficult to find;  
47.♔h5! ends the game: 47...♖h8  
48.♖xf7+ ♔g8+ 49.♔xg6+- is the  
point of having the king on h5.

47...♖h8



48.♘g3??

Now Black has mate! [editor –  
Black is threatening ...♔g8, and  
doesn't need the hint 48.♖xf7+?  
♔g8+-+.]

White's defense wasn't obvious.  
Amazingly, White still holds with:  
48.♖a6□:

a) 48...f6 49.♖xf6 ♖xf6 50.♖g5  
♖g6 51.♖h5+ ♔g8 52.♘e7+ ♔g7  
53.♘f5+ ♔g8 54.♘e7+=;

b) 48...♔g8+ 49.♘h6+ ♖hxh6+

50.♖xh6 ♖xh6+ 51.♖xh6 ♖e2  
52.♖b1 ♖xf2+ 53.♔h5=;

c) 48...♖xa6 49.♖g5 ♖g6  
50.♖h5+ ♔g8 51.♘e7+ ♔g7  
52.♘f5+ ♔g8=;

d) 48...d3 49.♖a8 ♖xa8 50.♖e3!  
The only reason 48...d3 didn't  
win is because it carved out the  
e3 square for the queen. But  
White still has to find quite a few  
only-moves to save the game:  
50...♖g2 51.♖d1□ ♖h8 52.♘g3□  
♖hg8 53.♖f4□ ♖xg4+ 54.♖xg4□  
♖xg4+ 55.♔xg4□ (55.hxg4?  
♖f3-+) 55...♖xf2 56.♖xd3=.

48...♔g7+ 49.♘h5+ ♖xh5+

50.gxh5  
50.♔xh5 ♖xh3#.

50...♖f6+

One of the most chaotic games  
I've played, though the move  
quality left much to be desired.

0-1

**Atanasov, Anthony (2489)**  
**Noritsyn, Nikolay (2569)**  
**A50**

Maplewood Qualifier (5),  
02.06.2024

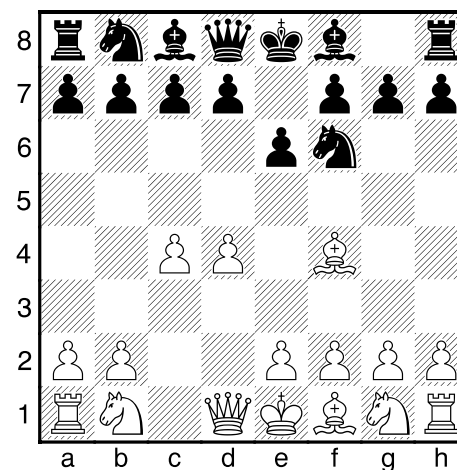
**Notes: IM Anthony Atanasov**

In round 5 I had the White  
pieces vs my coach, rated 2450.  
After the chaotic games on the  
previous day I decided to play  
things a bit safer with 1.d4.

1.d4 ♘f6

I was expecting either 1...d5 or  
1...e6, so this came as a slight  
surprise.

2.c4 e6 3.♙f4

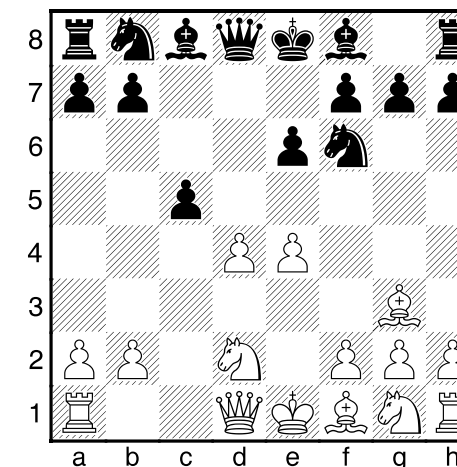


A pretty rare line — probably  
because it's not very good for  
White if Black plays precisely.  
That being said, it's not a bad to  
have as a **surprise weapon**. IM  
Noritsyn is my coach, so he was  
aware of my fondness for this  
3.♙f4 idea, but I didn't think he'd  
ever taken it seriously. He told  
me afterward that he only knew  
that the engine likes Black's  
position after 4...♘xd5. After that  
move he was playing on his own.

3...d5 4.cxd5 ♘xd5

4...exd5 5.e3 I think White gets a  
pleasant version of the Carlsbad  
structure here. The advantage is  
nothing serious of course.

5.♙g3 c5 6.e4 ♘f6 7.♘d2





Black has played critically so far, here the more dangerous moves are ...cxd4 and ...♖xd4, after which White plays for compensation. The position is equal with best play after both moves.

### 7...♘c6

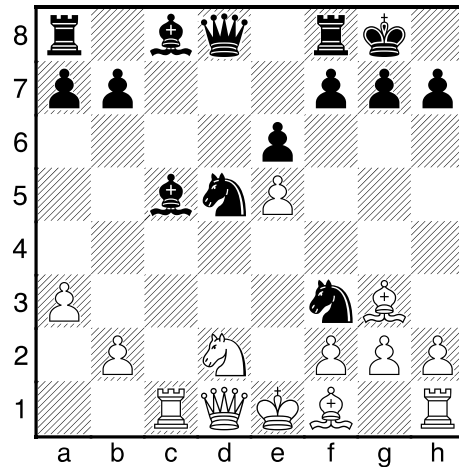
Not the most ambitious move, but still quite fine for Black.

### 8.dxc5 ♕xc5 9.e5 ♘d5

### 10.♘gf3 0-0 11.a3

Stops a potential ...♘b4 or ...♕b4 in the future.

### 11...♘d4 12.♖c1 ♘xf3+



### 13.♘xf3?

Both sides had played well up

to this point, but here I made an error in evaluating the position after ...♖a5+ b4.

### 13.♖xf3 ♕d4 14.♖c2 ♕d7

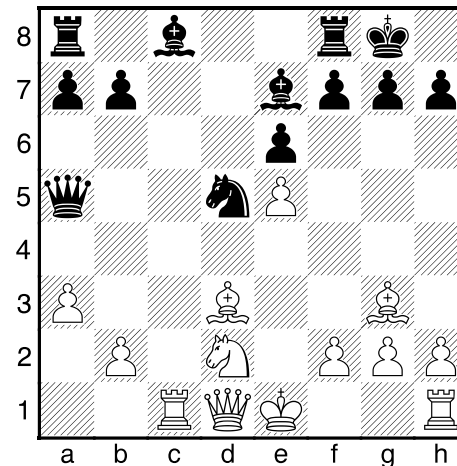
15.♕d3± White should get a nice position here.

### 13...♕e7

13...♖a5+ 14.b4 ♘xb4 15.axb4 ♕xb4+ 16.♘d2 ♖d8 17.♕f4 ♕d7 18.♕d3 I got this this far in my

calculations and came to the conclusion that I should be able to castle. But looking a little further... 18...♕a4 19.♖e2 ♖xd3! 20.♖xd3 ♖d8□ 21.♖e2 ♕b5□ 22.♖d1 ♕a6-+ Black is winning due to White's inability to castle.

### 14.♕d3 ♖a5+ 15.♘d2

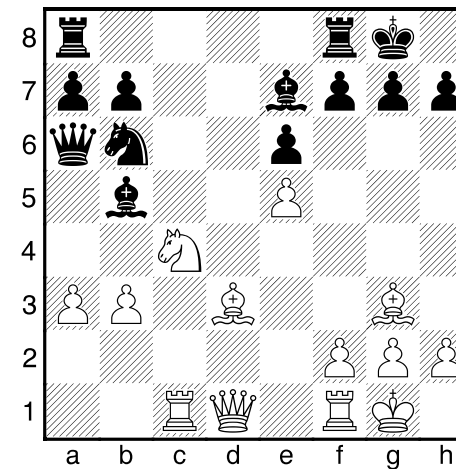


### 15...♕d7

15...♕g5 seems to cause a lot of problems for White, but it turns out White is fine after giving away a pawn: 16.♖c2 ♘f4 (or 16...♕d7 17.0-0 ♕a4 18.b3 ♕xd2 19.♖xd2 ♖xd2 20.♖xd2 ♕xb3 21.♖b1 ♕a4 22.♖xb7=) 17.♕e4 ♖xe5 18.0-0= when Black's pieces are quite clumsy, so White has decent compensation.

### 16.0-0 ♕b5 17.♘c4 ♖a6

### 18.b3 ♘b6



### 19.♖h5

19.♘xb6 was more accurate, but it leads to a drawish position after 19...♖xb6 20.♕xb5 ♖xb5 21.a4! where I thought if anyone had chances, it was Black.

### 19...g6

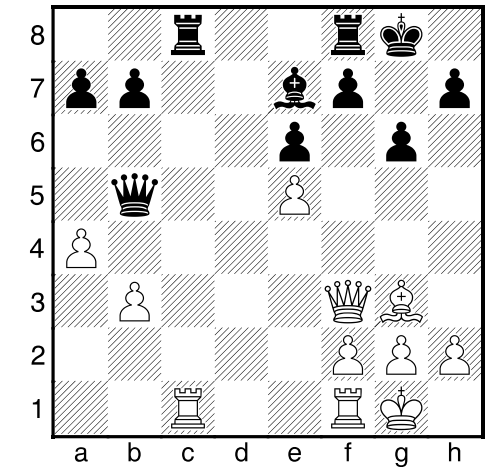
19...h6 20.a4 ♕xc4 21.♕xc4=.

### 20.♖f3 ♘xc4

20...♕xc4 21.♕xc4 ♖xa3! Neither of us really considered this, but Black is doing really well here. 22.♖xb7 ♘xc4 23.bxc4 a5±.

### 21.♕xc4 ♖ac8 22.♕xb5

### ♖xb5 23.a4



### 23...♖d5

23...♖b4 24.♕f4 is what I was expecting to happen, and I liked my position here. Black's king isn't very safe, so having the queens on should give me some chances.

### 24.♖xd5 exd5 25.♖fd1 d4



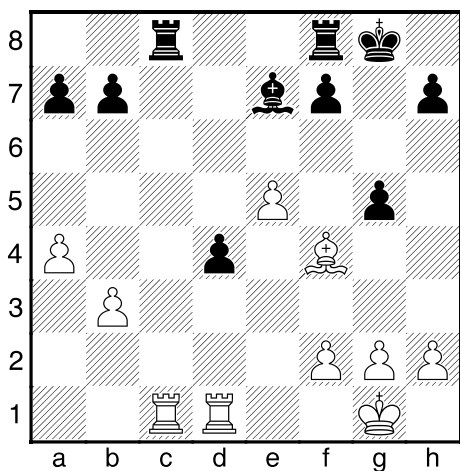


# Chess Canada Atanasov

**26. ♕f4**

26. ♖f1 was my initial consideration, but I dismissed it due to 26... ♖c3; but it turns out White is still doing well here: 27. ♖xc3 dxc3 28. ♔e2 ♖c8 29. ♔d3±. I didn't see a concrete problem with this in my calculations, but it felt a bit risky.

**26...g5**



**27. ♖xc8?! 27. ♕d2±**

White's king will come to d3 next.

**27... ♖xc8 28. ♖c1**

Despite dismissing ♖f1 a couple moves ago due to ... ♖c3, I simply forgot about the possibility of ... ♖c3 here.

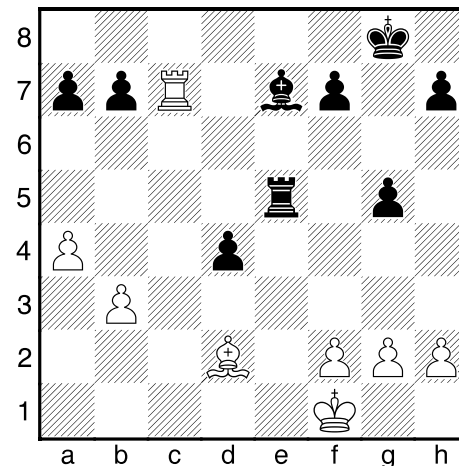
**28... ♖d8?**

So did he, it seems.

**29. ♕d2 ♖d5?**

29... ♖d7 Black is still worse here, but it's not as bad as the game.

**30. ♖c7 ♖xe5 31. ♔f1**



I saw this position a few moves prior and thought this could be very good for me – Black's pieces aren't well placed, and the b and a- pawns are going to fall soon.

**31...a6**

Black was relying on 31...d3 in his calculations — but it doesn't work due to the following tactic: 32. ♖c8+ ♕f8 (32... ♔g7 33. ♕c3+-) 33. ♕b4 d2 34. ♕xd2+-.

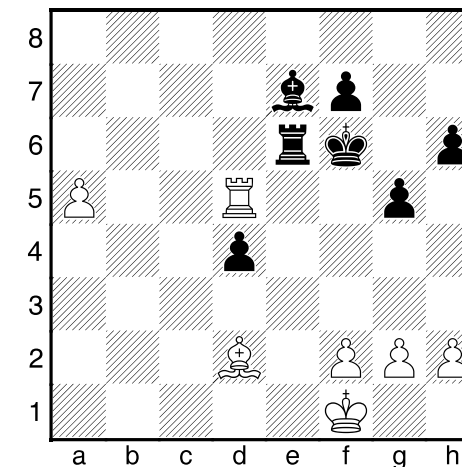
**32. ♖xb7 ♖e6 33. a5 ♔g7**

**34. b4 ♔f6?!**

34...d3 with the idea ... ♖e2 was Black's best try. Offence is the best defense.

**35. b5 axb5 36. ♖xb5 h6**

**37. ♖d5**



**37... ♖d6?**

The bishop endgame is lost for Black, so keeping the rooks on

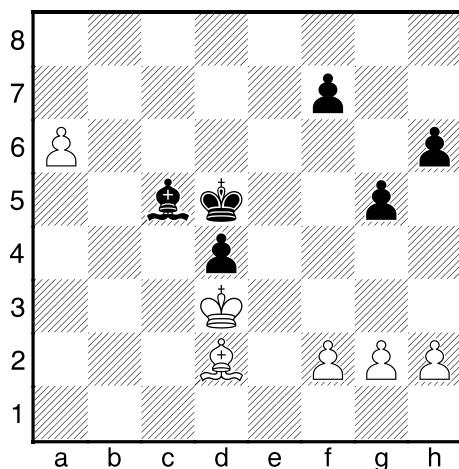


*"In round 5 I had the White pieces vs my coach, rated 2450."*



the board would've been a better try: 37...♖c6 38.♖xd4 ♖c2. White needs to show some very good technique to win here.

38.♖xd6+ ♗xd6 39.a6 ♗c5  
40.♔e2 ♔e5 41.♔d3 ♔d5



42.♗b4

*editor* – !

42...♗a7 43.g4

Fixing the pawns. The rest is easy.

43...♔c6 44.♗f8 ♔b5

45.♗xh6 ♔xa6 46.♗xg5 ♔b5

47.h4 ♔c5 48.h5 ♗b8 49.♗f6

♗f4 50.g5

Black resigned here and the

kings were put on light squares, so the DGT board and the databases include ...♔d5.

Although I made several mistakes this game, it was probably still my best game of the tournament.

1-0

Vetese, Nicholas (2501)  
Atanasov, Anthony (2489)  
A07

Maplewood Qualifier (6),  
02.06.2024

*Notes: IM Anthony Atanasov*

Going into the last round I was a full point ahead of the rest of the field, but with a loss and some unlucky results on the other boards I could actually still have missed top 3. I had the Black pieces vs a 2250, and I decided to play a normal game.

1.♖f3

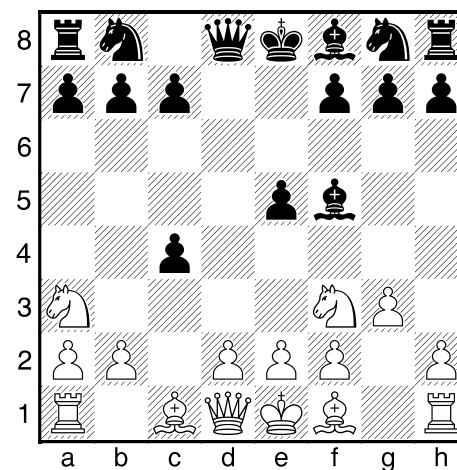
Another 1.e4 man avoiding the Petrov — given his tournament

situation requiring a win, a logical decision. We quickly ended up getting an imbalanced position.

1...d5 2.g3 ♗f5

Maybe considering I just needed a draw, I should've done this: 2...g6 3.♗g2 ♗g7 4.d4 ♖f6=; symmetrical positions are a lot harder to lose.

3.c4 dxc4 4.♖a3 e5



White has succeeded in getting an interesting position. I had this same position against Preotu in the Candidates Rapid and did pretty well, so I was happy to repeat it.

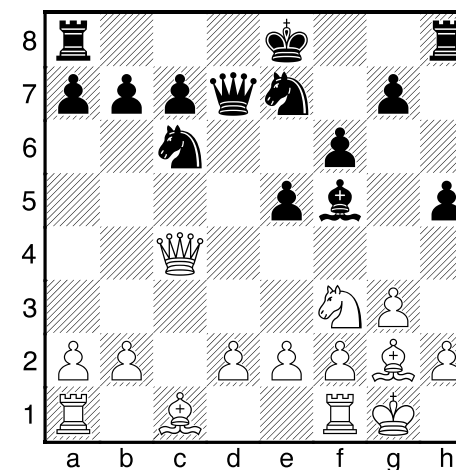
5.♗g2?!

5.♖xc4 is the correct move, if I'm not mistaken: 5...e4 6.♖e3 ♗d7 7.♖h4 ♖c6 8.♗g2 ♖f6 9.d3 ♗e6∞. I think Black is pretty comfortable here.

5...♗xa3 6.♖a4+ ♖d7 7.♖xa3 ♖c6

White has to waste a couple tempi taking the c4 pawn here.

8.♖c5 f6 9.♖xc4 ♖ge7 10.0-0 h5



I thought I was much better here, and I was. The attack against White's king is pretty quick, with ...♗h3 and ...g5+h4 coming.

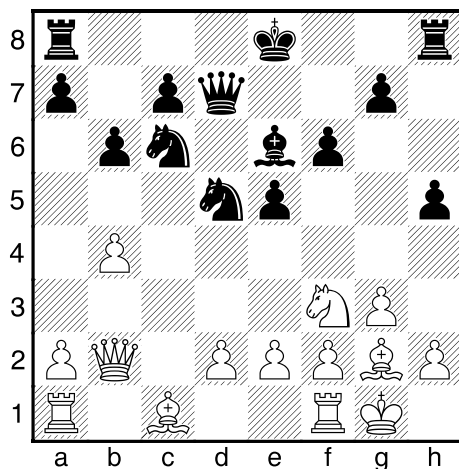
11.b4 ♗e6 12.♖c5 b6

13.♖c3 ♖d5 14.♖b2





# Chess Canada Atanasov



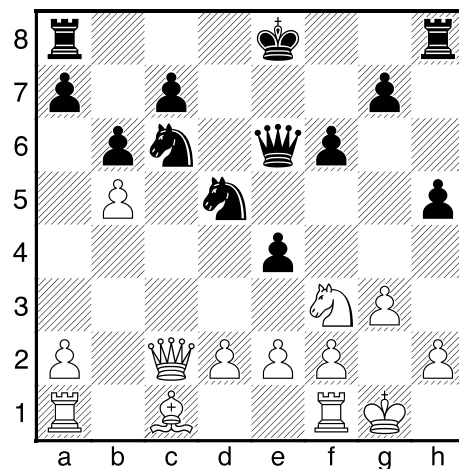
14...♙h3?

14...♘dxb4 I really can't understand why I didn't just take this pawn. For some reason I just didn't feel like taking it — not a good reason to avoid winning material!

15.♙xh3 ♔xh3 16.♚c2 ♚e6?

I once again could have won material but chose not to, for no apparent reason: 16...♘cxb4 17.♚g6+ ♔f8.

17.b5 e4?!



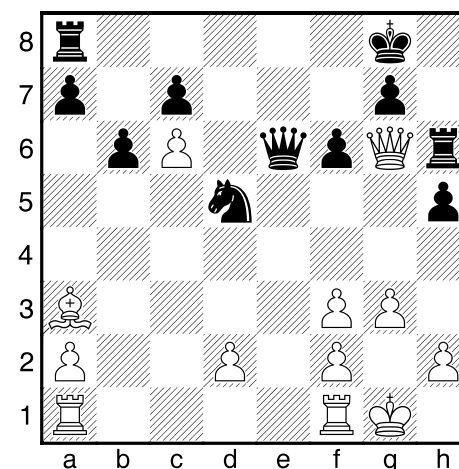
This time I'm losing material, although there is at least some pretty clear compensation afterwards. ...♘a5 would've been fine too.

18.bxc6 exf3 19.♚g6+ ♔f8

20.exf3 ♖h6?

Though natural, this move is wrong. It was best to focus on the attack with: 20...h4 21.♙a3+ ♔g8.

21.♙a3+ ♔g8



22.♚e4

After 22.♚c2! White can actually hold on to the pawn — interestingly, there's no actual way for Black to win it, despite it being very weak. 22...f5 23.♖ae1 c6 hangs but so does f5.

22...f5?

I should've just taken the c6 pawn instead. With this move, the f5-pawn becomes a pretty serious target, and this move also weakens the a1-h8 diagonal — something that will almost prove decisive later on.

23.♚d3

I definitely misevaluated this position during the game. I felt like I was close to equal, but in fact White is much better.

23...♚f7 24.♖fe1

While the game move is more natural, using the other rook — 24.♖ae1 — would've been more precise, as ...♖e6 wouldn't work due to ♚xd5, after which ...♖xe1 is not check.

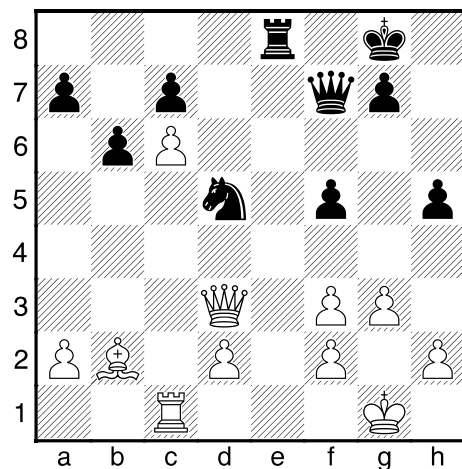
24...♖e6 25.♖xe6 ♚xe6

26.♙b2 ♖e8 27.♖c1 ♚f7

**They've played before...**

2018 Ontario Junior (0-1)



**28.f4**

Not a bad move, but it gave me more time –  $\text{Rc4-d4}$  instead looked crushing:  $28.\text{Rc4} \text{Kh7}$   
 $29.\text{Rd4} \text{Rd8}$   $30.\text{Qe2}$  +- the queen will come in to e5 next.

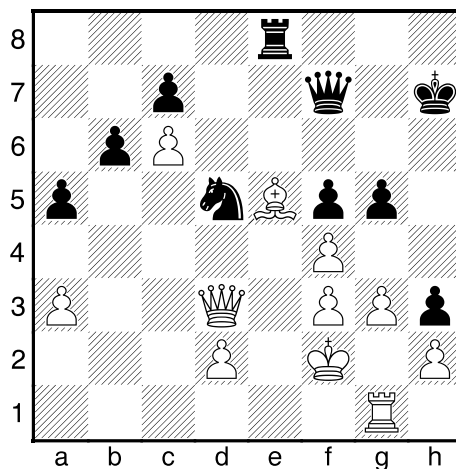
**28...h4**

The engine's choice here is to go pawn-grabbing with  $28...\text{h4}$  but this feels way too dangerous in a human game.

**29.Ke5 a5 30.a3!**

Putting an end to  $...\text{h4}$  possibilities. Neither side really wants to do much here,  $...a5$  and  $a3$  are mostly just waiting moves.

**30...h3 31.f3 g5 32.Kf2 Kh7**  
**33.Rg1**



I couldn't really find a move here! It doesn't feel like White has a threat, but somehow every move I looked at seemed to allow White to do something.

**33...Re7?**

Removing the Rook's access to g8 proves critical in some lines where the g-file opens, for example after  $...\text{gxf4 gxf4}$ .

$33...\text{Qe6}$  is Black's "least bad" move. But then  $34.\text{Re1}$  and this does feel pretty easy for White, which is why I avoided it in the game.

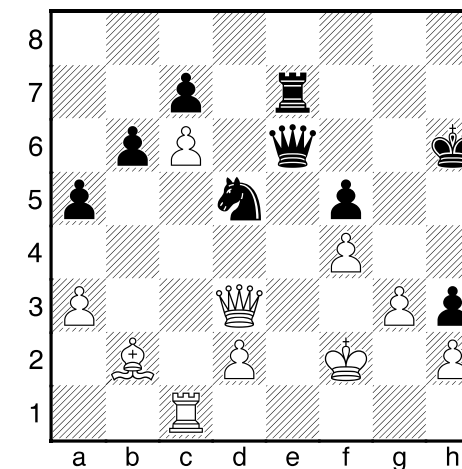
**34.Ke2 Kg6 35.fxg5?**

White's first serious misstep here. Better was  $35.\text{Ke5}$ : the

bishop was good on this square.  $\text{Rb1-b5}$  was White's winning plan.

**35...Qe6 36.Rc1 Kxg5**

Now I felt like I was in the game again.

**37.f4+ Kh6****38.Qf1??**

Allowing a tactic that both of us missed in the game. Again,  $\text{h4-h5}$ .

**38...Kg6=**

Missing  $38...\text{h4-h5}$   $39.\text{Qxh3+}$   $\text{Kg6-+}$ . No more checks! White's king is too vulnerable here, and White's pieces have a hard time coming to the defense.

**39.Ke5 f6 40.Kg1**

*editor* – SF16 identifies this as White's losing move, losing to the game continuation and nothing else.  $\text{h4-h5}$ .

**40...g4! 41.Qxh3**

After  $41.\text{Qd3} \text{h4}$   $42.\text{fxe5} \text{Qxe5}$   $43.\text{g4}$  the resulting endgame



IM Nicholas Vettese

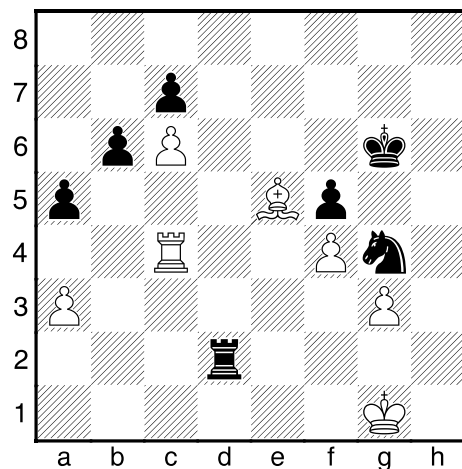


# Chess Canada Atanasov

is probably still losing, but it requires good technique on Black's part.

41...♖h7 42.♔f1 ♖xh2

43.♔c4 ♔xc4 44.♖xc4 ♖xd2



White is lost here for tactical reasons: ♖xc7 allows ...♖d1+ and ...♗e3+ winning the rook, while ♖d4 runs into ...♗xe5.

45.♖c3 ♗xe5 46.fxe5 ♔f7-+

47.♖f3 ♔e6 48.g4 fxg4

49.♖f6+ ♔xe5 50.♖f7 ♖a2

51.♖xc7 ♔d6 52.♖c8 ♖xa3

53.♔f2 g3+ 54.♔g2 ♖c3

Not a good game! After getting a nearly winning position out of the opening, I messed it up with

some very inaccurate moves and ended up getting a worse/lost position for a large portion of the game. While the final result was fortunate for me, I didn't play at a very high level.

0-1

## 2024 Maplewood Pro

Rk.	Title	Name	Rtg	FED	Rd.1	Rd.2	Rd.3	Rd.4	Rd.5	Rd.6	Pts.
1	IM	<b>Atanasov Anthony</b>	2417	CAN	41w1	14b1	29w1	4b1	2w1	5b1	6
2	IM	<b>Noritsyn Nikolay</b>	2450	CAN	28b1	6w1	30b1	5w1	1b0	8w1	5
3	FM	Gutierrez Renzo	2191	PER	10w0	37b1	41w1	29b1	11w1	6b1	5
4	GM	<b>Preotu Razvan</b>	2463	CAN	16w1	7b1	15b½	1w0	12b1	10w1	4.5
5	IM	<b>Vettese Nicholas</b>	2247	CAN	37w1	24b1	13w1	2b0	17w1	1w0	4
6	IM	Duong Thanh Nha	2157	CAN	36w1	2b0	32w1	16b1	15b1	3w0	4
7	CM	Derraugh Geordie	2177	CAN	22b1	4w0	11b0	42w1	27b1	19w1	4
8	CM	Lin Leo	2011	CAN	24w0	36b1	31w1	30w1	18b1	2b0	4
9		Clyde Jordan	2066	CAN	31w1	21b½	38w½	11b0	16w1	17b1	4
10		Lalonde Olivier	1888	CAN	3b1	30w0	14w1	35b½	13w1	4b0	3.5
11		Zhong Ryan Yunhui	1934	CAN	0	34b1	7w1	9w1	3b0	15w½	3.5
12	CM	Saha Ananda	2122	CAN	42w1	13b½	21w0	23b1	4w0	25b1	3.5
13	IM	Han Johnathan	2329	CAN	25b1	12w½	5b0	26w1	10b0	28w1	3.5
14		<b>Kot Emanuel</b>	2105	CAN	45b1	1w0	10b0	43w1	25b½	26w1	3.5
15	IM	Sai Krishna G V	2404	CAN	46b+	27b1	4w½	21b½	6w0	11b½	3.5
16		Marchand Calix	1973	CAN	4b0	22w1	20b1	6w0	9b0	37w1	3
17		Genzling Jerome	1989	FRA	20w0	33b1	24w1	38b1	5b0	9w0	3
18	IM	Wang Tianqi	2334	USA	32w1	29b0	35w1	27b1	8w0	0	3
19		Nassar Marc	1929	LBN	0	0	33w1	31b1	35w1	7b0	3
20		Morin Richer	1568	CAN	17b1	0	16w0	32b0	33w1	39b1	3
21	WGM	Ouellet Maili-Jade	2280	CAN	39b1	9w½	12b1	15w½	0	0	3
22		Berube Maximilien	1875	CAN	7w0	16b0	39w½	36b½	31w1	32b1	3
23		Mok Yuen Tak	1918	CAN	30b0	44w½	40b1	12w0	37b½	36w1	3
24		Dudko Andrii	1727	UKR	8b1	5w0	17b0	25w0	42b1	27w½	2.5
25		Li Yilin	1919	CAN	13w0	31b0	34w1	24b1	14w½	12w0	2.5
26		Jacquet Stephane	1907	FRA	38w½	35b0	44w1	13b0	39w1	14b0	2.5
27		Joseph Jonath	2055	CAN	43b1	15w0	42b1	18w0	7w0	24b½	2.5
28		Lu Tony	1968	CAN	2w0	42b0	36w½	44b1	32w1	13b0	2.5
29		<b>Guillemette Hugo</b>	2002	CAN	44b1	18w1	1b0	3w0	0	0	2
30	IM	Chiku-Ratte Olivier-Kenta	2297	CAN	23w1	10b1	2w0	8b0	0	0	2
31		Wang Rachel Zihan	1794	CAN	9b0	25w1	8b0	19w0	22b0	45b1	2
32		Nassif Aba	1929	USA	18b0	43w1	6b0	20w1	28b0	22w0	2
33	WCM	Zhong April Yunwei	1832	CAN	0	17w0	19b0	34w1	20b0	40w1	2
34		Jiang Barron Jiyu	1807	CAN	0	11w0	25b0	33b0	-1	42w1	2
35		Abrahams Daniel	2153	CAN	40b½	26w1	18b0	10w½	19b0	0	2
36		Duval Mathieu	1872	CAN	6b0	8w0	28b½	22w½	43b+	23b0	2
37		Gao Heye	1908	CAN	5b0	3w0	45b½	40w1	23w½	16b0	2
38	IM	Lawson Eric	2205	CAN	26b½	40w1	9b½	17w0	0	0	2
39		Singher Jean-Pierre	1911	CAN	21w0	0	22b½	45w1	26b0	20w0	1.5
40		Di Matteo Alessio	1847	CAN	35w½	38b0	23w0	37b0	45w1	33b0	1.5
41		<b>Libersan Thierry</b>	1945	CAN	1b0	45w1	3b0	0	0	0	1
42		Kiryakov Marin	1828	CAN	12b0	28w1	27w0	7b0	24w0	34b0	1
43		Duval Merlin	1753	FRA	27w0	32b0	-1	14b0	36w-	0	1
44		Jutras Arnaud	1684	CAN	29w0	23b½	26b0	28w0	0	0	0.5
45		Filion Samuel	1812	CAN	14w0	41b0	37w½	39b0	40b0	31w0	0.5
46		Ali Nehad	1935	SYR	15w-	0	0	0	0	0	0





**Wu, Jonathan (2015)**

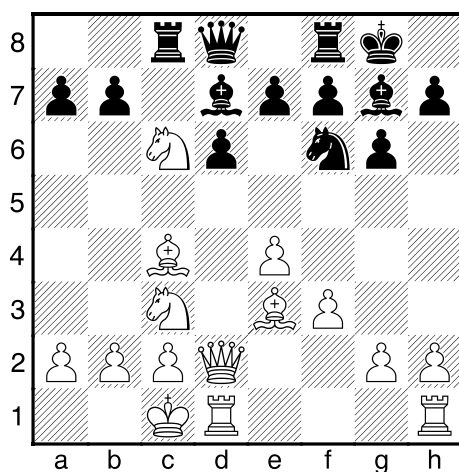
**Findlay, Ian T (2126)**

**B78**

Calgary International 14th (7),  
29.12.2023

*Notes: John Upper*

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4  
4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♗c3 g6 6.♙e3  
♙g7 7.f3 ♘c6 8.♚d2 0-0  
9.♙c4 ♙d7 10.0-0-0 ♖c8  
11.♗xc6!



### Dragon Novelty

To call this rare would be an understatement: it is 100x less common than the main line with 11.♙b3, and it isn't even mentioned in the Quality Chess

GM Repertoire books by Gwain Jones (on the Dragon) or Negi in his 1.e4 repertoire.

This is even more remarkable because at low ply, SF16 rates ♗xc6 as best, and at 40 ply SF16 rates it worse than ♙b3 by an insignificant 0.04. This combination of **sound but very rare** makes it an excellent choice in the very well-trodden Dragon main lines.

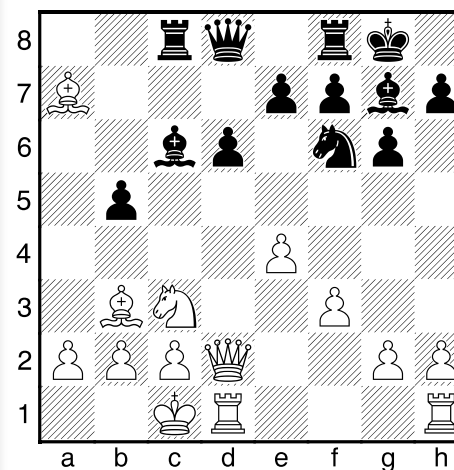


The more common line goes:  
11.♙b3 ♗xd4 12.♙xd4 b5  
13.♙xa7 b4 14.♗d5 ♗xd5  
15.exd5 ♚a5 and here, unlike the game, the move 16.♙d4? is bad because 16...♖xc2+!! 17.♙xc2 ♚xa2 ♖↑ Bakre,T (2492)–Zawadzka,B (2298) Pardubice Skanska op, 2004.

### 11...♙xc6 12.♙b3 b5

This is the main move in lines with ...♗xd4 ♙xd4, but that depends on both the c-file tactics in the previous note, and not losing a tempo to the attack on the ♙c6 after exd5.

### 13.♙xa7!

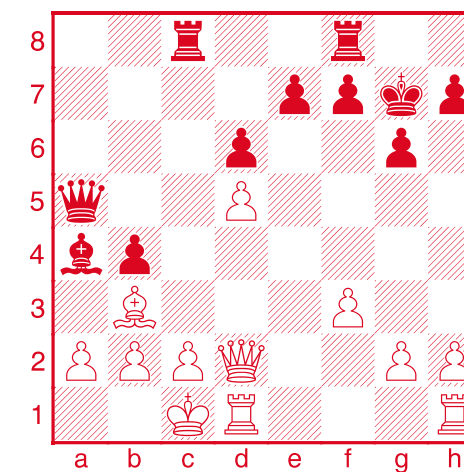


Ian faced this position twice in the same day!

### 13...b4!

This is a move-order improvement over his morning game. It doesn't allow White to simply trade the Dragon ♙ with ♙d4.

In the previous round that morning, Ian played the weaker: 13...♚a5 14.♙d4 b4 15.♗d5± ♗xd5 16.♙xg7 ♚xg7 17.exd5 ♙a4:



### 18.c4!!

This move might not even occur to players — like me — whose heads are still clogged with the rusty old saws about "not making pawn moves around your king",

**Jonathan Wu**  
2023 Banff Open



or "not moving pawns on the area of the board where your opponent is stronger"; but this move kills all of Black's play and essentially ends the game. 18. ♖d4+ is also good, so long as White plays c4 next.

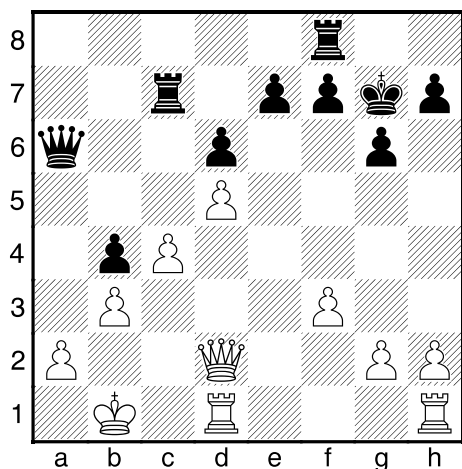
After 18.c4!! Black is doomed:

a) 18...bxc3? 19. ♖d4+ ♗+- wins the ♔ and a Black pawn on b2 will protect White's ♔ long enough to consolidate;

b) 18...♗xb3 19. axb3+- gives White a safe ♔ on c2 and targets on b4 and e7;

c) 18...♖c7 19. ♗xa4 ♖xa4 20. b3 ♖a6 21. ♔b1:

*Analysis Diagram (not!)*

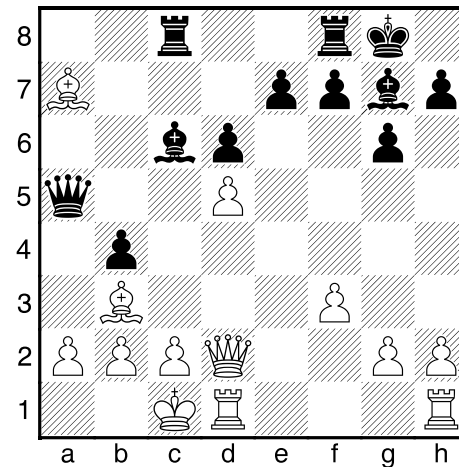


White is up a pawn, with a safer king and a better structure. Notice how c2-c4 allows both lateral defence of a2 while killing any hope for play on the c-file.

In the morning round, Neil Doknjas wrapped up smoothly with: 21... ♖a8 22. ♖he1 ♔g8 23. ♖e2 ♖b6 24. h4 ♖ca7 25. ♖f4 ♖a3 26. ♖xe7 1-0 in **Doknjas, N (2255)–Findlay, I (2126) Calgary int. 2023 (6)**.

14. ♗d5 ♗xd5 15. exd5  
15. ♗xd5?? ♗xd5 16. exd5 ♖a5+-.

15... ♖a5

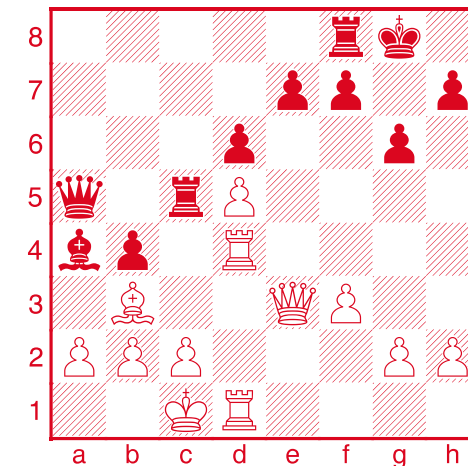


Here we see the point of Black's improved move order.

16. ♖e3  
Trying to transpose to Doknjas-Findlay from the morning round with 16. ♗d4 fails tactically to

16... ♗xd5! 17. ♗xd5 (17. ♗xg7?? ♗xb3+) 17... ♖xd5 18. ♗xg7 ♖xa2! 19. ♖xb4 ♔xg7+ with equal material but White's king is much less safe.

16... ♗a4 17. ♗d4 = ♗xd4  
18. ♖xd4 ♖c5 19. ♖hd1



19... ♖a8?  
Going for play on the a-file; but we've already seen a clever and non-standard defence to this.

19... ♗xb3 20. ♖xb3 ♖fc8= with standard play.

19... ♖fc8!? invites complications after 20.c4! ♗b5 21. ♖d3 ♗xc4 22. ♖xc4 (22. ♗xc4



photo: Vlad Rekhson/CCC facebook

## Bad day for Dragons

FM Ian Findlay's Dragons first abused by Neil Doknjas here, then Jonathan Wu.





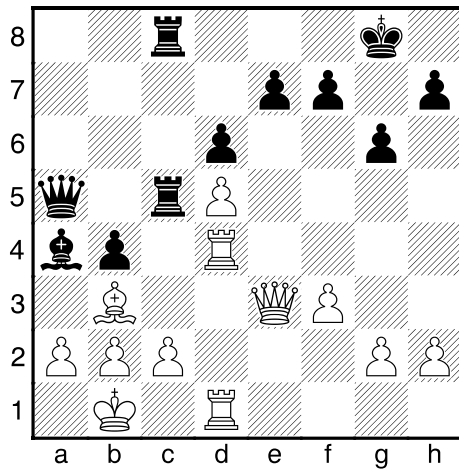
♙xa2 ♘23.b3 ♘∞) 22...♖xc4+ ♘  
23.♙xc4 ♙xa2 ♘24.b3 ♙xg2∞.

20.♙b1? =

As in the game against Doknjas:  
20.c4 ♘+- just kills all Black's play.

Having suffered against this in the morning round, and then overlooking it in the afternoon, shows just how hard it is to see such "unnatural" looking moves!

20...♖ac8



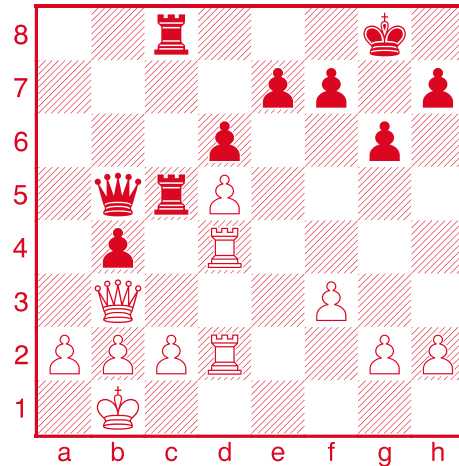
21.♖1d2?

White is mesmerized into thinking all the play is on the queenside.

♘21.♙h6+- and White gets the

typical (and crushing) anti-Dragon h-file attack without even having to play h2-h4-h5 etc.

21...♙xb3 22.♙xb3 ♘♙b5



Black threatens ...♙f1+, and maybe even ...♖xc2.

23.♙d3?!

Stops Black's threats, but there was much better.

Once again, the winning move is a non-standard pawn push in front of the king: 23.a4!! either wins the b-pawn or trades it off and ends Black's queenside play. 23...bxa3 24.♙xb5 ♖xb5 25.b3!± ♙a2 will either win the pawn or tie a Black rook to its defence, leaving White clearly better everywhere else on the board.

23...♙b6 24.♙b3 ♙b5

25.♙d3 ♙a5 26.♙b3 ♙b5

1/2-1/2

**Nunez Asencio, Jorge (2251)**

**Doknjas, Neil (2245) E61**

Fraser Valley Rapid 10 Langley CAN (4.1), 03.02.2024

Notes: John Upper

1.d4 d6 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 g6  
4.♘c3 ♙f5 5.h3 ♘e4 6.♘xe4  
♙xe4 7.♘g5 ♙c6 8.d5 ♙d7  
9.♙d4 f6 10.h4 ♙g7 11.h5  
0-0



photo: Calgary CC facebook

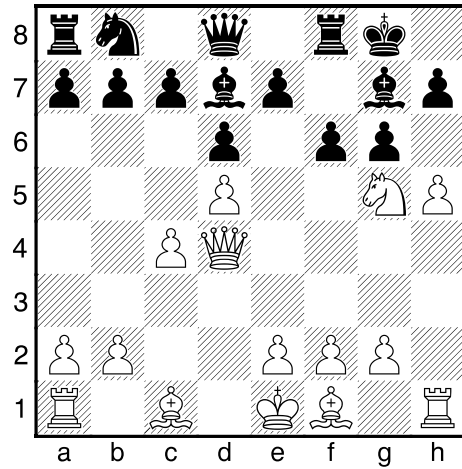
# 14th Calgary International

L2R:

FM Tymur Keleberda  
GM C.A.Gomez Garrido  
Neil Doknjas  
Jorge Ascencio Nunez



**Chess Canada  
Across Canada**

**12. ♘f3**

12. ♘xh7!? "with attacking chances" is obviously very tempting, but with little time to calculate in a rapid game, you'd have to be very confident of your evaluation skills to go into this when White has only one pawn for the piece.

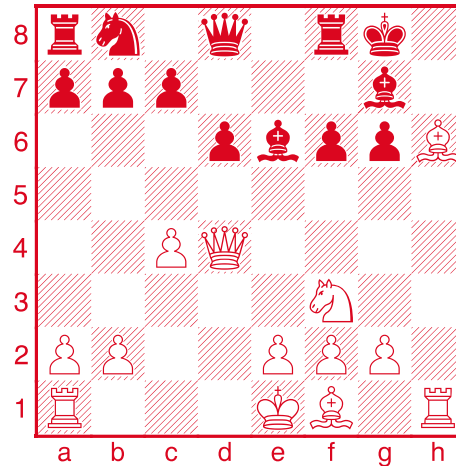
In fact, White does have a winning attack: 12. ♘xh7!? ♔xh7 13. ♕d3! (13. hxg6+?? ♔g8+) 13... f5 (13... ♕f5 14. hxg6+ ♔xg6 15. e4+; 13... ♕e8 14. hxg6+ ♔g8 15. ♕h6+;) 14. hxg6+ ♔ ♕xg6 15. ♕g3+ ♔f7 16. ♖h7 ♖g8 17. ♕h6 ♕f8 18. e3 Black is so tied up there is no time to defend against ♕e2-h5, winning the ♕g7 with a continued attack; e.g. 18... f4 19. ♕g5!+-.

12...e5 13.dxe6 ♕xe6

14.hxg6

14. ♕e4 ♕e8!±.

14...hxg6 15. ♕h6



15... ♕xh6?

15... ♕e7 16. ♕xg7 ♕xg7! 17. ♕e4 forking e6 and b7 17... ♖e8 ♔ 18. ♕xb7 ♘d7±.

15... ♘c6:

a) 16. ♕h4?! g5!∞ 17. ♘xg5 fxg5 18. ♕xg5 ♕d7 (18... ♖f6!?) 19. ♕h7+ ♔f7 20. ♕h5+=; b) 16. ♕e3! ♕e7 17. ♕xg7 ♔xg7 18. ♕h6+ ♔f7 19. ♕h7+ ♔e8 20. ♕xg6+ ♔d7 21. ♖h7 ♖f7±.

16. ♖xh6 ♔g7

This loses, but only if White finds the next two moves:

17. ♘g5 ♔

17. ♕h4? ♖h8 ♔∞.

17... ♕g8

17... ♔xh6? 18. ♕h4+ ♔g7

19. ♕h7#.

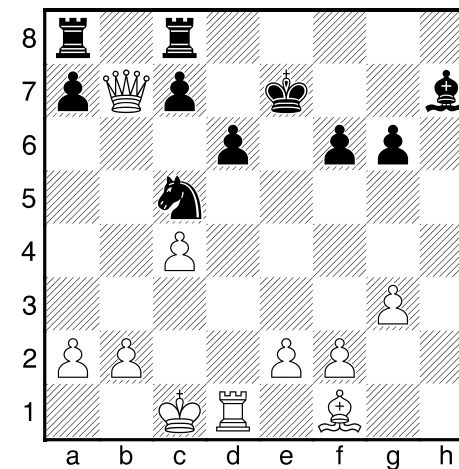
17... ♕e8 18. ♖h7+ ♔g8 19. ♕h4 mates more slowly.

18. ♖h7+ ♔+- ♕xh7 19. ♘e6+

♔f7 20. ♘xd8+- ♖xd8

21. ♕d5+! ♔e7 22. ♕xb7 ♘d7

23. 0-0-0 ♖dc8 24. g3 ♘c5



25. ♕h1!

Always fun to play the ♕ to the corner; even better when it's a strong move!

25... ♕g8 26. ♕h3 ♖cb8

27. ♕g2!

Switchback! The ♖a8 is a goner.

27... ♖b4 28. ♕xa8 ♕xc4

29. ♕h7+ ♔e6 30. ♕xc7 ♕xa2

31. ♖xd6+

1-0

## 14<sup>th</sup> Calgary International

Dec.26-30, 2023.  
Calgary Chess Club

A 9-round, 16-player Swiss, topped by GMs Dimitri Komarov (UKR), and Camilo Ernesto Gomez Garrido (CUB).

While weaker than pre-pandemic events, it is still a very good way for FMs like Findlay, Hassel, Keleberda, and Yam to get good competition.

This year, **GM Garrido won** with 7.5/9; top Canadian was **Neil Doknjas** with 6/9.

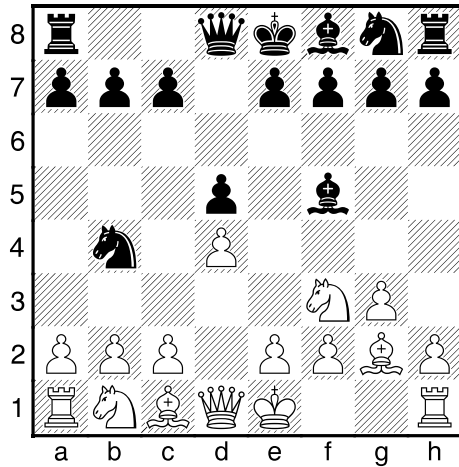


**Migot, Tangi (2467)  
Duong, Thanh Nha  
(2293)  
D02**

Germain Laplante op Chambly  
CAN (5.1), 28.04.2024

*Notes: John Upper*

1.  $\text{Nf3}$   $\text{d5}$  2.  $\text{g3}$   $\text{Nc6}$  3.  $\text{d4}$   $\text{f5}$   
4.  $\text{g2}$   $\text{b4}$



**Two Step**

This looks like a beginner's lunge, but it's actually the main move, and has been played by Kramnik, Carlsen, and Ding, to mention only the World Champions.

This "two step" maneuver is far more common with diagonal-

moving pieces than knights, and features in many openings, including the anti-Catalan ( $\text{f8}-$

$\text{b4-e7}$ ), the Grivas Sicilian ( $\text{d8-b6-c7}$ ), and even against the KID ( $\text{c1-g5-d2}$ ): in each case the piece crosses and retreats to a square it could have occupied in one move, but takes two moves to induce a long-term discoordination in the opponent's pieces.

Knights can't cross and return to a square like queen, bishop or rook, but this pseudo-two-step works here anyway. Even though the  $\text{b4}$  will almost always go back to  $\text{c6}$  (or sometimes  $\text{a6}$ ), Black's idea is that the two moves White gets "for free" —  $\text{a3}$  and  $\text{c2-c3}$  — are not very useful in general, and are utterly worthless for White's usual strategy here: to improve the  $\text{g2}$  by fighting for the long diagonal with  $\text{c4}$  and  $\text{c3}$ .

**This looks like a beginner's lunge, but it's actually the main move, and has been played by Kramnik, Carlsen, and Ding, to mention only the World Champions.**

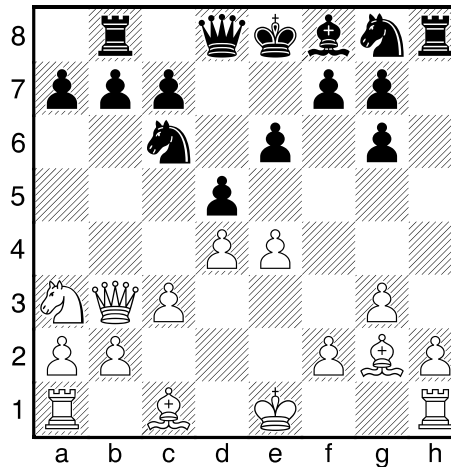
Amusingly,  $4... \text{b4}$  is SF16's top pick, and after the forced...

5.  $\text{a3}$

... SF opts for the as-yet-unplayed

$5... \text{c6}$ , with a small plus for White.

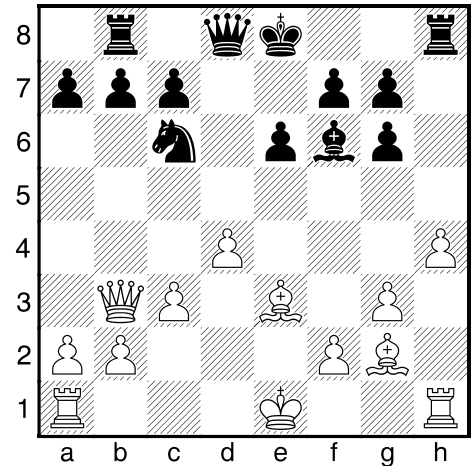
- 5...  $\text{e6}$  6.  $\text{h4}$   $\text{g6}$  7.  $\text{c3}$   $\text{Nc6}$   
8.  $\text{b3}$   $\text{b8}$  9.  $\text{Nc6}$   $\text{hxg6}$   
10.  $\text{e4!}$



White has the two bishops and an open center, which has to be  $\pm$  in the long run. Over the next few moves Black trades his  $\text{f6}$  for the  $\text{a3}$ , in effect, trading White's worst minor piece for

a piece that was guarding the place his king is going to go.

- 10...  $\text{dxe4}$  11.  $\text{xe4}$   $\text{f6}$   
12.  $\text{g2}$   $\text{e7}$  13.  $\text{c4}$   $\text{d5}$   
14.  $\text{e3}$   $\text{xe3}$  15.  $\text{xe3}$   $\text{f6}$   
16.  $\text{h4}$



**16...a6?!**

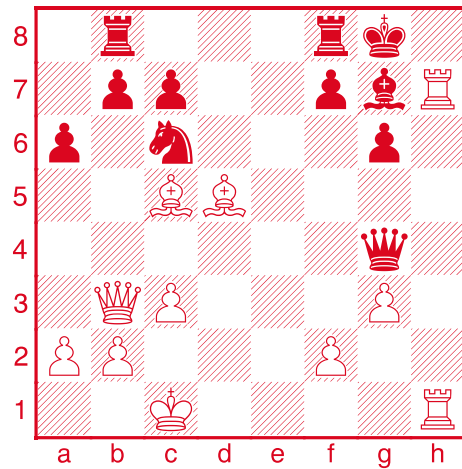
$\text{b4}$   $\text{e7}$  and White may have to give up the B-pair to push  $\text{d5}$ .

**17.d5! exd5 18. xd5**

Material is equal, but after a few seconds SF16 rates this position +2.5; and at 30 ply it is up to +3.

- 18...  $\text{0-0}$  19.  $\text{0-0}$   $\text{c8}$  20.  $\text{h5}$   
 $\text{gxh5}$  21.  $\text{hx5}$   $\text{g4}$  22.  $\text{dh1}$   
 $\text{g6}$  23.  $\text{h7}$   $\text{g7}$  24.  $\text{c5}$





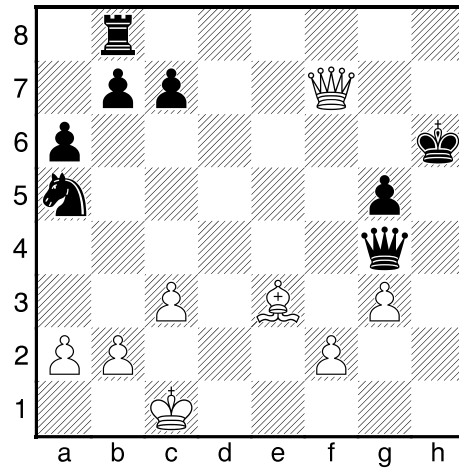
Hitting the best defender of f7, which can't move without allowing  $\text{♙xf7\#}$ . But what happens after  $\dots\text{♘a5}$ ?

**24...♘a5 25.♙xf7+!**

Best and simplest. From here to move 30 both sides play the best — and only — moves.

White has other ways to win, but they are less direct, with side branches that make them harder to calculate:  $25.\text{♙a3 ♙g5+ 26.f4 ♙xd5 27.♖xg7+□ (27.♙xf8?? ♖xf8□-+)} 27...\text{♔xg7 28.♙d4+□ f6?! 29.♙e7+ ♙f7 30.♙xf6+ ♔g8 31.♖h8\#}$ .

**25...♖xf7 26.♖xg7+ ♔xg7 27.♖h7+ ♔xh7 28.♙xf7+ ♔h6 29.♙e3+ g5**



**30.f4 ♖g8!**

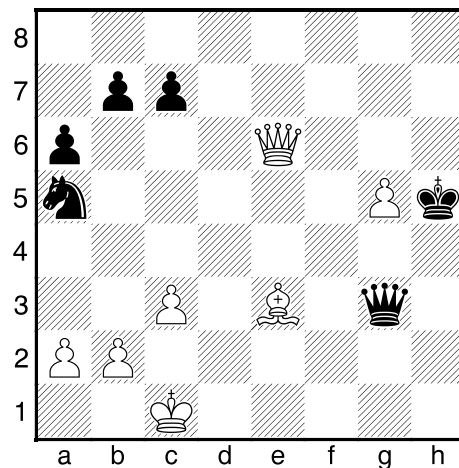
Best. Otherwise  $\text{fxg5+}$  wins.

**31.♙xg8 ♙xg3 32.fxg5+**

All that for an extra pawn? No: it's an extra passed pawn, and an exposed  $\text{♔}$  to attack, and  $\text{♙}$  vs  $\text{♘}$ .

**32...♔h5 33.♙f7+ ♔g4**

**34.♙e6+ ♔h5**



**35.♙d2!**

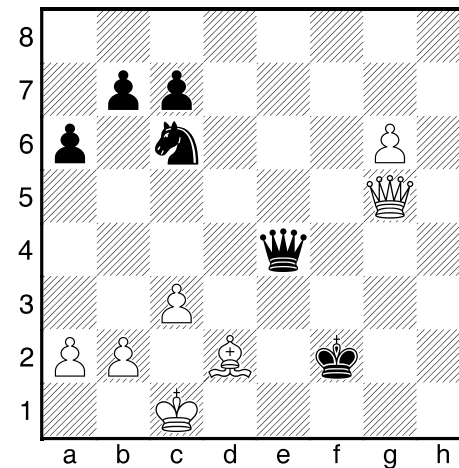
Tidying up: putting the  $\text{♙}$  on a safe square and guarding the  $\text{♔}$  from checks.

**35...♘c6 36.♙f5 ♙e5**

**37.♙f7+**

**37.♙xe5?? ♘xe5=.**

**37...♔h4 38.g6 ♙e4 39.♙f6+ ♔g3 40.♙g5+ ♔f2**



**41.b3!**

$41.g7$  also wins, but why worry about the checks on the light squares when you can simply make a safe space on b2?

**41...♘e5 42.♙e3+!**

Nice finish.

**42...♙xe3 43.♙xe3+**

**1-0**

## Keres Memorial

May 18-20, 2024. Surrey, BC.

The 48<sup>th</sup> annual 6-round long-weekend Swiss had a guaranteed prize fund of \$8,500. NM **Neil Doknjas** and GM **Gergely Szabo** agreed to a quick draw in the final round to clinch shared-first with 5/6. IMs **Bindi Cheng** and **Raymond Kaufman** were next with 4½, both losing only to one of the two winners.

The shared first in the Keres was the second in a row for Neil, the 2023 BC Champion, who tied for first IM **Georgi Orlov** in 2022. Including the complete game in the notes to **Wu-Findlay**, the following is the *third* full game by Neil in this issue. You could do worse than to keep an eye on his White repertoire...

**Doknjas, Neil (2363)**

**Cheng, Bindi (2443)**

**B80**

Paul Keres mem (48th) Surrey CAN (3.2), 19.05.2024

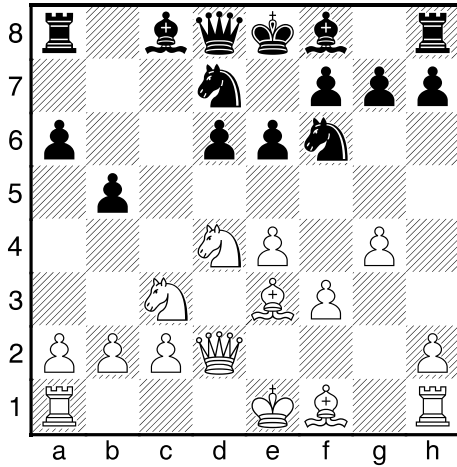
**Notes: John Upper**

**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♙e3 e6 7.f3 b5 8.♙d2 ♘bd7 9.g4**





# Chess Canada Across Canada



### 9...Nb6?!

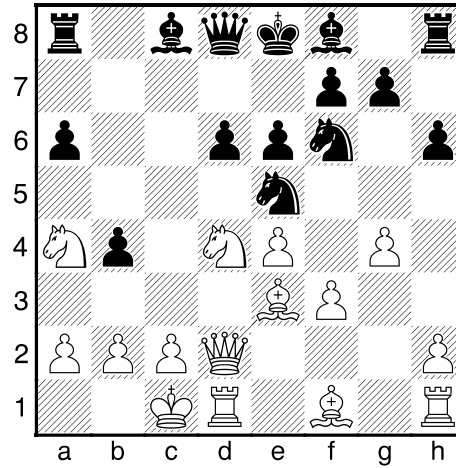
Kasparov and Anand both played this as Black 20 years ago, but it has completely disappeared from top level chess due to the maneuver we see in this game.

Top players now try to slow White down with: 9...h6 or the unbalancing 9...b4:

10. Nce2 h6 11. 0-0-0 Qc7  
12. h4 d5!∞ Akopian, V (2638)–  
Inarkiev, E (2693)  
FIDE Chess.com  
Grand Swiss 2019;

10. Na4 10...h6  
11. 0-0-0 Ne5!:

### Analysis Diagram



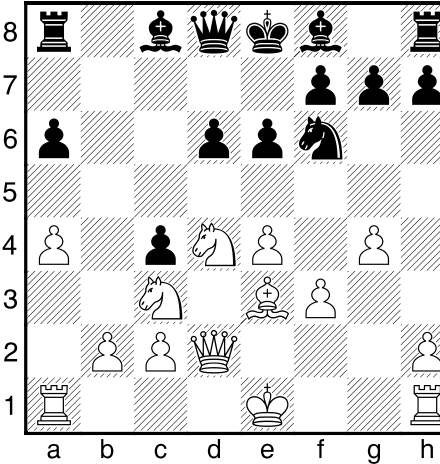
Reaches a famous Topalov pawn sac idea that led to one of Kramnik's shortest ever defeats:

12. Qxb4 12... Qd7 13. Nb3?!  
(13. Nc3∞) 13... Rb8 14. Qa3  
Nxf3 15. h3 Nxe4+ 16. Qe2  
Ne5 17. Rhe1 Qc7 18. Qd4 Nc6  
19. Qc3 d5 20. Nbc5 Qa7 0–1  
Kramnik, V (2754)–Topalov, V  
(2757) Corus Wijk aan Zee,  
2005.

Declining is more prudent:  
12. b3 Qd7  
13. Nb2 d5∞  
Carlsen, M

(2839)–Vachier Lagrave, M  
(2727) AI Cup rapid, 2023;

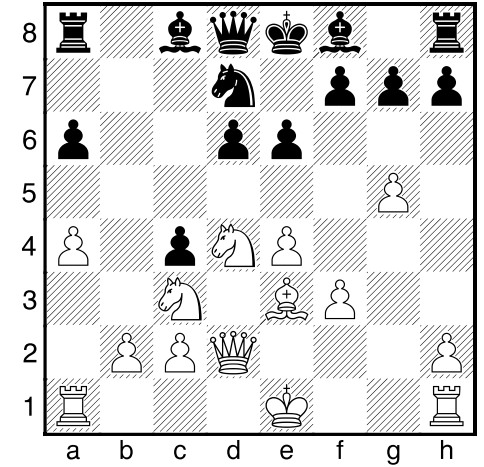
### 10.a4! Nc4 11. Qxc4 bxc4



### 12.g5

White can also play on the queenside with: 12. a5!? Qb7  
13. Na4 d5 14. g5 Nd7 15. 0-0-0  
dxe4 16. f4! Rb8 17. Qc3! Qe7  
18. Nf5?! (18. Nb6±) 18... exf5  
19. Rxd7! Qxd7 20. Qe5+ Qe7  
21. Qxb8+ Qc8=; Leko, P (2734)–  
Shirov, A (2718) EU–Cup 28th  
Eilat, 2012.

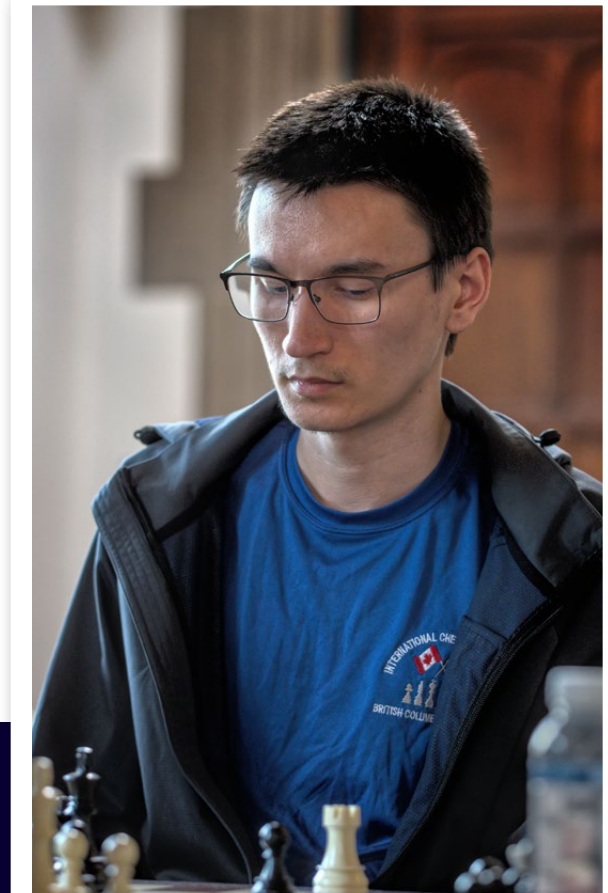
### 12...Nd7



Black has no developed pieces, having spent 4 moves to get

...it's second-best,  
but in wild positions  
second-best loses.

Chess is a hard game.



**Neil Doknjas**  
2024 Zonal, Hart House.

his b-pawn to c4; but the open b-file looks like it might give Black a deadly attack should White be daring enough to castle long...

### 13.0-0-0!!N

... which he does!

A Novelty, and the computer's top choice. All the older games continued with kingside pawn storms, which is also good; e.g. 13.f4 ♖b7 14.f5! ♞c5 15.♔g2!± g6 16.fxe6 (16.0-0-0! e.g. 16... gxf5 17.♞xf5 exf5 18.♙xc5+-) 16...fxe6 17.♞f1 ♔d7 18.♞de2 ♙g7 19.0-0-0± [Areshchenko,A \(2710\)–Shirov,A \(2718\) EU-Cup 28th Eilat, 2012.](#)

### 13...♙b7

Of course, the bishop interferes with Black's play on the b-file, but the attempt to pile up on the b-file is too slow, and going after the a-pawn with ...♔a5 and ...♞b6 traps and loses the ♔ to ♞c6!

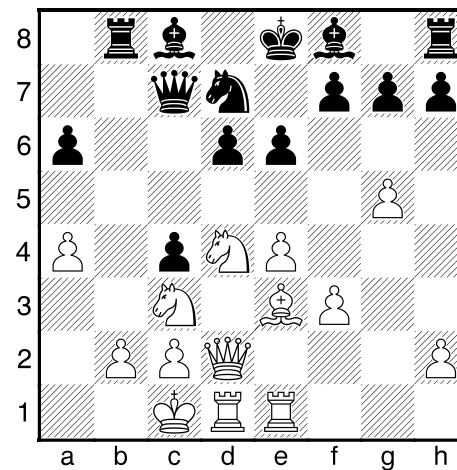
If you're going to try this as White, it will be reassuring to know that the most direct b-file

counterattack does not work, so long as White plays accurately and boldly:

13...♞b8? is obviously too soon  
14.♞c6+-;

13...♔c7 14.♞he1□± ♞b8:

### Analysis Diagram

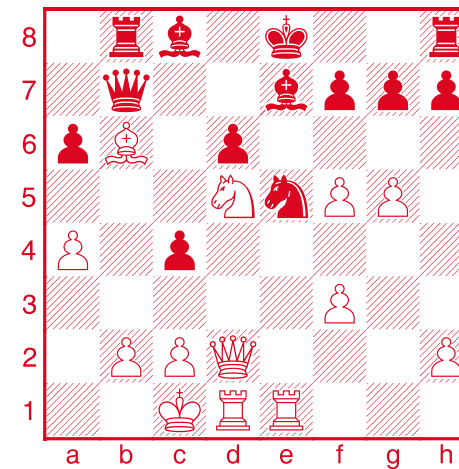


If it was Black's move, ...♔b7 would be a large advantage, but here White strikes first with 15.♞f5!!+- . A typical sac, and the only move that gets an advantage. Here are two illustrative lines after 15.♞f5:

15...♔b7 16.♞xd6+ ♙xd6  
17.♔xd6 ♔xb2+ 18.♔d2+-.  
Material is equal, and both kings are in the center, but White's

rooks and minor pieces are ready to pounce;

15...exf5 16.exf5 ♞e5 (16...♔b7  
17.♙b6+!+-) 17.♞d5 ♔b7 18.♙b6  
♙e7: *Analysis Diagram 2*

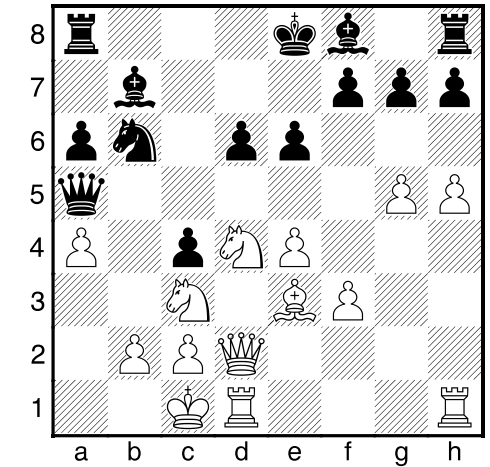


White to play and win in the old style.

Not 19.f4?? ♞d3+-+ and takes on d5.

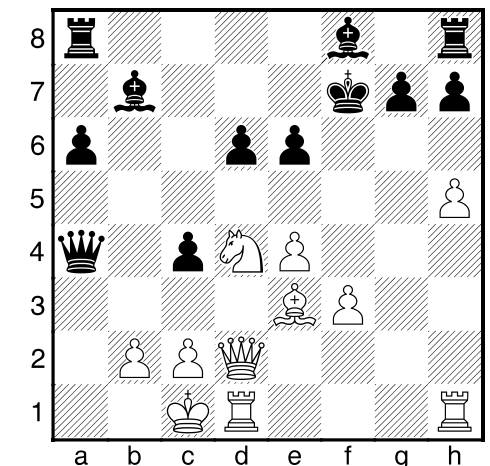
19.♞xe5! 19...dxe5 20.♞c7+!  
♔f8 21.♔d8+! ♙xd8 22.♙c5+□  
♙e7 23.♞d8#. I gotta believe this whole line, right to its pretty finish, has been played in skittles *at least* once.

14.h4 ♔a5 15.h5 ♞b6



Without ...♙b7, ♞c6 would trap the Black ♔.

16.g6 ♞xa4 17.gxf7+ ♔xf7  
18.♞xa4 ♔xa4



The last few moves have been perfectly sensible: White has opened lines on the kingside and Black has won the a4-pawn and threatens mate on a1. What



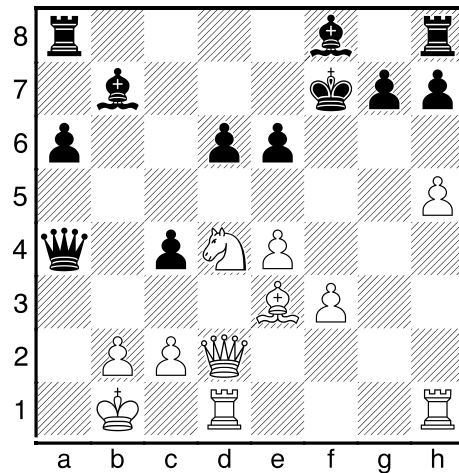


should White do with his ♔?

### 19. ♖h2?!±

We've transposed to a game between a couple of strong players where White continued optimally before going wrong in complications: ♠19. ♖b1+-:

Analysis Diagram



a) 19... ♖c8 20. ♖h2 or 20. ♖c3+-;

b) 19...c3? goes nowhere:

20. ♖xc3 ♖c8 21. ♖d2+- (21. ♖b3? ♖xb3 22. ♗xb3 ♕e7∞);

c) 19...a5 20. ♖hg1 ♖d7 21. ♕g5

(♠21. h6!) 21...a4 22. h6! g6

23. ♖c3! e5 24. ♖xc4+- (24.

f4!+- exd4 25. ♖xc4+-) 24...

d5 25. exd5 ♕xd5 26. ♖c3

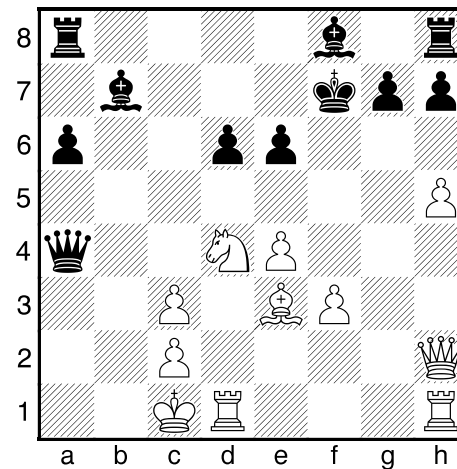
(26. ♗b5?? ♕xc4= 27. ♖xd7+ ♔e6

28. ♖b7∞ Doluhanova,E (2334)-  
Lagarde,M (2521) Avoine op 29<sup>th</sup>,  
2014.) 26... ♖c8 27. ♗c6! ♖xc6  
28. ♖xe5+- forking the ♕d5 and  
♖h8 and rooting out the exposed  
♔; Black's check on c2 is utterly  
useless.

### 19...c3!

Black's not going to fall for  
this: 19... ♖a1+ 20. ♔d2 ♖xb2  
21. ♖b1+-.

### 20. bxc3



### 20... ♖c8?

Chess is a hard game.

This was obviously the point of  
...c3, but it's second-best, but  
in wild positions second-best  
loses.

♠20...e5± looks crazy, since  
it hands White g5, but the  
computer shows White is too  
slow to use it: 21. ♗f5 ♕c8!∞,  
Black will take the ♗, and d6 is  
defended by ... ♖a3+.

Also under the heading Chess is  
Hard: after 20...e5 21. ♗f5  
the sensible-looking 21... ♖c8?  
leads to a ridiculous computer  
line that looks totally lost for  
White until you see the last  
move: 22. ♖d3! a5 23. ♖g1! ♕a6  
24. ♖h3 ♗xd3 Black threatens  
mate on c2 and the ♕d3 is  
untouchable, but 25. ♗xd6+ ♗+-  
and suddenly all of White's  
pieces make sense.

### 21. ♖d3!±

Good. But even better is  
21. h6!!+- . White wants to play  
this, but giving up c3 with check  
is unhuman.

After 21. h6:

a) 21... ♖a1+ 22. ♔d2 ♖xc3+  
23. ♔e2 g6 24. ♖f4+-;

b) 21... ♖a3+ 22. ♔d2 ♖xc3  
23. hxg7 ♕xg7 (23... ♖xe3  
24. gxh8 ♖+ and ♖f4+ and

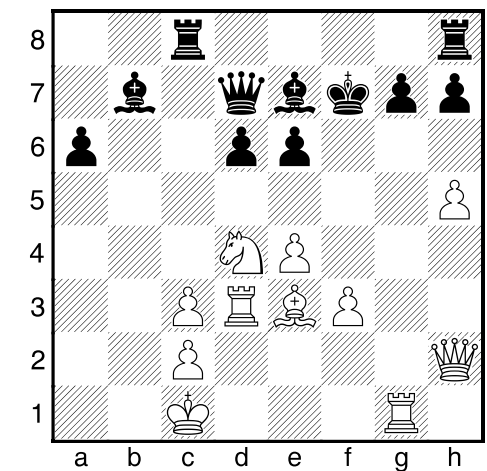
White's up a ♖.) 24. ♖h5+ ♔e7  
25. ♕g5+-;

c) 21...g6 notice how many  
of White's moves exploit the  
weakened dark squares:  
22. ♖f4+ ♗ ♔g8 23. ♖f6 (threat  
♖xe6#) 23... ♖a1+ 24. ♔d2  
♖xc3+ 25. ♔e2 ♖c7 26. ♗xe6  
♖f7 27. ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 28. ♗g5+  
♔e8 29. ♕d4+- White's advanced  
h-pawn will cost Black a piece.

### 21... ♕e7

21...e5! transposes to a previous  
note.

### 22. ♖g1 ♖d7



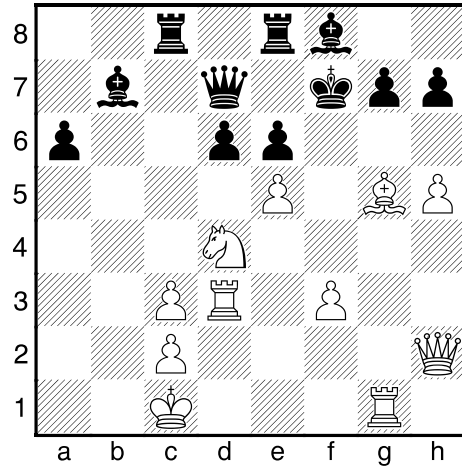
### 23. e5?!

23. ♖f4!+ is better, but this is  
a hard combo to see: 23... ♕f6



24.e5!! dxe5 25.♖xg7+!! ♔xg7  
26.♘f5++-.

23...♖he8 24.♙g5 ♙f8



25.♙f4+?!

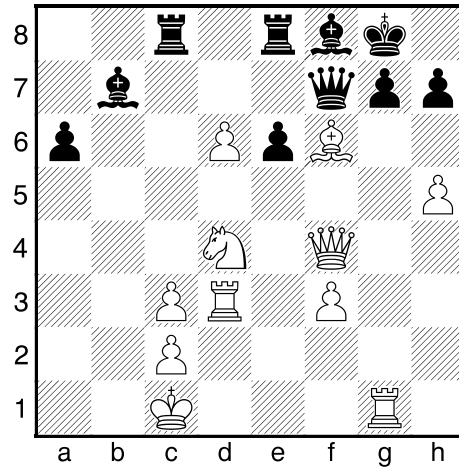
▷25.♙h6!!:

a) 25...gxh6 26.♙f4+ ♔e7  
27.♙f6#;

b) 25...♔g8 26.♙xg7 ♙xg7  
27.h6+-;

c) 25...dxe5 26.♙xe5 gxh6  
27.♘f5!+- threatening the ♙ and  
mate with ♖g7.

25...♔g8 26.♙f6! ♙f7  
27.exd6□



27...♙xd6

27...e5 28.♘f5! (28.♙xe5+- wins  
too.) 28...♙xf6 29.♘h6+ ♔h8  
30.♙xf6 gxf6 31.♖g8#.

28.♙h4??

Allows Black a weird but saving  
resource.

▷28.♙g5!:

a) 28...♙f8 29.♙xg7 ♙xg7  
30.♙e3!+-;

b) 28...♙e7 29.♙xg7+- is the  
big difference between ♙h4 and  
♙g5;

c) 28...♖c7!?! and now not  
29.♙xg7?? ♙f4+-, but  
29.♘b5!+- attacking the ♙ the  
♖ and guarding against ...♙a3+.

This wins, but it has a "random  
tactics" feel to it at the end. 29...  
axb5 30.♖xd6 ♙xf3 31.♙e5 ♙xh5  
32.♙xg7 ♙xe5 33.♙xe5+ ♔f8  
34.♖d3 double attack on c7 and  
f3 34...♖f7□ 35.♙d6+- wins an  
exchange.

28...♙e7!=

Which he finds! Defending g7 by  
pinning the ♙ to the ♙! Black is  
equal.

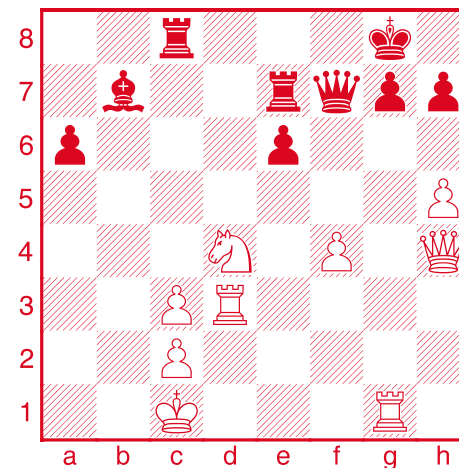
White certainly saw this:

28...♙f8?? 29.♙xg7 ♙xg7  
30.h6+-.

29.♙xe7

29.♖xg7+?? ♙xg7+- oops.

29...♖xe7 30.f4



30...♖f8??

If his bishop was on d5 Black  
would be fine, but here it loses to  
the exact line White plays in the  
game.

30...♖d7□= frees the ♙ from  
defending the ♖. 31.♖dg3 ♙f8□=  
defending g7 with the ♖ and  
hitting a3: White won't like what  
happens to his ♔ if he takes on  
e6.

Reversing the move order  
doesn't work: 30...♙f8? 31.f5+-  
exf5 32.♘xf5 ♖ec7 (32...♖e4  
33.♙g5+-) 33.♘xg7 ♖xg7  
34.♖xg7+ ♙xg7 35.♖g3+-.

Funny how White's only defensive move  
(♖d3) turns out to be part of the  
winning attack.

31.f5□+- ♙f6

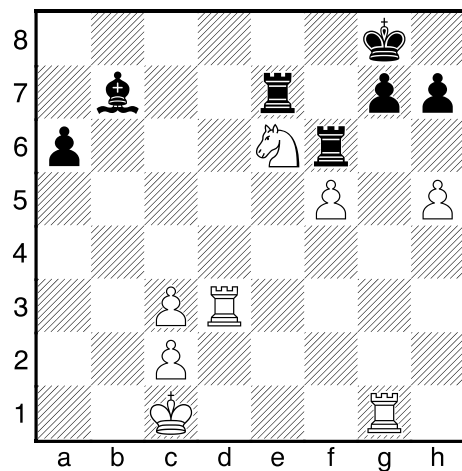
31...♙d5 32.h6!+-.

31...exf5 32.♘xf5+- threatens the  
♖e7 and ♘h6+, which can both  
be covered by 32...♖e6 but that  
loses to 33.♖xg7+-.

32.♙xf6□ ♖xf6 33.♘xe6!







Exchange sacs don't save Black because of the skewers along the 7th.

33...♖xf5 34.♖d8+ ♔f7  
35.♘g5+♚ ♔f6 36.♖f8+  
♔e5 37.♖e1+

Black will have too many bits hanging after ♖xd7.

1-0

**Christian Stevens**

2024 Ontario Open,  
Toronto



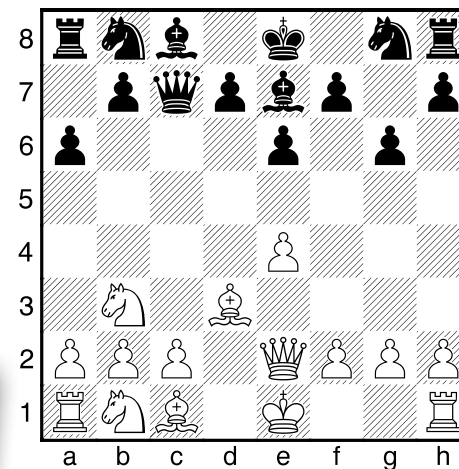
**Vettese, Nicholas**  
(2247)  
**Stevens, Christian**  
(2252)

**B42**

Ontario op Toronto CAN (6.2),  
20.05.2024

*Notes: John Upper*

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4  
4.♘xd4 a6 5.♙d3 ♙c5 6.♘b3  
♙e7 7.♖g4 g6 8.♖e2 ♖c7



**Two Step 2**

White's two step with the queen (♖d1-g4-e2) induced Black to play checkers with his pawns, leaving White with potential play against the dark squares.

**9.h4N**

Hard to believe, but this natural move seems to be a novelty. Maybe chess isn't fully "played out"?

Black had this position before:  
9.0-0 d6 10.c4 ♘c6 11.♘c3 ♘e5  
12.h3 h5?! 13.♙e3 ♘f6 14.♙g5  
h4?! 15.f4 ♘xd3 16.♖xd3 ♖h5

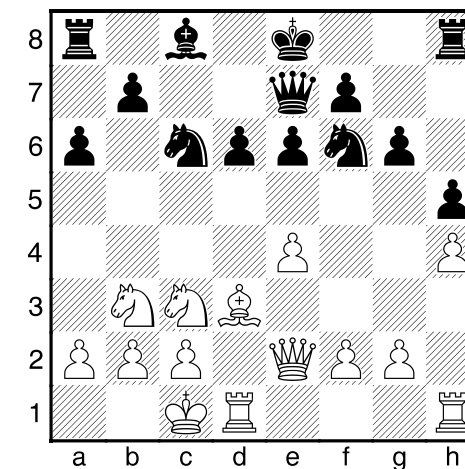
17.♖d4+- Black gets pummelled on the dark squares. Licznerski,L (2439)-**Stevens,C** (2260) Titled Tuesday, May 2022.

**9...h5± 10.♙g5**

Developing and trading the best defender of the dark squares.

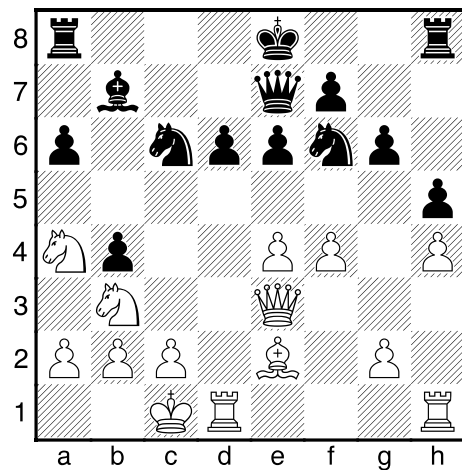
**10...d6 11.♙xe7 ♖xe7**

**12.♘c3 ♘f6 13.0-0-0 ♘c6**



If the ♘b3 was on f3, then the immediate e5 would be strong. Here, White has a choice of sensible deployments, including ♖d2 (vs d6) and ♖he1 (looking for ♘c3-d5).

**14.♖e3 b5 15.♙e2 ♙b7 16.f4  
b4 17.♘a4±**

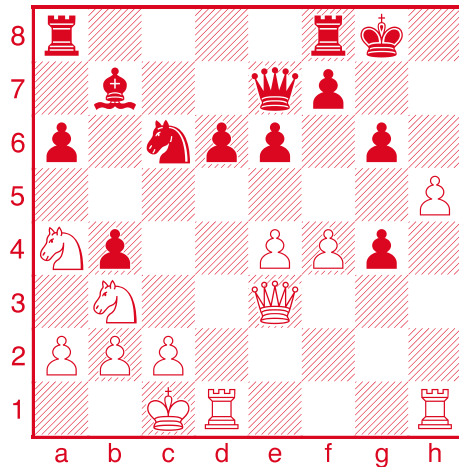


### 17...♔f8!?

Keeping the ♖ on h8 discourages g4 and h5 breaks.

The computer prefers  $17...0-0\pm$ , but it requires good nerves — and the ability to correctly judge the position in the next diagram.  $18.g4!?$  ( $18.e5 \text{ ♘d5}\infty$ )  $18...♘xg4!$  ( $18...hxg4?$   $19.h5+- gxh5$   $20.e5 \text{ ♘d5}$   $21.♖xd5 \square exd5$   $22.♖xh5+-$ )  $19.♙xg4 hxg4$   $20.h5$ :

*Analysis Diagram*

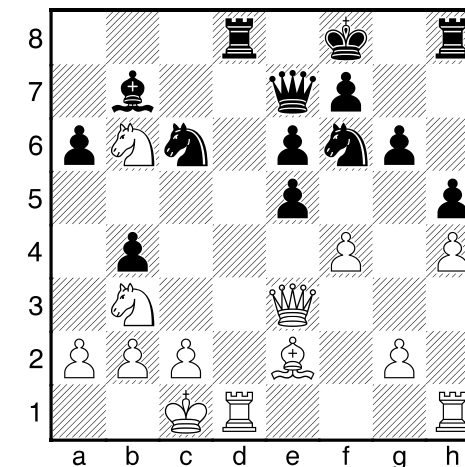


It looks like Black is busted. But not if he plays:  $20...g5 \square$ .  $21.fxg5 \text{ ♘e5}\infty$  the pawns on g-file look like they should be the opposite colours. White's g- and h- pawns look dangerous, but g5-g6 is met by  $...f5!$ , and the difference in quality between the ♘a4 and ♘e5 gives Black full equality.

Black's pawn sac with  $...g7-g5$  to get the e5 outpost is common in this structure, but unusual to see when White's kingside play seems so far advanced.

$18.♘b6 \text{ ♖d8}\infty$   $19.e5$   
 $19.♖hf1 \text{ ♔g7}\infty$ .

$19...dxe5$



$20.♖xd8+ \text{ ♘xd8}$

$20...♙xd8?$  doesn't look terrible, but the White pieces are too active.  $21.fxe5 \text{ ♘d5}$   $22.♘xd5 \text{ ♙xd5}$   $23.♙f3+- \text{ ♖b5}$  ( $23...♙d7$   $24.♘c5+-$  and  $\text{♙c5+}$  wins the ♘c6.)  $24.♙f4+-$  aiming for ♙f6 and ♖d1-d7/8. Black will have to pay to activate his ♖.

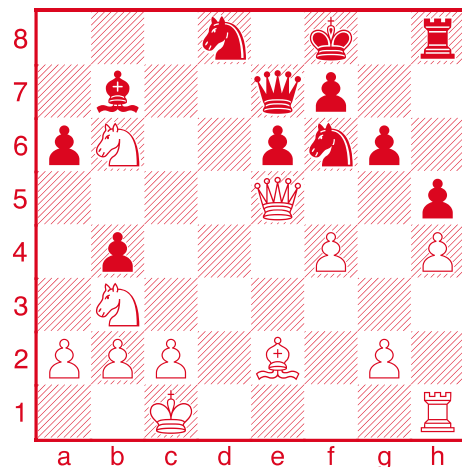
$21.♙xe5$



## Vettese v Stevens

*GM Bator Sambuev,  
always watching.*





### 21...♙xg2

Playable, but obviously dangerous with the rickety kingside. Any mistake now will be fatal.

Black can slow play to equality with 21...♙g7 which looks dangerous, but ...♘c6 will break the pin by forcing the ♙ off the diagonal: 22.♖d1 ♘c6 23.♙e3 (23.♖d7?? ♙xd7+) 23...♖d8=.

### 22.♖g1 ♙d5??

Already the fatal mistake.

22...♙b7? 23.♘c5! threat ♘bd7+ 23...♖g8 putting the ♖ on a safer square. (23...♙g7 24.f5□+- ♖e8 25.fxg6□ fxg6 26.♙xh5+-) 24.♘xb7 ♙xb7 25.♙xf6+- ♙xb6 26.♖d1□ ♙e3+ 27.♙b1□+-;

22...♙g7□ 23.♖xg2 ♙b7 forking the ♖ and ♘ recovers the piece. Black still has a lot of holes, but also an extra pawn; e.g. 24.♖g3 ♙xb6 25.♘c5 ♙c6□ (25...♘c6?? 26.♙xf6+-) 26.♙f3! (Taking on a6 with either piece loses to ...♙h1+ followed by a fork from h2 or ...♘c6 and activating the ♖h8.) 26...♙b5 27.♙e2 ♙c6=.

### 23.♘c8□+-

Deflecting the ♙ and winning the ♘f6 with a tempo on h8.

23...♘c6 24.♘xe7 ♘xe5  
25.♘xd5

1-0

## Final Boss

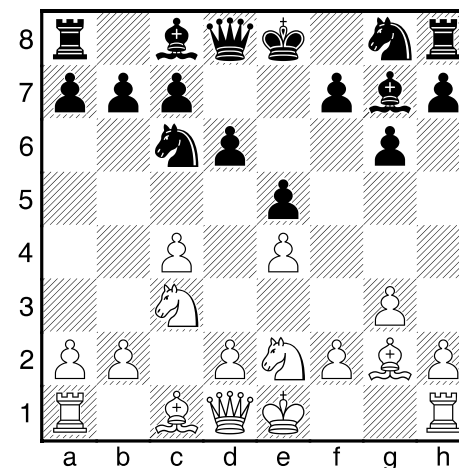
If you've paid any attention you'll have noticed **GM Bator Sambuev** all over this issue: in the notes, the background of many photos, and two games vs SRL. That's because this issue features Canada's youngest title-holders, and they *all* mastered their chops against Bator: he competes constantly, and he doesn't give draws. That makes him a good opponent, but can cost him when he plays to avoid draws...

## Gordon, David (2167) Sambuev, Bator (2561) A25

Eastern Ontario Open, Ottawa, Canada (2.1), 15.06.2024

**Notes: John Upper**

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 g6  
4.♙g2 ♙g7 5.e4 d6 6.♘ge2

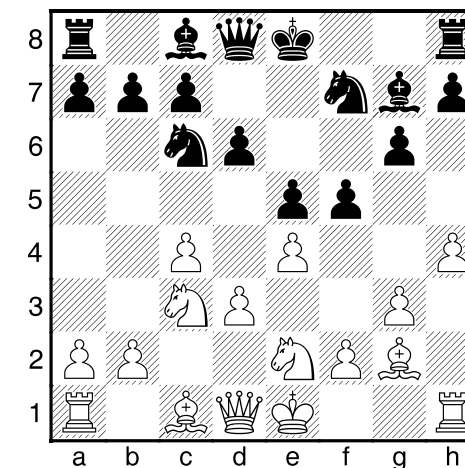


### The Botvinnik System

This is a kind of "formula" opening, since White's setup — c4, e4, d3, g3, ♘c3, ♙g2, ♘e2 — can be played almost without looking at what Black does. White also gets a safe position without conceding space. All of which make it an appealing repertoire choice for White.

Even so, strong players should not be unhappy to face it as Black: unlike other formula openings — the London, Colle, King's Indian Attack — the Botvinnik creates a more strategically complex middlegame, since the central pawn tension can be resolved in different ways by both sides, and because the only likely piece exchanges — knights on d4 or d5 — also dramatically change the pawn structure. So there is plenty of scope for the better player to prove it... on both sides.

6...♘h6!? 7.h4!? f5 8.d3 ♘f7



SF16 rates this position at around +0.25 after several moves — h5, ♙e3, b4, exf5 — but Black outscores White from



here in performance rating: Elo+50 vs Elo-40. Does the wider range of decent options for White make it more likely that White will go wrong over the long run, giving the higher-rated Black players a better chance of winning? Or maybe White players who opt for the Botvinnik System underestimate the complexity of the middle games they reach?

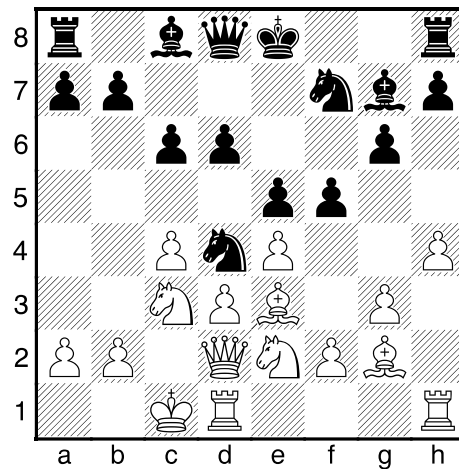
### 9.♔e3

9.♘d5 ♘e7 10.h5 ♘xd5 11.hxg6 hxg6 12.♖xh8+ ♕xh8 13.cxd5± ♕d7 14.♗b3 b5 15.♔e3 a5 16.♖c1 b4 17.♗c4 f4 18.♕d2 ♖a7 19.a3 ♗f6? 20.f3? (Both players overlook a fantastic tactic: 20.♕h3!!+- ♕xh3 21.♗b5+ ♔e7 22.♗b8+-) 20...♕g7 21.axb4 axb4 22.♗xb4 ♘d8!± Kostenko,P (2466)–Short,N (2664) Kolkata, 2015.

### 9...♘d4 10.♗d2

Bator had been here before: 10.h5 g5 11.h6 ♕f6 12.♘d5? (♔12.exf5±) 12...♘xe2 13.♗xe2 f4!± Rodrigue Lemieux,S (2303)–Sambuev,B (2504) Quebec–ch Montreal, 2021.

### 10...c6 11.0-0-0



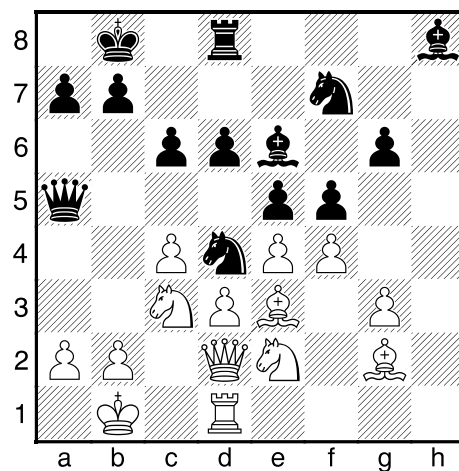
### 11...♕e6

11...h5!?

### 12.h5 ♗a5 13.hxg6 hxg6

14.♖xh8+ ♕xh8 15.♔b1 0-0-0

16.f4 ♔b8



17.♘xd4!

Creating a fork on d4 seems stupid, but after...

### 17...exd4 18.♘e2

... the ♘ is safe and the Black ♗ is attacked, so there's no time to take the ♕. The exchange on d4 has reduced the pawn tension in the center — which makes things easier for the lower-rated player — and the ♕h8 means White will get to enjoy the h-file for one move before Black can contest it with his ♖.

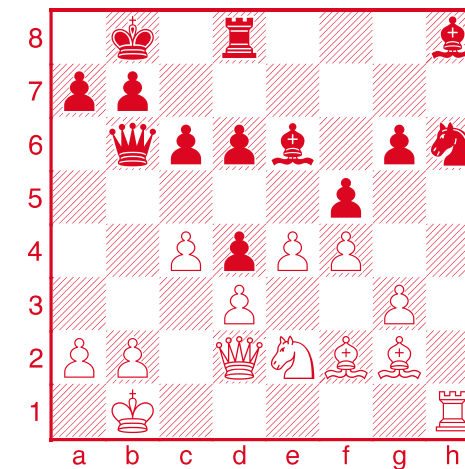
### 18...♗b6!?

Keeping the queens on and defending d4, but Black's ♗ is not well-placed here. 18...♗xd2 19.♕xd2 ♕f6 20.♖h1=.

### 19.♕f2 ♘h6

19...c5 shoring up d4 is better in computer terms, but Black would be very hard-pressed to create any winning chances after: 20.♖h1±.

20.♖h1!



...♕g7, ...♘g4, or ...fxe4?

### 20...♕g7??

9min 45 sec on this — Black's longest think of the game so far — and it's a lemon.

White is better in all lines, but the other two options were not forced losses:

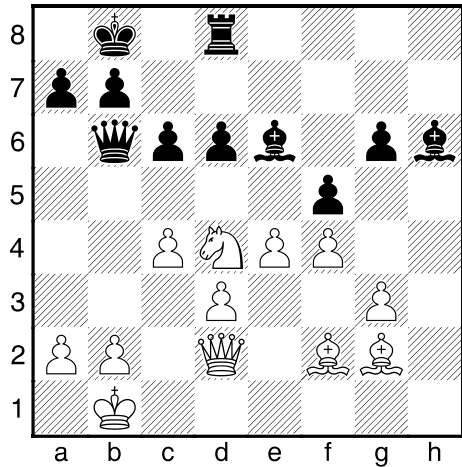
♔20...fxe4 21.dxe4 (21.♕xe4!? ♘f5 22.g4 ♘e3 23.g5±) 21...♘f7 (21...♘g4? 22.♖xh8+-) 22.♕xd4 ♕xd4 23.♘xd4 ♕xc4 24.♗c3!±;

♔20...♘g4 21.♖xh8± ♖xh8 22.♕xd4 ♗d8 23.♕xh8 ♗xh8± 24.♗c3 ♗h2 25.♕f3± Black's ♗ activity looks tremendous, but there's a snag: if 25...♗f2? 26.♗d4!!+- and White wins!



21. ♖xh6 ♘+  
Some fish have teeth.

21... ♗xh6 22. ♘xd4 ♘



22... ♗xc4  
Desperado.  
22... ♗d7 23. ♘xf5+- with a double attack on b6 and h6.

23. dxc4 ♔a6 24. ♘e6!  
24. ♘e6 ♖d7 saves the ♖ and d6, but 25. ♘c5 is fini.

One mistake and it was all over for Black.

1-0

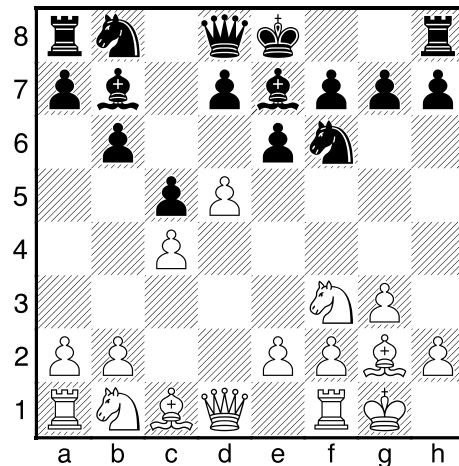
## Moses, Neil (2225) Chiku-Ratte, Olivier Kenta (2455)

A30

Eastern Ontario Open Ottawa, Canada (5.2), 16.06.2024

Notes: John Upper

1. ♘f3 ♘f6 2. g3 b6 3. ♗g2 ♗b7 4. d4 e6 5. 0-0 ♗e7 6. c4 c5 7. d5!



A pseudo-sac which turns the game into a Benoni where both of Black's ♗s are misplaced: Black's LSB concedes f5, and imagining some of the following positions with the Black ♗ on g7 will show you how much better it would be there.

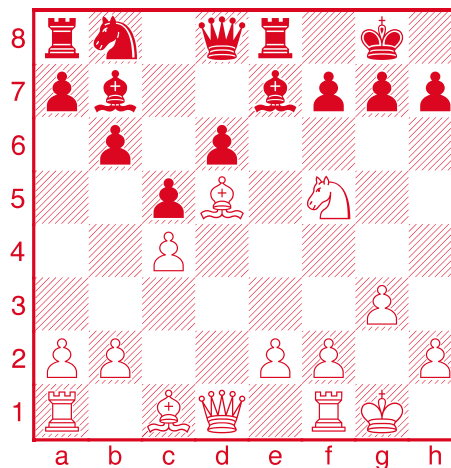
This line is so good for White that the strongest Black players do not risk 6...c5 against their closest rivals, but go for ...00 and ...♘e4, or ...d6.

I'll assume the IM playing Black knows all this, but hoped he'd be able to outplay his lower-rated opponent in the complications.... which he does.

7...exd5 8. ♘h4 0-0 9. cxd5

Here's the first game in the database with this d4-d5, ♘h4 sac idea. It leaves a very Capablanca-like impression: 9. ♘c3 ♖e8 10. ♘f5 d6 11. ♘xd5 (11. ♘e3!? is a neat way to redirect the ♘ from f3 to d5.) 11... ♘xd5 12. ♗xd5!:

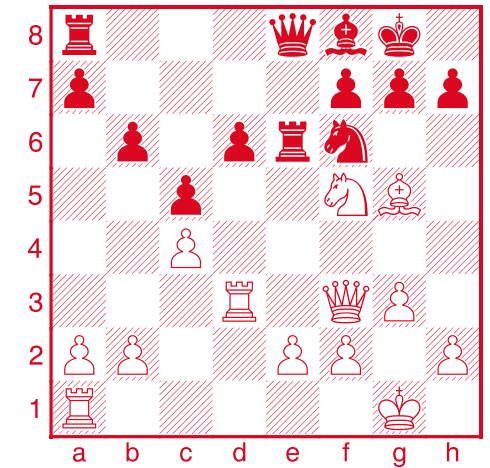
Analysis Diagram



12... ♘c6? 13. ♗xf7+!!+- leads to a winning king hunt where literally every one of White's moves is the only way to win. 13... ♔xf7 14. ♖d5+ ♘f6! (14... ♔f8? 15. ♘h6!!) 15. ♗g5+ ♘xg5 16. ♖f7 ♗f6 17. ♘xg7 ♗xg7 18. h4+ ♘h6 19. ♖f4+ ♘g6 20. h5+ ♘h5 21. g4+ ♘h4 22. ♔g2 ♘d4+ 23. e4 ♗xe4+ 24. f3 ♗xf3+ 25. ♖xf3 ♖e2+ 26. ♖f2 ♖xf2+ 27. ♔xf2 ♖ and ♖h1#.

12... ♗xd5 13. ♖xd5 ♘d7 14. ♖d1! (14. ♘xd6? ♗xd6 15. ♖xd6 ♖xe2 16. ♖d1 looks like trouble, but Black escapes with 16... ♖f6 or the clever 16... ♖e8!?) 14... ♘f6 15. ♖f3! ♗f8 16. ♗g5! ♖e6! 17. ♖d3 ♖e8:

Analysis Diagram

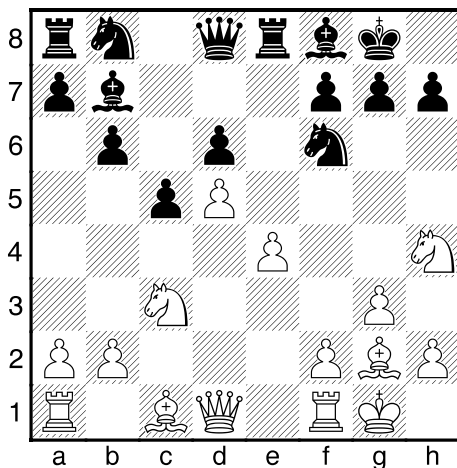


18. ♖h6+!

The "petite combinaison".

18...gxf6 (18...♔h8 19. ♖xf7+ overloads the ♔.) 19. ♕xf6 ♕g7 20. ♕xg7 ♔xg7 21. ♖ad1+- and White converted his huge positional advantage. [Frydman,P -Kohn,S POL-ch02 Lodz, 1927.](#)

9...d6 10. ♖c3 ♖e8 11.e4 ♕f8



12.f4?!

Here, and on the next few moves, SF would play ♖f5 as White, and prevent it with ...g6 as Black.

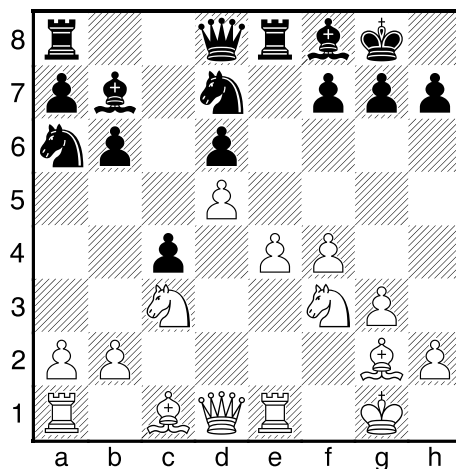
After 12. ♖f5! White threatens to clamp with a4 or attack with g4-g5, and ...b5 now fails with the ♖ on f5: 12...b5? 13. ♖xb5!

♖xe4 14. ♔g4+- Forking e4 and g7, which is the big difference between ♖f5 and f2-f4. Black can squirm, but ends up in with a fatally weak ♔. 14...g6 (14... ♖f6 15. ♖h6+!+- and the ♕b7 hangs at the end.) 15. ♕xe4 ♕c8 16. ♕d3 ♔h8 (16... ♔d7 17. ♖h6+! ♕xh6 18. ♔xd7 ♕xd7 19. ♖c7+-) 17. ♖fxd6 ♕xd6 18. ♖xd6 ♔xd6 19. ♔f3+- White's up only a pawn, but the dark square weaknesses around the Black ♔ are worth a couple more.

12... ♖fd7

♖12...b5!∞ 13.e5 b4 14.exf6 bxc3∞.

13. ♖e1 ♖a6 14. ♖f3 c4



15. ♕f1?!

The beginning of a sequence that sees White trade his e4 pawn for Black's a and c-pawns — a good trade for Black. ♖15. ♖d4 ♖ac5 16.b3!±

15.e5? doesn't work, and the reasons why show why some players love the Benoni: 15... dxe5 16.fxe5 ♖b4! 17. ♕f1 (17. e6? fxe6 18.dxe6 ♕c5+ 19. ♕e3 (19. ♔h1 ♖d3-+) 19... ♖d3-+) 17...b5! threatening ...♖c5 and ...♖bd3, when Black's ♖s

attack White's advanced center from the rear. 18.a3!? ♖xd5!! (18... ♔b6+ aiming for ...♖xd5 and doubling on the diagonal works too!) 19. ♖xd5 ♖c5-+ and suddenly the ♕b7 makes sense: one of the White ♖s will drop.

15... ♖c8

15...b5!? another Benoni like sac for rapid development.

16. ♖b5 ♖dc5 17. ♖xa7 ♖a8

18. ♖b5 ♖xe4∞



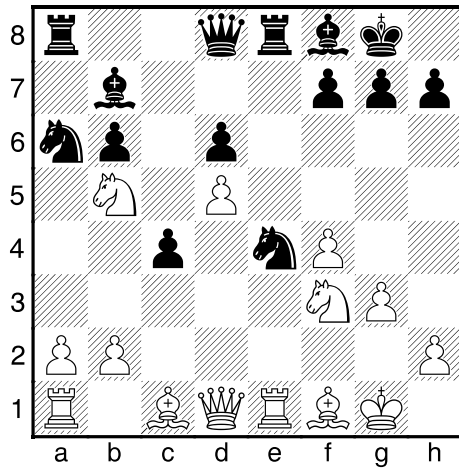
2024 Toronto Rapid

Andrew Bruziewics, Neil Moses, Sarthak Deshpande, Sean Liu



Chess Canada  
Across Canada



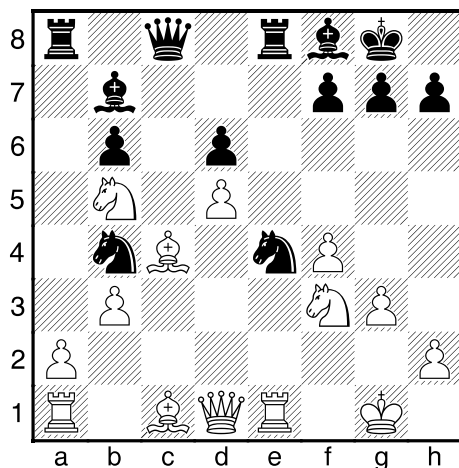


### 19. ♖xc4 ♔c8?!

The ♔ is not well placed here: ...♔c5 is not really a threat, and Black will lose time if his ♘e4 has to move. There are lines where Black gets ...♘xd5xf4 and ...♔g4+, but White can avoid them.

♞19... ♘f6.

### 20. b3 ♘b4



### 21. ♖e3?

Chess is hard.

SF rates this completely normal looking move as nearly -2 points worse than a2-a4! The *general idea* is that a2-a4 makes the a-pawn safe and gives the DSB a good square on a3. But the details — as in many Benoni positions — are highly tactical, and can only be understood through variations:

After 21.a4:

The tactics work for White, since the double attack created by ...♔c5+ always fails to a ♘ fork on c7:

a) 21... ♘xd5? 22. ♖xd5 ♔c5+ 23. ♖e3 ♔xd5 24. ♘c7!± is a triple fork, so exchanging on d1 doesn't save Black;

b) 21... ♘xd5? 22. ♖xd5 ♔c5+ 23. ♖e3 ♔xd5 24. ♔xd5 ♖xd5 25. ♘c7+-.



## IM Olivier Kenta

c) If Black continues as in the game with 21... ♘f6, then 22. ♖xe8 ♘xe8 23. ♖a3! chases a ♘ that is menacing d5 back to the edge of the board. Once again, the double-attack with

23... ♔c5+ fails, this time to 24. ♘fd4!. Black can win the d5 pawn at the cost of fatally tangling his pieces: 24... ♘f6 25. ♖c1 ♘fxd5 26. ♔d2 tying Black to the ♘b4 and now moving the ♖c4 wins.

### 21... ♘f6!

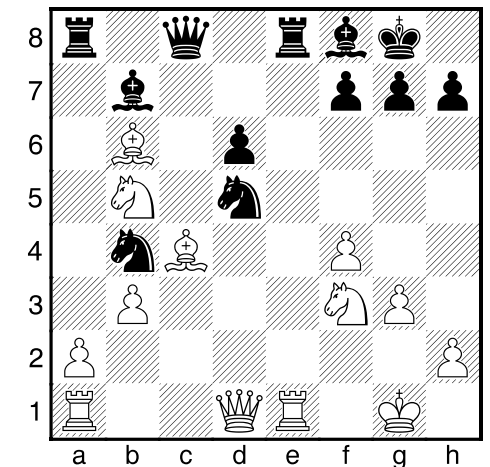
Suddenly Black is better!

### 22. ♖xb6?!

SF prefers 22. ♖d4± since taking the b-pawn loses a tempo in a volatile position after ...♘xd5. I'll leave it to readers to pursue this.

### 22... ♘fxd5?!

Again, SF rates 22... ♘bxd5 as +1 better. Giving up pressure on a2 for kingside tactics using the ♘f6, maybe?



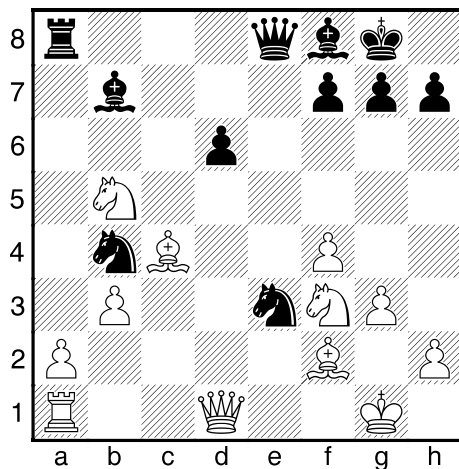
## 23. ♖xe8?

Control over the e-file gives Black a winning attack on the exposed white King. ♖23. ♕f2 ♖xe1+ 24. ♘xe1∞.

## 23... ♙xe8

The loose ♕b6 now costs White. Had he played 22. ♕d4 instead of taking on b6 he could now go ♙d2 with equality.

## 24. ♕f2 ♘e3!-+



White's king will be so exposed that he is now lost no matter which White ♕ gets traded for the ♘.

## 25. ♕xe3

This speeds things up due to the pretty tactic Black plays in the

game.

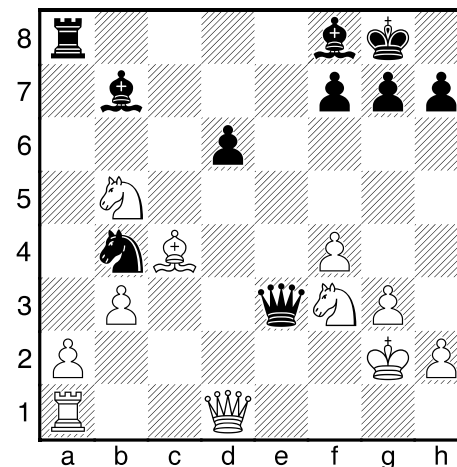
The best alternatives were trickier but not objectively better or essentially different: **after exchanges Black has a winning attack on the light squares.**

25. ♘c7? ♘xd1 26. ♘xe8 ♕xf3-+;

25. ♙d2 (makes the ♙ safe and forks the ♘s) 25... ♘ec2! 26. ♖c1 ♕xf3 27. ♘c7 ♙b8! very important, and much better than ... ♙c6: Black will recapture on a8 with the ♕, and then put the ♙ on the tip of the spear. (27... ♙c6? 28. ♘xa8 ♙xa8 29. ♖xc2 ♘xc2∞ White will be a pawn up, but his ♙ is very exposed.) 28. ♘xa8 ♕xa8 29. ♖xc2 ♙b7-+;

25. ♙e2 changes the tactics, but the fundamental idea is the same: Black wins by keeping the queen and LSB on: 25... ♘xc4□ 26. ♙xc4 (26. ♙xe8 hangs f3.) 26... ♕xf3 27. ♙xb4 ♖b8□ 28. ♘c7!?! (28. a4 ♕a8-+; 28. ♙c3 ♕b7!-+) 28... ♙c8 29. ♙c3 ♙b7-+.

25... ♙xe3+ 26. ♙g2



## 26... ♘c2!

Taking the knight drops the ♖a1 to 27... ♙xf3+ etc.

After 26... ♘c2 White can save the ♖ with 27. ♖c1, but just like the Vettese – Stevens game, a ♘ on the rim is a grim reaper: 27... ♘e1+!:

28. ♙h3 ♘xf3-+ with an extra piece and a massive attack;

28. ♙xe1 28... ♙xf3+ 29. ♙h3 ♙h5#.

0-1

## photos

Credits appear under *most* pix.

Uncredited pix on pages 41/72, 61, 98, 101 are from social media posts, IIRC. If you want to ID them, please let me know.

All others by John Upper.

Some are AI repaired/enhanced.

## Corrections: