

Sam Collins

Karpov

move by move

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About the Author

Sam Collins is an International Master with two Grandmaster norms, and a former Irish and Japanese Champion. He has represented Ireland at eight Olympiads, winning an individual gold medal at Bled 2002. He has a wealth of teaching and writing experience, and has produced many books, DVDs and magazine articles on chess.

Also by the Author

The French Advance

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The Tarrasch Defence: Move by Move

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Introduction

The 12th World Champion, Anatoly Karpov, needs no introduction. However, a book dedicated to his games certainly does. As a reader might note from the bibliography, many books have been published on Karpov, including several by Karpov himself and, more recently, by Kasparov (most of Volume 5 of *My Great Predecessors* is dedicated to Karpov, in addition to the books devoted to the great world championship matches between the two Ks). Karpov's legacy is a rich one, with a huge number of model games, as befits the most successful tournament player in history.

Kasparov once observed that many great players, while excellent in all areas, were particularly outstanding in two. Thus, Kasparov categorized himself as an outstanding opening and middlegame player. Kramnik was categorized as an outstanding opening and endgame player. And Karpov was categorized as an outstanding middlegame and endgame player.

My approach in this book has been to select a number of aspects of Karpov's play which could be helpful to club players. I could easily have doubled the selection.

In the first chapter, we examine a number of techniques which Karpov used consistently, across a number of structures and openings, namely prophylaxis, masterful handling of opposite-coloured bishops in the middlegame, and exchange sacrifices.

In the second chapter, we consider two of the formations in which Karpov excelled, namely the isolated queen's pawn and the Carlsbad structure.

The third chapter is devoted to a number of openings which Karpov handled with particular expertise. I have tried to include games from different stages of his rich career, so the reader will see Karpov's transition from 1 e4 to 1 d4.

The fourth chapter is devoted to one of the greatest tournament performances of all time, namely Karpov's dominating win at Linares 1994 ahead of all the world's best players. As is clear from the notes, this achievement was based on a decent slice of luck (including the worst move I've ever seen, played by Evgeny Bareev in an equal position). Nevertheless, in this tournament Karpov produced a number of classic games in diverse openings – and in some ways, of all his amazing competitive achievements, this is the most impressive, and a perfect expression of all the elements of his chess which made him such a great player.

The fifth and final chapter takes a look at a few of Karpov's recent efforts. While it is clear that professional play is no longer the centre of Karpov's activities, he has managed

to maintain a remarkably high level and continues to impress, even when playing relatively few games each year at a classical time control.

It's obvious that the above topics are merely a selection. Karpov has far too many strings to his bow for them all to be described here. Similarly, he brilliantly handled many more openings and structures than I am able to cover. But I hope that these examples, as well as being instructive, prompt the reader to investigate Karpov's games more deeply. As well as being one of the all-time greatest world champions (and the most successful tournament player of all time), he is also a master of reinvention. He has changed from 1 e4 to 1 d4 and moved around in different openings as Black, helping him to remain competitive (albeit primarily in blitz and rapid events) against top players for decades.

Karpov on Karpov

I have decided to omit any biography of Karpov, partly because the essential aspects of his life story are widely known, and partly because I have very little of note to add.

However, a description of Karpov as a player strikes me as something that should be brought to the reader's attention. In this regard, Karpov recently gave an interview to www.bigthink.com where he explained a number of aspects of his style, and his approach to chess, which I found deeply instructive:

"I had an active positional style. I played quite strongly endings, so this was my advantage also. And then I could defend difficult positions, which is quite seldom in modern chess, and I could resist in positions where other players probably would resign. And I was finding interesting ideas how to defend difficult positions, and I could save many games. So I never gave up, I was stubborn as a chess player and I tried to defend even very bad positions, and in many cases succeeded."

In response to the question "How do you remain calm after you realize you've made a poor move?", Karpov said:

"This is a very important and good question, because many people would call back the situation, that they missed chances, and then of course it will spoil the rest of the game. It is concerning not only special situation during the game, but also the bad result of a previous game for the next game you play. In my life I tried, and I succeeded in many cases, to forget everything what was in the past. Of course you need to make some analysis and not to repeat mistakes, but it's extremely important to accept a situation like it is, the real situation, not with the thoughts and regrets of what you missed and, okay, two moves ago you had winning position and now you have to defend difficult position, and probably you might lose the game. So these thoughts shouldn't be when you play chess game."

A Taste of what is to Come

The following game could have been in the main body of the book – in particular, the sections on Prophylaxis, the Sicilian and even, perhaps, the Exchange Sacrifice – but I wanted to describe it here. When thinking about what to include in this book, this game was one of the first that came to mind. It contains so many characteristic Karpovian themes: prophyl-

lactic thinking, simple chess, manoeuvring and tactical alertness. It takes amazing ability to make Boris Spassky look like an ordinary player, and this is precisely what Karpov achieves in this game.

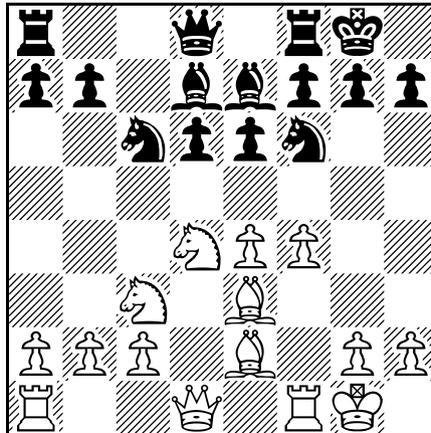
Game 1
A.Karpov-B.Spassky
 Candidates semi-final (9th matchgame), Leningrad 1974
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♖c3 d6 6 ♕e2

Throughout his career with 1 e4 Karpov favoured this classical development against the Sicilian, no doubt influenced by one of his long-time assistants, GM Efim Geller, who was a leading expert on this system.

Black, by using a pure Scheveningen move order, allowed the Keres Attack with 6 g4, a system which Karpov also used to devastating effect, as we will see later. Nursing a one point lead in the match, Karpov chooses a safer continuation.

6...♕e7 7 0-0 0-0 8 f4 ♗c6 9 ♕e3 ♕d7



One of the classical methods of development.

The more popular 9...a6 takes the game into the modern interpretation of the Classical Scheveningen (often arising from a Najdorf move order), as was developed in several key encounters in the series of matches between Karpov and Kasparov.

In the second game of the match, Spassky had played 9...e5 10 ♗b3 a5 11 a4 ♗b4 12 ♕f3 ♕e6 13 ♖h1 ♖c7 14 ♗f2 ♗fd8 15 ♗d2 ♕c4 16 ♗b5 ♕xb5 17 axb5 a4 18 ♗c1 d5, when Black was on top and won after 63 moves. In a subsequent game the same year, Geller demonstrated the improvement 12 ♖h1, beating Spassky in 30 moves.

Exercise: What is Black's intention and how should White respond?

Answer:

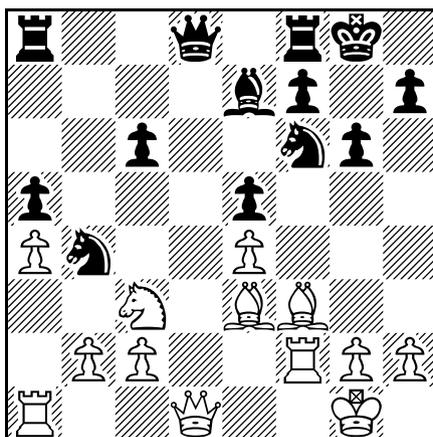
10 ♖b3!

Black intended to trade knights on d4 and bring his bishop to c6. While this freeing manoeuvre was allowed in many games, here Karpov decides to avoid simplification (a normal preference for the side with more space) and leave Spassky with more work to do in order to bring his pieces into play.

10...a5 11 a4 ♖b4 12 ♗f3 ♗c6 13 ♘d4

This is quite an unpleasant position for Black, from which White has scored heavily.

13...g6 14 ♜f2 e5 15 ♘xc6 bxc6 16 fxe5 dxe5



Exercise: Where should the white queen move?

Answer:

17 ♕f1!

Of all Karpov's attributes, perhaps the most difficult to imitate is his uncanny ability to co-ordinate his pieces. There are some positions where good co-ordination can be achieved easily, or according to a standard pattern. However, Karpov had a remarkable capacity to make apparently "strange" moves, after which his pieces prove perfectly placed to deal with any transformation of the position. 17 ♕f1 is an excellent illustration of this.

Of course White is not especially keen to exchange queens, when (as often in the Sicilian) most of Black's problems would be solved. But why not 17 ♕e2 - ? The benefit of Karpov's move is that he keeps open options of ♜d2 (taking the open file) and ♗e2-c4 (attacking the weak f7-pawn and unleashing pressure on the half-open f-file), while the queen is both well placed (supporting the rook on f2, looking at the f6-knight and the f7-pawn) and

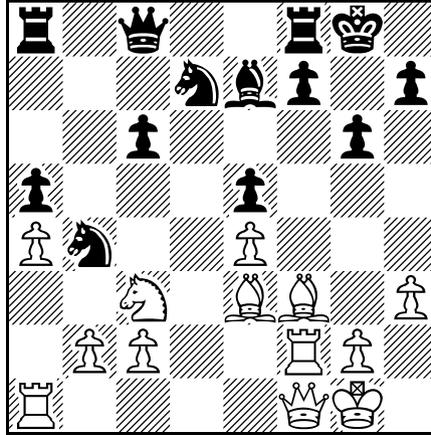
capable of being improved (c4 is an inviting square).

17...♖c8 18 h3!

A typical move, taking control of the g4-square (and so preventing ...♗g4), while creating luft for the king on h2.

In fact White could anticipate ...♗g4 with a more aggressive move, 18 ♖c4, since 18...♗g4? fails tactically to 19 ♕xg4 ♖xg4 20 ♕h6. But this runs into 18...♖a6! instead, when Black is alright.

18...♗d7



Exercise: What is Black's idea? How can White stop it? (Get used to this question, since Karpov asks it of himself on pretty much every move.)

Answer:

19 ♕g4!

After a natural move like 19 ♖d1, Black's idea is revealed: 19...♕c5!, which trades off one half of White's bishop pair and reduces the potential for a direct attack on the black king. Of course 20 ♖xd7?? fails to 20...♕xe3.

19...h5

Now 19...♕c5 has been prevented directly in view of 20 ♕xc5 or 20 ♕xd7, winning a piece.

20 ♕xd7 ♖xd7 21 ♖c4 ♕h4?

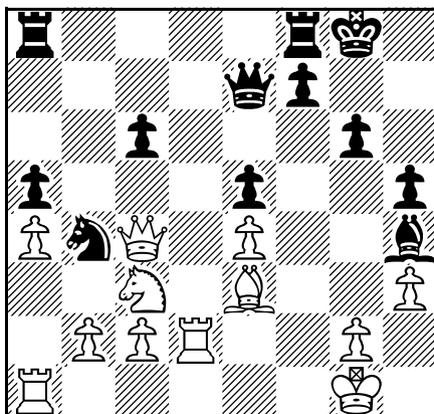
An odd move, forcing the rook to a good square (from, admittedly, another good square).

Spassky avoids the ugly 21...♖e6 22 ♖xe6 fxe6, when the compromised black structure means that the players are playing for two results (a white win or a draw). Such a position is pure torture against a technical master like Karpov, but this might have been a better try than risking a direct attack in the middlegame.

Simply 21...♖ad8 also looks more logical than Spassky's move.

22 ♜d2 ♚e7

Again 22...♚e6 came into consideration, although this is a worse version for Black than on the previous move since he has misplaced his bishop.



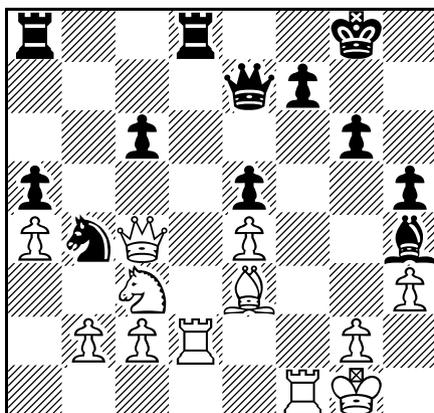
Exercise: How should White continue?

23 ♜f1?!

Answer: 23 ♜c5! was even stronger, since White wins after 23...♚g5 24 ♖ad1 (here 24 ♖d7 ♜xc2 25 ♜f1 ♜e3 26 ♜xe3 ♚xe3+ 27 ♜h1 leads nowhere for White due to the surprising 27...♜g7!, when the king can hide on h6, which is stronger than Timman's 27...♜h8) 24...♖ad8 25 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 26 ♜f1 ♖d7 27 ♜xb4 axb4 28 ♚xc6.

23...♜fd8

Hort suggested 23...♖ad8, seeing that Black survives after 24 ♜c5 ♚b7!. But Black's position remains unpleasant if White's makes the same 24th move as in the game.



Exercise: What should White play now?

Answer:

24 ♖b1!!

One of the most memorable moves in chess history. Karpov prepares to re-route his knight from c3 (where it is limited by the black pawn on c6 and the white pawns on a4 and e4) to the kingside, while protecting his rook and preparing to drive away Black's only good piece with c2-c3. According to Timman, this move was predicted in the press room by Se-myon Furman, Karpov's long-standing trainer.

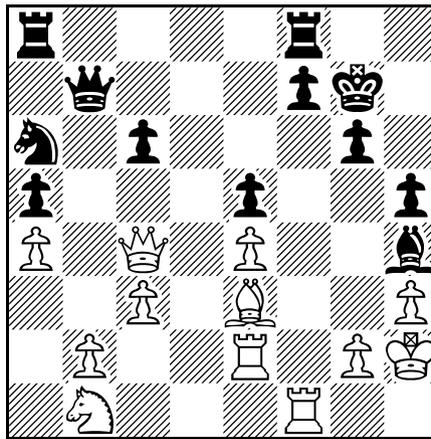
24... ♗b7 **25** ♔h2!

More typical Karpovian play, improving his king and giving himself the option of pushing the bishop away with g2-g3.

25... ♔g7 **26** c3 ♞a6

Perhaps Black should have taken the opportunity to trade a pair of rooks with 26... ♖xd2, even though this brings the white knight where it wants to go.

27 ♗e2 ♗f8



Exercise: How should White continue?

Answer:

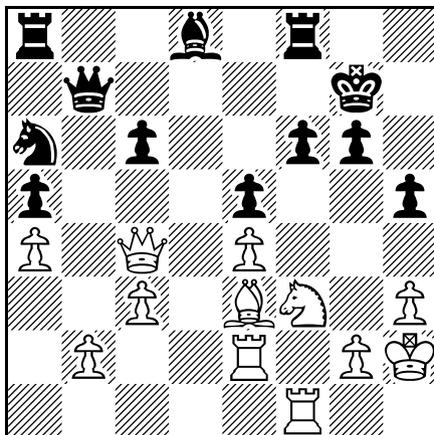
28 ♞d2!

Bringing the knight to its ideal square.

28... ♙d8

28... ♗xb2? drops a piece to 29 ♞f3.

29 ♞f3 f6



Exercise: How can White further improve his position?

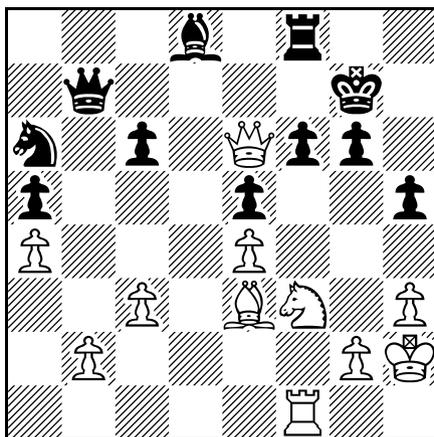
Answer:

30 ♖d2!

Seizing the open d-file, at a time when Black can't contest it since his bishop is awkwardly placed on d8. It makes sense to use this rook to control the d-file since the f1-rook is usefully placed on the f-file. All the white pieces are dramatically more active than their opponents.

30...♗e7 31 ♕e6! ♖ad8 32 ♖xd8 ♗xd8

Spassky couldn't play 32...♖xd8, as 33 ♘xe5! wins on the spot.



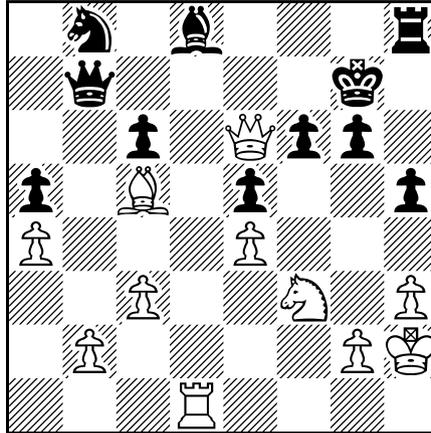
Exercise: How should White proceed now?

Answer:

33 ♖d1!

Black can't defend his last two ranks. As noted by Timman, 33 ♘xe5 ♚c7 34 ♙f4 also wins, but it is more complicated. Karpov's move is risk free and utterly decisive, while requiring no calculation.

33... ♞b8 34 ♙c5 ♜h8



Exercise: Find a tactical blow to end the game.

Answer:

35 ♜xd8! 1-0

Black resigned in view of 35 ♜xd8 ♜xd8 36 ♙e7, when his position collapses.

I'd like to thank John Emms, Byron Jacobs and Jonathan Tait for their help with this book.

Sam Collins,
Dublin, July 2015

Game 8
A.Karpov-V.Malaniuk
 USSR Championship, Moscow 1988
Dutch Defence

1 d4 f5

With his intuitive positional style and keen sense of danger, Karpov has scored heavily against the Dutch throughout his career. Malaniuk, however, was probably the most dedicated supporter of the Leningrad Variation at GM level, and so felt honour-bound to test Karpov in this system.

2 g3 ♖f6 3 ♗g2 g6

Setting up the Leningrad.

Against 3...e6, which can lead to the Stonewall (after ...d7-d5) or the Classical (after ...d7-d6), Karpov favoured formations with ♖h3. For example:

a) 4 ♖h3 ♗e7 5 0-0 0-0 6 c4 d6 7 ♖c3 (after 7 ♜b3 c6 8 ♖c3 ♖a6 9 ♖g5 e5!, Black equalized in A.Karpov-Pr.Nikolic, Reykjavik 1991; ½-½ in 24) 7...♜e8 8 ♖f4 g5 9 ♖d3 ♜g6 10 f4 h6 and now, instead of 11 d5 h6 12 b4 as in A.Karpov-N.Short, Linares 1992 (1-0 in 37), White might gain a greater advantage by preparing e2-e4; for instance, 11 ♖f2 ♖bd7 12 e4 with the better chances.

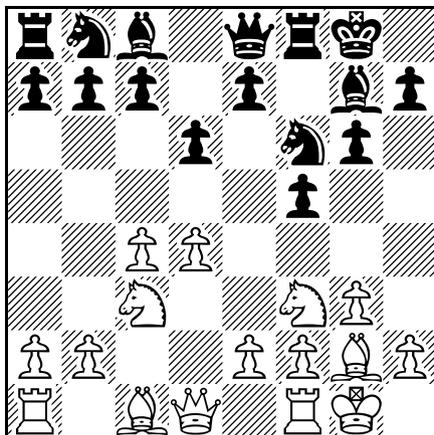
b) 4 c4 d5 5 ♖d2 c6 6 ♖h3 ♗e7 (or 6...♗d6 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♜c2 ♗d7 9 ♖f3 ♜e7 10 ♗f4 ♗e8 11 ♗xd6 ♜xd6 12 ♖f4 with a solid advantage in A.Karpov-B.Bidališ, Rethymnon simul 2001; 1-0 in 64) 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♖f4 ♜e8 9 ♖f3 ♖e4 10 ♜c2 ♗d6 11 ♖d3 a5 12 ♗f4 ♗xf4 13 ♖xf4 and the trade of dark-squared bishops resulted in a classical White advantage in A.Karpov-H.Böhland, Hockenheim (simul) 1994 (1-0 in 44).

An unusual Stonewall formation arose after 3...d6 4 ♖c3!? d5! 5 ♗g5 e6 in A.Karpov-V.Ivanchuk, Linares 1995 (½-½ in 51).

4 c4 ♗g7 5 ♖f3

Malaniuk subsequently made a comfortable draw in this line: 5 ♖c3 0-0 6 ♖h3 ♖c6 7 0-0 d6 8 d5 ♖e5 9 b3 c5 10 ♖f4 ♖e8 11 ♜c2 ♖c7 12 ♗d2 a6 13 a4 b6 14 ♖d3 ♜b8 15 ♜ae1 b5 with good play for Black in A.Karpov-V.Malaniuk, Tallinn 2005 (½-½ in 22).

5...d6 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♖c3 ♜e8



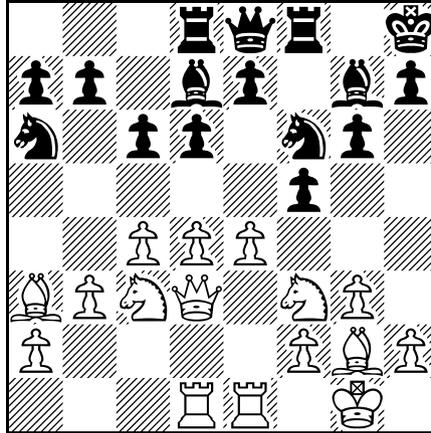
8 b3

Karpov has tried a number of moves here.

a) 8 ♖b3 c6 9 d5 ♗a6 10 ♕e3 ♗g4 has been contested twice between Karpov and another Leningrad Dutch specialist, GM Mikhail Gurevich: 11 ♕f4 (an attempted improvement on 11 ♕d4 e5 12 dxe6 ♗e5 13 ♜ad1 ♜xe6 14 ♗a4 ♜xc4 15 ♜xc4+ ♗xc4 16 ♕xg7 ♗xg7 17 b3 ♗b6 18 ♜xd6 ♗xa4 19 bxa4 ♗c5 and Black was no worse in A.Karpov-M.Gurevich, Reggio Emilia 1989/90; ½-½ in 53) 11...♗c5 12 ♜c2 h6 13 h3 e5 14 dxe6 ♗e5 15 ♜ad1 ♗xe6 16 ♜xd6 ♗xc4 17 ♜d3 ♗xf4 18 gxf4 ♕e6 and Black had no reason to complain about the outcome of the opening. A.Karpov-M.Gurevich, Amsterdam 1991 (1-0 in 47).

b) 8 d5 a5 (after 8...♗a6 9 ♜b1 ♗c5 10 ♗d4 ♜f7 11 b4 e5 12 dxe6 ♗xe6 13 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 14 ♕xb7 ♜ab8 15 ♕g2 ♕xc4 16 ♕e3 ♜be8, Black was very comfortable in A.Karpov-H.Nakamura, Cap d'Agde rapid 2008; 0-1 in 52) 9 ♗d4 (varying from 9 ♜b1 ♗a6 10 ♗e1 ♕d7 11 ♗d3 h6 12 b3 g5 13 ♕b2 ♜g6 with balanced play in A.Karpov-Zhang Zhong, Cap d'Agde rapid 2000; 1-0 in 35) 9...♗a6 10 ♜b1 ♕d7 11 b3 c6 12 ♕b2 ♗c7 13 ♜d2 ♗h8 14 e4 fxe4 15 ♗xe4 cxd5 16 ♗xf6 exf6 17 cxd5 with a clear advantage for White in A.Karpov-I.Rotov, Puhajarve (rapid) 2013 (1-0 in 50).

8...♗a6 9 ♕a3 c6 10 ♜d3 ♕d7 11 ♜fe1 ♜d8 12 ♜ad1 ♗h8 13 e4!

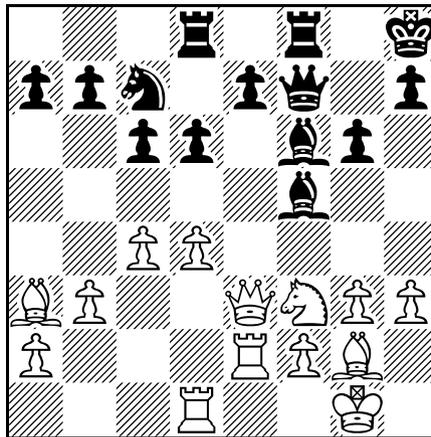


Karpov's set-up looks very logical to me. White rapidly develops his pieces to their best squares and cracks open the centre.

13...fxe4 14 Nxe4 Qf5 15 Nxf6 Qxf6 16 Wf3

Generally, if White achieves e2-e4 in the Dutch, he can count on a slight advantage. Here Black has to guard the e7-pawn and the e6-square, and the knight on a6 is out of play.

16...Wf7 17 h3 Nc7 18 Ke2!



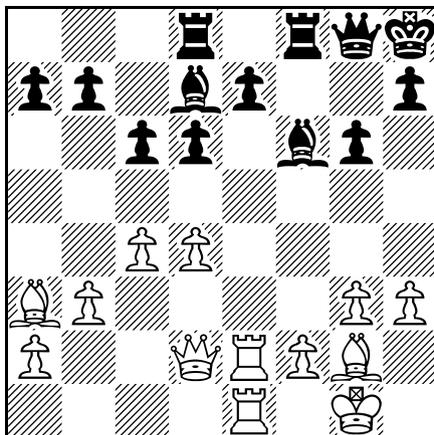
A perfect multi-purpose move, protecting the weak f2-pawn (and the dark-squared bishop if it drops back to b2) while preparing to double on the e-file.

18...Qc8 19 Ng5!

The knight can only be driven away at the cost of weakening the kingside.

19...Wg8 20 Wd2 Ne6 21 Nxe6 Qxe6 22 Rde1 Qd7

22...Qc8 is a stronger defence, when 23 Qb2 keeps up the pressure.



Exercise: How should White continue?

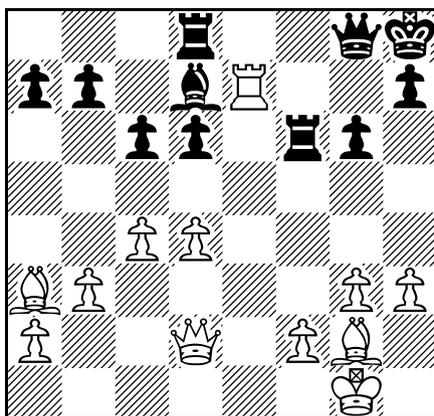
Answer:

23 ♖xe7! ♜xe7 24 ♖xe7

For the exchange White gains a pawn and eliminates Black's best defensive piece. White's dark-squared bishop will be dominant on the a1-h8 diagonal. In addition, the d6-pawn is hanging (which wouldn't have been the case after 22...♜c8).

24...♗f6

Trying to block the long diagonal with 24...d5 is futile: 25 ♜d6! and the bishop gets to e5.



Exercise: Find the best continuation for White.

Answer:

25 d5!

Opening the long diagonal for the bishop.

25... ♖f8 26 ♜e3 ♘g8 27 ♙b2

Black is completely busted.

27... ♜f5 28 ♚d4 ♜e5

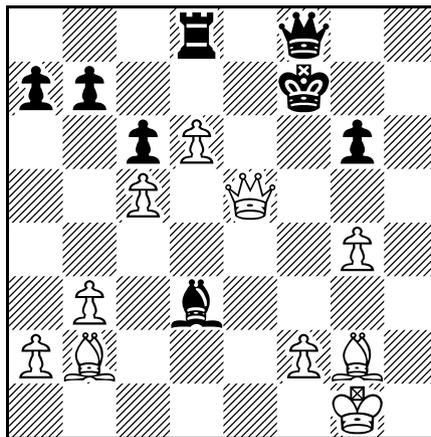
At least this way he eliminates an attacking piece, but White gets two pawns for the exchange and is still dominating the dark squares.

29 ♜xe5 dxe5 30 ♚xe5 ♘f7 31 d6 ♙f5 32 c5 h5 33 g4!

33 ♙f1!, aiming for c4, was also strong.

33...hxg4 34 hxg4 ♙d3

34... ♙xg4 drops the bishop to 35 ♚f6+ ♙e8 36 ♚xg6+ etc.



Exercise: Find the mate in four.

Answer:

35 ♙d5+! 1-0

Since 35...cxd5 36 ♚xd5+ ♙e8 37 ♚e6+ ♚e7 38 ♚xe7 is mate.

Game 9
A.Karpov-B.Spasky
 Moscow 1973
Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 a6 4 ♙a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♙e7 6 ♜e1 b5 7 ♙b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♘b8

Game 16
V.Korchnoi-A.Karpov
 World Championship (9th matchgame), Merano 1981
Queen's Gambit Declined

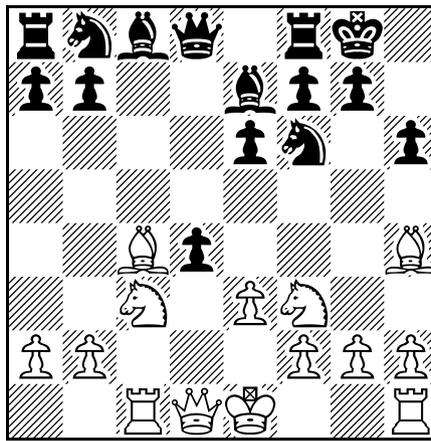
1 c4 e6 2 ♘c3 d5 3 d4 ♙e7 4 ♗f3 ♗f6 5 ♙g5 h6 6 ♙h4 0-0 7 ♚c1 dxc4!

A novelty prepared by Karpov for the match.

8 e3

Karpov notes that 8 e4 ♗c6! gives Black good play.

8...c5 9 ♙xc4 cxd4



10 exd4

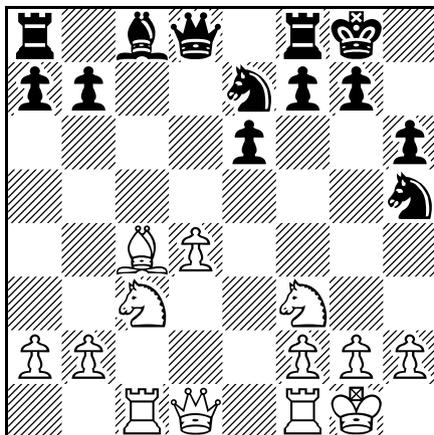
An ambitious choice. 10 ♗xd4 is more conservative and was tried by Korchnoi in game 17 of the match. After 10...♙d7! 11 ♙e2 ♗c6 12 ♗b3 ♗d5 13 ♙xe7 ♗cxe7 14 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 15 ♗d4 ♙c6 16 ♙f3 ♗e7 17 ♙xc6 ♗xc6 18 ♗xd8 ♗fxd8 19 ♙e2 ♚ac8 20 a3 ♙f8 21 ♚c2 ♗e7 22 ♚hc1 ♚xc2+ 23 ♚xc2 ♙e8, a draw was agreed.

Karpov later took on the white side of this variation: 11 0-0 ♗c6 12 ♗b3 ♚c8 13 ♙e2 ♗d5 14 ♙xe7 ♗cxe7 15 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 16 ♚xc8 ♗xc8 17 ♗d4 ♗b8 18 ♙f3 ♗f6 19 ♗c5 ♙b5 20 ♚d1 b6 21 ♗e4 ♗xe4 22 ♙xe4 ♚c8 was also a draw in A.Karpov-G.Kasparov, World Championship (23rd matchgame), Moscow 1984. Instead, 11 ♙g3 a6 12 e4 ♗c6 led to a win for White in A.Karpov-A.Beliavsky, Dortmund 1995 (1-0 in 60), but the result had nothing to do with the opening.

10...♗c6 11 0-0 ♗h5!?

A standard idea in IQP positions – the knight is not well placed on the edge, but by anticipating ♙g3 it forces an exchange of minor pieces. All such trades are generally in Black's favour.

12 ♙xe7 ♗xe7

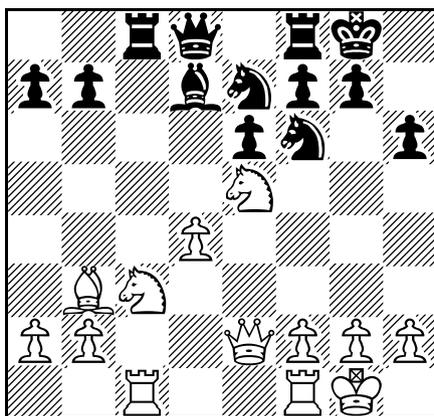


13 ♖b3

Karpov makes an interesting psychological observation at this point: “Here White could have got rid of his weak pawn: 13 d5 exd5 14 ♘xd5 ♙xd5 15 ♙xd5 ♗f4 16 ♙e4 ♚xd1 17 ♚cxd1 ♙e6 with equality. But Korchnoi does not want to give up the white pieces so easily, and as a result he ends up in a difficult position.”

Instead, 13 ♚e1 ♗f6 14 ♗e5 ♙d7 15 ♚b3 ♚b8 16 ♚cd1 b5 17 ♗xd7 (17 ♙d3! would have kept some initiative for White) 17...♗xd7 18 ♙d3 ♗f6 19 ♙b1 a6 20 ♗e4 was balanced in L.Christiansen-A.Karpov, London 1982 (1/2-1/2 in 45); here 20...♗xe4 21 ♙xe4 ♚a5 was simplest, when White has nothing better than forcing a draw with 22 d5 ♗xd5 23 ♙xd5 exd5 24 ♚xd5.

13...♗f6 14 ♗e5 ♙d7 15 ♚b3 ♚b8



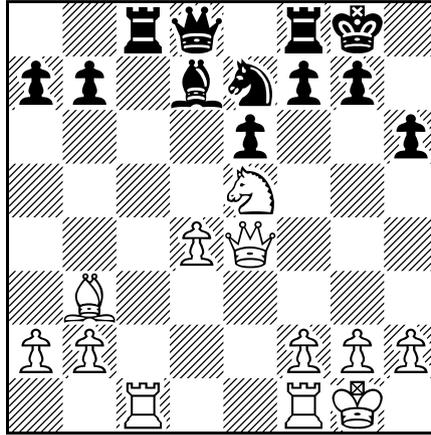
Exercise: How should White proceed?

16 ♖e4?

Not like this! It's hard to understand why Korchnoi invites piece exchanges which ease Black's defence. As Hecht notes: "Now the queen's pawn is fast becoming a problem child."

Answer: 16 ♜fe1, 16 ♜fd1 or even 16 h3 are all normal moves, after which White is at least equal.

16...♗xe4 17 ♙xe4



Exercise: How should Black meet the threat to his b7-pawn?

Answer:

17...♘c6!

A standard idea – as we've just said, Black benefits from piece exchanges. Karpov explains his move as follows: "An important subtlety. Black is not afraid that after the double exchange on c6 he will also be given an isolated pawn. His knight is capable of both securely defending his own pawn, and attacking the enemy d4-pawn, whereas the functions of the white bishop are restricted."

I prefer Karpov's move order to 17...♜xc1 18 ♜xc1 ♘c6, which gives White control of the c-file.

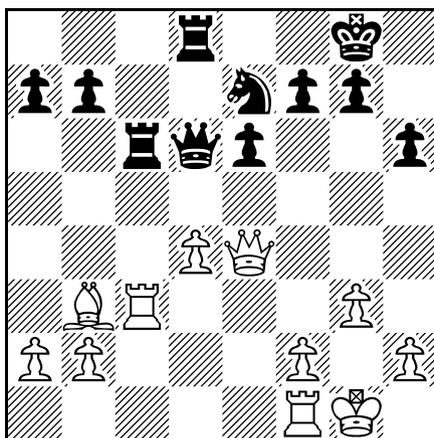
18 ♗xc6 ♜xc6 19 ♜c3

Exercise: How was Karpov intending to answer 19 ♜xc6 - ?

Answer: 19...bxc6! is a standard idea in IQP structures. The d4-pawn is fixed (d4-d5 will never happen now) and Black can build up with ...♗b6 and ...♜d8, with possibilities of playing ...c6-c5. Black is certainly no worse here.

In contrast, 19...♗xc6? 20 d5 exd5 21 ♘xd5 leaves White with the clearly superior minor piece. Black should be able to hold this position but there is some suffering ahead.

19...♔d6 20 g3 ♖d8

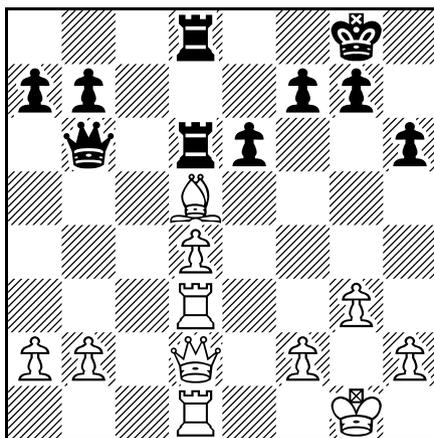


The game now enters a lengthy manoeuvring phase. Black's idea is to triple heavy pieces on the d-file, after which (should White defend the d-pawn with a rook on d1) the ...e6-e5 break might win the pawn. But he is also happy with piece exchanges. Over the next few moves Karpov reorganizes his pieces perfectly. It is hard to suggest how Korchnoi can really improve from here – his position is strategically difficult.

21 ♖d1 ♖b6 22 ♔e1 ♔d7 23 ♗cd3 ♗d6 24 ♔e4 ♔c6!

Offering a trade of queens which White can't afford to accept. This is one of the best things about nursing a long-term advantage (such as an extra pawn or a superior pawn structure) – by offering unfavourable exchanges, you can drive your opponent's pieces from strong squares.

25 ♔f4 ♗d5 26 ♔d2 ♔b6 27 ♗xd5



Exercise: How would you assess this decision from Korchnoi?

Answer: It has to be classed as a significant mistake. As mentioned before, all trades are in Black's favour. The pure major piece position which results is extremely difficult for White. Hecht suggests simply 27 a3, when Black must still demonstrate how he plans to break through – the knight on d5 looks great but it shields the d4-pawn from direct attack.

Kasparov's explanation for the decision is probably correct: "Short of time, Korchnoi does not want to undermine the stability of his bishop by moving the a2-pawn, and he decides to parry the threat of ...♘d5-b4 in the simplest way. The position after 27 a3 ♘e7 28 ♖f4 ♘c6 29 d5 e5 30 ♕e3 ♘d4 is also advantageous to Black, but possibly this was the lesser evil."

27...♖xd5 28 ♖b3

White gains some time on the black queen, but this is purely temporary and actually removes defenders from the d4-pawn.

Here Karpov makes another fascinating psychological observation: "The sacrifice of the d4-pawn would give White practical saving chances in the rook endgame. However, it is psychologically difficult to decide on such a step of one's own free will. Meanwhile Black increases the pressure."

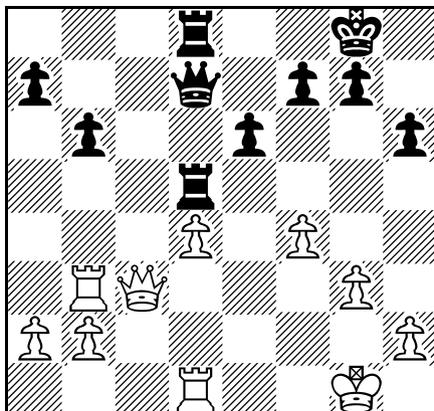
Looking forward, it is certainly the case that Korchnoi, by dealing with tactical threats to his d-pawn, ends up destroying his own position (in particular, by playing f2-f4 which, as will be seen, is forced in order to prevent ...e6-e5).

I have probably played through this game a dozen times and, frankly, it had never occurred to me that White could elect to go into the rook and pawn endgame which, while obviously giving Black serious winning chances, is not trivial to win.

28...♕c6 29 ♕c3 ♕d7 30 f4

Not a move White wants to make, but Black threatened 30...e5, exploiting the pin on the d4-pawn.

30...b6!



Really nice play – Karpov wants to force Korchnoi’s rook into a ridiculous position on b4.

31 ♖b4 b5!?

The immediate 31...e5 was also extremely strong.

32 a4

Otherwise Black could have considered 32...a5, driving the b4-rook away from the defence of the IQP.

32...bxa4

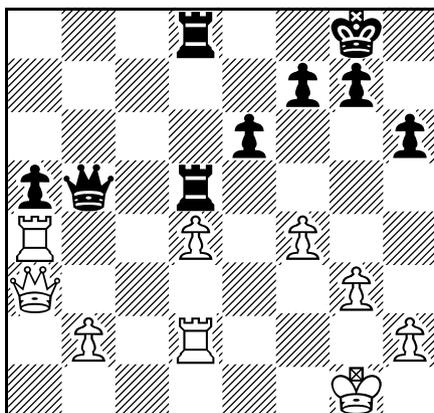
White will get this pawn back, but loses time and co-ordination while doing so.

33 ♕a3 a5 34 ♖xa4 ♕b5

Black had several strong moves here – this is one of the most direct, attacking the b2-pawn and playing with ideas of ...♕e2.

35 ♖d2

Karpov expected 35 b3, when he can win the b3-pawn with excellent winning chances in the rook ending, or (as Kasparov notes) continue as in the game with a strong attack.

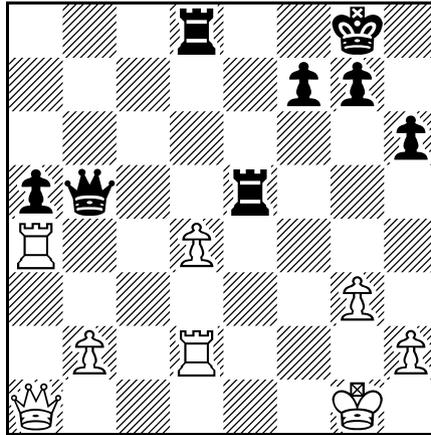


Exercise: How should Black proceed?**Answer:****35...e5!**

The most incisive continuation.

36 fxe5 ♖xe5 37 ♔a1

37 ♖f2 held on for longer, but White's position remains horrible.

**Exercise:** Black to play and win!**Answer:****37...♔e8!!**

Absolutely decisive. Black breaks through to the seventh rank and the white major pieces on the a-file are completely incapable of defending their king.

38 dxe5 ♖xd2 39 ♖xa5

Or 39 ♔e1 ♔d8 and the white king faces far too much firepower.

39...♔c6 40 ♖a8+ ♔h7 41 ♔b1+ g6 42 ♔f1 ♔c5+

Of course not 42...♔xa8?? 43 ♔xf7+, when Black can only escape perpetual check by hanging his pawns and rook.

43 ♔h1 ♔d5+ 0-1

Winning the queen and the game.