

Arkadij Naiditsch  
Csaba Balogh  
Sebastien Maze

# Most stunning victories of 2016



Chess  
Evolution

Cover designer  
Piotr Pielach

Typesetting  
Piotr Pielach <[www.i-press.pl](http://www.i-press.pl)>

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All sales or enquiries should be directed to Chess Evolution  
2040 Budaors, Nyar utca 16, Magyarország

e-mail: [info@chess-evolution.com](mailto:info@chess-evolution.com)  
website: [www.chess-evolution.com](http://www.chess-evolution.com)

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	3
Key to symbols	5
Introduction	7
Preface	9
GAME 1 ▷ R. Rapport (2730) ▶ T. Radjabov (2696)	11
GAME 2 ▷ T. Radjabov (2710) ▶ O. Bortnyk (2581)	14
GAME 3 ▷ M. Rodshtein (2678) ▶ A. Donchenko (2588)	17
GAME 4 ▷ M. Vachier-Lagrave (2804) ▶ J. Krassowizkij (2446)	20
GAME 5 ▷ D. Andreikin (2733) ▶ F. Ashiku (2306)	24
GAME 6 ▷ H. Nakamura (2790) ▶ V. Anand (2762)	27
GAME 7 ▷ D. Howell (2685) ▶ R. Jumabayev (2607)	31
GAME 8 ▷ W. So (2773) ▶ G. Kasparov (2812)	35
GAME 9 ▷ B. Jobava (2665) ▶ R. Ponomariov (2709)	39
GAME 10 ▷ V. Kramnik (2808) ▶ D. Vocaturo (2583)	44
GAME 11 ▷ C. Lupulescu (2609) ▶ G. Papp (2587)	49
GAME 12 ▷ M. Cornette (2581) ▶ C. Bauer (2620)	53
GAME 13 ▷ I. Saric (2660) ▶ R. Kempinski (2612)	56
GAME 14 ▷ Hou Yifan (2673) ▶ D. Navara (2730)	59
GAME 15 ▷ Wen Yang (2609) ▶ V. Artemiev (2674)	64
GAME 16 ▷ M. Carlsen (2851) ▶ N. Grandelius (2649)	67
GAME 17 ▷ F. Caruana (2804) ▶ T. Radjabov (2726)	71
GAME 18 ▷ L. Nisipeanu-D (2669) ▶ Z. Kozul (2591)	76
GAME 19 ▷ A. Salem (2617) ▶ M. Siva (2352)	79
GAME 20 ▷ F. Caruana (2823) ▶ H. Nakamura (2779)	84
GAME 21 ▷ A. Giri (2790) ▶ Vachier M. Lagrave (2788)	87
GAME 22 ▷ V. Kramnik (2808) ▶ B. Gelfand (2743)	91
GAME 23 ▷ H. Nakamura (2779) ▶ M. Vachier-Lagrave (2804)	97
GAME 24 ▷ V. Kramnik (2808) ▶ G. Meier (2654)	101
GAME 25 ▷ E. Safarli (2678) ▶ C. Vernay (2507)	106
GAME 26 ▷ S. Ganguly (2660) ▶ P. Tregubov (2582)	110
GAME 27 ▷ B. Socko (2604) ▶ E. Bacrot (2692)	114
GAME 28 ▷ V. Anand (2784) ▶ L. Aronian (2792)	117
GAME 29 ▷ E. Najer (2681) ▶ D. Jakovenko (2731)	120
GAME 30 ▷ F. Caruana (2804) ▶ V. Kramnik (2812)	124
GAME 31 ▷ Dominguez L. Perez (2720) ▶ B. Adhiban (2671)	129

GAME 32	▷ V. Anand (2762) ▶ P. Svidler (2757)	134
GAME 33	▷ E. Inarkiev (2732) ▶ P. Svidler (2745)	137
GAME 34	▷ G. Kamsky (2673) ▶ A. Goganov (2575)	139
GAME 35	▷ M. Carlsen (2857) ▶ E. Ghaem Maghami (2566)	144
GAME 36	▷ N. Sedlak (2537) ▶ W. So (2782)	148
GAME 37	▷ T. Gelashvili (2557) ▶ V. Akobian (2612)	153
GAME 38	▷ L. Aronian (2795) ▶ R. Rapport (2730)	157
GAME 39	▷ D. Dubov (2644) ▶ A. Brkic (2584)	160
GAME 40	▷ A. Ipatov (2648) ▶ A. Brkic (2584)	163
GAME 41	▷ M. Ragger (2688) ▶ H. Poetsch (2514)	168
GAME 42	▷ V. Topalov (2760) ▶ V. Anand (2779)	171
GAME 43	▷ S. Mamedyarov (2747) ▶ L. Fressinet (2700)	175
GAME 44	▷ A. Giri (2790) ▶ P. Harikrishna (2763)	178
GAME 45	▷ H. Nakamura (2791) ▶ Ding Liren (2755)	181
GAME 46	▷ H. Nakamura (2787) ▶ M. Muzychuk (2554)	185
GAME 47	▷ A. Beliavsky (2603) ▶ J. Borisek (2576)	189
GAME 48	▷ B. Gelfand (2734) ▶ E. Inarkiev (2730)	193
GAME 49	▷ H. Nakamura (2787) ▶ B. Bok (2594)	197
GAME 50	▷ Z. Almasi (2682) ▶ S. Maze (2617)	202

# KEY TO SYMBOLS

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



# INTRODUCTION

Useful information for our valued readers.

- »» This book is the continuation of last years's successful "Best Games" series
- »» The book contains 50 of the stunning victories of 2016
- »» As in the previous books, the games have been selected and analysed by GM Arkadij Naiditsch, GM Csaba and this time round GM Sebastien Maze also joins our team of experts.
- »» Most of the games are taken from the highest-level tournaments, such as the Baku Chess Olympiad, London Classic Super tournament, World Chess Championship, etc.
- »» The selected games includes illustrious names such as: Carlsen, Caruana, Karjakin, Nakamura and many more of the world's best chess players.
- »» The games are sorted according to their ECO code.





# PREFACE

We are proud to present the continuation of the successful 'Best Games' series, with the new release: 'Most stunning victories of 2016'.

It was once again interesting and exciting work trying to select and analyse the 50 "best games" from the last year. Of course the choice was wide, with most of the best players in the world being very active on the chess board. Our aim was to find the most interesting, spectacular and, of course, useful attacking ideas -those which might also occur in our own practical games.

The main idea behind this book remains clear: We try to reduce the importance of opening theory and rather get inside the workings of the best chess-playing brains on the planet, in an attempt to explain the most complex attacking ideas in a way that is simple and understandable to any chess lover.

Another very important point of the book which we are proud of is, we have not used much "engine" assistance during our commentary on the games. We try to see the game the way we would in our own practical games, which makes the commentaries very special-and which in practice puts the reader fully in the shoes of the world-class players; this is exactly the best way to improve our own chess skills and level.

Sadly, nowadays, we have more-and-more computer analyses and we can hear chess amateurs judging the play of even Carlsen. Yes, you can find tactical mistakes with an engine at home-but the question is, can you do the same during your practical game over the board?! Chess is a game where everyone makes mistakes-and this is what it is all about in the current book!

We would advise all our readers to take out a real chessboard and enjoy these beautiful masterpieces. This is how we learned to play chess and this is why we still enjoy every wonderful game, even after almost 20 years of being professional chess players!

Yours,  
Arkadij Naiditsch, Csaba Balogh & Sebastien Maze



## ■ GAME 1

- ▷ **R. Rapport (2730)**
- ▶ **T. Radjabov (2696)**  
European Club Cup  
Novi Sad SRB  
12.11.2016 [A01]  
Annotated by Sebastien Maze

Let's have a look at this funny game between Rapport and Radjabov. A really weird opening from the Hungarian player and a great attack by Radjabov are on the menu!

### 1.b3

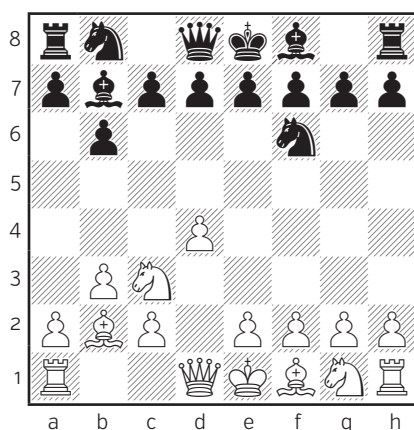
Rapport chooses his pet line! It's very rare to see this kind of first move at the highest level.

### 1...b6

Not a typical reply from Black. Normally, the system with ♘f6 and g6 is more popular.

### 2. ♖b2 ♖b7 3. ♘c3 ♘f6 4.d4?

I don't like this move at all as he blocks in his own bishop.



### 4...e6

After only 4 moves, this position has never been reached before! It's not a huge surprise with this super-creative player, Rapport, involved.

### 5.f3

Preparing to push e4.

### 5...d5

There is no other choice for Radjabov to stop this idea.

### 6. ♙d2?!

It's really difficult to understand what the Hungarian prodigy's plan is? He is mixing many ideas and this strategy — against a very strong player such as Radjabov — could be very dangerous.

6... ♖e7 7.0-0-0

Rapport is in attacking mood today. An easy bet is that there will be no draw: one of the 2 kings will be checkmated!

7...0-0 8.e3 c5

A logical move from the Azeri player, developing his knight behind the pawn and then thinking of how to prepare the offensive.

9.♖b1 ♗c6 10.♗ge2 ♜c8

Placing the rook on a good file.

11.g4 c4

And Radjabov starts!

12.g5

12.bxc4 ♗a5+ and the knight will cause a lot of damage.

12...♗e8 13.h4

Both sides push their pawns to weaken the opposing kings.

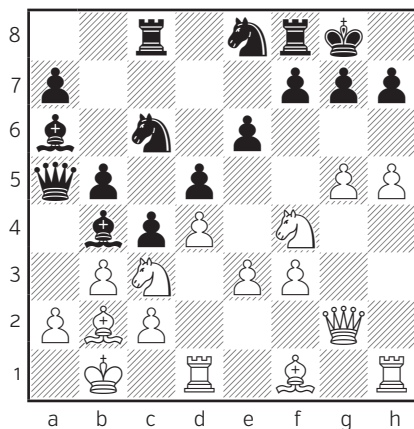
13...♖a6

Radjabov prepares his attack. His plan is very simple, ...b5 then ...♖a5 and ...♖b4.

14.♗f4 b5 15.♖g2 ♖a5 16.h5

Rapport also attacks, but it's too slow.

16...♖b4



17.♗cxd5?

The position is too boring and too passive for the Hungarian! He decides to go for a sacrifice. 17.♖d2 is clearly passive, but still solid and the best way to play for White. 17...♗e7 18.a3 ♖xa3 19.♗cxd5 ♖xd2 20.♗xd2 ♖d6 21.♗xe7+ ♖xe7 leads to a complicated position, but one which is close to equality.

17...exd5 18.♗xd5

18.h6 g6 19.♗xd5 ♜d8 20.c3 ♖a3 21.e4 ♖xb2 22.♖xb2 b4 Black is piece up and has a big attack! No chance for White here.

18...♜d8+

A move with a great idea behind it...

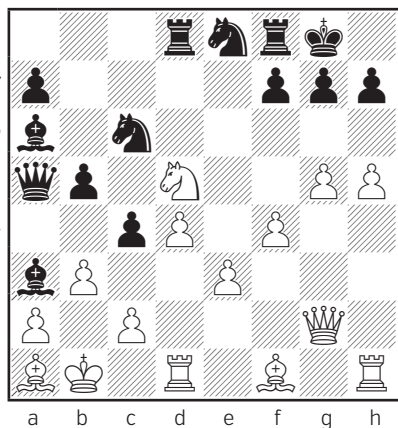
19.f4

19.e4 ♜xd5! 20.exd5 ♗e7 21.f4 ♖b7 22.bxc4 bxc4 23.♖xc4 ♗xd5-- with a killing attack.

19...♖a3

Trying to exchange the last of White's defenders.

20. ♖a1



20... ♗b7--+

And the bishop is now on this beautiful diagonal with the queen on g2 as a target.

21. ♖e2 ♖xd5!

A nice sacrifice to eliminate a good defender.

22. ♗xd5 ♘d8!

Chasing the queen. However, 22... ♘d6 was more accurate. 23. ♗f3 ♘xd4 24. ♗f2 (24. ♖xd4 ♖xf3 25. ♖xf3 ♘f5-- winning easily.) 24... ♘e4--

23. ♗d7 ♖e4

And the bishop is on a fantastic spot, staring at his target, the c2-pawn.

24. ♖hf1

It's terrible for Rapport; there is nothing to do, not even a single trick.

24... ♘d6 25. f5 ♘c6

White's position is now completely hopeless. All the black pieces are looking at the white king, and the attack is terrifying!

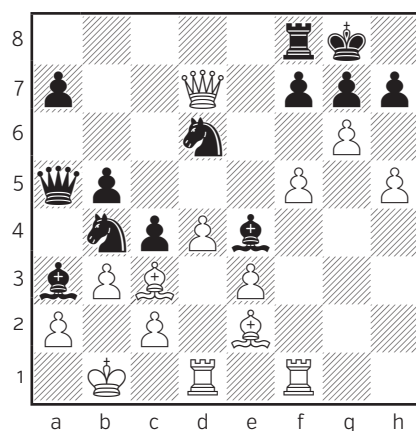
26. g6

Trying something... 26. ♖f3 ♖xf3 27. ♖xf3 ♘e4--+

26... ♘b4

And here comes the knight.

27. ♖c3



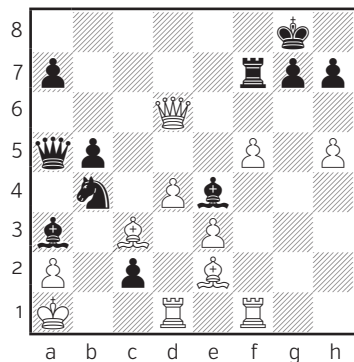
27... cxb3

27... ♖xc2+ checkmates nicely in 7 moves! 28. ♖a1 ♖b2+ 29. ♖xb2 ♗xa2+ 30. ♖c1 ♗b1+ 31. ♖d2 ♘e4+ 32. ♖e1 ♘d3+ 33. ♖xd3 ♗xd1#

28. gxf7+ ♖xf7 0-1

and Rapport will be checkmated soon. The dubious plan of the Hungarian didn't work and Radjabov created a beautiful attack against the long castled position. With accurate moves, Black won this game

with gusto! 28... ♖xf7 29. ♔xd6 bxc2+  
30. ♔a1



30...c1 ♔+! 31. ♖xc1 ♗b2+ 32. ♔xb2  
♔xa2#

## ■ GAME 2

▷ T. Radjabov (2710)

▶ O. Bortnyk (2581)

World Rapid

27.12.2016 [A04]

Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

This game was played in the WCC rapid event that is played as an Open tournament with players over 2500 ELO. Even though the game had a short time-control, we are going to see one of the most beautiful mates I have ever seen! After the opening, White, with a great positional exchange sacrifice, starts a very strong mating attack and finishes the game with a queen sacrifice — where a rook and a bishop pair mate the black king despite Black being a full queen up! A very spectacular game with an amazing mating web!

1. ♘f3 d6

In rapidplay we see more often openings such as 1. ♘f3 d6, lines which are rare in classical chess.

2. d4 ♘f6 3. g3 g6 4. ♗g2 ♗g7

But we are quickly back into the KID with g3.

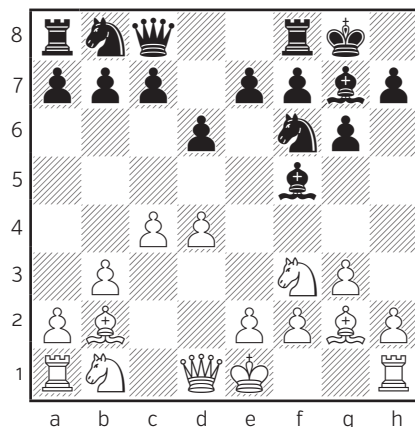
5. b3

The line with 5. b3 is not so stupid at all. White plays against the ...e5-move of Black, but of course the main move is 5. o-o.

5...o-o 6. ♗b2 ♗f5

Quite a rare move, as usually Black tries to get in ...e5 anyway. The idea of the move in the game is simple; to play ...♖c8 next and if possible ...♗h3 afterwards, with a bishop exchange which is good for Black.

7. c4 ♖c8



8. h3

Not allowing ... ♗h3

**8...c5**

And of course Black has to start his play using the moment that White can't castle short.

**9.♘c3**

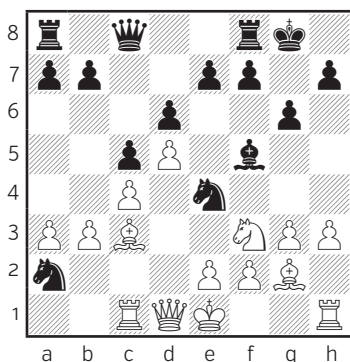
The most solid in my opinion. If White was to wait with moves such as 9.g4 ♕d7 it does not really cause any damage to Black, and now in short castling Black will always have the unpleasant ...h5 move: 10.♘c3 cxd4 11.♘xd4 ♖c6 with a unclear play.

**9...♗c6**

Questioning if White can push the d5-move or not?

**10.♖c1?!**

Of course, a solid move, but I think White could have pushed d5 here. Very powerful-looking is 10.d5 ♘b4 11.♖c1! White offers the exchange with similar ideas to what we will see in the game. 11...♗e4 12.a3 ♕xc3+ 13.♕xc3 ♗a2



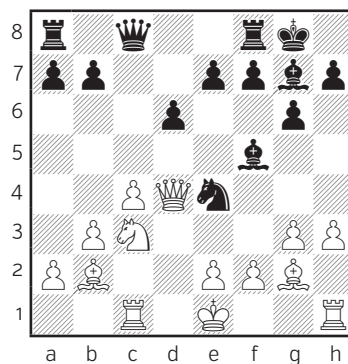
14.♕a1! This is the key move. 14...♗xc1 15.♖xc1 and despite being an exchange down, I think White's position has great prospects. Black can't

really do much against the upcoming attack on the king-side!

**10...♕h6?**

Not feeling the danger. Radjabov shows great understanding of the position and his exchange sacrifice will give White a massive attack, which is especially dangerous in rapid chess. I think Black should continue with 10...♗e4 11.♘d5 ♖e8 with a very complex position, and I believe Black should be perfectly OK here, the move ♖c1 being a bit loss of a tempo.

Not working is: 10...cxd4 11.♘xd4 ♗xd4 12.♖xd4 ♗e4? It seems as though Black is able to exchange all the pieces, but here comes the blow!



13.♘d5!! and White is simply winning, e.g. 13...♕xd4 14.♗xe7+ ♖g7 15.♕xd4+ f6 16.♗xc8

**11.d5! ♕xc1 12.♖xc1 ♗d4 13.g4**

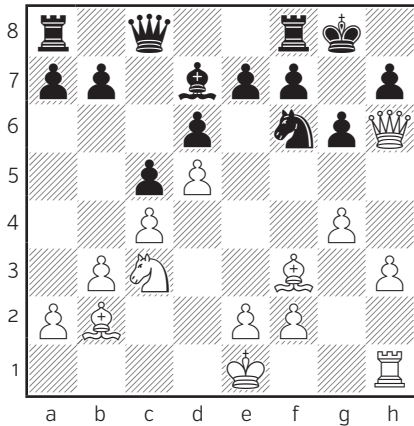
Of course White doesn't on d4 or make any other moves to open the position; the goal is the attack on the king-side, and the key to that is the rook on h1.

**13...♕d7 14.♖h6**

The threat is ♖g5 next.

14... ♖xf3+ 15. ♙xf3

The threat now is to play ♖e4 next. Actually, Black's position can already be considered lost!



15... ♖e8

With the idea of playing ...f6 to hold things together-what else to do?!

16. ♖e4

A good move, but White had an even better one. 16.h4! seems to end the game immediately 16...f6 17.h5 g5 and after Black is forced to play ...g5 to close the h-file, there comes the knight 18. ♖e4 and Black has no defense against the upcoming ♖xg5. 18... ♖f7 19. ♖xg5 fxg5 20. ♙xg5+ ♖g7 21.h6 with an easily winning position for White.

16...f6 17.h4 ♙xg4!

The best and only move. Black gives back everything to avoid getting immediately mated.

18.h5 gxh5

The h5-pawn also has to be taken.

19. ♖g5!

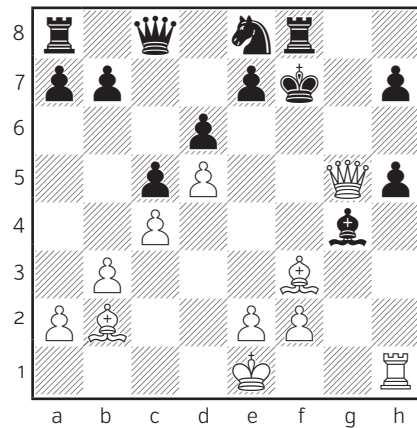
A great attacking move, not giving Black even a second to breathe.

19...fxg5?!

This makes the beautiful mate possible. Black should continue instead with 19... ♖f7 20. ♖xf7 ♙xf7 but of course White is still better after 21. ♙e4, but this is already not much better and Black has survived the most dangerous part of the game: 21... ♙f5 and the game goes on.

20. ♙xg5+ ♖f7

And here comes the beginning of one of the most beautiful mates I have ever seen!



21. ♙xh5+!!

Just 2 bishops and rook will mate the black king by force! There is no escape nor even the slightest chance, it is a forced mate in 13 moves!



21... ♖xh5 22. ♖xh5+ ♔g8 23. ♖g1+  
The moves are all forced now.

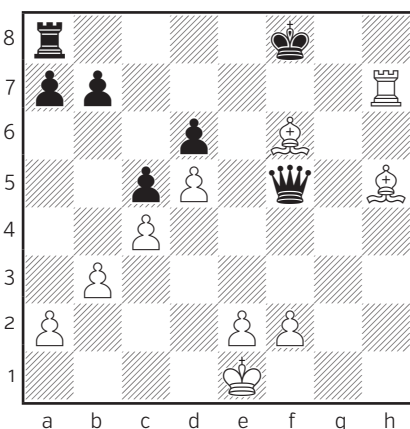
23... ♖g7 24. ♖xg7+ ♔h8 25. ♖xe7+  
♖f6

If 25... ♔g8 then 26. ♖g7+ ♔h8  
27. ♖g5+ ♖f6 28. ♖xf6#

26. ♖xf6+ ♔g8 27. ♖g7+ ♔f8  
28. ♖xh7

and there is no escape against ♖h8  
next. What a beauty! Showing a good  
sense of humor, Bortnyk allows Rad-  
jabov to show the mate on the board.

28... ♖f5



29. ♖h8# 1-0

We have just seen a game with  
a very nice and somewhat typical  
exchange sacrifice, one which is use-  
ful to remember and can be used in  
a practical game. Here special atten-  
tion should be paid to the moment  
when White still had not castled and  
had his rook on h1! And, of course,  
the amazingly beautiful queen sacri-  
fice leading to a forced mate!

## ■ GAME 3

▷ M. Rodshtein (2678)

▶ A. Donchenko (2588)

Rilton Cup

04.01.2016 [A05]

Annotated by Arkadij Naiditsch

We are now going to see a short, but  
very nice victory from Maxim, who  
became the tournament winner with  
one of the best results of his chess ca-  
reer, scoring 8/9!

1. ♖f3

Most of the Israeli players start with  
1.d4, 1. c4 or 1. ♖f3 because of their  
work with Gelfand, who almost never  
starts his games with 1.e4.

1... ♖f6 2.g3 c5

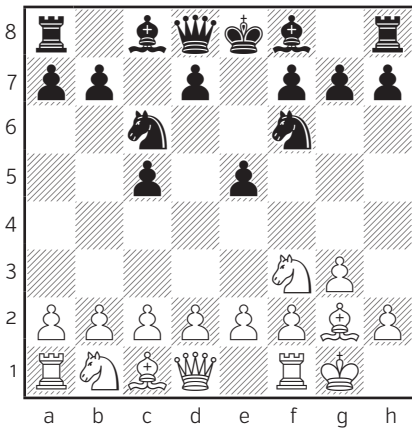
It is hard to say what both players are  
trying to avoid. Anyhow we will see  
a rare and tricky move order over the  
following moves.

3. ♖g2 ♖c6 4.0-0

White still waits with the develop-  
ment of the central pawns by not  
playing c4 or d4.

4...e5

Maybe Black is trying to avoid the  
4...d5 5.d4 line, which could end up in  
a Catalan after 5...e6 6.c4, or a Grün-  
feld with colors reversed in case of 5...  
cxd4 6. ♖xd4 and now ...e5.

**5.e4!?**

A rarely-played move, but an interesting option for White.

**5...♞xe4**

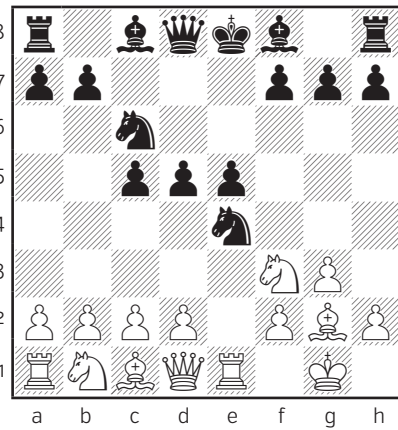
A very principled reply, but probably not the best. A simple move like 5...d6 followed by ...g6 and ...♖g7 looks like a very solid setup for Black.

**6.♞e1**

White might also try 6.♞xe5 ♞xe5 7.♙xe4 d5 8.♙g2 with probably some small advantage because of his better development.

**6...d5?**

Once again very direct play, but this time it is a clear mistake. The simple 6...♞f6 leads to just a slightly worse position after 7.♞xe5 ♙e7 and of course Black is very safe here.

**7.c4!**

This is the point of White's play! Black's center falls apart, but in a very beautiful way, which is hard to calculate during a practical game.

**7...♙e6**

This is probably the only move. Now White has quite a few options:

**8.♙a4**

White had another interesting option in 8.cxd5 ♙xd5 9.♞xe5 ♞xe5 and here comes the key move of the line: 10.d4! (10.♙xe4 ♙e7 and Black is perfectly OK.) 10...cxd4 11.♙xe4 It seems like Black should be fine somehow, but things are far from simple: 11...♙e7 12.♙xd4 ♙xe4 13.♙xe4 ♞c6 14.♙g5 f6 15.♙f4 o-o 16.♞c3 and the current position is clearly a bit better for White.

**8...♙d6?**

This is already a clear miscalculation. Much better was 8...♙d7 9.cxd5 ♙xd5 Now White once again has two choices: 10.♞xe4 (10.d3 ♞f6 11.♞xe5

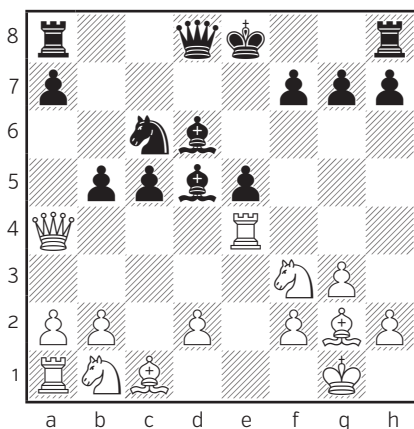
♖xe5 12. ♜xe5+ ♙e6 13. ♘c3 ♚xa4  
 14. ♘xa4 ♜g4 15. ♜e1 0-0-0 and  
 maybe the position is still better for  
 White, but only minimally so.) 10...  
 ♙xe4 11. ♚xe4 f5 Black tries to get  
 some play for the material deficit.  
 12. ♚c4 e4 13. ♘e1 ♘d4 and White  
 is better, but the position is not that  
 easy to play.

### 9.cxd5 ♙xd5 10. ♜xe4

Now White easily keeps the two  
 pieces for a rook and pawn, but with  
 an open position where it is especially  
 easy to see the advantage of the two  
 pieces.

### 10...b5

and here comes what Black has  
 blundered:



10... ♙xe4 11. ♚xe4 0-0 12. ♘c3 leads  
 to a position where White should actually  
 be able to win the game with-  
 out too much trouble.

### 11. ♚xb5!

A very beautiful tactical blow! Lead-  
 ing to a totally unclear position is  
 11. ♚c2 ♘b4 12. ♜xb4 cxb4

### 11... ♙xe4

It seems as though Black is an ex-  
 change up, but here comes the win-  
 ning move...

### 12. ♚a4!!

Beautiful! Of course not 12. ♘c3?  
 ♜b8 13. ♚a4 ♜b4 and it is already  
 Black who is better.

### 12... ♙xf3

Nothing helps any longer... 12... ♙d5  
 13. ♘c3; 12...f5 was also losing: 13.d3  
 ♙d5 14. ♘c3

### 13. ♙xf3 0-0 14. ♙xc6

The complications are over and  
 White has two pieces for a rook,  
 which basically gives him a winning  
 position. All that's needed now is to  
 develop the pieces from the queen-  
 side.

### 14... ♜c8 15.d3

The bishop from c1 gets into the  
 game now.

### 15... ♙e7 16. ♙b5

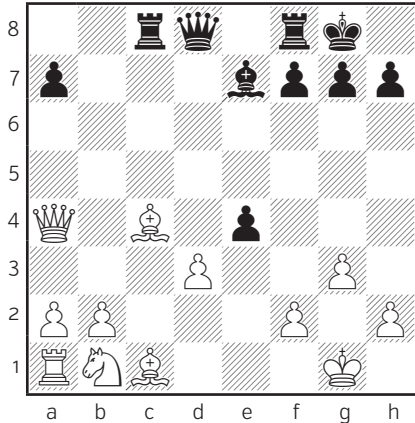
A very safe and strong move. White  
 defends the d3-pawn, after which the  
 bishop will take up an excellent posi-  
 tion on c4.

### 16...c4

Black tries to create something...

### 17. ♙xc4 e4

But of course this playing for small tricks doesn't often work at such a high level...



18. ♖c3

White keeps his cool and continues developing his pieces. Very strong play!

18...exd3 19. ♕e3

White needs one more move to end Black's suffering, and that is to play ♖d1.

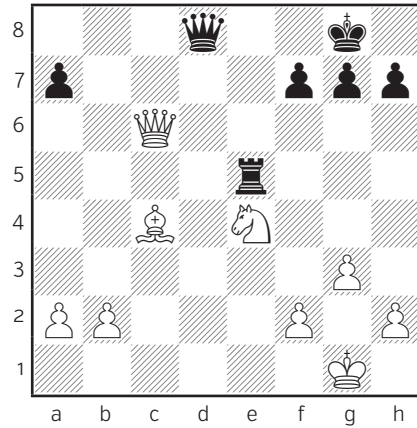
19...♕c5 20. ♕xc5 ♖xc5 21. ♖d1

Donchenko has tried his best to create some complications, but there is just nothing left for Black to hope for any longer. The d-pawn is falling, and with it the game...

21...d2 22. ♖e4 ♖e5 23. ♖xd2

The d-pawn is gone...

23...♗a8 24. ♖d4 ♖d8 25. ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 26. ♗c6 1-0



It is clear that Black's position is hopeless here, as ♖d6 is coming next. An interesting and beautiful game with a very tricky opening and move-orders already by move 5, which is useful to remember!

## ■ GAME 4

▷ M. Vachier-Lagrave (2804)

▶ J. Krassowizkij (2446)

Bundesliga

04.12.2016 [A05]

Annotated by Sebastien Maze

This game was played between the number 3 in the world, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and the Polish IM, Jaroslaw Krassowizkij, in the strongest league in the world. The fight looks unbalanced, and MVL will show his strategic skills. Let's see how it goes....

1. ♖f3 ♗f6 2.g3

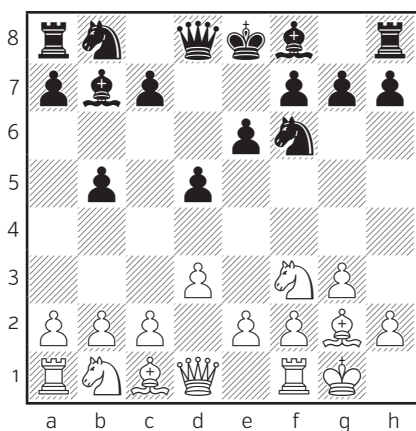
Maxime likes to play this system, as it avoids long theoretical lines. Lately, Carlsen and Kramnik have also used it a lot.

**2...b5**

An interesting system for Black, played by many strong players. The idea is to fight on the diagonal h1–a8 and also control the c4-square.

**3. ♖g2 ♜b7 4. o-o e6 5. d3 d5?!**

I think it's too early to play this move. Better to play 5... ♙e7 and see what White's plan is.



5... ♙e7 6. e4 d6 and ...c5-... ♞bd7.

**6.c4**

A typical move to break Black's center.

**6...a6**

6... bxc4 7. dxc4 ♙e7 (7... c6 8. ♞c3 ♙e7 9. e4!± The bishop on b7 looks stupid and White has a space advantage.) 8. cxd5 exd5 9. ♞d4 o-o (9... g6 10. ♙h6±) 10. ♞f5±

**7.cxd5 ♞xd5**

Black decides to take with the knight to keep the h1–a8 diagonal open. 7... exd5 is also possible but White will take advantage of the central position

of the black king. 8. e4! dxe4 9. dxe4 ♜xd1 10. ♜xd1 ♞xe4 11. ♞bd2 ♞xd2 12. ♙xd2 ♙d6 13. ♞e1+♞ with a lot of compensation for the pawn.

**8.a4 ♞b6**

Definitely not a good square for the knight. Sooner or later it will come under pressure. 8... ♙e7 was played recently in the game Short-Hou: 9. ♞c3 o-o 10. axb5 ♞xc3 11. bxc3 axb5 12. ♜xa8 ♙xa8 13. ♞b3± giving White a comfortable advantage.

**9. ♞c3**

Putting pressure on the b5-pawn.

**9...b4 10. ♞e4**

The knight is on a very good square, preparing his jump to c5.

**10... ♙e7**

10... f5? 11. ♞eg5 ♜f6 12. e4 and Black's position is lost...

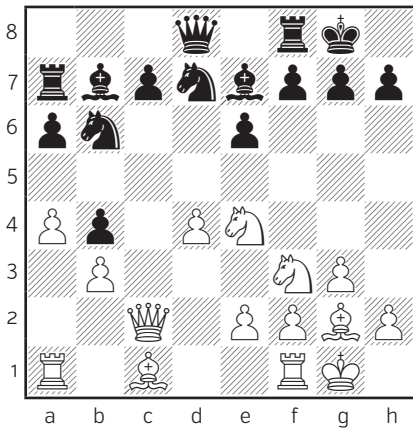
**11. ♜c2 o-o 12. d4**

I already think that White has a dream position. The knight will jump soon into c5 and cause a lot of damage.

**12... ♜a7?**

A really weird decision by the Polish player. This idea to put the Rook on a7 is well-known in the Catalan opening, but here it is just bad. 12... f5 13. ♞c5 ♙d5 14. ♙f4± Black has too many weaknesses on the dark squares.

**13. b3 ♞8d7**

**14. ♖c5**

Everything is in order to introduce the knight into Black's camp!

**14... ♕xf3**

14... ♕a8? 15.e4 It's funny, but Black's position is solid — but strategically it's completely lost!

**15. ♕xf3 ♖xc5**

Black exchanges the maximum of pieces in order to find some space for the remaining ones.

**16.dxc5 ♖d5 17. ♖d1**

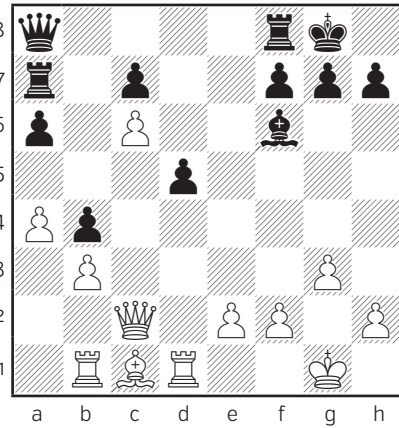
With the idea of playing e2-e4.

**17... ♕f6 18. ♖b1 ♔a8**

18... ♕c3 19. ♕d2 ♔e7 20. ♕xd5 exd5 21. ♕xc3 ♔xc5 22. ♖d3 ♖b7 23. ♖c1 bxc3 24. ♖xc3 and White gets a very good endgame a pawn up.

**19. ♕xd5**

The French player gives up his strong bishop for a good reason; he wants to paralyze the black queen-side.

**19... exd5 20.c6±**

A great positional idea by MVL. The rook on a7 is completely dominated by the c6-pawn!!

**20... ♖d8**

20...a5 21. ♖xd5 ♖a6 22. ♖c5±

**21.e4 d4**

Black has to close the position, otherwise the bishop comes to e3 and wins the rook on a7...

**22. ♕f4 g5**

The Polish player has to do something, so he tries to create some complications... 22... ♖e8 23.e5 ♕xe5 24. ♕xe5 ♖xe5 25. ♖xd4+- No material advantage, but this poor rook on a7 gives White a winning position.

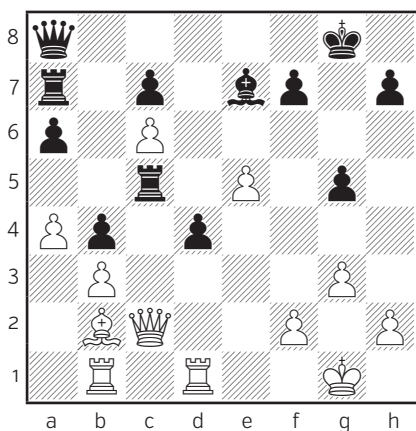
**23.e5**

A nice move, attacking the black bishop and also offering a magical square on f5 to the queen.

**23... ♕e7 24. ♕c1**

White transfers the bishop to the a1-h8 diagonal.

**24... ♖d5 25. ♕b2 ♖c5**



### 26. ♕f5

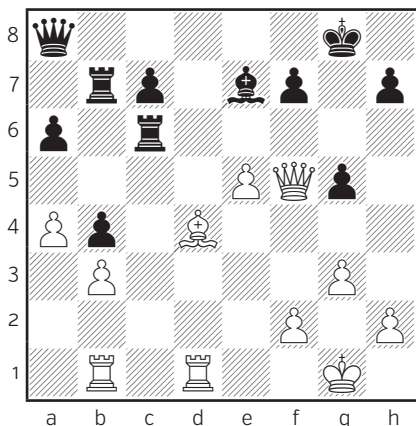
And the queen finally arrives on f5, and now big problems are heading Black's way...

### 26... ♖xc6

26... ♕xc6 27. ♗xd4+-

### 27. ♗xd4 ♖b7

As we can see, the queen on a8 is blocked by his rooks on b7 and c8! A funny situation.



### 28. h4!+-

It's time to attack... by opening the g-file.

### 28... gxh4

28... ♖g6 29. h5 ♗e6 30. ♗e3 h6 31. f4 ♕f8 32. ♕e4+- attacking the rook on b7 and threatening f5.

### 29. e6!

A double pawn sacrifice, opening all the lines around Black's king!

### 29... ♖xe6 30. ♗e1!

and here comes the key move to eliminate the best defensive black piece.

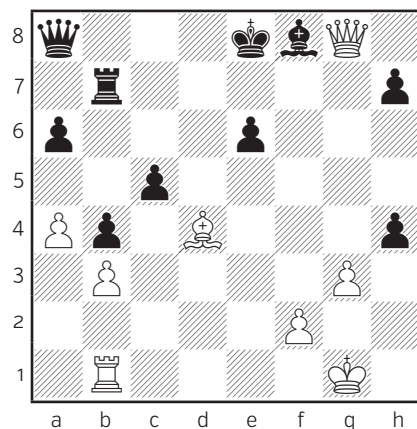
### 30... c5 31. ♖xe6 fxe6

31... cxd4 32. ♖h6 wins immediately.

### 32. ♕g4+

The black king has no more defenders, and Maxime lands a killing check with his queen.

### 32... ♕f8 33. ♕g7+ ♗e8 34. ♕g8+ ♗f8



34... ♗d7 35. ♕xa8+-