

Daniel Gormally
CHESS ANALYSIS - RELOADED

Turn off your engines!
Why chess analysis has declined, and how to reverse it!



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INTRODUCTION

Magnus Carlsen loses two games in a row in Wijk Aan Zee 2023 and it feels like the chess world senses the passing of time and the baton of one generation to another. Or could it just be variance? Giri played almost perfectly against the World Champion and Abdusattarov played a great game to win with Black after a complex opening.

In chess, so much of our success is dictated not just by our own abilities but those of our opponents. How good are they at resisting in bad positions? Are they happy with a draw today or do they want to play for something more?

In this book I want to hand the reader a head start, which is to develop the ability to analyse and calculate to a high level.

From my own experience I have come to realize how calculation has been letting me down. So, this creative work is my attempt to improve that and the journey I will take along the way to achieve that goal, and in doing so I hope to enable you, the reader, to improve as well. I will be uniquely combining computer, grandmaster and amateur analysis in an attempt to explain the various thought processes involved and explain how amateur thinking differs from that of a chess master, which in itself varies from what we regard these days as the ultimate truth of the engine. And this all comes with a warning sticker! Although I will try and breakdown the thoughts of the engine, I will also be doing my own analysis rather than depending solely on the machine. It is that dependence that I believe made me lazy and lead to the issues with calculation that I alluded to above. Whenever I got stuck I would turn on an engine. This led to a slovenly chess mind and a lack of experience in dealing with difficult problems in the middlegame.

Daniel Gormally

CHAPTER I

HUMAN vs. MACHINE

Great Britain 2023

The first game we are going to look at was played very recently in the Four Nations Chess League (4NCL) which took place in Daventry, which is about 70 odd miles north of London and not far from the larger town of Northampton. There isn't a train station in Daventry itself which caused some issues recently amongst some of the regular players in the competition. Tim Wall wrote on Facebook: "After long deliberation, I have decided (after many long weekend journeys to out-of-town hotels) to stay away from the Four Nations Chess League (4NCL) until it is held in venues that have good access to main line train services, preferably in towns or cities with more accommodation and eating options."

The problem seems to be getting to the Mercure court Daventry hotel. From my own experience this involves getting an expensive taxi from Long Buckby station. It isn't really walkable and the buses aren't very regular. Once at the hotel there are limited options for food and drinks as the main town is forty minutes walk away. There are a couple of pubs within walking distance which tends to be the preferable option on the Friday night, as the hotel menu is quite expensive. So I was nicely primed and felt I had prepared reasonably well for my game against Callum Kilpatrick on the Saturday, a game that began at 14:00.

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.e4 ♗xc3 6.bxc3 ♕g7 7.♗f3 c5 8.h3 This was the off-beat line that I had prepared. I saw that my opponent played the Grünfeld as his regular reply to 1.d4 so it was easy to predict this position would arise on the board.

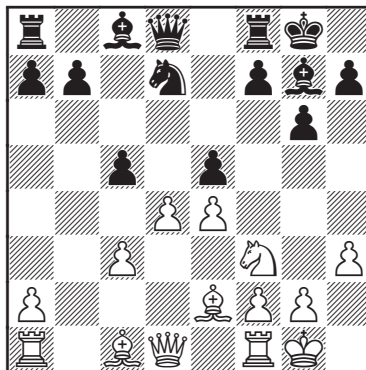
8...0-0 9.♕e2 ♗d7

9...b5 was once played by Kasparov, the

only time he faced this variation as Black in a game against Kramnik. 10.♕e3 ♕b7 would follow that game - Vladimir Kramnik 2758 - Garry Kasparov 2851, Wijk aan Zee 2000, and 11.e5!? is a novelty that I had prepared;

9...♗c6 10.♕e3 cxd4 11.cxd4 ♔a5+ 12.♕d2 ♔a3 is probably the critical line and White can't really count on an advantage here. 13.d5! ♗e5 14.0-0 ♗xf3+ (14...♕d7= Parham Maghsoodloo 2719 - Erigaisi Arjun 2722, Wijk aan Zee 2023 - 155/158) 15.♕xf3 ♕xa1 16.♔xa1 ♖ White has decent practical compensation for the exchange, but probably no more than that.

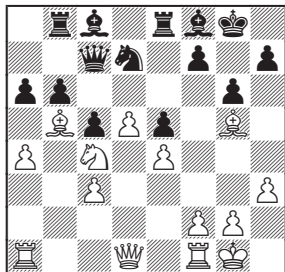
10.0-0 e5



11.♕g5! I think this took my opponent by surprise but it is quite typical for such positions. The response ...f6 would clearly be very weakening and hardly optimal so Black is forced to make an awkward piece move.

11...♕f6

Grandmaster analysis: 11...♔c7 12.d5 ♖e8 13.d6 (*Computer analysis:* 13.a4! ♕f8 14.♗d2 b6 15.♕b5 ♖b8 16.♗c4 a6



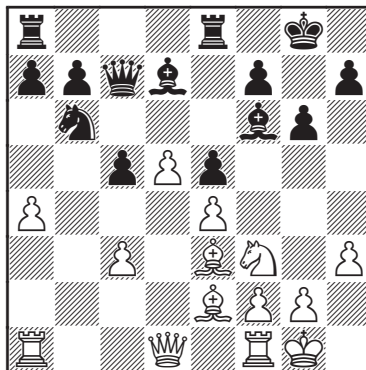
17. ♖c6+- with a crushing positional edge. I did vaguely consider more positional and strategical moves like a4 or the rerouting ♜d2, but to my mind they seemed rather slow. I also feared that this would give Black time to reroute the bishop from g7 to f8 and create some kind of blockade. The engine is quite happy for the game to play out and considers that White will shatter the blockade eventually. This is an important consideration and the fact that I was tempted to go for more active solutions after the move 12... ♖e8 shows a slight weakness in my style. I think I've always had this fear that if I don't do something quickly, I'll lose my advantage.) 13... ♗c6 14. ♙e7 "with dangerous attacking prospects if Black takes on e4." However, the computer disagrees with this and says that after 14... ♙f6 I must admit I did consider moves like ... ♙f6 or ... ♙f8 but was "hoping" that there would be some way to be better here for White - apparently there isn't. 15. ♙xf6 ♜xf6 16. ♙c4∞ is just unclear at best.

12. ♙h6 ♖e8 13. d5 ♜b6 14. a4 - but now I was happy to play a4, as this seemed to interfere tactically with his plan of ... ♙d7 followed by ... ♜c8-d6.

14. ♙b5 ♙d7 15. ♙xd7 ♗xd7 16. a4!? ♜c8 17. ♗d3 ♜d6 18. ♜d2± At first Black is fine here with the blockade on d6 but White still has a positional advantage due to the pawn wedge on e4 and d5, which is impossible for Black to undermine; 16. ♜h2± was what my opponent recommended after the game. It is true that this position favours

White, but apparently there were better opportunities earlier.

14... ♙d7 15. ♙e3 ♗c7



16. d6?! As per usual I lack patience in the prosecution of the advantage and seek a tactical solution as soon as possible.

Computer analysis: 16. ♜d2 ♜c8 17. ♜c4 ♜d6 18. ♜xd6 ♗xd6 19. ♙g4+- I hadn't given much thought to this in the game and felt that the main battle revolved around preventing Black rerouting the knight to d6. I sensed that if I could prevent this I would have some advantage but if Black could carry it out then he would be absolutely fine. The computer disagrees with this entirely and says that White is winning here! I think the biggest problem here is the lack of counterplay and space that Black has. White has an obvious plan of cranking up the pressure on the queenside and Black has no answer to this.

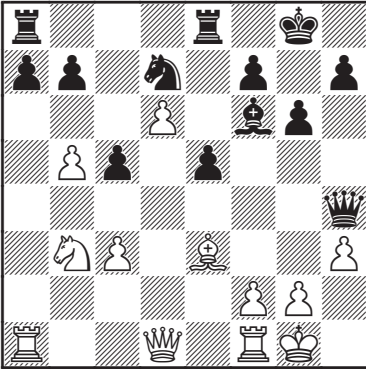
16... ♗c6 17. ♙b5 ♗xe4 18. ♜d2 ♗h4? During the game I thought this was excellent, but apparently it wasn't.

18... ♗f5 19. g4 ♗e6 20. ♜e4 ♙xb5 21. axb5 ♜d7 22. ♗f3± I saw lines like this in the game and felt they were very promising. It's entirely possible that if this variation had occurred in the game I would have won, as there is plenty of tension in the position and Black is getting short of time, and more importantly White is just better.

19. ♖b3?!

This was where I really should have looked further. 19. ♖xc5 ♕xb5 20. axb5 ♘d7 didn't seem that clear to me in the game. Clearly there are many options, taking on a7, playing ♖a4 etc. The computer sees these options and says that all of them are strong and White is just winning. 21. ♕e3 ♕d8 22. ♖b3 ♕b6 23. ♖d5+- with relentless pressure.

19... ♕xb5 20. axb5 ♘d7

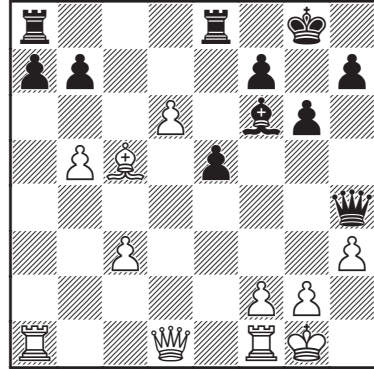


21. ♘xc5?

I saw 21. ♖d5! in the game but underestimated just how nasty it was. And in part my cautious choice was dictated by the poor start I had made in the league. I was on 0/2 and didn't want to take what looked like a risky gamble to give up a pawn for activity. I also failed to play ♖d5! because I didn't spend enough time fully investigating the inner secrets of the position. I was comfortably up on the clock and this was the time to cash that in by spending 20 minutes. Instead, obsessed about the result, I nervously rushed through. 21...b6 22. ♘d2 e4 I stopped here, didn't see anything concrete and discounted it as a "mess." This is laziness in the extreme as White can easily break the blockade on d7. 23. ♖b7 ♖ad8 24. ♖xa7 ♕xc3 25. ♖c6 ♕xd2 26. ♕xd2 ♘e5 27. ♖xb6 ♘c4 28. ♖c7 ♘xd6 29. b6+-;

21. ♘a5! is also rather promising. I also saw this idea of trying to plan the knight on c6 during the game but wasn't sure. What does it actually do on c6? Wouldn't it be easier just to win a pawn? 21...b6 22. ♖a4 ♖h5 23. ♖xh5 gxh5 24. ♘c6± - this ending is thoroughly unpleasant for Black.

21... ♘xc5 22. ♕xc5



22... ♖c4! I had seen this coming and was just hoping that there would be something good for White here, but the lack of material is counting against as the tactics are now reduced. To be honest my opponent's attitude irked me in the post mortem slightly; he kept saying how he had all these options, to which I eventually responded with something along the lines of "You don't have any other options, everything else is just losing!" However, you have to salute the optimism and this ability to find variations and different candidate moves will serve him well in the future. In fact, I already got the impression that he will be much stronger than 2420 eventually, if he gets the chance to play more tournaments.

23. d7 ♖e6 24. ♖xa7 ♖d8 25. ♕e3 ♖xb5 26. ♖b1 ♖xb1 27. ♖xb1 ♖xd7 28. ♖xb7 ♖xb7 29. ♖xb7 ♖c6 30. ♖b6 ♖xb6 31. ♕xb6 e4 32. c4 ♕c3 33. ♖f1 f5 34. ♖e2 ♖f7 35. f3

1/2 : 1/2

MAGNUS CARLSEN 3231 - FREDERIK SVANE 2918 [A29]

chess.com (Internet-bltz) 2023

Last night I watched Emma Raducanu play in the Indian Wells tennis tournament which takes place right in the middle of the desert in California and as a consequence is searingly hot. The players often fade in the scorching heat as the temperature rises to levels which would probably enable you to fry an egg on the court if you so wished. Emma was playing against the 13th seed from Brazil, Beatrice Haddad Maia. Despite the fact that her opponent was seeded and she was not, Emma won the first set. I got the impression at that point that Emma was the much more naturally gifted player. She seemed to be able to create unreal angles and take the ball extremely early in the rally. Her opponent seemed to be all power with little of Emma's skill. At that moment having coasted the first set, Emma dropped off markedly, lost the second and barely scraped through the match by winning the third set. What I thought after that first set was that someone like Serena Williams would have crushed Beatrice in that match. It would have ended 6 : -2, 6 : 0. Don't get me wrong I'm not stupid. I know that Emma isn't half the player that Serena is and can only dream of winning the number of titles and accolades that Serena has managed. But what it tells me is that a lot of winning comes down to psychology and attitude. Serena would have just said to herself after winning the first set "I am strong, my opponent is weak. Let's demolish this person!" Emma doesn't have that level of confidence and as a consequence wobbled, and let her opponent back in the match.

When you think about chess the obvious stand out player from a psychological perspective is Magnus Carlsen. He seems to tower over the opposition and always comes up trumps in the big games. I think Carlsen wins because he has the BETTER

personality. I understand that this opinion is highly subjective so let me explain. I simply think Carlsen is a more rounded and honest individual than many of his rivals. Look at the way that he is reluctant to play against cheats and validate them. How if his opponent is short of time in an online game for some reason beyond their control, Magnus will let his clock run down to equalise the chances. Not everyone does this. But this isn't the only thing that separates Magnus from me and you, and from some of his peers. It also comes down to knowledge. Simply put, you can't play at a high level in chess without a tremendous amount of hard work.

Watching Magnus stream titled tuesday there was one game that stood out because of the knowledge that Magnus displayed.

1.c4 e5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 ♘c5 4.d3 0-0 5.♘f3 d6 6.0-0 ♘c6 7.♘c3 ♘d4

This reply took Magnus by surprise. He had already pointed out that Frederik is the younger brother of Rasmus Svane who has a higher rating but Magnus said that Frederik is also pretty talented and well booked-up.

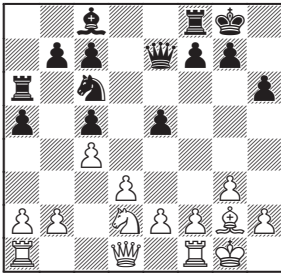
This is similar to the situation in golf, where there are two brothers who are very good and one is called Rasmus Højgaard and he is arguably slightly better than his twin brother who is called Nicolai. So maybe if you are born Rasmus you are destined to be the better brother.

According to Magnus, 7...h6 is the most common reply here, with the idea that Black wants to prevent the move ♗g5. To my eyes this already displays a high level of knowledge. Now you could say, well we are only seven moves in and he is the world champion? But I didn't know what the theory says here.

So we are already seeing a very clear difference between my opening knowledge

and Magnus's. He simply knows a lot more opening theory than I do. 8.a3 a5 9.e3 ♟b6 10.b3 Now make sense of these moves if you can. White is building up slowly, while at the same time not giving Black anything to bite on.

Incidentally the engine sees little difference between a number of these moves and also rates 7...a5 just as good as ...h6, or the move played in the game ...♞d4. 8.♟g5 Now to understand an opening variation I believe it is important to try and appreciate the logic behind the moves. Black played ...h6 because they believe the positions after ♟g5 to be uncomfortable. But are they? 8...h6 9.♟xf6 ♖xf6 10.♞e4 ♗e7 11.♞xc5 dxc5 12.♞d2 ♖a6



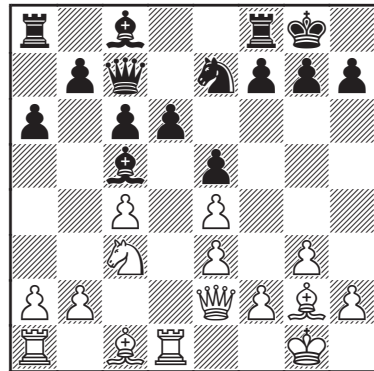
Now let's take stock. Black has doubled pawns but the pawns on c5 and e5 exert a great deal of influence over the centre. And although Black played the rook to a6 to meet the threat of ♟xc6 which would cripple the pawns, there is also a devious idea behind this. In some cases Black can release the knight from c6, play ...f5 and then swing the rook over to the kingside and go for a crazy hack. White has ways of improving as well involving ♞e4-c3-d5. I guess there have been few practical examples from here because:

1. We are quite a long way down the line.
2. Most players go for ...h6 because they either don't like doubled-pawns or are perhaps afraid that too many pieces have already been exchanged in a position like this so the game is too dry.

8.♞d2 a6 9.e3 ♞f5

Magnus wondered if Black could play 9... ♟g4 here. 10.f3 ♞f5 is the tactical justification. This is what I meant when I said earlier in the book that chess players at the highest level often look at chess in quite a chaotic way. They are capable of finding crazy looking candidate moves and as a consequence they come up with more creative ideas than we do. 11.fxg4 ♞xe3 12.♗e2 You probably need longer than the time you get in a blitz game to unpack everything going on in this position. Black has a wide choice: take the rook on f1 directly, take the rook on a1, or maybe some other move. Let's look at all these in turn. 12...♞c2+ (12...♞xf1+ 13.♟xf1 also looks good for White. It is well known that in a middlegame two minor pieces are superior to a rook and a pawn; 12...♞fxg4 13.♞f3 ♞c2+ 14.♞h1 ♞xa1 15.♞e4 also seems to favour White.) 13.♞h1 ♞xa1 14.♞de4+- The expedition seems to have backfired on Black, as there seems to be no good way to extricate the knight on a1. So it turns out ...♟g4 wasn't that great. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't look at the move. The more you find unexpected ideas, the more it expands your horizons and makes you a better chess player.

10.♗e2 c6 11.♞de4 ♞xe4 12.dxe4 ♞e7 13.♖d1 ♗c7



"Maybe he should have gone for a quick 13...♟e6". This intends the immediate ...b5. 14.♞a4 ♟a7 15.c5 d5 16.exd5 cxd5



Magnus Carlsen

17.b4 This seems to squeeze the Black position somewhat. The bishop on a7 looks out of play and if Black goes for ...b6 then White could hack everything off and try and exploit the two bishops.

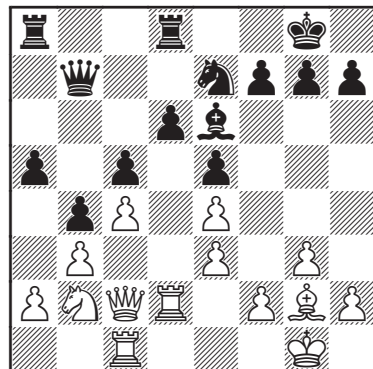
14.♞a4 Magnus said his knight was not very good on c3 and he wanted to reroute it to somewhere else. The plan is to bring the knight around to d3. A lot of people wouldn't have that deeper level of chess knowledge to understand that the knight isn't great on c3. I know I probably wouldn't. You and me might think that it is doing a good job there because it is shutting down the d5 break. The issue White has if he doesn't reroute the knight is what plan does he have? He can't do anything to improve his position.

Another thing that I've noticed when looking at the games of the very best players is how often they reroute their knights. They are always looking to increase the POTENTIAL of their position and maximize their chances.

14...♙a7 15.b3 b5 16.♞b2 ♙e6 17. ♙d2 ♜fd8 18.♞ac1 ♞b7 19.♙a5 ♙b6 20.♞d2 ♙xa5 21.♞xa5 c5 22.♞c3

Magnus said he was probably not worse but also probably not better. Evaluating is what these guys do. You should do the same when you are annotating or looking at your games. Evaluate, evaluate. And it doesn't matter if you get it wrong. That's how you increase your knowledge. Trial and error.

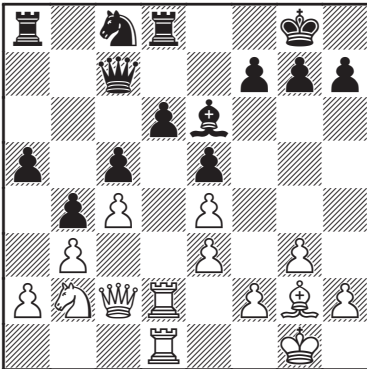
22...b4 23.♞c2 a5 24.♞d2



24...♔c7 I thought what Magnus said about this position was what drew me to this game in the first place. He said that this was looking a bit like those Sheshnikov lines where White goes for an early c4, and that the structure would be the same if you take away the white pawn on e3 and the black pawn on c5. To me this shows why universal knowledge of chess is so important. The more you know, the more this knowledge will transfer to other openings and variations that don't seem to have any connection. He also pointed out some other features of the position which to me were quite relevant.

He said that Black can eventually play ...a4 but it doesn't do a whole lot. He also said that the pawn on e3 doesn't look that great but it does a good job of preventing the black knight from roosting itself on this square.

25.♖cd1 ♘c8



26.h4! Magnus played this while looking supremely bored and disinterested and yet I think it's a pivotal moment. I'm not at all convinced I would have played h4 and ♔h2 and ♕h3 there and Magnus makes it look automatic and White is clearly making

progress. You exchange off an important defender of the light-squares on e6.

26...♘b6 27.♔h2 ♖d7 28.♕h3 ♚c6?!

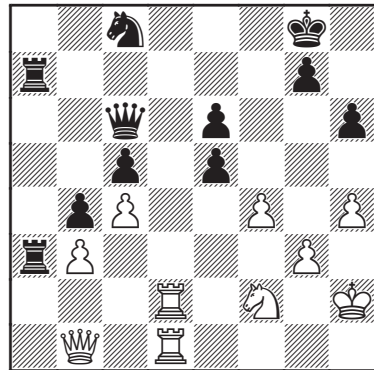
Later on Magnus looked at this moment in his review of the game and said that Black definitely should have exchanged. **28...♕xh3 29.♔xh3 h5=** - there doesn't seem to be much to worry Black here.

29.♕xe6 fxe6 30.f4 exf4 31.exf4 Again you see the great understanding because on the video Magnus wakes up around this point and you can clearly sense that he's more optimistic about his position.

31...a4 32.♖e2 axb3 33.axb3 ♖a2?

33...♖da7

34.♚b1 ♖a3 35.♘d3 ♖da7 36.♘f2 h6 37.♖ed2 ♘c8 38.e5! dxe5



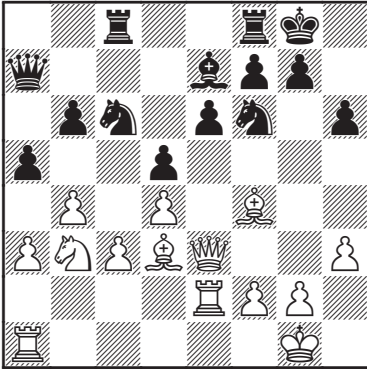
39.♘g4

As Magnus explained, he felt that White was better but it was kind of unclear but the computer just gives White as having plus six here. **39...♘d6** That's the move the engine proposes, just giving a piece, as a way to delay the inevitable checkmate.

1 : 0

Position 1

lichess.org IIGS: Round 2 (me as black)
2023

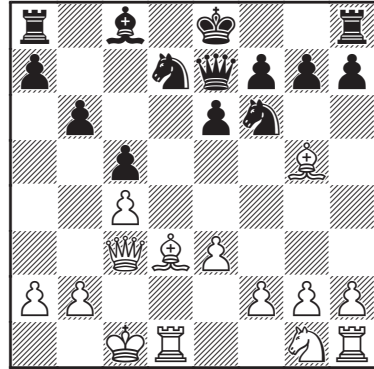


Black to move

=

Position 3

Yasser Seirawan 2600 - Tigran V.
Petrosian 2605
Nikšić 1983

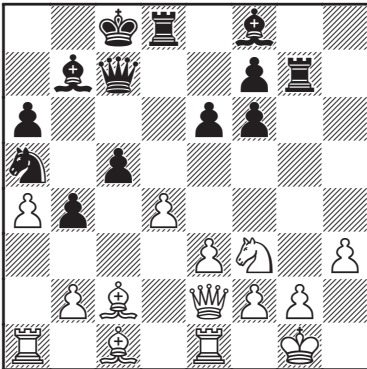


White to move

±

Position 2

Ding Liren 2788 - Ian Nepomniachtchi
2795
Astana (m/2) 2023

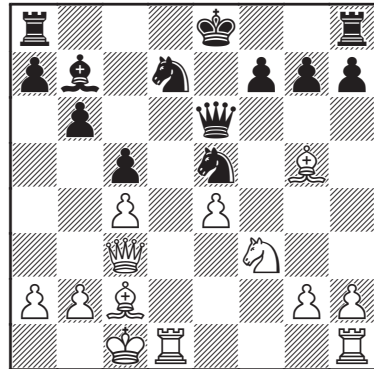


White to move

=

Position 4

Yasser Seirawan 2600 - Tigran V. Petrosian
2605
Nikšić 1983



White to move

+-

This is possible variation from a World
Championship game.

IVANCHUK

VASSILY IVANCHUK 2695 - BORIS GELFAND 2700 [D77]

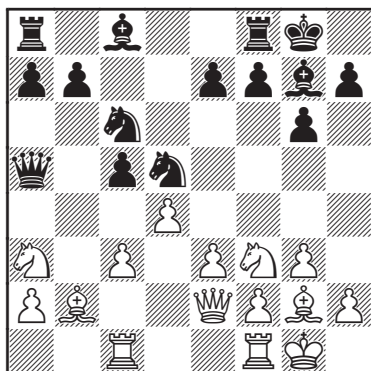
Linares 1991

I recall buying a compendium of old British Chess Magazine articles and reading about the mercurial exploits of the fascinating figure Vassily Ivanchuk, who seemed poised to end the dominance in chess of the two Ks when he defeated both in the 1991 Linares tournament in Spain, forcing many to consider that he would be the natural successor to Kasparov. Ivanchuk seemed unnaturally devoted to chess, going straight from his wedding to the tournament and then defeating Kasparov in the first round. An eventual 9½/13 was enough to take the spoils, quite deservedly so, and his win against his fellow rookie Boris Gelfand in the penultimate round was typical of a player in form. Gelfand is thoroughly routed when he makes a questionable decision to cut off retreat squares for his queen.

**1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗f3 ♕g7 4.g3 0-0
5.♕g2 d5 6.0-0 dxc4 7.♗a3 c3**

Nowadays 7...♗c6 8.♗xc4 ♕e6 9.b3 ♕d5 is just as popular. Black is very solid here and can develop ambitions on the queenside with a later ...a5.

**8.bxc3 c5 9.e3 ♗c6 10.♖e2 ♖a5 11.
♕b2 ♗d5 12.♖ac1**



12...b6?! No doubt Gelfand intended to reach easy play with a subsequent ...cd4 followed by ...♕a6, but Ivanchuk never seems to give him the time to reach that goal.

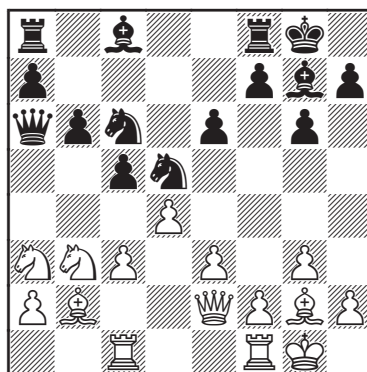
According to the website Chessgames (an excellent source of historic chess material) Black's best was to play 12...cxd4 13.cxd4 (13.♗xd4 ♗f6!∞) 13...♗db4 14.♖c5 ♖a6! and Black will experience few problems;

12...♕g4 has also been tried, with mixed results. 13.h3 ♕xf3 14.♕xf3 ♗b6 with a dynamically imbalanced game in prospect.

13.♗d2!

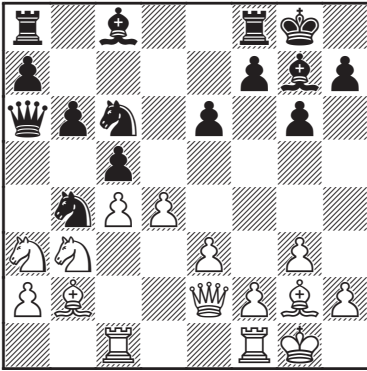
A decent alternative suggested by the engine is 13.♗g5!? e6 14.c4 ♗de7 15.dxc5 ♕xb2 16.♖xb2 bxc5 17.♗b5 where the powerful location of the white knights give him an edge.

13...e6 14.♗b3 ♖a6



15.c4! White's threat is not so much to take the knight as to play ♗b5.

15...♗db4



15...♞de7 16.dxc5 is also highly unpleasant.

16.♞b5! It is not clear if this was home preparation by Ivanchuk (perhaps someone with a better grasp of chess history may be able to elaborate). But what is clear is that this lands Black in terrible trouble because

his queen and two knights are in a tangle. Ivanchuk incidentally, was never someone who really embraced chess computers. He used to carry his chess set around with him to tournaments, and study on it incessantly.

16...♞a4

Perhaps from afar Gelfand missed the strength of 16...♞xa2 17.♖c3!

17.♞c3 ♞a6 18.a3 After this tournament commentators fell over each other to proclaim Ivanchuk the natural successor to Kasparov. I feel this was premature, because Kasparov was terribly strong. It takes more than one tournament to supplant such a player. What was clear was that unlike some of his contemporaries, Ivanchuk was not in awe of the champion.

1 : 0



Vassily Ivanchuk

OFF THE TEE/ OPENING EXPERTS

VASSILY IVANCHUK 2714 - GARRY KASPAROV 2812 [B90]

Linares 1999

In golf the ability to drive the ball long distances has become all-important. In fact to such an extent that a very driven individual like Bryson DeChambeau has shown himself willing to put on large amounts of muscle mass just so that he can pump the ball that bit further, thus gaining an edge on the opposition. The danger is that golf will soon be reduced to a pitch and putt competition. The same dangers exist in chess, in that increasingly powerful chess engines are beginning to squeeze chess theory. Certain lines that were once considered playable, are no longer feasible. Play a risky but interesting gambit, turn on the chess engine and it already gives the other side a decisive edge. Who wants to play that? I think we have ended up in this current state, where it has become increasingly likely that computers will solve our royal game, because of the great development in opening understanding that has taken place over the last hundred years.

Chess players have for a long time been obsessed with the ramifications of opening theory and the possibility of pushing back the boundaries of what is possible. The following list of the top three openings experts in chess history is arbitrary, and by no means final:

1. Garry Kasparov
2. Mikhail Botvinnik
3. Vladimir Kramnik

Honourable mention: Lev Polugayevsky.

I must admit that readers and contributors with a much deeper understanding

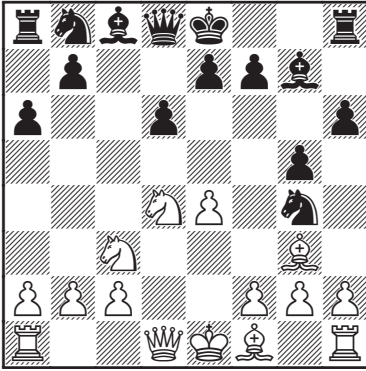
of chess history, would be able to come up with a much better list. But who could leave out Garry Kasparov? One super grandmaster neatly described the dilemma when facing the great man; you survive the opening somehow, but he outplays you anyway, because he's the best player. When I was younger a book that inspired me a lot was "Winning with the Najdorf" by Danny King. In the ♟e3 Najdorf, Danny King suggested you play an early $\dots\text{♞g4}$. Kasparov, with his profound and deep instinct for dynamic play, was able to turn this into an explosive opening weapon.

1.e4 c5 2.♞f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♞xd4 ♞f6 5.♞c3 a6 6.♟e3 ♞g4 7.♟g5

To my shame, I once had a game in the last round of the Isle of Man tournament where I was Black against Alexander Shabalov. He played $7.\text{♟c1}$ and I repeated with $7.\dots\text{♞f6}$ $8.\text{♟e3}$ ♞g4 and we agreed a draw. Why was this to my shame? Because I needed a win to catch him, and a draw gave him outright first place. Of course Shabalov is a much stronger chess player than I am, but it's still pathetic to not fight in such a situation.

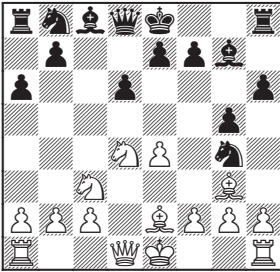
7...h6 8.♟h4 g5 These aggressive pawn moves are not without their downside, although it is interesting that in recent years more and more players are happy to play like this. Computers have shown that you can push your pawns forward on the king-side and get away with it, so Kasparov was something of a pioneer in this sense.

9.♟g3 ♟g7



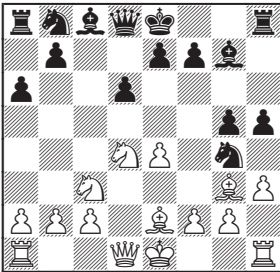
10. ♖d2 A positional approach. White is relying on unpretentious development to refute Black's strategy. That is why it is quite shocking what occurs in the game and how quickly Kasparov is able to grab a decisive edge.

10. ♖e2 quickly became one of the main-lines.



10...h5! Black is continuing with his maximalist strategy.

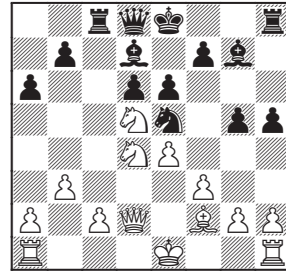
a) 11.h3



11...h4! is one of the main tactical points. (11... ♗f6?! seems inconsistent with Black's approach) 12.hxg4 hxg3 13. ♖xh8+ ♗xh8 14.fxg3 ♗c6 is already winning for

Black, according to my Stockfish 12;

b) 11. ♖xg4 ♗xg4 12.f3 ♗d7 13. ♖f2 ♗c6 14. ♖d2 (14.0-0 e6 15. ♗de2 ♖c7 was another heavyweight clash between Topalov and Anand, with the Indian genius playing on the Black side, doubtless motivated to try this line by his previous experience against Kasparov.) 14... ♗e5 15.0-0 (A recent game of Firouzja's (playing White) went 15.b3 ♖c8 16. ♗d5!?) and in general this is a not untypical way for White to play this line, using his knights to create tactical opportunities - Alireza Firouzja - Pouria Darini, Iran (ch) 2018. 16...e6



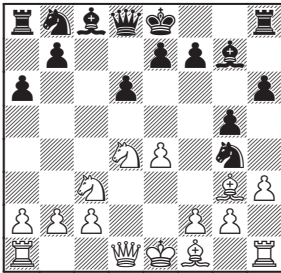
17. ♗f5!! This is the brilliant idea! 17...exd5 18. ♗xg7+ ♖f8 19. ♗f5 although after 19... ♖f6 Black seems to be holding reasonably well.) 15...e6 16.b3 ♗g6 17. ♖ad1 g4! 18.f4 h4 19. ♗de2 h3 20.g3 ♖c8

b1) One of my fears when playing this line with Black is the idea that my opponent would try to exchange dark-squared bishops with 21. ♖d4! which should certainly be declined. 21...f6! (21... ♖xd4+? a dynamic player like Kasparov would probably rather chop off his own hands, than chop off this bishop! 22. ♖xd4+- is terrible for Black, as he has been robbed of any dynamic play by this exchange of bishops, and all his dark-squares are now weak; 21...e5?! gives away the d5 square. 22.fxe5 ♗xe5 23. ♗d5±) 22. ♖d3 (22.f5 ♗e5 23.fxe6 ♖xe6 24. ♗d5 with unclear prospects, although once again the pawn on h3 provides Black with a great deal of strategic insur-

ance.) 22...♖a5 with a rich and complex middlegame ahead;

b2) 21.e5 d5 And Black had fine long-term prospects in the game Viswanathan Anand 2735 - Garry Kasparov 2785, Genève (rapid) 1996. As Kasparov described very well around about this time the pawn on h3 is a very powerful asset for Black, not only in the middlegame where it hangs over the white king's head like a Damocles sword, but also in the endgame (in scenarios where the white h-pawn drops off, it will be very close to queening.)

In an important game playing White against Judit Polgár, Kasparov played the most popular response, 10.h3 and after



a) 10...♗e5 is in fact the main-line. 11.♗f5 ♕xf5 12.exf5 ♖bc6 13.♗d5 e6 14.fxe6 fxe6 15.♗e3 ♖a5+! this is considered best by the engine, and it is wise not to doubt it in such sharp positions. (15...d5!? 16.♖h5+ ♗f7 is also playable; 15...0-0 16.♕e2 d5 17.0-0 ♗g6! - it's logical to increase the potential of the bishop on g7, and now Black may have a strategic threat of playing ...♗e5. Also ...♗f4 becomes possible. 18.c4! d4 19.♖c2!± and it's quite sad to note that all of this theory is new to me, despite being a devotee of the Najdorf for many years.) 16.c3 ♗f3+ 17.♖xf3 ♕xc3+ 18.♗d1 ♖a4+ 19.♗c2 ♕xb2 with a bit of a mess, although if we use statistical analysis, we can see that most games from this position end in draws;

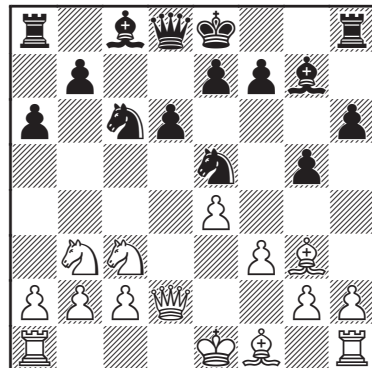
b) 10...♗f6 11.♕c4 ♖b6 12.0-0 0-0 13.♗de2 ♖xb2 14.♕b3 ♖a3 15.f4! With

a razor-sharp game in prospect in Garry Kasparov 2851 - Judit Polgár 2658, Wijk aan Zee 2000.

I believe that the Polgár game was reasonably famous as one where Kasparov made comments afterwards along the lines of "Most of my colleagues would have taken a quick draw in this situation." He was referring to the fact that a quick draw would have assured him of out-right victory in the tournament. Instead Kasparov went for it and scored a brilliant victory, to put an exclamation mark upon his overall success. This is the opposite to what I did against Shabalov, in effect. While Kasparov had the heart of a lion, I had the heart of a lamb. Although these comments by Kasparov might seem rather cruel, there is some truth to them. Having the courage to steel yourself against external pressures and not take draws, like he had, is something that statistics can not easily measure. I also believe that the video of the post mortem to this game was available on Youtube for a few years but now seems lost, which is a pity, as it gave an insight into Kasparov's fantastic tactical mind and other-worldly calculation.

One of the variations that attracted me to this line was the possibility of Black being given an early gift with 10.f3?? ♗e3 11.♖d2 ♕xd4!++ and indeed, I managed to carry out this trap in a number of blitz games.

10...♗c6 11.♗b3 ♗ge5 12.f3





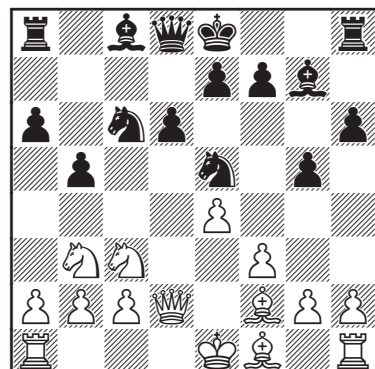
Garry Kasparov

12...b5! As any Najdorf devotee will tell you, the pawn break ...b5! is almost as common as it's counterpart, the all-important ...d5!

I once had this position against a young Luke McShane and played 12...♙e6 I was vaguely aware that it was a move. I had no idea of what the follow-up was. In the game I ended up drifting aimlessly, and was ruthlessly crushed on the kingside. This was why I eventually gave up this variation with ...♘g4. I realized that it was tempting to play the same lines that Kasparov did, but because the variations that he chose were often so sharp and theoretical, you really had to know the details. And this line is a prime example. If Black just plods along, and fails to play with great dynamism and accuracy,

then you can quite easily end up in a situation where you have all these weaknesses on the kingside and nothing to show for it.

13. ♙f2



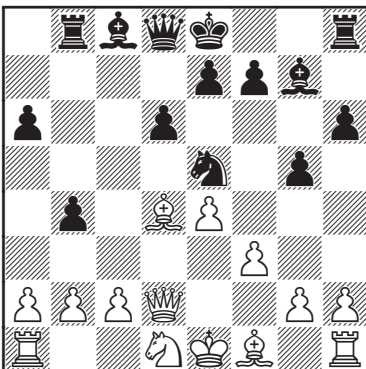
13...♖b8! The ball has been smashed 370 yards down the middle! Now only a wedge into the green awaits. This is the difference between me and Kasparov. (Well in truth, not the only difference.) Kasparov plays the opening with a purpose. As soon as you see this idea of ...b5 and ...♖b8, you think, wow this makes sense, because it is obvious that Black is creating counterplay on the queen-side – ...♗c4 already looks like a threat.

14.♗d4?! No doubt made uncomfortable by the strength and purpose of Kasparov's opening play, Ivanchuk violates one of the great opening principles– don't move a piece more than once in the opening. Of course a player of the calibre of Ivanchuk is more than aware of such a rule, and they do not break them lightly. He must have had an idea in mind.

14.♗e2 ♗c4 looks scary for White, because if you take on c4 then it looks like b2 will be hanging at the end, and perhaps this is why Ivanchuk rejected this continuation and went for ♗d4 instead. 15.♗xc4! anyway! (15.♖c1?? ♗xb2+) 15...bxc4 16.♗d4 ♗e5 17.♖b1∞ is just unclear.

14...b4! 15.♗d1 I wondered if White could try 15.♗ce2 0–0 16.♗g3 because it looks like the knight is heading for f5 or h5, but in the opening time is even more important, and **16...d5!** like in the game, is immensely powerful.

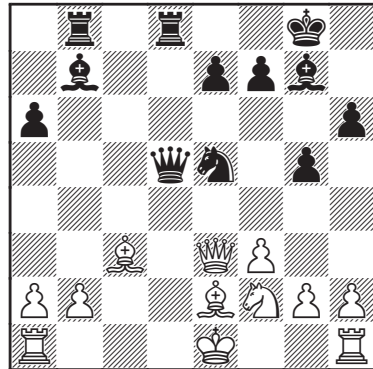
15...♗xd4 16.♗xd4



16...d5! I once had a conversation with the Dutch player Merijn van Delft on a train from Amsterdam to Hamburg. He's a bit of an openings expert himself, and according to him the struggle in the Najdorf revolves around whether or not Black can get the ...d5 break in successfully. He also seemed to think there were many situations where this break ...d5 looks bad, but ended up working out well for Black anyway. In short, it's very tough for White to keep a lid on Black's play. Here it's just good.

17.exd5 ♖xd5 White's opening can already be seen as a disaster. His development is lacking and Black is already creating decisive threats.

18.c3 0–0 19.♗e2 ♖d8 20.♖e3 ♗b7 21.♗f2 bxc3 22.♗xc3



22...♖e6! Subtle prophylaxis. Black wants to prevent his opponent castling, after which much of his advantage will be lost.

23.♗f1 not a move that you would ever gladly play, but there was little choice.

23.0–0 ♗xf3+ was the point of Black's last.

23...♗d5 24.b3 ♖bc8 25.♖d1 ♖xc3 26.♖xc3 ♗g4! 27.♖a5 ♗e3+ 28.♗g1 ♖c8 29.♖xa6 ♗xd1 30.♖xe6 ♗xe6 31.♗xd1 ♖c1

0 : 1