WINNING CHESS BRILLIANCIES

By

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Introduction

From the time that I was bitten by the "chess bug", fantasies of entering a packed hall and playing a brilliancy have stayed with me. I'd dream of making a comeback from a half-point behind the leader, with one round to go. "...Yaz desperately needs a win against one of the world's most solid grandmasters. Can he pull it off and take clear first?" My fantasy would crank up as I anticipated the oohs and aahs of the audience, amazed by my brilliant, decisive moves.

Yes indeed. Just as basketball players relish taking the final shot with seconds on the clock, chess players hunger for the opportunity to sacrifice pieces and come up with an idea of such wonder that it sets the world back on its heels and makes it take notice. While both chess and basketball place great demands on the emotions and abilities of the players, there is one obvious difference between the games. Even the most casual sports fan can wonder at a Michael Jordan soaring above his defender, double-clutching to get an open shot, firing and making a swish. By contrast, if a chess player sacrifices first one piece, then another, then another and then finally mates with a lowly pawn, nobody, bar the initiate, will understand all the fuss.

Such circumstances give members of the chess world a special bond, almost a kinship. Understanding a game of chess played at the highest level is the reward for hard-won knowledge wrested from hours of study, strife and plenty of losses! I can recall my own first struggles as I delved into the games of the masters. "Why did the grandmaster do that?" and "Why didn't he just move over there?" These questions tortured me every time I played through the games of the leading players of the day. Answering such questions is the aim of this book.

A chess master friend of mine, James McCormick, once told me about the training techniques used for the Japanese game of Go. When beginners first enter the schools to learn Go, they are given the hundred greatest games of Go ever played and are instructed to memorize the moves, so that the patterns of play become etched into their minds. This struck me as a superb way to learn a game. I therefore made a commitment: whenever I replayed an exceptional game of chess, I'd try to memorize that game.

While I don't insist that you memorize the games in this book, you will be well rewarded if you do. I believe your play will improve by analyzing them carefully. I've tried to answer questions about these model games before they're asked, and I've dissected the moves to identify the most compelling reasons why they were chosen. My notes will continually recall the principles

expounded in the companion works to this one book in the *Winning Chess* Series. The chess terminology I introduced in the previous volumes is used freely in this book, and I expect that you are already familiar with it.

In my first book, *Play Winning Chess*, I discussed chess's four elements:

1) Time (deployment of pieces)
2) Force (being ahead or behind in pieces and pawns)
3) Pawn structure (for determining a plan)
4) Space (how much of the opponent's territory a player controls)

These four elements are, or should be, the underpinnings for the principles that guide all our moves.

But boy, that's a lot to think about, and there are all the openings and endings too, not to mention tactics and strategic plans! If a basketball team had to stop and consider collectively their every drive to the basket, full court press, pick and roll, rebound strategy, and defensive coverage, perhaps even each player's role in a given play, they might never score a point! They'd be paralyzed. But basketball players make all these moves appear to come naturally. It looks simple because the players are professionals. Years of toil and hard work, individually and as a team, have made the most difficult plays seem routine.

The same is true for today's chess grandmasters. They've analyzed the openings, tactics, various types of plans, technical endings and attacks. These players appear to transition effortlessly from one type of advantage to another. They have honed their skills through thousands of hours of concentrated work. They make it look simple – the key to greatness as well as to brilliancy. Applying the tools of the trade subtly and simply appears natural, and yet is satisfying because the results are brilliant.

When two top-flight grandmasters sit down and go for glory, who's to say who will win? Why is it that a player might be able to pound his equally-skilled adversary on one day but not on the next? There are probably dozens of reasons, but the one that I'd like to focus upon is *inspiration*. A player soars to a level of unusual creativity and plucks out of the imagination a concept so beautiful that it appears to freeze time. It is a brilliant moment.

In this work I will take a look at 15 inspired games, or rather 15 *brilliancies*, of the past generation, by putting them under my "chess" microscope. It was, of course, enormously difficult to select such a small handful of games. Hundreds, if not thousands, of beautiful games have been played in each recent decade. How could I choose from so many? It wasn't easy! First of all, nearly all the wins from my career sprang to mind. (How was I supposed to keep my ego at bay? I couldn't!) I humbly put forth only two of my games, so don't skip them!

I will begin each game with a short introduction describing the historical atmosphere of the chess world – and sometimes the world at large – at the time the game was played. When I begin discussing the game itself, I will wax lyrical about the reasoning behind the opening moves. As play moves through the middlegame and into the concluding endgame, I will continue to examine the moves in terms of piece deployment and possible tactical opportunities, but my comments will grow shorter and become more robust as the game reaches its critical moments.

Further Acknowledgements

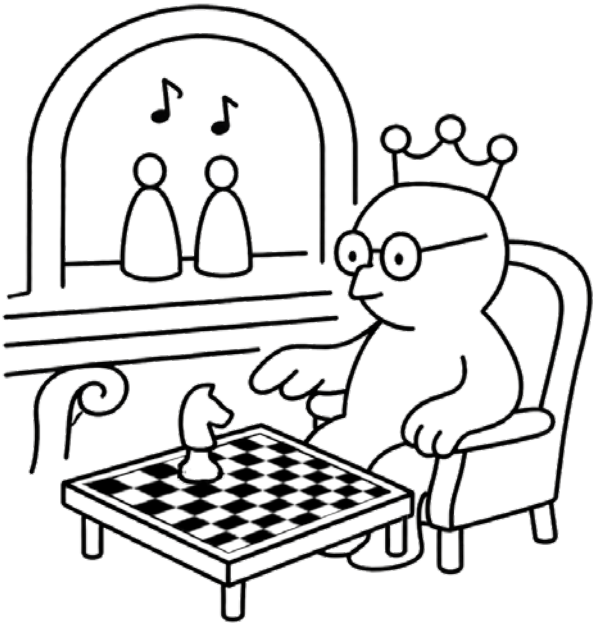
Having rejected 20 games for each one chosen, my next task was to personalize the games. That is, I wanted to see what the players themselves had to say about them. Nearly all the players, especially the winners, were happy to share their comments. In fact, their seconds, coaches and a stream of analysts have shared their views with me. Whenever I've incorporated commentary from the players or other authors, I've credited the source. On this point, a special thanks is due to *Chess Informant* – a series filled with the best games of the previous four months, and at that time with commentaries by the players – as well as to *New in Chess* magazine, where the top players also annotate their wins on a regular basis. I'd also like to thank the writers from my own (now sadly discontinued) magazine, *Inside Chess*, who have shared their elation and sorrows in its pages. Also, I offer thanks to the authors of the many books that I scoured in search of information. Without them, this book wouldn't be as much fun or as interesting.

A final word of thanks goes to the players of these games. To the victor go the spoils, but for a game to be brilliant, the opponent has to put up a heroic defense in order to allow the winner to display creative genius. Both players of each game have my respect.

The author at the 1980 edition of the famous Wijk aan Zee tournament

GAME 10

À la Morphy



In the second half of the twentieth century, chess was dominated by Soviet, or rather Russian, players. Soviet chess players held a complete hegemony over the World Championship title, and only Bobby Fischer broke their dominance. It has often been said that Russian players were to chess what French chefs are to cooking. Simply put, they were the best.

Following Bobby Fischer's victory in 1972, Western players as a group became more challenging, particularly in the 1990s. Jan Timman was Holland's finest player, who rose in the world's rankings to become the second-best player in the world. In 1993 he competed with Anatoly Karpov for the World Championship.

Of course, geography doesn't stand still, and more recent years have seen the rise in the chess fortunes of other nations, with India in particular deserving an honorable mention.

In 1990, the Dutch broadcast station KRO sponsored a match between Jan Timman and me in Hilversum in the Netherlands. The match was well attended, piquing a great deal of media interest. It was seen as a duel between the best of the West. I disappointed the Dutch audience by decisively winning, 4–2 (three wins, one loss and two draws). The following was my best win of the match.

Enjoying the lead for the first time in the match, I knew that Timman would be spoiling for a fight. This suited me fine. I just wanted to be sure that this would take place on my terms, in a variation of my choosing. I consider the game to be my gem in the style of Paul Morphy. To enjoy the comparison I'd like to make, the reader must be familiar with the game played by Morphy against the Duke of Brunswick and Count Isouard, in Paris in 1858 (as I annotated in *Winning Chess Tactics*).

My annotations for this game first appeared in *Inside Chess* magazine. They were written right after the match was completed and reflect the elation I felt at the time. For this book I've modified those notes to give a deeper explanation of the ideas behind the moves.

Yasser Seirawan – Jan Timman

Hilversum (5) 1990

1.d4

For many years this has been my favored opening move. Today's grandmasters tend to employ Indian and modern defenses, eschewing classical defenses. I enjoy the spatial advantages that White gets playing against these modern defenses.

1...♘f6

This is Timman's preferred defense, which he had employed throughout the match.

2.c4
As we've seen, this is the standard response.

2...e6
Black chooses to play a Nimzo-Indian or a Queen's Indian Defense (QID). It was a bit of a relief to see Timman stick to his guns. I hadn't prepared for either a King's Indian Defense or a Grünfeld. If Timman had chosen either of these, I would have opted for a quiet line.

3.♘f3
I develop and control the e5-square.

White has three major choices. 3.♘c3, fighting for the e4-square and inviting 3...♗b4, transposing into the Nimzo-Indian Defense; the text move; or 3.g3, the Catalan Opening. By playing the Catalan, White fianchettoes and prevents the QID, 3...b6, in which Black fianchettoes his queen's bishop.

Timman's favorite defense is the QID. I have an opening weapon against it that I love to employ. The games in this match in which I was White featured important battles in this opening.

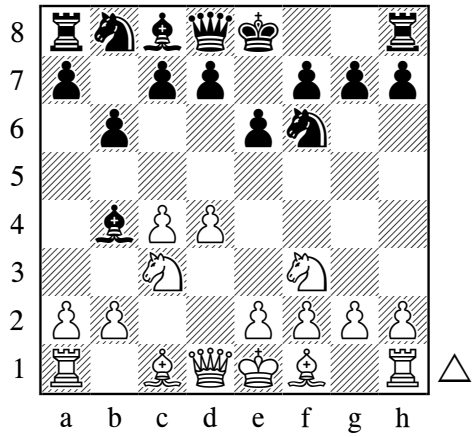
3...b6
Timman is faithful to his favorite opening.

Black intends either to fianchetto with ...♗c8-b7, controlling the e4-square, or to employ what I call an extended fianchetto with ...♗c8-a6, attacking the c4-pawn. The idea behind this defense is similar to what I explained in Game 8. Black takes a restrained approach to the center. He strengthens his queenside flank with a fianchetto, and intends to block the center. This done, Black will enjoy an advantage on the queenside.

4.♘c3
This constitutes the most direct challenge to the QID, going after the e4-square. If White can accomplish e2-e4, Black's position would become very difficult, because his opening revolves around controlling the e4-square. If Black loses control of that square, or if White gains control of it, the fianchetto will lose its effectiveness. White will have a massive pawn center that could bury Black under an avalanche of pawns.

Because the c3-knight is such a useful piece, Black is quick to pin it with ...♗f8-b4. Therefore, Tigran Petrosian's move 4.a3, preventing ...♗f8-b4 and preparing ♘b1-c3, also deserves attention.

4...♗b4
Black develops his position and pins the c3-knight. In some cases, it is natural for Black to follow up with ...♗b4xc3† to double White's queenside pawns. In that case, the c4-pawn can become vulnerable to the maneuver ...♘b8-c6-a5 as well as ...♗c8-a6, attacking the c4-pawn directly.



5.♕b3

This is an opening specialty of mine.

To answer Black's strategic threat of doubling the queenside pawns, White normally counters with 5.♗g5, creating a pin on the kingside. My idea is straightforward: protect the c3-knight while simultaneously attacking the b4-bishop. The idea hasn't gained a lot of adherents because White has to commit his queen rather early.

5...c5

The most natural move, protecting the b4-bishop while attacking the center.

Black has also tried protecting the bishop with 5...a5 and 5...♕e7.

A mistake would be 5...♗xc3†? 6.♕xc3, allowing White to gain a tempo over classical Nimzo-Indian variations.

6.a3!

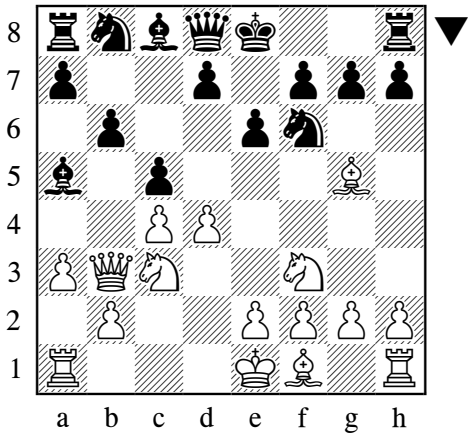
I put the question to the bishop. White's queen is vulnerable to ...♘b8-c6-a5 with tempo. The idea of the text is to force Black either to trade pieces on c3 or to occupy the a5-square.

6...♗a5

Black sees no reason not to maintain the pin.

After 6...♗xc3† 7.♕xc3, White has gained the two bishops and a modest opening advantage.

7.♗g5



It's a wonderful feeling to see your preparation on the board! I aim for rapid development, in particular with 0–0–0; breaking the pin is important for White's control over the center.

7...♘c6?!

This move is excessively aggressive. Black tries to force White to make a decision in the center by attacking the d4-pawn.

7...h6 8.♗xf6 ♕xf6 would be Black's safest choice.

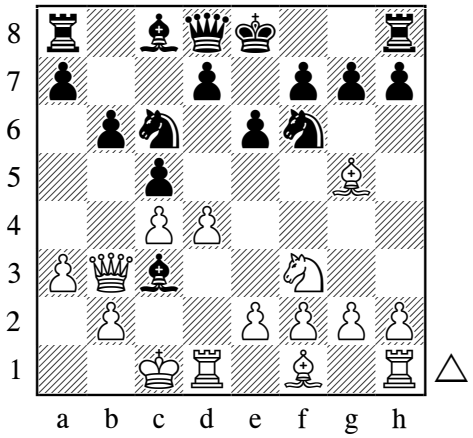
8.0–0–0

A stunning move. White voluntarily brings his king to the queenside, where he has a poor pawn shield, the c4-pawn being too far advanced to offer protection.

After 8.e3 0–0 9.♗e2 cxd4 10.exd4 d5!, Black has achieved a fine game. With the text, White threatens d4-d5 followed by e2-e4-e5, blowing Black off the board.

8...♗xc3!

Black parries with the best way of dealing with the threats from White's last move. White has broken the pin and could play ♘c3-e4, leaving the a5-bishop stranded with nothing to do. Black has set a cunning little trap.



9.d5!

This is the only move that will maintain my advantage.

After 9.♕xc3 ♘e4!?, Black would break the g5-d8 pin to secure a comfortable game. The proof is that 10.♗xd8 ♘xc3 11.bxc3 ♔xd8 leaves White with doubled pawns on the queenside. In this ending, it isn't important that Black has lost the right to castle, since White is unable to coordinate a mating attack. The text avoids this line and offers a promising pawn sacrifice. My idea is to play in the center and to take advantage of White's better development.

9...exd5?

Black makes a crucial mistake. He voluntarily trades his e6-pawn for White's c4-pawn.

Why is this so crucial? Consider White's f1-bishop. With the c4-pawn traded, the bishop has much greater mobility; it will be released with devastating effect. Before the game, Timman had prepared 9...♗e5? 10.dxc6 ♗c7. This is again better for White, but not nearly as bad for Black as the game continuation. But instead of going for it, he had inspiration over the board and decided to opt for a complicated game, the type I really enjoy.

Black avoided 9...♗xb2†? 10.♕xb2 ♘a5 11.e4, which would give White an awesome pawn center for his one pawn investment.

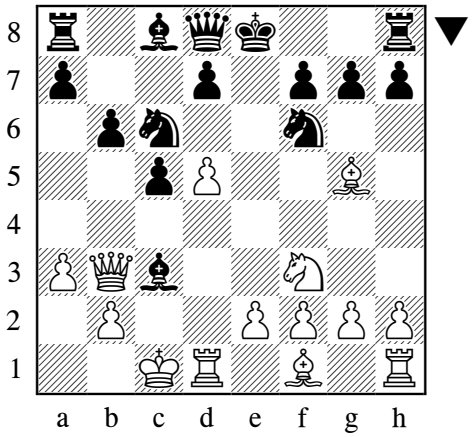
Black also correctly steered clear of 9...♘b4? 10.bxc3 ♘a6 11.e4, which is similar to the previous line and excellent for White.

The only way for Black to avoid serious trouble though would be 9...♘d4! 10.♕xc3 ♘e4! 11.♗xd8 (11.♕xd4!?) 11...♘xc3 12.bxc3 ♘xf3, when different interesting endgames can occur. For example: 13.♗c7 ♘g5 14.f3 f6 15.dxe6 ♘xe6 16.♗d6 With a complicated struggle. The white dark-squared bishop is tremendous, but Black has a much better structure.

These variations show how tricky the nature of the position really is. That is why preparation before the game is crucial at the highest levels. Grandmasters don't have enough time on their clocks to wade through such a tangle of variations. Black would have been better off, relative to the game, by sticking to his preparation.

10.cxd5

I recapture the pawn and prepare to grab one of Black's pieces on the next move. By trading a pair of pawns, the board has been opened up. Never forget that *open positions favor the player who is better developed*. The elements of time and space in chess were covered in depth in *Play Winning Chess*.



10...♗e5?

Black removes one of his pieces from capture. It's not easy to find a viable move for Black, but there was one. Let's examine the possibilities one by one.

10...♗d4? would be a sharp try to win the f2-pawn, but the tactics would work out badly for Black because 11.dxc6 ♗xf2 12.cxd7† ♗xd7 13.♘e5 wins, as both the d7-bishop and the f7-pawn are under threat.

10...♘d4? 11.♕xc3 is a huge positional advantage for White, and 11...♘xd5 fails to solve the issue because of 12.♕d3! ♘e7 13.♘xd4, and White will have both the bishop pair and a better structure.

10...♘e5? 11.♕xc3 is just another positionally lost situation for Black.

10...♘a5? 11.♕xc3 leaves the a5-knight misplaced. White would soon take the center with e2-e4, garnering a much better position.

10...♗a5 11.dxc6 misplaces the a5-bishop. White would continue to play in the center with e2-e4 and develop the f1-bishop, giving Black a difficult game.

The only way for Black to stay in the game was to defend nothing, and instead go on the counterattack with 10...h6!!. The idea becomes clear after 11.♗h4 ♘e5 12.♕xc3 ♘g6!, which comes with tempo on the h4-bishop. This prevents White from plowing on in the center with e2-e4, as he could do without the inclusion of ...h7-h6 and ♗g5-h4.

Instead, White can opt for the most dynamic 11.♕xc3 hxg5 12.dxc6, but Black is not without chances to survive after 12...♕c7!. In any case, White's game looks easier.

11.dxc6

I recapture the sacrificed piece.

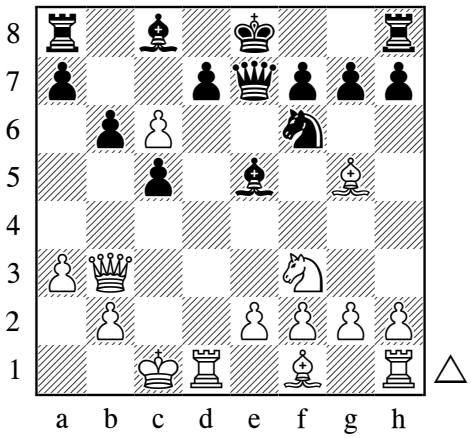
At this point I am very satisfied with my position and optimistic about an early knockout. First, I have the direct threat of ♘f3xe5, simply winning a bishop. My other pieces have also landed on excellent squares. The d1-rook, the queen and g5-bishop all join to put pressure on Black's position. Because Black's c5-pawn is on the board and the c-file is half closed, even my king isn't under any pressure. If I can quickly bring my kingside pieces into play, things will work out wonderfully.

11...♕e7

Black also plays for development. The text gets out of the pin on the d-file, making ...d7xc6 possible.

By defending the e5-bishop, Black avoids the problems stemming from 11...♗c7? 12.e4! d6 13.e5, which would place him in a deep quagmire.

After 11...♕e7, before reading on, take a good look at White's position and consider how you would continue here.



General principles tell us to pursue quick development, control of open lines and so on, while preventing our opponent from doing the same. The most likely moves for White appear to be 12.♘xe5 and 12.e4, playing in the center. We could reject 12.cxd7† on principle: why help the opponent develop? Armed with my two candidate moves, my thought process unfolded as follows:

12.♘xe5 ♕xe5 13.f4 would look nice, especially after 13...♕f5?? 14.e4 ♘xe4 15.♗d3 d5 16.♗xe4 dxe4 17.♖d8# checkmate! How sweet!

After enjoying a few more crunching lines, my enthusiasm soured: 13...♕e6! 14.♕xe6† fxe6 is an endgame in which I have almost nothing – so much for having the bishop pair.

Therefore, all my instincts told me that the right move had to be:

12.e4

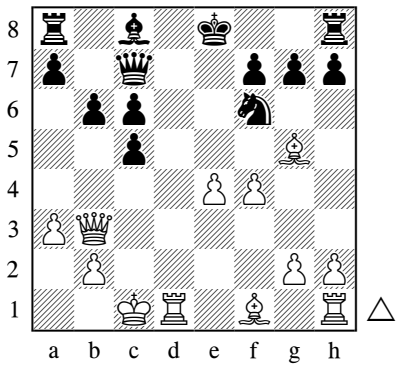
Still, I had some nagging doubts. Wilhelm Steinitz once said, "The best way to refute a gambit is to accept it!" I couldn't see how White would proceed after:

12...dxc6!

Certainly 12...♗c7? 13.e5! ♗xe5 14.cxd7† ♗xd7 15.♖xd7 ♔xd7 16.♗b5† ♔c7 17.♖e1 would convince one and all that I was on the right track.

Also, 12...h6 13.♗xf6 ♗xf6 (13...♕xf6 14.cxd7† ♗xd7 15.♘xe5 ♕xe5 16.♖xd7 ♔xd7 17.♕xf7† ♔c6 18.♗a6 is game over for Black) 14.♕d5 d6 15.c7 would pocket the a8-rook in the corner.

13.♘xe5 ♕xe5 14.f4 ♕c7!



Not a single convincing blow was now in sight – only feeble moves playing for a positional advantage such as 15.♗c4, 15.♕g3!? or 15.f5.

So, my mind drifted back to the position at hand. After visualizing a lot of c6xd7† variations, it became clear that I needed to play ♗g5-f4. This led me to the right idea.

12.cxd7†!

This move is absolutely contrary to my approach. I've been seeking a way to develop my pieces, and here I'm developing my opponent's. What gives? The point will be obvious within the next two moves. Essentially, the move doesn't develop my opponent's pieces so much as it clarifies the position and lures Black's pieces to vulnerable squares.

12...♗xd7

Naturally Black is happy to capture the pawn that has managed to zigzag all the way down the board (c2-c4xd5xc6xd7).

13.e3!

As Victor Korchnoi would say, "Really! Sooo simple." White prepares to develop the f1-bishop and leaves it up to Black to find a decent reaction.

13...♖d8

With the text, Black at last plans to bring his king to the kingside and to safety. It's clear Black's king can't go to the queenside or remain in the center.

Black faces an amazing shortage of effective moves: 13...0–0–0 is out of the question, as 14.♗a6† ♔b8 15.♘xe5 ♕xe5 16.♗f4 wins. This is the essence of e2-e3: White protects the f4-square, making ♘f3xe5 and ♗g5-f4 possible.

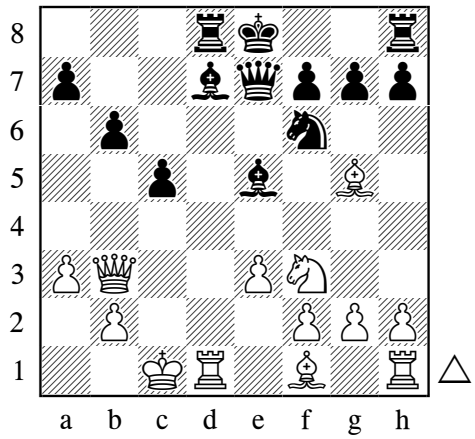
13...♗c6, getting out of harm's way along the d-file, would result in: 14.♗b5 ♖c8 15.♗xc6† ♖xc6 16.♕a4 White wins material.

13...0–0? 14.♘xe5 ♕xe5 15.♗xf6 ♕xf6 16.♖xd7 grabs a piece, which illustrates the point behind 12.cxd7† – to lure the c8-bishop to the d-file.

13...h6 14.♖xd7! ♔xd7 15.♘xe5† ♕xe5 16.♕xf7† ♔c6 17.♗f4 features the same points. White's bishops and queen combine for a winning attack.

Finally, 13...♗d6 would be a mistake because the d-file is crowded with black bishops: 14.♗c4! Threatening the f7-pawn. (14.♗xf6 ♕xf6 15.♕d5 ♔e7! allows Black to defend.) 14...♗e6 (14...0–0 15.♕d3 wins a bishop along the d-file.) 15.♕a4† ♗d7 16.♗b5 0–0–0 17.♕a6† This is decisive, as ♖d1xd6 will exploit the weakness of the h2-b8 diagonal.

All these variations left the Dutch commentators wondering how Timman would resolve his tactical malaise.



14.♖xd7!

Morphy would be proud. White doesn't waste a tempo in attacking.

After 14.♗b5? ♗d6!, Black would still be kicking.

After taking on d7, my fantasy was: 14...♔xd7 15.♕a4†! ♔e6 (As we've seen, when Black's king steps on the h2-b8 diagonal, White wins material by 15...♔c8 16.♗a6† ♔b8 17.♘xe5 ♕xe5 18.♗f4, picking up the queen.) 16.♗c4† ♔f5 17.♕c2† ♔g4 18.h3† ♔h5 19.g4† Winning. No kamikaze king today! These lines show how terribly Black is being punished for trading my c4-pawn on move 9.

14...♖xd7

Shucks! My fantasy will have to remain just that.

The other possible recapture, 14...♕xd7?, loses the queen to 15.♗b5.

15.♗b5

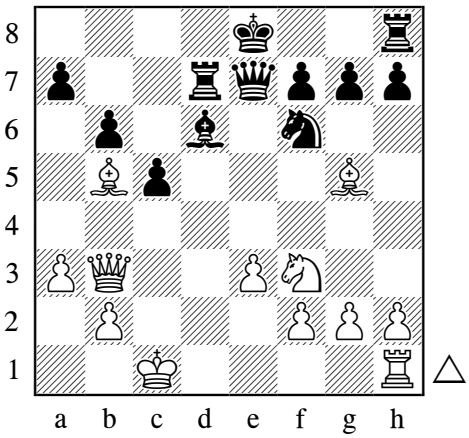
The bishop enters the game with devastating effect, threatening to capture the d7-rook, then the e5-bishop, and then the f7-pawn. More importantly, with each developing move, White's attack is picking up speed.

15...♗d6

Black desperately tries to block the d-file.

Black has no time for 15...0–0?, as White wins a piece with 16.♗xd7 ♕xd7 17.♘xe5.

And 15...♔d8 16.♗xd7 ♔xd7 17.♘xe5† ♕xe5 18.♕xf7† allows White to implement his threat.



16.♖d1!

I develop and pile up the threats.

16...0–0

The black king gets to safety at last. Black was facing far too many threats to keep his king in the center.

17.♗xd7!

This move recaptures the sacrificed exchange. Black's queen is forced into an unpleasant pin on the d-file.

17...♕xd7

Black has no choice but to recapture the piece.

18.♗f4!

This is the clearest move. The tempting 18.♗xf6 gxf6 19.♕d5 ♖d8 20.♘h4 ♕e8 21.♘f5 ♗c7! wouldn't produce an immediate win.

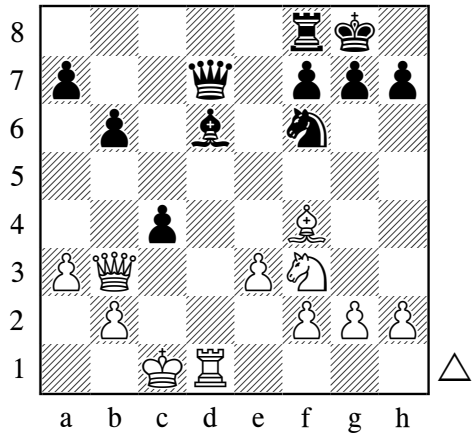
The text poses a painful question to Black: how will he handle the d-file pin?

18...c4

The only chance. It prevents either ♕b3-d5 or ♕b3-d3, which would create a decisive battery on the d-file, as shown by the following lines.

18...♘e8? loses to 19.♕d5.

18...♘e4 is also met by 19.♕d5!, when 19...♕a4 (19...♘xf2 20.♖d2 doesn't change anything) 20.♗xd6 ♖d8 21.♘e5 ♘xd6 22.♘c4! exploits the d-file pin once again. The back-rank mate after 22...♘b7 23.♕xd8† ♘xd8 24.♖xd8† ♕e8 25.♖xe8# would be a nice touch.



19.♕c2!

I prevent the defense ...♘f6-e4 by controlling the e4-square.

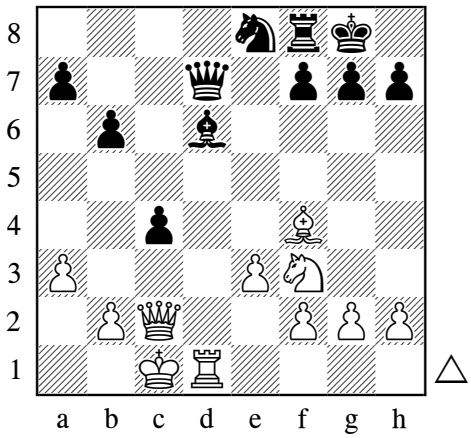
After 19.♕c3? ♘e4 20.♕d4 ♕e6 21.♗xd6 ♖d8, Black is able to complicate matters with his own pin along the d-file. White would then be forced to address the question of how he's going to defend the d6-bishop.

A horrible mistake would be 19.♕xc4?? ♖c8!, allowing all of White's hard work to go up in smoke. Black would win because of his pin on the c-file.

19...♘e8

Black makes the only possible move.

After 19...c3? 20.♖xd6 cxb2† 21.♔b1!, Black has insufficient play for the sacrificed piece. Black's b2-pawn would act as a useful shield for the white king.



20.♘g5!

This beautiful move forces Black to create new weaknesses. White has two threats, ♕c2xh7 mate and ♘g5-e4, piling up the pressure on the d6-bishop.

At first, creating the battery by 20.♕d2 looks quite strong, but 20...c3! 21.♕xc3 (21.bxc3 ♗xa3† allows Black to save his skin) 21...♕e6 would break the pin on the d-file, with the minimum loss of a pawn. I was greedy and wanted to win more than a pawn.

20...f5

This is the only move that can stop both of White's threats.

21.♕xc4†

I give Black no reprieve.

After 21.♕d2?! h6 22.♘f3? ♖f6, Black would still cling to a bit of hope. Now I was able to calculate a winning sequence of moves.

21...♔h8

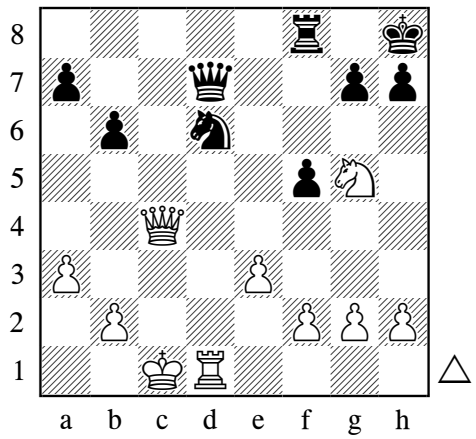
Black is forced to move his king into the corner, setting himself up for various kinds of mates, including a Philidor and back-rank mate.

22.♗xd6

The best move, again nudging Black.

22...♘xd6

Black is forced to bring his knight to the vulnerable d6-square.



23.♕d5!

This is the key move. From the exalted outpost of the d5-square, White's queen lords over the position. Black is given one tempo to deal with the pin on the d-file, but that will not be the end of his problems.

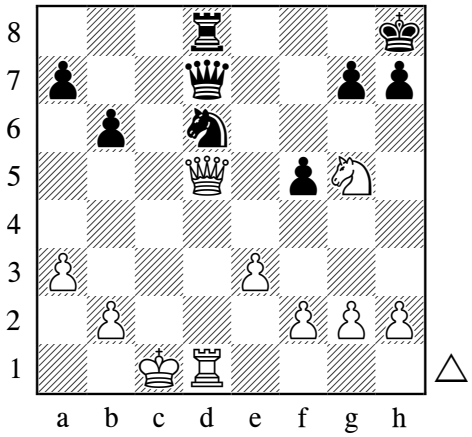
23...♖d8

The text is quite sensible. Black protects the d6-knight and prepares to move his queen, getting out of the pin along the d-file.

Still, there is no defense. Black has a lot of choices, but, for one reason or another, they all lose, After 23...♖f6 24.♕a8† ♕e8 25.♕xe8† ♘xe8 26.♖d8 ♖f8 27.♖a8, the game is over. White has an extra pawn and will win another one on the queenside. He would then be two pawns ahead with good positions for his pieces, locking up a technical win.

23...♖c8† 24.♔b1 ♖c6 protects the knight, but 25.♘f7† ♕xf7 26.♕xc6 wins an exchange with a continued attack.

Black could try to evacuate his queen from the d-file with either 23...♕c7† or 23...♕c8† 24.♔b1, but they transpose into the same outcome as in the game.



24.♘e6!

I sidestep Timman's last trap. The text is cold-blooded. Black's rook protects the d6-knight. I'm just trying to drive the defender away.

My original intention was 24.♕xd6 ♕c8† 25.♔b1 ♖xd6 26.♖xd6; I thought that the threat of 27.♖d8† ♕xd8 28.♘f7†, to fork Black's king and queen, would win. I stopped myself when I realized Black could play 26...♔g8! with the better game.

24...♕c8†

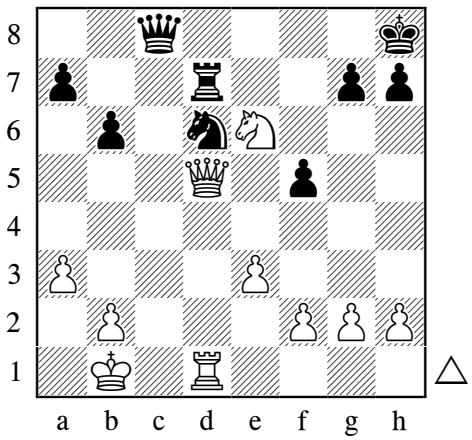
Black desperately tries to clear the d-file. After 24...♖c8† 25.♔b1 ♖c6 26.♘d8!, the rook is forced to abandon the protection of the black knight.

25.♔b1

White's king skips out of danger. Black is left dealing with the threat to his rook.

25...♖d7

Black finds the only way to protect the d6-knight whilst avoiding the capture of the rook.



26.♕xd6!

In this simple and shocking finale, White invites 26...♖xd6 27.♖xd6, and Black can't prevent ♖d6-d8† from winning back the queen with interest.

1–0

Jan Timman was the first to congratulate me on winning the match. For just a moment, I felt as if I was the best of the West. More than anything, I was very happy with my victory in this game. With sharp development play, I felt a momentary kinship with Paul Morphy, one of history's greatest players.

Jan Timman

Timman was born in Amsterdam on December 14, 1951. He became an international master in 1971 and a GM in 1974. In 1993 he played for the World Championship but lost the match to Anatoly Karpov. Jan has a very enterprising approach to the game. He often challenges his opponents directly in their areas of strength. This has caused him to lose a number of games but equally makes him a much-feared competitor. No one likes to lose from their favorite positions!

Timman at the Calvia Olympiad, 2004