

Cyrus Lakdawala

Larsen

move by move

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About the Author

Cyrus Lakdawala is an International Master, a former National Open and American Open Champion, and a six-time State Champion. He has been teaching chess for over 30 years, and coaches some of the top junior players in the U.S.

Also by the Author:

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The Nimzo-Larsen Attack: Move by Move

Korchnoi: Move by Move

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Series Foreword

The Move by Move format is designed to be interactive, and is based on questions asked by both teachers and students. It aims – as much as possible – to replicate chess lessons. All the way through, readers will be challenged to answer searching questions and to complete exercises, to test their skills in key aspects of the game. It's our firm belief that practising your skills like this is an excellent way to study chess.

Many thanks go to all those who have been kind enough to offer inspiration, advice and assistance in the creation of *Move by Move*. We're really excited by this series and hope that readers will share our enthusiasm.

John Emms,
Everyman Chess

Introduction

“Think left and think right and think low and think high. Oh, the thinks you can think up if only you try!” – Theodor Geisel, aka Dr. Seuss.

When a writer annotates a collection of games of a legendary player, he or she becomes by default a curator of the legacy. The book, like a portrait, should strive to encapsulate essential truths about its subject – in this case, the mind and chess games of Grandmaster Bent Larsen, one of the most creative, unorthodox and influential chess forces of the 20th century.

Jørgen Bent Larsen was born on March 4th 1935, in Tilsted, Denmark. He was a sickly child and took up chess as a pastime for his sickbed (chess was a disease he caught young but could never shake). Larsen was the first Western player to seriously challenge the domination of the Soviet machine, who regarded the World Champion’s title as a national treasure, jealously guarded from the West. He was also the strongest Scandinavian player until current World Champion, Magnus Carlsen, arrived on the scene.

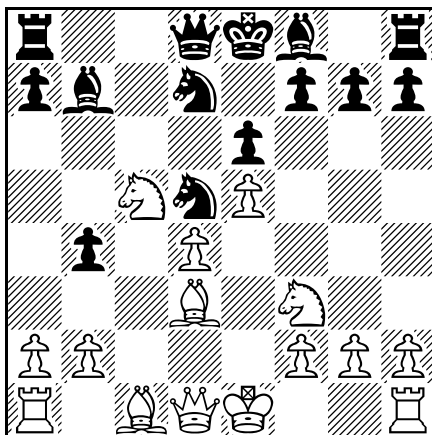
Larsen came to prominence in the late 1950s/early 1960s, collecting six Danish Championships. He qualified for the Candidates’ cycle for the World Championship no less than four times. Although I don’t believe Larsen was ever the strongest player in the world during his lifetime, he was one who on a given day could beat any world champion. He racked up multiple wins against every World Champion from 1948-1985. A list of his elite tournament victims included Botvinnik, Smyslov, Tal, Petrosian, Spassky, Fischer and Karpov.

From the mid ’60s to the early ’70s, Larsen was in effect the unofficial “World Tournament Champion”, collecting a monumental number of victories, only later surpassed by Karpov and Kasparov. In 1970, Larsen played on top board in the USSR vs. the Rest of the World match (Fischer surprisingly agreed to play board two – many conjecturing it was because he feared Spassky!). Larsen scored 1½-1½, holding off the reigning champion, Boris Spassky. In the final game, Spassky fell ill, so super-GM Leonid Stein was substituted. Larsen’s victory (the ending to which is examined in Game 56) gave him a personal victory over the Soviet machine on board one! Larsen was also a “people’s GM”. He participated in open tournaments, which was unusual for a world-class player, winning both the Canadian (I was there to watch the legend!) and US Opens, among others.

Larsen's Opening Contributions

Larsen was a jack of all trades in the opening, playing anything and everything. He heavily influenced the theory of numerous opening systems. As White: Bird's Opening (1 f4 – which should really be called Larsen's Reversed Dutch), Nimzo-Larsen Attack (1 b3), and Anti-Sicilian lines such the Grand Prix Attack (1 e4 c5 2 f4). As Black, he dabbled in the Semi-Slav, Grünfeld, Dutch, Philidor, Alekhine's Defence, Scandinavian, and the 5...gxf6 Bronstein-Larsen variation of the Caro-Kann. It is generally believed that Larsen's influence prompted Bobby Fischer to take up both 1 b3 and Alekhine's Defence (1 e4 ♖f6).

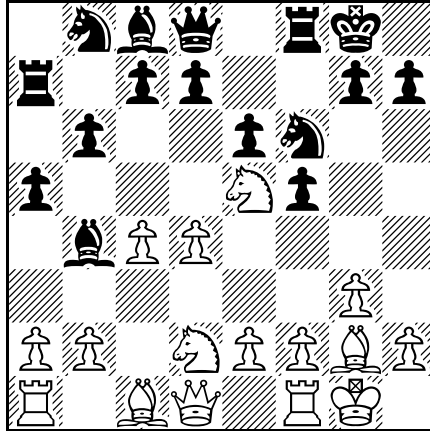
Here's an example of Larsen's shockingly nonconformist approach to the opening:



The diagrammed position is B.Ivkov-B.Larsen, Candidates' match, Bled 1965. It arose from a now very fashionable line of the Semi Slav. Here, rather than follow the then automatic continuation 12...♖xc5 13 dxc5 ♖a5, Larsen came up with the shocking (now quite routine!) theoretical novelty 12...♖xc5!!, allowing 13 dxc5 ♖xc5! 14 ♗b5+ ♔f8!. Kasparov writes: "As it turns out, with such a powerful knight at d5, Black can permit himself certain liberties."

Larsen's Style: Never Allow a Crisis to go to Waste

World Champion Magnus Carlsen represents a shocking new paradigm for modern chess. The high priest of the arcane fails to give the same weight to the opening stage as his colleagues, and is okay with an equal position with White and a slightly inferior one with Black, trusting in his innate chess skills to twist the game slowly his way – although later, he would tend to snap an opponent's crutch with either a novelty or a rarely played byway. Larsen was the precursor to and possible influence of Carlsen's strategy, always quick to mongrelize an opening with themes from another. Larsen was never interested in a theoretical arms race in the opening, with each side striving to outspend and out-book the other. His motto: Open softly, then adulterate the position with some zany, contaminating idea. For example:



The diagram is from Game 31 (Botvinnik-Larsen, Leiden 1970). Have you ever seen a Dutch like this one? As we can surmise, Larsen did his very best to provoke and annoy the old man, developing his rook to the somewhat non-traditional a7-square!

My yoga teacher, Brenda, is also a fire-fighter whose life is one of leisure and work-outs, while waiting for a crisis to occur. Only when a fire breaks out does she spring into action and put her life at risk. Larsen's opening style follows the fire-fighter's rest/crisis pattern. As White he played so quietly that he didn't even expect an edge (which is rather strange when you consider that Larsen enjoyed dull positions the way Charles Manson loved the police!); with Black, he didn't mind a slightly inferior position, as long as some dynamism remained within its residue.

Larsen's games tended to follow this calm to crisis narrative, with the crisis nearly always instigated by him. He tended to avoid topical theoretical duels, lulling the opponent with restful tranquillity. Then, later in the game, he would always disturb the stillness by contaminating the position's logic with some crazy, atonal idea, burdening the opponent with original problems (and also messing with his head!). Nimzowitsch laid the formulaic foundations, while Larsen, his spiritual heir, continued the work by placing his bizarre games on display.

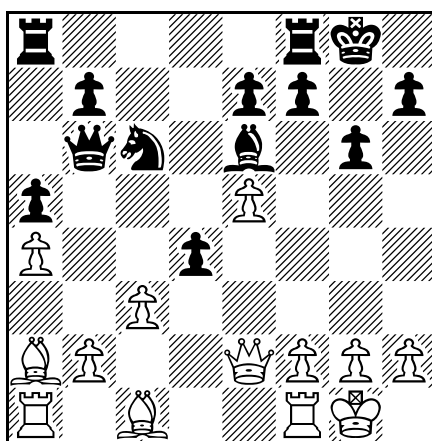
Dogma has a way of fossilizing our minds, if backed up by authorities in the field. Larsen, deeply influenced by Nimzowitsch's theories as a child, strove to prove them, both in his writings and, even more so, through the artistic medium of his games. He loved to lead opponents into landscapes devoid of familiar landmarks, and his prime directive was: Make opponents think for themselves. He shrugged off classical beliefs to embrace the hypermodern. So the Nimzowitsch/Larsen theories progressed: a centaur, fused with Nimzowitsch's body and Larsen's head.

If a criminal continues to get away with minor crimes, he soon believes he can break any law with impunity. Larsen – like Korchnoi, Tal and Lasker – played this way and fit this modus operandi. Studying Larsen's games, it feels to me as if he *deliberately* made ugly

moves – even outright dubious ones – to provoke an opponent and, perversely, to flaunt the law. His goal was to curdle theory at its outset and put his opponents on their own resources, forcing them to think for themselves, rather than parrot theory.

Unlike classical giants, such as Botvinnik and Spassky, Larsen was not a good citizen. He refused to show iron-bound respect for authority or trend. Above all he was a lawless exhibitionist who delighted in shocking the establishment with unorthodoxy and then laughing about it by transforming the impossible into a reality. So reality-altered were Larsen's games, that to compare them with those of, say, Portisch or Spassky is like analysing an alien race by human standards.

The question arises: Was Larsen an original, or was he a logical extension of Nimzowitsch? My feeling is that the answer is a little of both!



Larsen's uniqueness lay in his perception of externally ugly, geometric anomalies which, when examined deeper, were proven sound. For example, in the above position from Game 34 (Jimenez Zerquera-Larsen, Palma de Mallorca 1967), Larsen shockingly traded away his fianchettoed, holy grail, dark-squared bishop for a white knight on e5, and then followed with his last move ...d5-d4!, accepting doubled isolated e-pawns. He committed these seemingly egregious violations all in the name of the light squares, which he soon dominated, justifying his decisions. His radical ideas linger on in our imaginations, long after we finish playing over his games.

“Dear Grandmaster 0-6:”

Your slightly hot-headed, possibly unstable writer once got a tad peeved with the hero of this book because of an article Larsen wrote, and began a letter to *Chess Life* magazine with the rather rude salutation: “Dear Grandmaster 0-6.” When I cooled off, I deleted the email and instead, more politely, sent Larsen an unprintable, expletive-laced message via my old friend IM Tony Saïdy!

Kasparov made an astute observation about Larsen's legendary “Bogoljubow-like opti-

mism”: “He (Larsen) apparently thought that any favourable position should win itself! Until the early '70s he got away with such ultra-optimism and it was a plus for him. But then it turned into a catastrophic loss of objectivity, which was demonstrated especially clearly by his match with Fischer.” I remember the year well, 1971 Anno Domini. In his match with Bobby Fischer – who played chess as if he merely recollected something he already knew – Larsen came face to face with his greatest fears. Larsen, still in his prime, was somehow tailor-made for Fischer, in much the same way that Capablanca brushed aside Nimzowitsch’s strategic contortions with disarming ease.

The lopsided 0-6 result was a macabre affair, which appeared to a stunned, gaping chess world as a match between a flawed mortal and an angry god, descended from the heavens to teach humanity a lesson. In a fight to the death one expects inevitable war wounds on both sides. In this case Larsen was routed in the most humiliating possible manner, while Fischer walked away without a scratch. Reasonable acts of compromise are not to be found very often in Larsen’s games and, after a very close first game loss, Larsen’s confidence sagged noticeably. His play seemed to grow more and more erratic as the match proceeded. Caution comes naturally if you are aware of another’s power. Larsen’s caution didn’t increase. His inexhaustible supply of pluck and fighting spirit failed to bring benefit, since he was simply outmatched.

Larsen later blamed his loss on a heat wave which hit Denver the week of the match but, to me, this appears to be an ego-salving excuse. Maybe if the weather were cooler it may have made the match closer but I can’t see anyone defeating Fischer in 1971. If the causal agent of a problem is external, then we have hopes of finding a solution; when the causal agent is internal, then we deal with a problem of epic proportions, because it is our own inner demons we face. I don’t believe Larsen was capable of defeating Fischer in 1971. But as the 3rd/4th highest ranked player in the world, the match should have been closer. Normally, Larsen’s temperament was one of a man who saw even the sunny side of a disaster – but not this time. I believe Larsen collapsed psychologically after the first game, his self-image somehow a casualty of Fischer’s legend.

Larsen’s Pathological Will to Win

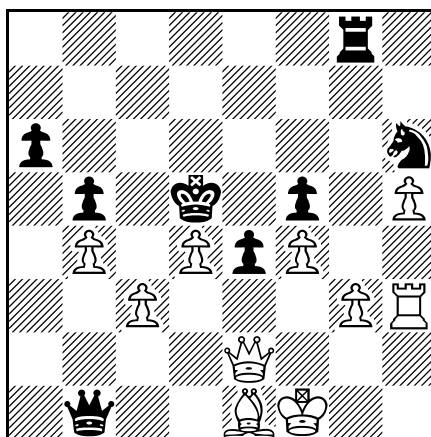
“You see things; and you say, ‘Why?’ But I dream things that never were; and I say, ‘Why not?’” – George Bernard Shaw.

Quantum physics nurtures a term called “decoherence”, which is an upper limit to a computation, until a random error occurs. Larsen, a serial, fiendish violator of the lawful and the natural, utilized this physics principle to his benefit over the board, by constantly stepping outside of the accepted code. When he couldn’t extract a win by outplaying an opponent, he relied on this principle by embracing the irrational (at least to the limited understanding of this annotator and most of his opponents!). He had a masterful knack for discovering a geometric incongruity and then tweaking it into some bizarre idea. He willingly climbed dangerous promontories in his risk taking, and his process of evolution ex-

isted outside the boundaries of “normal” logic. Creative whims, which he loved to indulge and coddle at the cost of pragmatic necessity, mixed with his near pathological will to win. Where other players saw reason for fear or concern, Larsen sensed opportunity. He won (and lost!) many games which shouldn’t have taken that route.

The great Mikhail Botvinnik, the crown prince of the proper, frowned upon Larsen’s impulsive, almost irrational style. There is a story of Botvinnik lecturing the young Garry Kasparov, after the prodigy made a quick move and only then thought about its consequences. “Watch out!” warned Botvinnik to his student, adding, “if you go on like this you’ll become a Taimanov or a Larsen!”

Dr. Jekyll represented the rational mind, while his alter ego, Mr. Hyde, was the scary unconscious, which wanted what it wanted, no matter the cost or consequence. In the diagrammed position below from Game 12 (Larsen-Bronstein, Moscow 1962), we see an example of Larsen’s Mr. Hyde-like will to win, even when the rational mind said it can’t be done.



How to navigate this Cyclopean maze? It seems that Black has more than enough compensation for two pawns. When I showed this to IMs John Watson and Keaton Kiewra, over at my house for an analysis session, they both preferred Black’s position. I asked them: “How would you play for a win as White?” Now if you placed me in front of a chess board, granted me immortality, and then commanded me: “How can White play for a win?” I couldn’t solve this enigma in a trillion years. Both John and Keaton agreed there was zero potential for White to play for the win. In fact, John added as a joke: “Hey! Maybe Larsen should play 42 g4! Ha ha ha ha ha ha!”

Well, John’s joke move was exactly what Larsen played in the position, a stunning creative leap of faith, and one which appeared to be the decision of an abject lunatic! He confused the living daylight out of Bronstein and went on to win after sac’ing three (!) pawns.

Now a charitable reading of 42 g4!?!? (certainly not the move of an impoverished imagination, after which we must man-up and woman-up, placing squeamishness aside,

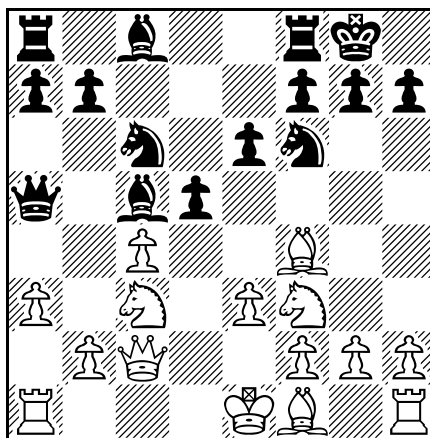
and look without averting our eyes) is “eccentric”. An uncharitable one would be: A symptom of the onset of mental illness! He couldn’t help himself. Larsen would create a maze of confusion and abnormality across the board, which at times it feels futile to attempt to fathom. He pursued his objective – absconding with the full point – with the compulsive, Vertigo-like obsession of Jimmy Stewart with Kim Novak. Larsen, much like Dr. Frankenstein, seemed to delight in defying nature. There is something admirable, yet willingly dystopian about such defiance to the inexorable laws of authority. For a player who willingly goes for 42 g4!?!? it is next to impossible to code and file away the obverse logic and bizarre motivations behind his moves.

Of course this crazy will to win also cost Larsen games he should otherwise have drawn. Of all the cardinal sins, Franz Kafka considered impatience to be the most grievous. “Because of impatience we were driven out of Paradise; because of impatience we cannot return.” If Kafka was right, then Larsen was one of the all-time greatest sinners of the chessboard. His thoughts existed in a perpetual state of agitation and he longed to disturb the position’s peace. Larsen was inherently opposed to routine, the way the evangelistic fervour of a religious person opposes sin.

Here’s an example of Larsen’s will to win, which some might say borders on psychosis:

Game 1
M.Taimanov-B.Larsen
Vinkovci 1970
Queen’s Gambit Declined

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 ♚c2 c5 5 dxc5 0-0 6 ♙f4 ♙xc5 7 ♘f3 ♘c6 8 e3 d5 9 a3 ♚a5



10 ♚c1

Via a Nimzo-Indian the game has transposed to a main line (with 5 ♙f4) of the Queen’s

Gambit Declined. White's last move is considered inaccurate by today's standards. Normal here are:

a) 10 0-0-0! – Kasparov's favourite.

b) 10 ♖d1 – Korchnoi's favourite.

c) 10 ♘d2 – my favourite (which I realize isn't much of an endorsement!), threatening ♘b3 and also discouraging ...d5xc4, since ♘xc4 gains White a tempo.

10...♙e7

Today, we know that 10...d4! 11 exd4 ♘xd4 12 ♘xd4 ♙xd4 is an easy equalizer.

11 ♙e2 dxc4

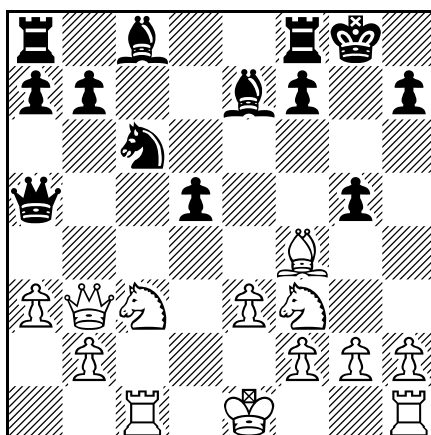
The correct time to capture on c4, since White has now wasted a tempo with his last move.

12 ♙xc4 ♘d5

Question: Why not 12...♘h5 and pick off the bishop pair?

Answer: Your suggestion is a new move in the position, but it may not be a straightforward equalizer. After 13 0-0 ♘xf4 14 exf4 ♙d8 15 ♖cd1, for instance, I still prefer White since Black experiences difficulty bringing out his queenside pieces. If 15...♙d7, White has the tricky 16 ♘d5!, when acceptance leads Black into difficulties: 16...exd5?! 17 ♖xd5 ♙b6 18 ♖h5! g6 (18...h6?? is met by the crushing 19 ♖xh6! gxh6 20 ♙g6+ etc) 19 ♙xf7+! ♙f8 (19...♙g7?? walks into 20 ♖xh7+! and mates) 20 ♖xh7 with a nasty attack. Black must find a succession of 'only' moves just to survive the first wave: 20...♙f5 21 ♙c3 ♘d4 22 ♙c4 ♖ac8 23 ♖e1 ♖xc4 24 ♙xc4 ♙e6 and even then he isn't out of the woods.

13 ♙xd5 exd5 14 ♙b3 g5!?



The key requirement to the foundation of any building is that it shouldn't move! Once again, my inadequate ChessBase annotation palette lacks the more accurate "?!?!" annotation button, necessary for Black's seemingly preposterous move. From Larsen's mysterious

mind convulses forth an aberrant yet potent idea, which I would be afraid to try against a category d-player, much less a top grandmaster. Well, we can at least state with confidence that Larsen chooses a non-mechanistic approach to a problem!

When we first conceive the seed of an idea, we must be adept in differentiating between reality and delusional fantasy. Here we see Larsen's hidden genius: 14...g5 is sound! This shocking move – akin to a soaking spray of ice water in the face – irrefutably proves that free will supersedes a predestination model of the universe. Larsen simply wasn't designed to embrace safe havens, and it's depressingly difficult to attempt to understand the atonal outflow of his arcane motivations.

Question: Does Larsen believe the earth is flat? Why isn't his last move, which looks more like a declaration than a request, given a double question mark?

Answer: Larsen delighted in flagrantly violating logic – our logic, not his! Of course, such vulgar Larsonian outbursts may aesthetically offend the more strategically minded Botvinnikian empiricists among us, who demand mathematical exactitude. I agree with you that such a move can't be accurately described as frictionless, but it isn't so bad. In fact, I was startled to discover that *Houdini*, after heavy analytical labours, was unable to come up with anything more substantial than an assessment of "equal" for White – and this only after being granted the leisure of a ten-minute think (the equivalent for a human would be one week of analysis)!

Brain researchers recently claimed that a person who is constantly interrupted loses coherence of thought and requires 50% greater time to complete a mental task, while committing 50% more errors than someone allowed full concentration. I suspect Larsen was aware of this theory even in 1970! Here he tosses in his signature opening anomaly, which throws Taimanov totally off balance by making him multi-task his distractions. Larsen was a virtuoso at manipulating an opponent's mental state during a game. His last move was obviously designed to raise the blood pressure of even a Zen Master, so how could Taimanov's *not* rise after such a provocation?

I don't deny that Larsen's move is a blatant violation of sacred edicts, namely: *don't weaken the pawn front around your king without a good reason.*

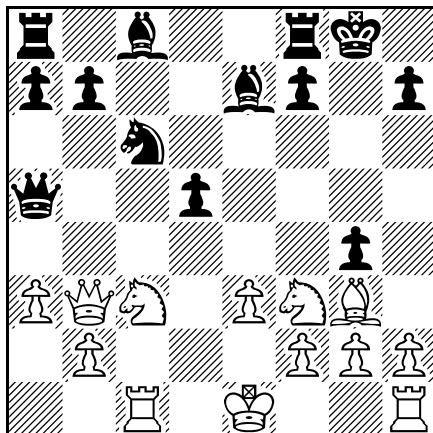
Question: Well, what is his "good reason"?

Answer: The nature of creativity is the blending of discordant ideas. In this case Larsen willingly swaps structural integrity and king safety for possession of the initiative. It turns out that his anomalous move works, since the all-knowing, all-seeing computers back him up.

15 ♟g3

The g5-pawn is taboo: 15 ♟xg5?? (15 ♞xg5?? d4! is the same trick) 15...♟xg5 16 ♞xg5 d4! and the double attack wins a piece.

15...g4



16 ♖d4?!

In any stock market transaction, there is a winner and a loser. The fact that Taimanov goes astray is not the work of mere chance. Larsen seized control over his own destiny through his high-stakes psychological gamble and emerged the lucky one.

Correct was 16 ♗e5! d4 17 exd4 ♗xd4 18 ♖c4 ♗c6 19 ♗xg4 (19 ♗xc6 bxc6 20 0-0 ♗a6 21 ♖xg4+ ♖g5! wins the exchange, even if White is okay after 22 ♖d7 ♗xf1 23 ♗xf1 with a pawn and structural compensation) 19...♗e6 20 ♖e4 ♗ad8 21 0-0 ♗d4 and now 22 ♗e5!! ♗xe5! (22...♗xe4?? 23 ♗h6 mate is a dream too beautiful to come true in the real world) 23 ♗h6+ ♖g7 24 ♖xd4 ♗d8 25 ♖e4 ♗c6 26 ♗xf7! ♗xf7 27 ♗cd1 ♗g6 28 ♖g4 and I'm not sure who stands better here; the verdict of dynamic equality is probably a fair one. If given a choice, I actually prefer Black, due to those nasty-looking bishops.

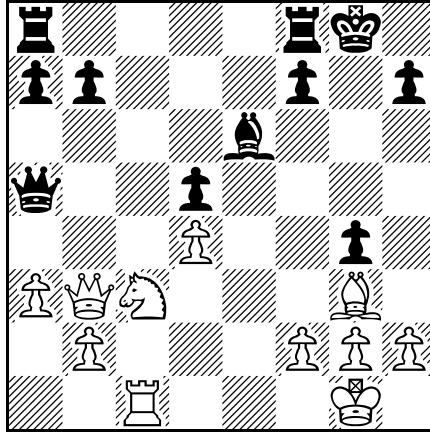
16...♗xd4 17 exd4 ♗g5 18 0-0?!

Taimanov is not one to back down from a challenge, chickening out with a line like 18 ♗d1 ♗e8+ 19 ♖f1 ♖a6+ 20 ♖g1 ♖c4 21 ♖xc4 dxc4 22 ♗b5 ♗d8 and Black stands no worse, since the h1-rook remains out of play for a while at least.

Kasparov writes: "The exchange sacrifice appears tempting (the opponent is deprived of his important bishop – the only defender of the dark squares), but in fact it turns out to be dubious." Larsen's true genius is to understand that Taimanov's thematic exchange sacrifice was not to be feared.

18...♗xc1 19 ♗xc1 ♗e6!

After 19...♗d8?! 20 ♗e5!, White seizes control over f6 with full attacking compensation for the exchange.



Fear is kind of self-preservatory intelligence. Bravery, while considered a virtue in almost every human culture, can easily morph into foolhardiness which, in battle, is synonymous with abject stupidity. “The exchange ahead, Black does not begrudge giving up his b7-pawn,” writes Kasparov.

20 h3?!

The prelude to an incorrect combination. Taimanov, just itching to punish Larsen’s strategic extravagance, decides upon a tempting yet faulty attacking idea.

Correct was 20 ♖xb7! (20 ♖c2?!, intending ♖d2, is too slow due to 20...f6! 21 ♖d2 ♜ac8 and White has no obvious method of strengthening his attack) 20...♗b6! 21 ♖xb6 (White grudgingly acquiesces to Black’s terms, half petulantly, half obediently) 21...axb6, when Black stands a microbe better with his material edge, but my feeling is that White should be able to hold the ending. Of course, such a decision is virtually psychologically impossible for Taimanov, who is driven by an urge to punish, not grovel!

20...gxh3 21 ♙e5?

Once again, Taimanov is disinclined to admit that his exchange sac was dubious and enter the grovelling line 21 ♖xb7 ♗b6 22 ♖xb6 axb6 23 gxh3.

21...f6 22 ♗e4?

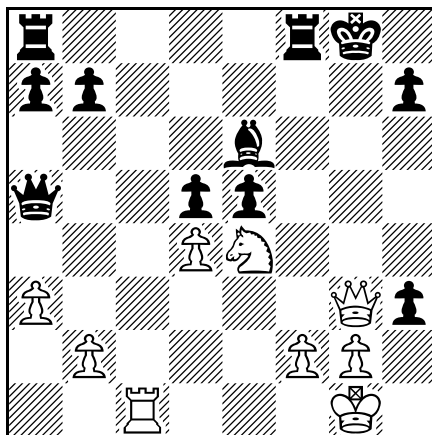
This compensatory lunge turns out to be a fruitless tangent. With every addiction, comes a steep price. The disjunction between intent and implementation widens, as Taimanov throws material into his attack, the way a teenager running out of money plays the ring toss at the county fair, hoping to win the stuffed animal prize to impress his date.

Taimanov’s move looks like a brilliant shot, where the rhythm of White’s initiative continues with the regularity of a beating heart, but the computers tell us this isn’t so, and that the combination is flawed.

Petrosian and Bronstein observed this game. Petrosian asked: “What can he (Larsen) do? Take the bishop? But then a queen check on g3 and White wins.” Bronstein, who displayed deeper insight into the position, replied: “Larsen is winning.”

22...fxe5!

Not fearing ghosts. Larsen has seen that White's "win" is no win at all. Declining the piece sac wasn't an option: after 22...dxe4?? 23 ♖xe6+ ♔g7 24 ♜c7+, Black loses miserably. 23 ♜g3+



"As reward for your impertinence, you shall reap a harvest rich in pain," gloats White's queen in anticipation of her coming glory. Apparently she is mistaken. A locust swarm descends upon Black's king and it feels as if the time required to organize a coherent defence is a luxury Black woefully lacks.

Exercise (combination alert/critical decision): Find Larsen's brilliant defensive idea, and it is White who is losing.

Answer: Interference/Deflection. White's entire concept is short-circuited when his queen gets knocked off her dark-squared track.

23...♗g4!!

Oh, the sweet bliss of serendipity. Impossibly, every variation works out in Larsen's favour. "God's love does not shine upon the undeserving," intones the bishop, as he martyrs himself before White's startled queen. The mad cleric, bereft of reason, goes on a suicide mission, the tricky point of which is to deflect the white queen away from e5.

Other moves lose for Black:

a) 23...♔h8?? (the king tactfully attempts to steer the conversation away from the unpleasant subject of his upcoming execution, but without success) 24 ♖xe5+ ♔g8 25 ♖xe6+ ♔h8 26 ♖e5+ ♔g8 27 ♜c3! (there is no defence once the final white attacker enters) 27...♖xc3 28 ♖xd5+ and Black can resign.

b) 23...♕f7?? 24 ♘g5+ ♕e7 25 ♖xe5 ♜f6 26 ♜c7+ ♖xc7 (after 26...♕e8? 27 ♜xh7, Black is unable to avoid mate) 27 ♖xc7+ ♕d7 28 ♖e5+ ♕e6 29 ♘xe6 ♜xe6 30 ♖g7+ ♕d6 31 ♖xb7

and White will win in the long run.

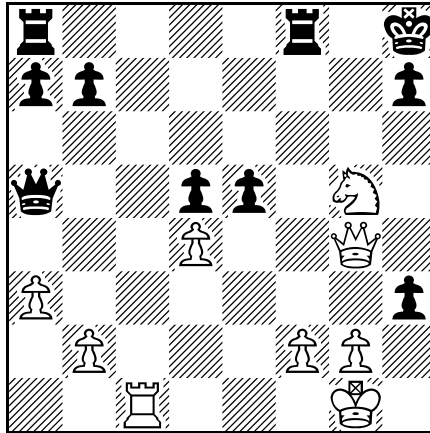
24 ♚xg4+

The queen partakes in foul curses and vulgar language (Everyman forbids me to reprint the transcripts!), considered indelicate for a person of her upbringing.

24...♗h8

Regaining control over the dark squares is the indemnity for which Larsen paid with his bishop sacrifice. Note that 25 ♚g5 fails to 25...dxe4 and the black queen covers e5 along the fifth rank.

25 ♖g5



Exercise (combination alert): Matters still don't look so easy for Black, since his king remains dangerously exposed. Find one powerful move and you end White's illusion of attack.

Answer: The double attack on White's rook and the f2-pawn seizes the initiative.

25...♗d2! 26 ♖c7

26 ♖f1 hxg2 27 ♗xg2 h6 28 ♖f3 ♖g8 is curtains for White as well.

26...♗xf2+ 27 ♗h2 ♗xg2+

Queens come off the board – and with them, White's hopes.

28 ♗xg2 hxg2 29 dxe5 ♖ac8!

The only black pawn which matters is the one on g2.

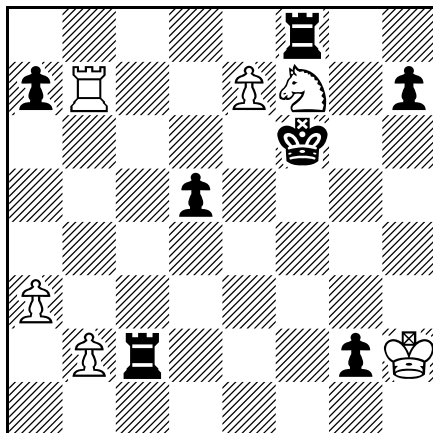
30 ♖xb7

30 ♖xh7+ ♗g8 31 ♖xb7 ♖f5 32 ♖h3 ♖c2 is similarly conclusive.

30...♖c2 31 ♖f7+ ♗g7

There is no good discovery for White.

32 e6 ♗f6 33 e7



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

Answer #1: Deflection/Zwischenzug.

33...g1♖+!

Answer #2: 33...♖g8! is even stronger, since 34 e8N+ ♖xe8 doesn't change anything.

34 ♖xg1 ♖g8+ 0-1

White's knight falls next move.

Dedication

Many thanks as always to editor GM John Emms, to CC-SIM Jonathan Tait for the final edit; and to proof-reading czar Nancy for not bossing me around so much this book (although I'm sorry to report she did make me delete multiple jokes which I'm certain the reader would have found delightful!). May our minds discard routine and Larsenize, with our moves convulsing our opponents with baffling innovations and offensive unorthodoxies.

Cyrus Lakdawala,
San Diego, October 2014