

Anish Giri

My Junior Years in 20 Games

by Anish Giri

New In Chess 2014

Contents

Preface	7
Introduction	11
Games:	
1. Domnin– Giri, St. Petersburg 2005	31
2. Kosarev– Giri, St. Petersburg 2005	34
3. Giri– Abdullayev, Herceg Novi 2006	39
4. Giri– Brandenburg, Dieren 2009	42
5. Giri– Kudriavtsev, St. Petersburg 2007	45
6. Giri– Dgebuadze, Hilversum 2008	50
7. Nyzhnyk– Giri, Enschede 2008	57
8. Giri– Werle, Germany 2008	62
9. Bartel– Giri, Germany 2008	68
10. Romanishin– Giri, Wijk aan Zee 2009	74
11. Giri– Nijboer, Haaksbergen 2009	78
12. Giri– Sutovsky, Wijk aan Zee 2010	81
13. Nyback– Giri, Wijk aan Zee 2010	84
14. Carlsen– Giri, Wijk aan Zee 2011	88
15. Anand– Giri, Wijk aan Zee 2011	92
16. Caruana– Giri, Reggio Emilia 2011/12	102
17. Giri– Ivanchuk, Reggio Emilia 2011/12	107
18. Morozevich– Giri, Biel 2012	110
19. Giri– Li Chao, Tromsø 2013	118
20. Nakamura– Giri, Wijk aan Zee 2014	123

Introduction

My Early Days

The story goes like this. When I was six, I stumbled upon a new puzzle called chess. After a couple of failed efforts by my mother to teach me the rules, the chessboard went back to its dusty corner. A year later, though, with the help of a book, I managed to learn it anyway.

Whether this is a real memory or something that has settled in my memory thanks to my own interviews, I honestly do not know, but one way or the other, that is how the story goes. The book, by the way, was a great one, and it's still sitting on my book shelf. Its title (in Russian) is 'How to Become a Gentleman'. Skipping the chapters on 'manners', 'self-defence', 'dancing skills' and many others that I should probably start reading now, before it's too late, I quickly found myself in the most peculiar chapter of the book, which I read avidly. To sum up, it may not be clear whether I became a gentleman, but I certainly became a chess player, and that's what this short story is about.

I was fortunate to end up in the right chess club. The little club in the library close to our home was closed for the holidays, so we decided to take a longer trip to a bigger club called DUSSH-2, where my talented friend was studying and practising the game.

That talented friend had been playing from his early childhood, and he soon became my main opponent, with whom I played games over the phone. While those phone games usually went badly at first, at the club I won all my games, because I had been put into the wrong group. My mother had modestly claimed that my chess skills largely consisted of 'knowing how the pieces move', despite the fact that by that time I was already a decent opponent for my mother herself.

Winning quickly became a habit, and within a year, although not without the help of my first coach, Kovalova Asya Vladimirovna, I became a 'first category' player, something I was very proud of back then. The Western European equivalent is an Elo rating of approximately 1700.

My rapid progress was not entirely accidental, of course, as I had already devoured a bunch of good (and bad) books about chess and during that year was completely preoccupied by my new passion.

Japan-Russia-Japan

When I was eight, our whole family moved to Japan, where my father had been offered a job in the field of hydrology (water research). While the Japanese certainly possess all the skills needed to dominate the chess scene, they don't for one simple reason: they have their own version of the game, which is a lot more popular out there. Nevertheless, we managed to find a chess club there as well. At the Sapporo Chess Club, Japanese chess fans,

a total of around 10 people, gathered about once a month. It was definitely not as intense as it used to be back in St. Petersburg. The Japanese chess community was strong enough for me at that point, to put it mildly. I remember losing game after game, waiting for that one 1500 player with whom I could fight on equal terms.

Fortunately for my chess development, we paid occasional long visits to Russia in order to keep up with schooling in both countries. Eventually I unconsciously developed a healthy formula to combine club practice in Russia and Internet chess in Japan. Meanwhile I also had a beautiful hardcover edition of Garry Kasparov's *My Great Predecessors, Part 2*, with his hypnotizing face on the cover, and I can understand why I managed to slowly but steadily raise my level of play.

I have special memories of that book. My Russian coach at that time, Andrei Sergeevich Praslov, picked the second part of the series and sent it to me over the post. I already possessed all the necessary ingredients of a great player, such as general laziness and an incredible passion for chess. Being too impatient to read the book from the beginning till the end, I once again decided to stick to the good old reading method that I had used back then. The method was simple. You open a book at a random page and read that game (without a chessboard, of course; I was too lazy for that too!). Then you do it again and again. The problem with this excellent reading method is that eventually you have seen so many

games that you need to re-open the book countless times to end up at a game that you haven't yet seen. As a result. I still don't know whether I have studied all the games of the second part of this great series or just most of them. Still, one way or another, this study definitely contributed to my chess development, and the absence of a board helped my blindfold skills.

My first 'major' victory came in 2004, when I became Hokkaido Champion. The Hokkaido Championship was a closed tournament of six players (if I am not mistaken), the strongest with a rating of approximately 2000. The games of this period have not found their way to a database, and rightly so. I presume that at this point in a player's development it is far more important to know what games he has seen and studied than what kind of games he has played himself.

A year later I also scored some victories in my other homeland, Russia, where I became silver medallist in the category U-12 in 2005 and a year later, in 2006, even managed to win it. The year 2005 is also the year in which some of my games found their way into the Mega Database. I've decided to include two games from that period, both of which feature my cute attempts to emulate the play of two of the great World Champions of the past: Robert Fischer and Garry Kasparov.

In 2005, I also played my first international tournament, the U-12 European Championship. While I didn't make it to the podium, I scored a

few nice attacking victories. I have included two of these spectacular attacking games in the games section. Incidentally, it's quite amusing that in 2009 when, a grandmaster already, I mated my opponent Daan Brandenburg, he told me in surprise that he had never seen me give mate before...

Anyway, in 2005 and 2006 I played both the Russian and the European championships. I couldn't go to the 2006 World Youth Championship in Batumi, for which I had qualified by winning the Russian U-12, on account of the unfortunate political situation between Russia and Georgia. But perhaps it was only for the best, as I was way too young to meet my future girlfriend, who won the U-16 world title that year.

The year after, in 2007, I played some bigger open tournaments in St. Petersburg, and my play got a little bit more mature. I found a typical bad-bishop endgame amongst my old games, which I happily annotated for the games section.

2007 was generally a good year for me. I played well in the Opens and won a lot of rapid events that I was playing every week in a club called Petrogradka. There were rapid events each Saturday and Sunday, the first prize being around 20 euro, which I was happy to fight for.

Moving to the 'Low Countries'

Another year later, it turned out we were going to the Netherlands,

where my father had been offered a job, once again in the same field of hydrology. That 'move' turned out to be extremely fortunate for me, as I won the very first Open I played in, Hilversum 2008.

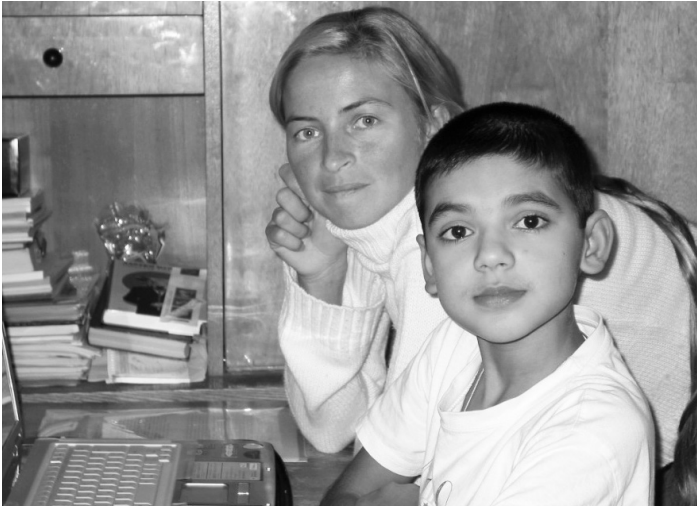
In that tournament I played my first grandmaster, Daniel Fridman, to whom I humbly lost. Eventually I got back on track, drawing with some strong grandmasters. According to an arbiter who was a friend of ours, I seemed to have secured an IM norm going into the last round. I was in bed already when I received a phone call from an apologetic arbiter, who explained that, on reflection, he had realized that if I won my last game (I was paired with the tournament leader, GM Dgebuadze), I would actually make a GM norm. I laughed a little into the phone and went back to sleep without worries.

But I managed to win that game surprisingly smoothly, and this victory was definitely one of my most memorable ones.

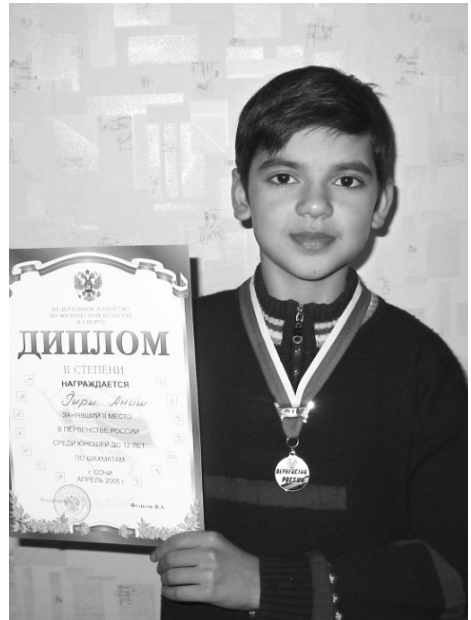
It goes without saying that it is included in the games section, although I had to cut down my original analysis somewhat, as my original notes, inspired by my happiness, were far too detailed.

After this victory I played many open events in Holland. Leiden, Bussum and Groningen come to mind, amongst several others. I was quite successful and kept increasing my rating and gaining norms.

I should also mention my 'club career' in Holland. Back in Russia the



Ten-year-old Anish with his aunt in St. Petersburg.



The proud Under-12 Russian Champion.

Playing soccer in Japan.



Monaco 2011. Having fun in the press room with World Champion Vishy Anand.

Hoogevveen 2009. Let's get down to work. Helping Vassily Ivanchuk solve a puzzle during the Univé tournament.



Shaking hands with political commentator Frits Wester at the start of a simul in the Dutch parliament in The Hague.



A34

Hikaru Nakamura
Anish Giri

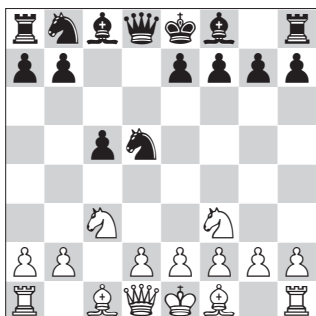
Wijk aan Zee 2014

I played quite solidly in Wijk aan Zee this year and at the outset of the last round I was on +2, still unbeaten. However, one shouldn't get confused in top tournaments, where every game is a big challenge.

In the final round I had to face the ever aggressive American star Hikaru Nakamura and I was looking forward to another big battle. In fact, my games with Hikaru are always very tense and we both have scored quite a few memorable victories against each other.

1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5

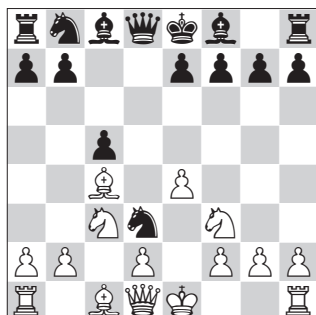
This is the new Anti-Grünfeld of some sort. If White wants he can transpose to the Grünfeld with 5.d4, but a couple of months before this game I showed good preparation against Hikaru exactly in that opening, so he decided not to test me there this time.



5.e4 ♘b4 5...♗xc3 6.dxc3! is known to lead to a slightly better endgame for White due to the pawn on c5, which should stand on c7(6) in this symmetric pawn structure.

6.♙c4 ♘d3+

A very old and somewhat forgotten line that leads to fascinating play.



7.♙e2 ♘f4+ 8.♙f1 ♘e6



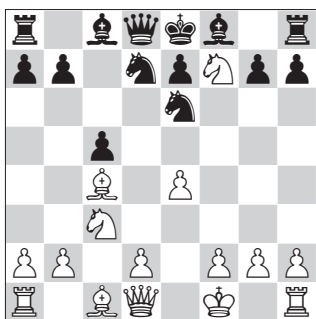
9.♗e5!?

I didn't remember this move and felt somewhat confused. In fact, it has already been played in some old high level games.

9.b4!? is the main move, which I tried myself against Rustam Kasimdzhanov.

9.d3 is of course also a move to be considered.

9... ♖c6?! I thought for a very long time and finally decided to keep it safe and get rid of the annoying knight. 9... ♖d7?? was tempting, but only briefly, as after 10. ♗xf7! it becomes apparent that the black king gets into trouble:

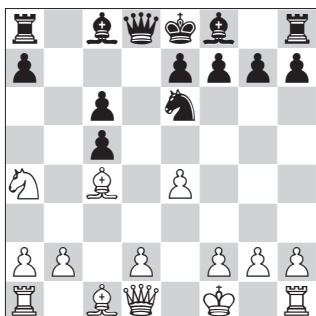


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

10... ♗xf7 11. ♖xe6+ ♗xe6 12. ♖b3+ ♗d6 (12... ♗f6 13. ♖d5+!) 13.d4! etc. I also considered 9...g6 and 9...♖d6 (c7) which are better moves than the one in the game, but finally I saw some ghosts and decided to keep it safe, judging that in a practical game I will have enough compensation for my poor pawn structure.

10. ♗xc6 bxc6 11. ♖a4

This came a little unexpected, so I had to take even more time...



11... ♖d4!?

11...g6 12. ♖xe6 ♖xe6 13. ♗xc5 felt a little dry. After 13... ♖g7 14. ♗xe6 fxe6 15.d3 0-0 16. ♖e2 ♖d4 Black definitely keeps some compensation for the pawn, but there is clearly no fun.

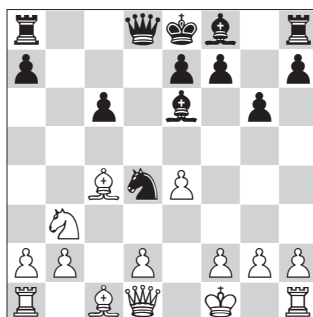
12. ♗xc5 g6

I was nevertheless eager to develop my bishop to the long diagonal.



13. ♖b3 ♖e6!?

My point. Once again, I wanted to keep some dynamic possibilities and I wasn't aiming for a dull position for merely two results.



14. ♖xe6

An interesting idea was 14.d3!? ♖g7 (14... ♖xc4 15.dxc4 ♗xb3 16. ♖xb3) 15. ♗xd4 ♖xc4 16.dxc4 ♖xd4 with