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Legendary Chess Careers

Nona Gaprindashvili



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KEY TO SYMBOLS

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

PREFACE

My interview with Nona Gaprindashvili took place almost a decade ago. The original idea was to make a book of interviews with former world class players who made it to the World Championship Candidates matches, and one interview with the female player who dominated women's chess during almost all of the sixties and seventies.

Unlike present day top players, former greats can talk much more freely about their secrets and approaches to chess. Also, the achievements of the world champions are well known, but we know less about women's world champions. However, the original idea never materialised. Grandmaster Csaba Balogh came up with the alternative idea to make separate books of these interviews, as he thought there was enough rich material in each interview for a whole book. I am grateful to him for this.

The first two books of the series were on Timman and Portisch. Fortunately, these books were successful, and Chess Evolution decided to publish some more. In this book you can read firstly the original interview with Gaprindashvili. As it is a whole book on the Georgian women's world champion, I was able to provide more material than original planned, so I happily analysed further superb games from the Georgian chess legend. She was also kind enough to answer further questions from me, so a second, shorter interview can be found in this book as well.

I would like to express my gratitude to the many people who helped with this book. First the strong players Maya Chiburdanidze, Ketevan Arakhamia, Zurab Azmaiparashvili and Maria Ivánka who know Gaprindashvili very well and wrote appraisals about their contemporary. Dave Path and Nick Aplin helped me with the English in the interviews. I also would like to express my gratitude to Sylvester Urban for raising the level of my English in the second part of the book. Robin Yu also contributed a bit to that part. Natalia Edgzveradze gave invaluable encouragement and inspiration during the writing process. Of course, the biggest thanks go to Gaprindashvili herself, who was kind enough to give the interviews. I hope the quality of the book will please her.

For the second part of the book, I selected games using a slightly different method than in the first part where I mainly focused on the quality of the games. In the second part I focused on two things: games that Gaprindashvili won at very important moments in her career, and games that resulted in Gaprindashvili achieving a new career high, such as at World Championship matches and Olympiads. These victories illustrate how strong she was, but they will also serve at least two more purposes: they will entertain you and one can learn a lot from them.

NONA GAPRINDASHVILI PHOTOGALLERY





1. [photo from N. Gaprindashvili archives].
2. [photo from N. Gaprindashvili archives].
3. [photo from N. Gaprindashvili archives].
4. [photo from N. Gaprindashvili archives].
5. [photo from N. Gaprindashvili archives].
6. [photo from N. Gaprindashvili archives].
7. Nona Gaprindashvili vs Corrie Vreeken-Bouwman, Hoogovens tournament 1963 (photo by Harry Pot / Anefo).

INTERVIEW

I was a member of the Singapore delegation in the World Youth age group championships in Batumi, Georgia in 2006. In the opening ceremony special homage was paid to the living legend of Georgian chess, Nona Gaprindashvili.

The idea to interview her was born then. We all know she is one of the greatest female chess players has ever seen. However, few know exactly how much she has achieved. Most of us do not know her style of chess, and even less about her personality.

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T.K.: Could you please talk about your family background?

N.G.: *I was born in Zugdidi, Western Georgia. It is a town of roughly 70,000 people.*

My father was a teacher, and my mother was a housewife who took care of my four brothers and me. Later one more brother was born.

T.K.: How did you start playing chess?

N.G.: *I started to play because my brothers played chess. Actually I played other kinds of sports as well, as they did too. In*

1953 one of my brothers and I were supposed to play in the Zugdidi team together. But in the end only I played, and made 50 percent on the woman's board, as he decided to prepare for university exams. One of my brothers participated twice in the Georgian Championship.

Vahtang Karseladze noticed me and started to work with me and soon he convinced me to move to Tbilisi. I had the idea to move to our capital earlier because of chess, however my parents agreed only when he convinced them.

By the way, he was a trainer of several strong players including Nana Alexandria.

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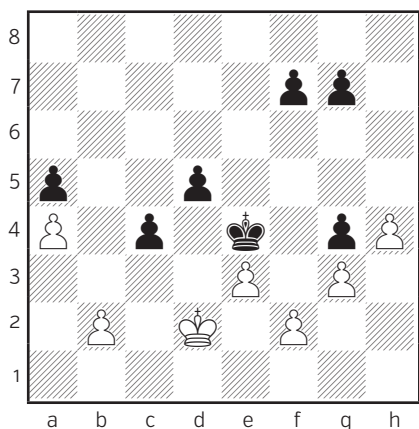
I decided to check Karseladze's games. He was a candidate master, which is perhaps the reason I could not find many games from him, so one cannot draw an exact picture of his play.

He played one game against Keres in 1946. Karseladze was not able to resist the great Estonian grandmaster, who was then perhaps the strongest player in the world (surely in the top three). Karseladze as White lasted only 22 moves. He was also beaten by other players. I only found games where he was White, and in those games he avoided proper openings. The game

analysed below is in my opinion very instructive and shows that he understood endgames well.

- **V. Karseladze**
- **I. Veltmänder**

SOVIET TEAM CHAMPIONSHIP FINAL
LENINGRAD (4), 1953



White is lost because Black's king dominates the centre.

42.h5!?

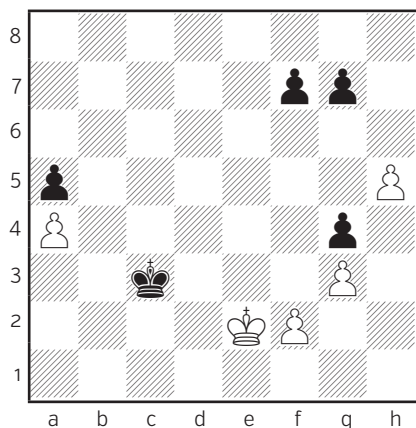
Karseladze's move shows that he understands pawn endings. Such an endgame can always turn into a race, and a tempo closer to promotion can decide the outcome. 42.♔e2 would lose because of 42...d4 43.exd4 ♖xd4 44.♔d2 f6 45.♔e2 (45.♔c2 ♔c5 46.♔c3 g6–+) 45...c3 46.bxc3+ and Black easily wins the race.

42...d4 43.exd4 ♖xd4 44.♔e2

44.♔c2 loses more simply. 44...♔c5 45.♔c3 f6 White loses because he would be in zugzwang.

44...c3 45.bxc3+ ♔xc3

It looks like Black wins the race by far.



46.f4!

Karseladze makes his opponent work for the win by pushing another pawn closer to promotion. Pushing the f-pawn one square only gives Black less opportunity to go wrong: 46.f3 f5 47.fxg4 fxg4 48.♔e3 ♔b4 49.♔f4 ♔xa4 Black wins the race.

a) 50.♔xg4 ♔b3 51.♔g5 a4 52.♔g6 a3 53.♔xg7 a2 and Black's pawn promotes with check.

b) 50.♔g5 ♔b3 51.♔g6 a4 52.♔xg7 a3 53.h6 a2 54.h7 a1♚+ 55.♔g8 ♚a8+ 56.♔g7 ♚b7+ 57.♔g8 ♚b8+ 58.♔g7 ♚xg3 Black wins as he will exchange queens.

46...♖b4?

Veltmänder falls for the trick by immediately going for the race. He probably stopped calculating when he promoted to a queen, but sometimes that is too early.

It is worth looking at this very instructive position in detail.

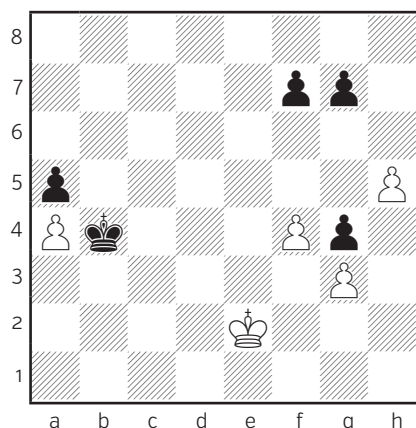
a) 46...gxf3+? This capture is careless as it helps White's king in the race. 47.♖xf3 ♖b4 48.g4 f6 49.♖f4 ♖xa4 50.g5 (50.♖f5? ♖b3 51.♖g6 a4 52.♖xg7 a3 53.h6 a2 54.h7 a1♚ 55.h8♚ f5+ Black wins.) 50...fxg5+ 51.♖xg5 ♖b3 52.♖g6 a4 53.♖xg7 a3 54.h6 a2 55.h7 a1♚ + 56.♖g8 This is a well known draw: to win, White would need two extra tempi, White's king should be on e4 and it should be Black to move.

b) 46...f5! If Black stops the f-pawn it can lead to a queen ending, but under favourable conditions. 47.♖e3 ♖b4 48.♖d4 ♖xa4 49.♖e5 ♖b3 50.♖xf5 a4 51.♖g6 a3 52.♖xg7 a2 53.f5 a1♚ + 54.f6 ♖c4 (54...♚e5 55.h6 ♚g5+ White drops a pawn and loses.) 55.h6 ♚e5 Black wins. Interestingly, if the g4-pawn was on g5, the position would be a draw. It is not because the pawn is closer to promotion, but because the g5-square is available. 56.h7 ♚g5+ 57.♖f7 ♚h6 58.♖g8 ♚g6+ 59.♖h8 ♚xf6+ 60.♖g8 ♚g6+ 61.♖h8 ♚d6 Black wins as on the next move he

can take on g3 and exchange the newly promoted queen on h8.

c) 46...f6 47.f5 (47.♖e3 f5) 47...♖d4! Black switches targets. 48.♖d2 ♖e4 49.♖c3 ♖f3 This race is absolutely one sided.

d) 46...♖d4! is the simplest win. Black just goes after the g3-pawn. 47.♖d2 ♖e4 48.♖e2 f5 49.♖f2 ♖d3 White drops the g-pawn.

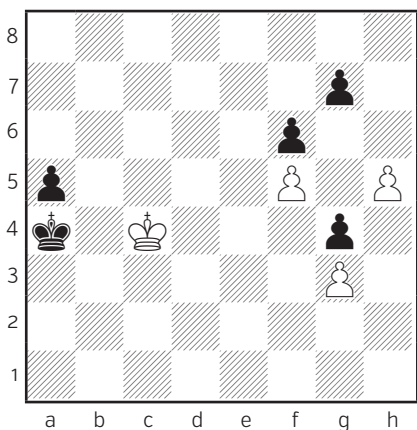


47.f5!

Another pawn gets closer to promotion. White threatens to create a winning passed pawn.

47...f6 48.♖d3 ♖xa4

Going for the kingside pawns no longer wins. 48...♖c5 49.♖e4 ♖c4 (49...♖b4 50.♖d5) 50.♖f4 ♖d4 51.♖xg4 ♖e4 52.h6 (52.♖h3 ♖xf5 53.g4+ ♖f4 54.♖h4=) 52...gxh6 53.♖h5 ♖xf5 54.♖xh6 The position is drawn.



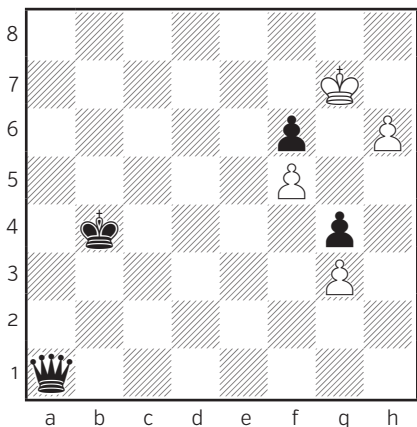
49. ♔c4!

The king shoulders in and gets closer to the g7-pawn. The move wins a vital tempo in the race.

49... ♕a3 50. ♔d5!

White goes after the g7-pawn.

50... ♕b4 51. ♔e6 a4 52. ♔f7 a3
53. ♔xg7 a2 54. h6 a1 ♕



55. h7

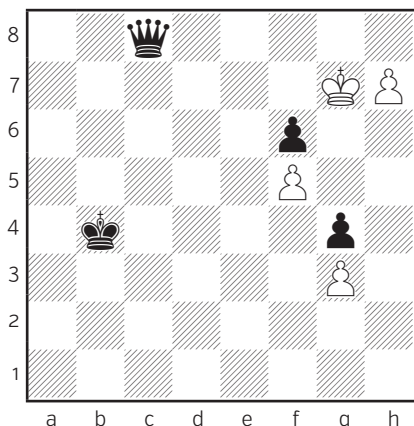
Karseladze is lucky the position is drawn, but credit to him not giving

up and finding this somewhat extraordinary idea. White's problem is that the queen cannot get to h8 due to the position of the White king.

55... ♕a7+

Black can give plenty of checks, but without much effect.

56. ♔g6 ♕b8 57. ♔g7 ♕c7+ 58. ♔g6
♕c8 59. ♔g7 ♕d7+ 60. ♔g6 ♕c8
61. ♔g7



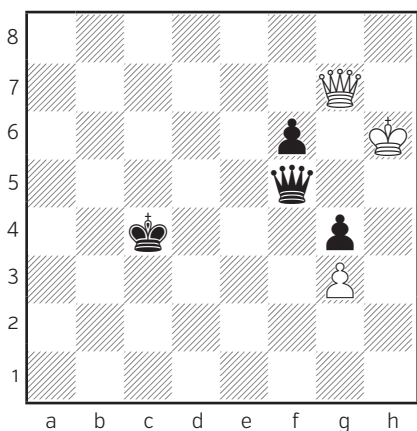
61... ♕xf5

Black resigns himself to a queen ending with an extra pawn.

62. h8 ♕ ♕d7+ 63. ♔h6

White's king is much closer to the pawns; therefore the position is drawn. Karseladze holds it easily.

63... ♕d2+ 64. ♔g7 ♕d7+ 65. ♔h6
♕f5 66. ♕g7 ♔c4



67. ♔g6

White can even offer to exchange queens.

67... ♚f3 68. ♔h5 f5 69. ♔g5 1/2

////////////////////////////////////

T.K.: When did you decide to take up chess as a profession and when did you first anticipate having a chance to win the world championships?

N.G.: *After I arrived in Tbilisi special results already started to flow in the first year.*

Among other successes I won the semi-final of the Soviet Championship, qualifying for the final. I simply had no time to think, it all came so naturally.

I really can't remember when I first thought about the title. Let me repeat, it all came very fast.

T.K.: What is the most important side of chess for you?

N.G.: *They all say I have a strong character, whenever I sit down before a chess-board it is a celebration for me. Whoever I face over the board I try to defeat. My latest tournament was the men's Senior World Championship, this is the only title that I have pursued and yet has eluded me. I was having a wonderful tournament, I was sharing first place with two rounds to go. I faced Spassov [Nona became excited talking about the game...]. I played a complex opening, my opponent started to have problems. A day later he admitted that he had not understood the position, not realising he was in trouble.*

T.K.: Why don't we look at that game in the database?

N.G.: *Let's do that!*

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You can enjoy her game against Spassov with the commentary she gave while we went through this game. I have added a few comments of my own — these are indicated with [TK].

29... ♕g7

[TK] Black by purposefully bringing new forces into the attack and has achieved an overwhelming position.

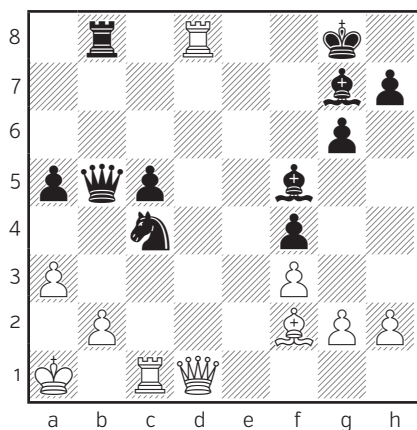
30.e5 ♖b5

[TK] In the next few moves Nona can choose between several winning possibilities.

31. ♔a1 ♘f5 32. ♗d1 ♖xd3 33. ♖xd3 ♘xe5 34. ♖xd6 ♘xc4

[TK] With such strong play Black is about to force resignation.

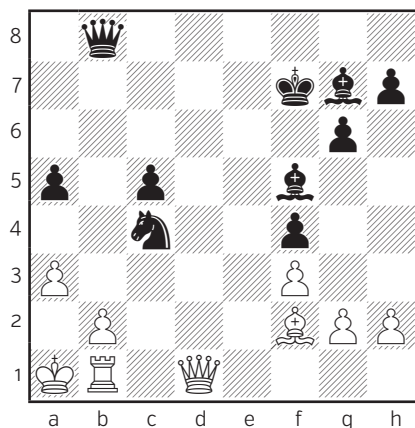
35. ♖d8+



35... ♖xd8?

This doesn't completely let the win slip away, however it makes it more difficult. 35... ♖f7!! I saw this win, but I thought the other continuation was winning as well. Unfortunately I missed something along the way. 36. ♖xb8 ♗xb8! [TK] The computer finds the most clinical way to finish the game. (36... ♕xb2+ she did not tell me

how she was going to finish the game but probably like this. 37. ♔a2 ♗xb8 38. ♖xc4 ♕e6 wins as well.) 37. ♖b1 (37. ♖c2 ♗b3)

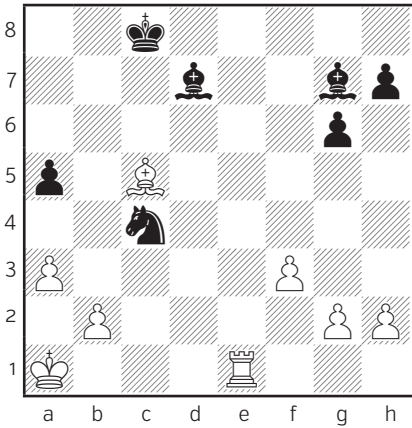


37...a4!! It is quite incredible that this silent move leads to by far the fastest checkmate. 38. ♗e2 (38. ♗xa4 ♕e6 39. ♗a4 ♘xa3) 38... ♘xb2 39. ♖xb2 ♗b3 Black checkmates in five.

36. ♖xd8+ ♔f7 37. ♗c7+ ♔g8 38. ♖d8+ ♔f7 39. ♗c7+ ♕d7 40. ♗xf4+

In taking on d8 I missed that I would lose this pawn.

40... ♔e8 41. ♖e1+ ♔d8 42. ♗g5+ ♔c8 43. ♗xc5+ ♗xc5 44. ♕xc5



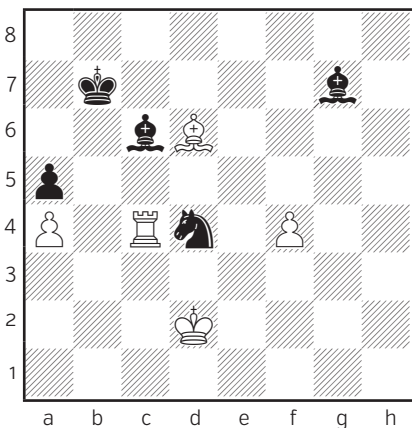
44... ♖xb2

Black is still better in the ending.

45. ♖e7 ♕f6 46. ♖f7 ♕c3 47. ♕e7 ♖c4+ 48. ♖b1 ♕f5+ 49. ♖c1 ♖b2+ 50. ♖d1 ♖e3+

Avoiding the exchange of the h-pawn for the g-pawn with 50...h5!? is worth considering.

51. ♖e2 ♖xg2 52. ♕d6 ♕d7 53. ♖xh7 g5 54. ♖f7 ♖f4+ 55. ♖d2 ♖e6 56. ♖h7 ♕g7 57. h4 gxh4 58. ♖xh4 ♖b7 59. ♖c4 ♕c6 60. f4 ♖d4 61. a4



61... ♕xa4??

I still wanted to win the game, and I planned to play 61. ♕d5. I touched the bishop and moved towards that square, then I realised that c7 check was possible. When I took the pawn my opponent warned me about touch-move, but I told him I had not let it go so I still had the freedom to move the bishop elsewhere. This is at the least losing, but did not really give any hope of survival.

62. ♖xa4 ♖c6 63. ♕e7 ♖b5 64. ♖a2 ♖c4 65. ♖a3 ♕h6 66. ♖a4+ ♖d5 67. ♖d3 ♖c6 68. ♕g5 ♕f8 69. ♖a1 ♕g7 70. ♖a4 ♖b4+ 71. ♖e2 ♖c6 72. ♕h4 ♕c3 73. ♕e1 ♖b4 74. ♕xb4 axb4 75. ♖d3 ♖c5 76. f5 ♖e5+ 77. ♖e4 ♖f7 78. ♖a7 ♖d6+ 79. ♖e5 ♖c4+ 80. ♖e6 ♖e3 81. ♖c7+ ♖b6 1-0

According to Gaprindashvili, the next day the well-known grandmaster Vasiukov asked her several times to accept his condolences for the loss.



T.K.: Did you participate in this year's Senior World Championship?

N.G.: *I was busy with my grandson [just mentioning her grandson made her smile], therefore I was not able to play, but if my health allows I will try next year.*

T.K.: Going through your games I noticed that while with White you

often play very aggressive openings, with Black you play lines like the Pirc and Paulsen where there is very little contact between the two camps. Was it designed or did it just happen like that?

N.G.: *You know, when I played women's tournaments they often wanted a draw against me, with those lines I had control over what type of positions would arise.*

T.K.: According my database you played 1.d4 481 times and 1.e4 273 times. How did that happen?

N.G.: *I mainly played 1.e4 during the first part of my career. I wanted to change for my Chiburdanidze match. The work was not completed in time, but soon after I shifted to 1.d4. It is interesting that after the Chiburdanidze match I started to work with Borisenko whom I had known before, as he was the husband of a strong woman player. It is a pity I did not meet him before, because only then I learned how to work on chess. He really had a very strong effect on me. Later I continued the same kind of work with Ubilava. It is strange that after so many world championship final matches and so many Olympic gold medals I came to this realization.*

T.K.: How did you prepare for those matches? Did you follow a pattern or did you prepare each of your matches in a different way?

N.G.: *We looked at my opponent's games and decided what opening to play. Sometimes we picked a new line, sometimes just corrected the repertoire a bit. Generally I concentrated on my play over the board. I also included physical preparation.*

At the best tournament of my life in Lone Pine 1977 I did not win a single game in the opening. I won them by out-playing the opponent. I believe both my tournament result and the quality of my play were better than in any other tournament in my career. By the way, when a player works on chess he or she should feel so absorbed that they do not notice time passing.

T.K.: I noticed that you often preferred knights to bishops. Were you aware of that?

N.G.: *Yes, I like knights, but I am generally practical about it. I had an argument with the excellent Estonian player Nei, who preferred bishops. When we had a training session I had a chance to defend my point of view, I managed to beat him like that. I often chose opening variations with knights against bishop.*

T.K.: What part of chess is the most appealing for you?

N.G.: *I like chess very much; it has always been a celebration for me to sit behind the chessboard. I called my book in the Georgian language, My Thing – Chess. I am a player, I like to play all kind*

of games, for example pool. It is a pity there was no chance to play it in the Soviet Union. Or I play or I read. I have read all the books of many authors. I have read all kinds of books. I even read legal books. When I was young I would have liked to study law at university, but I was already engaged in chess. Nowadays I mainly read detective novels, not serious books anymore.

T.K.: In what language do you read?

N.G.: *Mainly in Russian, I can read English, only too slowly. Many things have not been translated into Georgian, but I read from modern Georgian writers. When I go to a bookshop, I often end up buying 15 books.*

T.K.: Which is the most memorable game of your life?

N.G.: *[After a long think] I do not like to select one. My game against Lazarevic...*

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And we started to search for the game in the database. Here I analyse this staggering game for you, including some of Nona's comments:

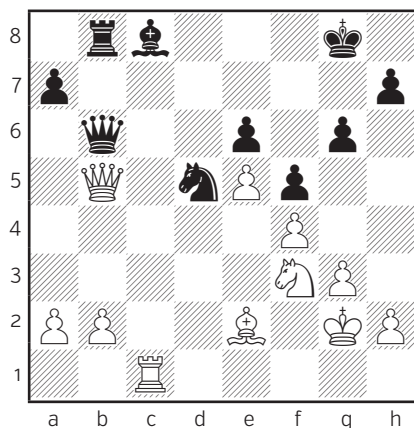
• M. Lazarevic • N. Gaprindashvili

CANDIDATE (WOMEN)

VRNJACKA BANJA (10), 1961

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1.f4 c5 2.♘f3 g6 3.e3 ♔g7 4.d3 e6 5.♙e2 ♘e7 6.o-o ♘bc6 7.e4 d6 8.c3 o-o 9.♙e3 ♖b8 10.d4 f5 11.e5 cxd4 12.cxd4 ♘d5 13.♙c1 ♙h6 14.g3 dxe5 15.dxe5 b5 16.♘c3 ♚b6+ 17.♔g2 ♖d8 18.♘xd5 ♖xd5 19.♚b3 ♙f8 20.♙e3 ♙c5 21.♙xc5 ♚xc5 22.♖fd1 ♘e7!? 23.♖ac1 ♚b6 24.♖xd5 ♘xd5 25.♚xb5



25...♚e3?!!

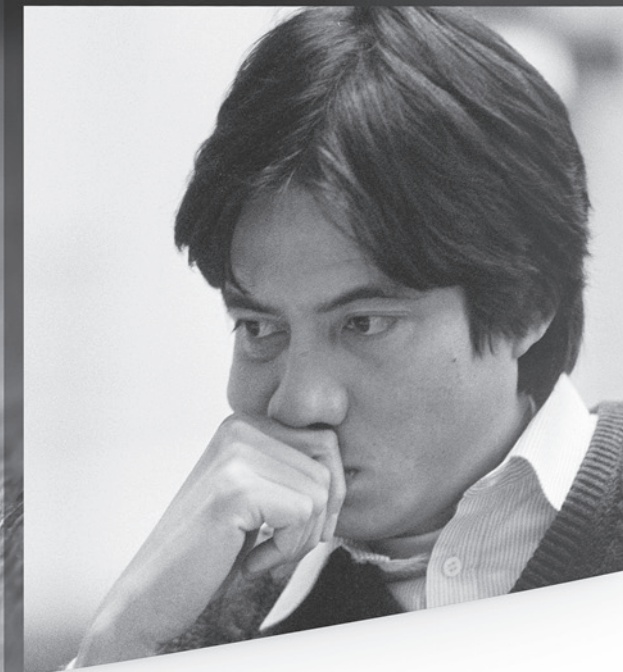
My opponent played the opening without any particular aim. I played this combination to stir things up. [TK] Let me add to the world champion's words that it is a remarkable idea and even more remarkable that she risked it

Tibor Károlyi

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Eugenio Torre



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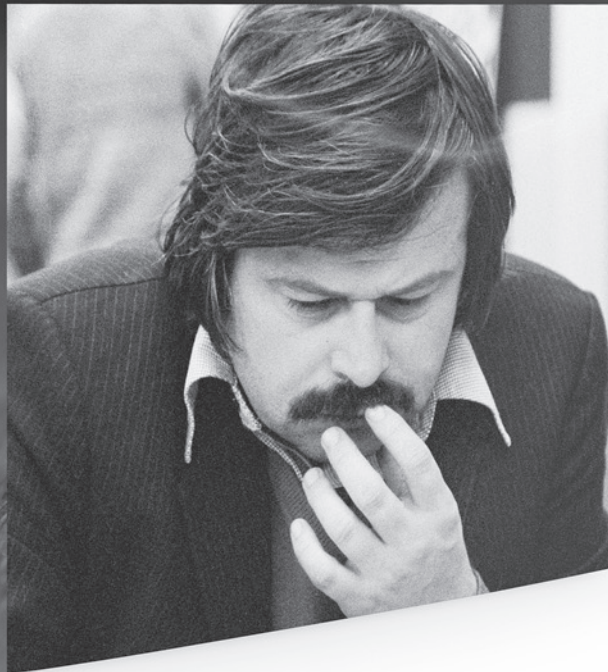
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