

Jan Timman

Timman's Titans

My World Chess Champions

New In Chess 2016

© 2016 New In Chess

Published by New In Chess, Alkmaar, The Netherlands
www.newinchess.com

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission from the publisher.

Photos in this book:

Alexander Alekhine, Max Euwe, Anatoly Karpov, Boris Spassky: courtesy Max Euwe Centre Amsterdam; Mikhail Botvinnik: courtesy '64'; Bobby Fischer: courtesy Icelandic Chess Federation; Garry Kasparov, Tigran Petrosian, Vasily Smyslov: New In Chess Archive; Mikhail Tal: Turov Archive

Cover design: Volken Beck

Translation & supervision: Peter Boel

Proofreading: Joe Petrolito, René Olthof, Frank Erwich

Production: Anton Schermer

Have you found any errors in this book?

Please send your remarks to editors@newinchess.com. We will collect all relevant corrections on the Errata page of our website www.newinchess.com and implement them in a possible next edition.

ISBN: 978-90-5691-672-5

Contents

Foreword	7
Alexander Alekhine	9
Max Euwe	33
Mikhail Botvinnik	53
Vasily Smyslov	79
Mikhail Tal	109
Tigran Petrosian	147
Boris Spassky	169
Bobby Fischer	201
Anatoly Karpov	233
Garry Kasparov	287
Recommended reading	323
Index of games	325
Index of names	329

Foreword

The idea for this book has gradually grown over the years. I wrote the story ‘The porcelain pieces’ in 2001. It was an account of a visit to Lisbon I had made one year earlier. The porcelain pieces I bought there in a shop had belonged to Alexander Alekhine, and that was the leitmotiv of the story. I wrote two portraits about Mikhail Tal and Mikhail Botvinnik for the Dutch literary chess magazine *Matten* in 2007. In 2011, the Dutch publisher De Bezige Bij published these stories, together with seven other portraits of chess players, including Boris Spassky, Bobby Fischer, Garry Kasparov and Magnus Carlsen, in one volume that received the simple title *Schakers* (‘Chess Players’).



Two years later, Allard Hoogland and Dirk Jan ten Geuzendam asked me to write a book about World Champions – but a comprehensive one: the chess-technical aspect had to be highlighted too. I agreed, but realized that this was going to be a gigantic job. On the other hand, writing about this would also be pleasant as it would take me back to those romantic times when chess wasn’t yet dominated by the computer. After some thinking I decided to limit myself to those champions whose careers had been concluded. Kasparov’s successor, Vladimir Kramnik, is still very active as a player, and the same goes for Viswanathan Anand, Veselin Topalov and, of course, Magnus Carlsen.

I decided to start the book with Alekhine. He was the only player I could never have known, as he died more than 5 years before I was born. Max Euwe I have known well, despite the age gap of half a century between us. Actually, this is the first time I have written about him, more than three decades after his death. I’ve never played against him, and I’ve never played against Botvinnik or Fischer either. Against the other World Champions, I played many hard-fought games, of which I have selected the most interesting ones here. Some I have annotated in full, from others I have given only fragments. I have corrected where necessary the old analyses from *Schaakbulletin*, the Dutch-language predecessor of *New In Chess*, and my book *Selected Games*. Also, I have discussed many different facets of the play of the champions. In doing this, I have strived to present as much information as possible that is little known to the larger chess audience.

Jan Timman,
May 2016.

Working for Karpov took its toll at a certain point. In 1980, Karpov had started the top tournament in the Bosnian town of Bugojno quite waveringly. He had made a couple of draws, and only managed to win one game. Then he was White against Tal. Karpov won convincingly, and immediately the rumour machine started: people supposed the game had been fixed. Everybody was talking about it. Tal had been forced to lose the game in order to help Karpov, as Balashov and Smyslov had done at the Interpolis tournaments in Tilburg, and as Georgadze and Polugaevsky would do later on. In such cases, it was assumed that a big shot from the Sports Committee had ordered the player in question to lose the game.

For me this rumour was unacceptable. I refused to believe that Tal would do something like that, and I decided to ask him directly, right after I had rather clumsily lost to Karpov myself. Tal replied with a counter-question: 'Well, what about your own game with Karpov?' I didn't have anything to say against this.

Later, Lubosh Kavalek told me that Tal, after consuming vast amounts of alcohol, had admitted that he had been forced to lose. I had no reason to doubt Kavalek's words, but I was glad I had asked the question to Tal first, so he had the opportunity to deny the shameful truth.

Tal and I played each other many times in the 1980s. We played in the same top tournaments. I beat him for the first time in Wijk aan Zee in 1982; almost all our other games, spread over a full decade, ended in draws. The years were starting to count for Tal.

Donner once said that Tal played and lived so daringly because he knew he wouldn't make it to fifty. This was an infamous comment, which isn't entirely correct in my opinion. As I argued earlier: Tal lived his life the way he wanted to live it.

When he was fifty, in 1987, he was walking around in his socks in the plush playing hall in the Sheraton Brussels Hotel during the second SWIFT tournament. Later, when I suffered from the same ailment myself, I understood what this had been about: an acute attack of gout. Tal now collaborated with Kasparov, Karpov's greatest rival. This time his primary motive was that the new World Champion's play intrigued him. He found it interesting to see how Kasparov looked at certain positions, and how he managed to brave sharp complications with great virtuosity. But this work also had its downside. In the last round of the tournament he was Black against Kasparov, who had to win to draw level with Ljubojevic. On the evening before the last round there was a big party, entirely in the style of the SWIFT tournaments, which used to grow into great events by Bessel Kok's efforts. Champagne flowed lavishly.

Sharp observers saw a remarkable scene in a corner of the large party hall. Nikitin, Kasparov's mentor and regular second, was talking to Tal, while their glasses were constantly being refilled in quick tempo. It wasn't hard to guess what was going on: one person was busy imposing his will on another person by persuasion. Kasparov beat Tal quite easily on the next day. Kasparov himself was satisfied with the game, and he reacted furiously when he heard that the prize for the best game of the game had not gone to him. However, the jury had good reasons for this decision.

I was seated next to Tal during the prize-giving ceremony. I asked him: 'Why did you exchange on c3 instead of solidly withdrawing your bishop to d6?' It

was a different type of question than the one I had asked him seven years earlier in Bugojno. I got an entirely different answer, too. First, Tal made some general remarks about the opening variation in question, and then he said: 'You have to realize that I wasn't out to play for a draw too much.'

This was an indirect confession that Nikitin had done his dirty job well. This time, it hadn't been decided by the ruling powers that Tal had to lose, as Nikitin hadn't been a member of the Sports Committee for more than ten years. But that didn't make the situation any less painful. As usual, Tal managed to convey the message with a subtle choice of words. He must have suffered this as a terrible humiliation: as a World Champion, he had been the one who had captured the public's imagination more than anyone else. He had been forced to give away points to two of his successors, because they had power over him.

In the next year, 1988, Tal was again in Brussels during the first World Cup tournament. This time he didn't have to lose any games, and he was in good spirits. It had become customary for a number of participants, led by Bessel Kok, to go to the Select Bar, a night bar behind the Sheraton. Again, champagne flowed lavishly.

On one night, Bessel Kok couldn't come. Other participants also pulled out for that reason. Tal and I decided to go to the bar by ourselves. He ordered a double gin and tonic, arguing that there shouldn't be too much tonic in the long drink glass. I stuck to the reversed combination myself, so the permillage in my glass was significantly smaller, but it was still quite a stiff drink. The gout attack of the previous year hadn't seemed to knock Tal out, as he managed to down quite a lot of glasses of his self-designed cocktail. He started to sing – impassioned Russian songs, but also a masterful Louis Armstrong imitation.

Tal was in his element now. He struck up a conversation with a Jamaican woman in her mid-thirties, and suggested she come to his hotel room. He pointed out that there were two beds in the room, which was supposed to be an argument to add force to his proposal.

'I have a headache', she replied. The perfect cliché.

'No problem, there is a bed for headaches', Tal said immediately.

Hübner writes: 'Of his further qualities, I would like to mention two for which I have always had the greatest admiration. To start with, there was his subtle humour, which he applied very gladly and effectively to save himself or others out of painful or dangerous circumstances.' The second quality that Hübner mentions I have already indicated above: Tal never complained.

Tal's reaction was brilliant, especially as it came without any hesitation. It didn't mean, however, that success was guaranteed. Towards closing time, we left the Select Bar empty-handed. It was four o'clock in the morning, and we walked back to the hotel. Sobered up by the cool air, Tal asked: 'What does Winants actually play with black?' His mind was already at the tournament again. I gave him an answer that I hoped would be helpful.

On the following morning I slept late, but Tal didn't. He was spotted at the breakfast table, a Kent cigarette in his claw, his piercing glance aimed at a random point in front of him. His game with Winants ended quite quickly in a draw.

How long would he be able to keep up this way of living? Six months later we both played in the third World Cup tournament in Reykjavik. Tal took an early lead with two victories, and then started freewheeling. Several short draws followed. After the games, he could be found in the Hospitality Suite behind a long drink glass filled with pure whisky. I would join him when I had finished my game. We followed the games that were still going on, and talked about other things as well. One time, we were so immersed in our conversation that we didn't notice that all the other participants had already gone to the hotel. Night had fallen. Tal was sitting in a big armchair, and the whisky glass was standing beside him.

Then, something happened that made an indelible impression on me. It was different than what I had seen before, in Sochi and Hastings, where he had fallen off his feet from one moment to the next. Now, it took as long as half a minute.

Tal was arguing about something. At a certain point, his speech became a little incoherent. A few instants later, he was in deep sleep. I looked around me: only the bartender was still there. I asked him to call a taxi, and when it came we carried Tal outside. When we arrived at the hotel, the taxi driver and I carried him inside and briefly seated him in an armchair in the lobby, so that I could ask the reception for his room key. At that moment, Kortchnoi passed by. He sardonically quipped, 'So this is the leader of the tournament.' There was nothing I could say against this.

With the taxi driver, I carried Tal to his room. I removed his jacket and we laid him down on the bed.

A few months later, we played our second match in Hilversum. Three years earlier we had played a match for the right to qualify for the Candidates' matches. It had ended in a 3-3 tie, and I had qualified according to the regulations.

In Hilversum, we played another six games as part of the KRO match series. I started well, holding easy draws with black in the first and third game and winning the second game in good style. But then things went wrong. In the fourth game I came out of the opening with a very good game, but then I mishandled the position and Tal won convincingly.

An awkward situation: you lose with white and then have to play with black again. My situation became even more awkward when Tal proposed to draw the final two games.

Four years earlier, I had experienced the same thing in my KRO match against Lajos Portisch. The course of that match had been identical. After the fourth game, Portisch had waited for me in the hotel and offered to draw the final two games. In neither of the cases did I accept. I couldn't do it, and didn't want to.

Against Portisch I won the fifth game, and then the match, but against Tal it went wrong. I went down after a sharp struggle, and I left for Amsterdam to consider my options for the last game. In the meantime, it turned out that Tal was filled with feelings of guilt, as I heard later from Hans Böhm, who was a member of the organization team. Tal and Böhm had retreated to a café, where the last game was the subject of their conversation. Tal was prepared to enter any risky variation with black. He wanted Böhm to pass on this message to me. As more drinks were

downed, Tal's suggestions became wilder and wilder. Böhm didn't know what to do, and decided to let events take their course.

On the following day, I got a lift to Hilversum and saw Tal walking, not far from the KRO studio. His unsteady gait struck me. The game started. After the first moves, I was startled by a muffled bang. Tal had fallen off the stage. But his moves were good. I obtained some advantage, but it was insufficient for a win.

After the match, Tal stayed on in Amsterdam for a few more days. He was staying in a small hotel in the south of the city, not far from my home. I looked him up on one evening. The landlady, a middle-aged woman, gave me a beer. Tal seized the opportunity to ask for a vodka. Clearly, he had had more than enough, and the landlady wasn't too keen on giving him any more drinks. After I had finished my beer, I wanted to go home. The landlady seized the moment to try to persuade Tal to put himself to bed. She would bring him breakfast in bed the next morning. 'No', Tal said, 'it's better if you come and bring a bottle of vodka.'

A quite lengthy discussion started, with both parties uncompromising in their positions. It would have been interesting to film this scene. After some time, I decided I had seen enough, and went home. Somewhat desperate, I wondered how long this could go on.

In March 1989, I got a message that Tal was in mortal danger. He survived the crisis, but his appearance had become terrifying. With his subtle sense of humour, he congratulated friends and acquaintances with the fact that they managed to recognize him. In the summer, I saw him during the opening ceremony of the World Cup tournament in the Swedish city of Skelleftea. The participants had to pick up gold bars, which had their pairing numbers at the bottom. Tal had a lot of trouble lifting up the bar. He looked frighteningly bad, as if the end could come at any moment. Still, he was to live on for almost three more years. Bessel Kok had him examined by specialists in a Belgian hospital. A surgeon cut him open. He then quickly stitched everything up again, shocked. There was nothing left in Tal's body that could be operated.

I saw him for the last time during the Interpolis tournament in 1991. He was watching the post-mortem of a game between Kamsky and me. I had built up the game quite well strategically, but then something had gone wrong. After Kamsky had left, I showed Tal one more time exactly how I should have played, and how I could have turned the game in my favour. He listened attentively, nodded once or twice, without saying anything. It was clear that he had trouble concentrating. In the end, he said: 'Thank you, Jan.'

Shortly before his death, he escaped from the hospital in Moscow to play a blitz tournament. He beat Kasparov, who was then at the height of his powers. His mind was still functioning well, but his body couldn't keep up any more. He died as a result of total organ failure.

His body had to be moved from Moscow to Riga. Times were turbulent in the new Russia, and there were no standard procedures for such a transport. One person devoted himself to this cause: Anatoly Karpov, the man Tal had worked for, the man he had had to grovel for. After some time, permission was given for Tal's body to be interred in the old cemetery in Riga.

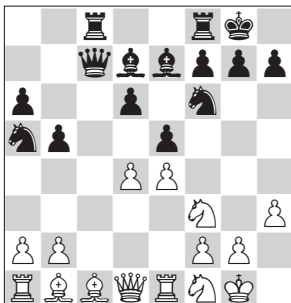
Tal as an escape artist

In the same way that Tal, in the last year of his life, escaped from the hospital to beat Kasparov, he managed to win even entirely hopeless positions in his younger years. Sometimes he ended up in a lost position because a wild, adventurous concept had failed completely, sometimes it was by pure nonchalance. Whatever the cause was, every time he managed to straighten his back. His inexhaustible fighting spirit came to the fore, supported by the piercing look in his eyes. Tal himself remarked in *The Life and Games of Mikhail Tal*: 'There is no doubt that my opponents in these games had every justification for complaining about their bad luck, I hope, however, that I in some way "contributed" to this bad luck'. He wrote this with reference to his victory over Klasups in the Riga championship in 1952. I have selected three other examples. It is interesting that in all three games Tal, in the end, managed to orchestrate a lethal attack with queen and knight.

Mikhail Tal Pliss

Riga 1950

Remarkably, this game is not in the databases. I found it in *Complete Games of Mikhail Tal 1936-59* by Hillary Thomas.



15...♖c6

A typical Ruy Lopez position. White has a choice: he can jump with his knight to either e3 or g3.

16.♘e3

Probably the alternative 16.♘g3, as played in Nijboer-Nikolic, Amsterdam 2004, offers more chances of an advantage.

16...exd4 17.♘d5 ♗xd5 18.exd5 ♘e5 19.♗xd4 ♙f6

Black has obtained equality with healthy strategic play. Tal now commits a serious mistake.

20.♙e3?

White shouldn't have allowed the knight to come to c4. With 20.b3 ♖c3 21.♙e3, he could have completed his development in a normal way. The rook on a1 is taboo due to the check on h7.

20...♗c4 21.b3

White has to concede the bishop pair to his opponent.

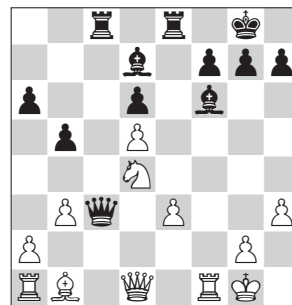
21...♗xe3 22.fxe3 ♜fe8

Black's play is really exemplary. As he rules supreme on the dark squares, his advantage is already decisive.

23.♞f1

Searching for counterplay.

23...♖c3



24.♞xf6

The point of the previous move. The exchange sacrifice is insufficient, but it is White's best practical chance.

**24...gxf6 25.♙f5 ♖xe3+ 26.♔h1
♙xf5 27.♘xf5 ♖e2**

Good enough, but 28...♖f4! was even stronger, so as not to give the white queen any squares.

28.♖d4

A first lifebuoy for Tal. He has a central post for his queen.

28...♙e5 29.♘xd6 ♖c2 30.♖g1

A defensive intermediate move.

30...♙xa2 31.♖a7

The queen invades Black's position. Objectively, it still doesn't amount to anything. Black is still winning.

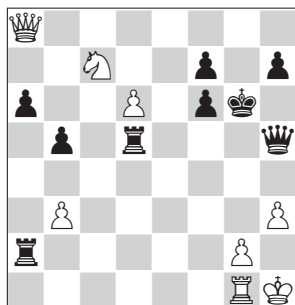
**31...♖h5 32.♖a8+ ♔g7 33.♘e8+
♔g6**

A good practical decision would have been 33...♖xe8 34.♖xe8 ♖xd5. With two extra pawns, the technical phase shouldn't be too difficult. However, Pliss wants more. The implication of this is that from this moment on he will have to calculate accurately.

34.d6 ♖d5

A step in the wrong direction, after which the position probably cannot be won any more. It was better to stop the white d-pawn with 34...♖f5. 34...♖e3 would also have been sufficient, because thus Black indirectly prevents the march of the d-pawn: 35.d7 then fails to 35...♔h6!, and the strike on h3 cannot be prevented.

35.♘c7



35...♖xd6?

35...♖d3 was necessary, to create counter-threats.

36.♖g8+

Suddenly it is all over. On 36...♔h6 37.♘e8 decides the game. It is remarkable how White managed to create a mating attack with only two pieces.

36...♔f5 37.g4+

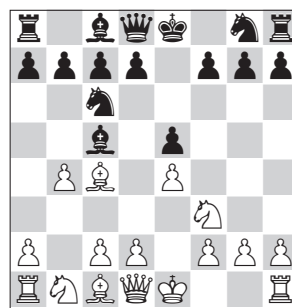
1-0

Mikhail Tal

Peteris Kampenuss

Riga ch-LAT 1954

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♙c5 4.b4



A surprise. Tal would never play the Evans Gambit again. He probably wasn't encouraged by the way the opening developed in this game.

4...♙xb4 5.c3 ♙a5 6.d4 d6 7.♙g5

This bishop sortie had been played already in 1892, by Lasker in a simultaneous display. It never became popular, but still it isn't entirely clear how Black should respond. Perhaps 7...♘ge7 is best.

7...♖d7

A standard move in the Evans Gambit which, however, has a concrete disadvantage.

8.0-0

Stronger than Lasker's 8.♖d3.

8...♙b6

Also standard, but not good. Anyway, it isn't so easy to give a completely reliable alternative.

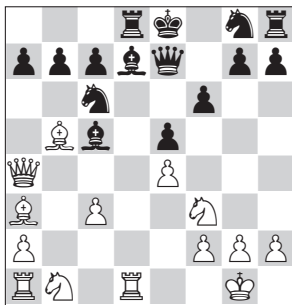
9.dxe5

Tal fails to take advantage of Black's mistake. After 9.♙b5!, Black wouldn't be able to avoid the loss of a piece. Things are not entirely clear, since in most cases Black gets three pawns in compensation. But there is no doubt that White has the advantage.

9...dxe5 10.♚a4

It seems as if White has created dangerous threats, but Black's reply is sufficient.

**10...f6 11.♞d1 ♚e7 12.♙c1 ♘d7
13.♙b5 ♞d8 14.♙a3 ♙c5**



This is how it often goes in the Evans Gambit: Black has defended successfully and is simply a healthy pawn up

**15.♞d5 ♙xa3 16.♘xa3 ♘h6
17.♙c4 a6 18.♞ad1 ♘f7 19.♚b3
♘d6 20.♙e2**

White has completely lost control. With 20.♞xd6 cxd6 21.♚xb7, he could still have created some confusion.

20...♙e6 21.c4 0-0 22.c5 ♘xe4

The white position has collapsed, but Tal keeps on fighting.

23.♙c4 ♘xc5

It is understandable that Black takes another pawn, but there were two even stronger continuations. First,

23...♞xd5, when only after 24.♙xd5 Black continues with 24...♘xc5, which would have given him three healthy extra pawns. The strongest move was 23...♘a5, after which White will suffer heavy material loss.

24.♞xc5 ♞xd1+ 25.♚xd1 ♙xc4



26.♞xc6!

A desperado, allowing White to keep fighting chances.

26...♙xa2 27.♞c3 ♙e6

Again, understandable. After the dust has settled, Black withdraws his bishop to a safe square. Yet, the bishop wasn't so bad on a2. Stronger was 27...b5 to allow the white pieces less space.

**28.♘c4 ♞d8 29.♚c2 c5 30.♘e3 b6
31.h3**

Luft for the king.

**31...♚d7 32.♞a3 a5 33.♚b2 ♚c6
34.♘h4**

Tal starts to play for an attack.

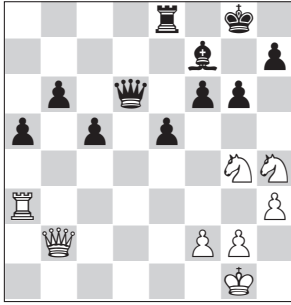
34...g6 35.♚b1 ♙f7

Black wants to prevent the strike on g6, but he protects the g-pawn with the wrong piece. With 35...♙f7 he could have retained his control of the g4-square and kept an advantage.

36.♘g4

White puts the other knight in position as well. He has sufficient counterplay already.

36...♚d6 37.♚b2 ♞e8

**38. ♖f3**

Interesting. The computer considers 38.f4 to be the strongest move, assessing the position to be balanced. Tal must have considered that move too. He probably didn't like the fact that the protection of his king would be partly gone. If White advances his f-pawn, all kinds of forced drawing lines appear. At this stage, Tal was probably already determined to play for a win.

38... ♜e6

A good defensive move. White has nothing concrete.

**39. ♖c3 ♕d1+ 40. ♔h2 ♖d4
41. ♗b3**

Again, White shows that he is playing for a win.

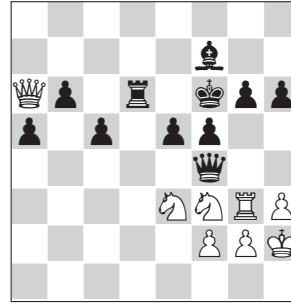
Objectively, 41. ♘xf6+ was his best choice, but then Black can force a draw with 41... ♙g7 42. ♚h5+ ♙g8 if he wants.

41... ♙g7 42. ♜g3 ♖f4 43. ♗b5

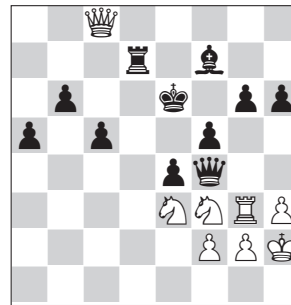
The same picture as in the previous game. The indefatigable white queen will invade the queenside.

**43... ♜d6 44. ♗a6 f5 45. ♚e3 ♙f6
46. ♚f3 h6**

A curious position. Three white pieces are packed together on the kingside, held in check by the black queen. At the moment, White can only play his queen.

**47. ♖c8 e4 48. ♗h8+ ♔e6 49. ♖c8+
♜d7**

Kampenuss avoids a repetition of moves. He can do this without any problem, since Black is not in any danger for the moment.

**50. ♘h4??!**

An incredible bluff. White makes an utterly incorrect knight sacrifice that will prove a great success. Necessary was 50. ♘d5 ♖d6 51. ♘xb6! ♖xb6 52. ♘e5 ♖c7, when an endgame ensues that offers Black some chances.

50... ♖c7?

The second time control phase is in full swing. Black could have gone for 50... ♖xh4 with an easy conscience. After 51. ♘c4 ♖d8 52. ♖c6+ ♜d6, he is winning again.

51. ♗a8 ♖d6 52. ♔h1

Tal consistently keeps avoiding forcing lines. After 52. ♘xg6 ♙xg6 53. ♘c4 ♖c7 54. ♘xb6 ♜g7 the chances would

have been roughly equal. After the text move White threatens to strike on g6.

52... ♖e5??

And Black just allows it! After 52... ♖d8, he would have obtained the upper hand again.

53. ♜xg6

Suddenly it is all over. White has a decisive attack.

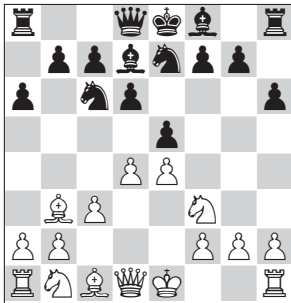
53... ♖a1+ 54. ♔h2 ♘d6 55. ♖b8+ ♜c7 56. ♜xf5+ ♙c6 57. ♜ge7+ ♘d7 58. ♜c8 1-0

**Mikhail Tal
Anatoly Bannik**

Leningrad 1956 (7)

We have moved on two years, and Tal is taking part in the championship of the Soviet Union for the first time. He plays two fantastic attacking games against Simagin and Tolush, and there is also another miraculous escape.

1.e4 e5 2. ♞f3 ♞c6 3. ♙b5 a6 4. ♙a4 d6 5.c3 ♙d7 6.d4 ♞ge7 7. ♙b3 h6



8. ♞h4

A sharp move that was introduced into practice by Smyslov in 1943.

8... exd4

In combination with the next move, this was a new idea at the time.

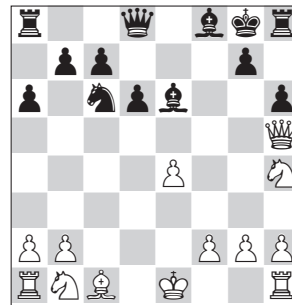
9.cxd4 ♞xd4 10. ♖xd4 ♞c6

Thus, Black regains the piece.

11. ♙xf7+?

The wrong choice. Best was 11. ♖d5 ♖xh4 12. ♖xf7+ ♘d8, with mutual chances, as in Tukmakov-Larsen, Leningrad 1973.

11... ♞xf7 12. ♖d5+ ♙e6 13. ♖h5+ ♞g8



The black king is safe, and a closer look at the position reveals that White is already in big, perhaps even insurmountable, trouble. The knight is very unfortunately placed at h4.

14.0-0

This boils down to a piece sacrifice. The only way for White to save the knight was 14. ♞g6. It is understandable that Tal decided against this. After 14... ♖e8 15. ♞f4 ♖xh5 16. ♞xh5 ♞b4 Black rules the board.

14... ♞e5

Threatening both 15... ♙g4 and 15... ♙f7.

15. ♞f5

There is no way back. Obviously, White will have insufficient compensation for the piece with his undeveloped queenside.

15... g6 16. ♖h3 gxf5 17. exf5 ♙c4 18.f4 ♞d7

Jozsef Hajtun calls this retreat 'a grave mistake' in *Selected Chess Games of Mikhail Tal*. Nothing is further from the truth. Black keeps full control of the position. That said, Hajtun's recommendation 18... ♙xf1 19.fxe5 dxe5 was also winning.

19. ♖f3 ♕g7 20. ♗c3 ♘f6 21. ♙e3 c5
22. ♙f2 b5

Here Hajtun remarks: 'Unsuspecting he moves on to his doom'. We cannot say very much against this observation in itself, as in the end Black loses the battle. For the sake of completeness, however, we should establish that the text move is healthy and strong. Black sets his majority in motion; he doesn't need to take defensive measures just yet.

23. ♙h4 b4

Inaccurate, for now White can centralize his knight. It was better to unpin the black knight with 23... ♖f8. Then, White would have been hard put to find any swindling chances.

24. ♘e4 ♙d5 25. ♙xf6

Curious. Tal gives up his bishop to keep the knight for a possible attack. Objectively, it would have been better to maintain the pin by 25. ♖e3. If Black exchanges on e4, the rook will have a nice strongpoint on e6 later on. In that case, Black's position would no longer have been clearly winning.

25... ♙xf6 26. ♖e1 ♙d4+ 27. ♗h1
♖h7 28. ♖g3+ ♖g7



29. ♖g6

Hajtun gives this move an exclamation mark, and adds: 'Black must remove this terrible rook... The united passed pawns soon prove adequate compensation for the piece.' You don't need a computer to

realize that this assessment is complete nonsense. White tries to fight to the bitter end, but objectively his situation is completely hopeless.

29... ♖xg6 30. fxc6 ♖f8

Even stronger was 30... ♖e7!. He can abandon the h-pawn as the lethal pin along the e-file is immediately decisive.

31. ♖d7

White can play for tricks again.

31... ♙g7 32. ♘g3

Tal is again dreaming of some teamwork between the queen and the knight. The square he is aiming for is h5.

32... ♖d8 33. ♖g4 ♖e8 34. ♖d1 ♙xa2
35. f5 c4

There were no objections to 35... ♙xb2, so as to eat up the entire white queenside.

36. h4 d5 37. ♖f1 ♙f6 38. ♖d1

The white queen is going to drift over the board again. She is heading for the queenside now.

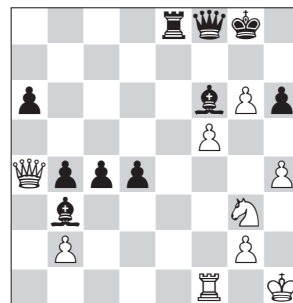
38... d4

A bad move, restricting the action range of both bishops. After 38... c3 Black would have been totally winning.

39. ♖a4

It's starting to look like something.

39... ♙b3



40. ♖c6!

The queen invades. Tal must have decided against the alternative 40. ♖d7 as Black can then aim for a queen

exchange with 40...♖e7. True, White does have the trump card 41.♘h5 in that case, but in the end this is insufficient: 41...♖xd7 42.♘xf6+ ♔h8 43.♘xd7 c3 44.f6 ♖d8! 45.♘e5 cxb2, and Black wins. It is striking that the far advanced white passed pawns are of such small consequence here.

40...♖e7 41.♘h5

Putting the knight in position. For the first time in the game Black is really under pressure.

41...♖f8 42.♖d5+ ♔h8 43.♘xf6

It is time to eliminate one of the defenders.

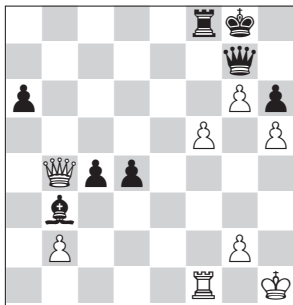
43...♖xf6

Slightly better was 43...♖xf6 44.♖xd4 ♔a4, and Black would still have winning chances.

44.♖b7

An important win of a pawn, as the black bishop is kept out of play.

44...♖g7 45.♖xb4 ♔g8 46.h5



Finally, it is true what Hajtun wrote 17 moves ago: now the white passed pawns provide enough compensation for the piece.

46...♖d7?

Bannik collapses under the pressure. After 46...d3, White would have had to steer for a draw with 47.♖d6 ♖f6 48.♖d8+ ♖f8 49.♖d7. If he wanted to play his queen, 46...♖c7 was possible, with the point 47.f6 ♖e5!, when the

g7-square is under control, so that White cannot play 48.f7+ followed by taking on f8.

47.f6

The pawns have been unleashed. There is no more defence.

47...♖g4 48.f7+ ♔g7 49.♖c5 ♖h4+ 50.♔g1 1-0

Tal is known for his spectacular attacking games, his daring sacrifices and his reckless abandon. When we think of Tal, we think of 21...♘f4! in the 6th match game against Botvinnik, the queen sacrifice against Hecht, 34.♖h6!! against Nievergelt, or the chaotic developments in the game with Keller, also from Zurich 1959. His strategic feats remain underexposed. You could claim that these strategic games would have become well-known if all those attacking games hadn't been there. That's how the human mind works. We are inclined to classify players; for Tal we have the qualification of 'attacker'. But every World Champion had more to offer than you would think superficially. Petrosian was known as a player with defensive qualities who shunned risks. Yet, he was phenomenal at calculating mind-blowing complications. Karpov is considered to be a full-blooded positional player. But his attacking games are in no way inferior to Kasparov's.

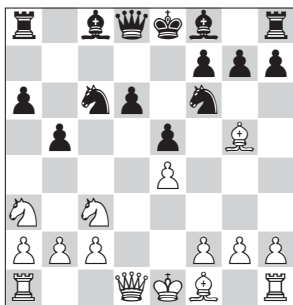
Already in the first years of his career, Tal was able to outplay various Latvian top players strategically. He knew how to convert small positional advantages into a win. At 19, he participated for the first time in the semifinals of the USSR championship. He won convincingly. In this tournament, Tal played a model game against Shamkovich.

Mikhail Tal

Leonid Shamkovich

Riga 1955 (3)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 cxd4
 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 e5 6.♗db5 d6
 7.♙g5 a6 8.♗a3 b5



The Sveshnikov, a quarter of a century before it came into fashion! It is interesting to see how the young Tal handles it.

9.♙xf6 gxf6 10.♗d5 f5 11.exf5
 ♙xf5 12.c3 ♙g7 13.♖f3

A principled move, which, however, has a concrete disadvantage.

13...♙g6

The wrong square. 13...♙e6 was necessary. Tal had probably planned to meet this with 14.♗f4. Practice has shown that Black can then solve his problems with 14...♗d4! 15.cxd4 exf4 16.♗c2 0-0.

14.h4!

Before completing his development, White first takes the initiative on the kingside.

14...e4 15.♖h3!

The best square for the queen.

15...h5 16.♗c2 0-0 17.♙e2 ♗e5

A tempting move. The knight is on its way to d3. Nevertheless, 17...♗e7 was to be preferred. Black can relieve the pressure on his position by exchanging knights.

18.♗ce3 ♗d3+ 19.♙xd3 exd3 20.0-0



Late castling. Taking stock at this point, we can observe that White has obtained a big advantage by simple means. Black's structure has been shattered, and his bishop pair has no power.

20...♗e8

The only chance was 20...a5 in order to play ...b5-b4 as soon as possible. That was the only way for him to increase the action range of his king's bishop. Black will be quietly swept off the board after the text move.

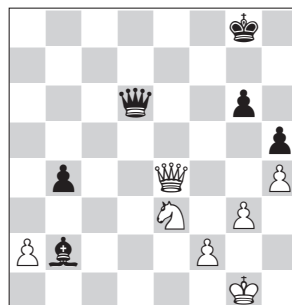
21.♗ad1 ♗c8 22.♗f4

Winning a pawn, while at the same time eliminating the black bishop pair.

22...♗e4 23.♗xg6 fxg6 24.♗xd3
 ♗c6 25.g3

Quiet play. White protects his h-pawn and vacates g2 for the queen.

25...a5 26.♖g2 ♖e8 27.♗fd1
 b4 28.cxb4 axb4 29.♗xd6 ♗xd6
 30.♗xd6 ♙xb2 31.♗d8 ♖xd8
 32.♖xe4 ♖d6



33. ♖d5+

Tal liquidates into a bishop vs knight endgame, where the black b-pawn is sentenced to death. The rest is simple technique.

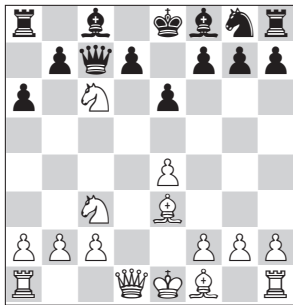
33... ♖xd5 34. ♗xd5 ♕a3 35. ♖g2 ♖f7 36. ♖f3 g5 37. hxg5 ♖g6 38. ♖f4 ♕c1+ 39. ♖e4 ♖xg5 40. ♗xb4 ♕a3 41. ♗c2 ♕c5 42. ♖f3 ♖f5 43. ♗e3+ ♖e5 44. ♗g2 ♖f5 45. ♗f4 h4 46. gxh4 ♕a3 47. ♗g2 1-0

**Roman Dzindzichashvili
Mikhail Tal**

Tbilisi 1969 (8)

If we take a jump of 14 years onwards, we arrive at another period in Tal's career. He had already reached the highest summit and was regarded as one of the 'old hands'. In the Goglidze Memorial, he faced one of the most talented youngsters of the day.

1.e4 c5 2. ♗f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4. ♗xd4 ♗c6 5. ♗c3 ♖c7 6. ♕e3 a6 7. ♗xc6



In combination with 6. ♕e3, this exchange is unusual. Probably Dzindzi wanted to get out of theory as soon as possible.

7... bxc6 8. ♕d3 ♗f6 9. 0-0 d5

A well-known theoretical position, only with the white bishop on e3 instead of the rook on e1. In fact this comes down to a loss of a tempo for White; the bishop will have to leave e3 soon.

10. ♕g5 ♕d6

Sharply played. More prudent was 10... ♕e7 with equality.

11. ♖h1

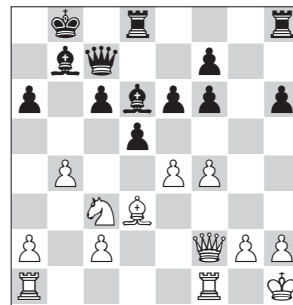
Stronger was 11. ♕xf6 gxf6 12. ♖h5 with attacking chances. Black will not have an easy job finding a safe place for his king.

11... ♕b7 12.f4 h6!

Now, Black is doing perfectly fine. He gains the bishop pair, after which he brings his king to safety on the queenside.

13. ♕xf6 gxf6 14. ♖f3 0-0-0 15. ♖f2 ♖b8 16.b4

White tries to launch an attack on the king by means of a pawn sacrifice.



16...c5!

An excellent reaction. Tal has no problem with an opening of the b-file, but only on his terms. By pushing the c-pawn, he prepares the opening of the long diagonal for his queen's bishop. After 16... ♕xb4 17. ♖ab1, White would have had good compensation for the pawn.

17. bxc5 ♖xc5

Aiming for an exchange of queens. In the endgame, the power of the bishop pair will show up best.

18. ♖xc5 ♕xc5 19. ♖ab1 ♖a7 20.exd5 exd5 21. ♗a4 ♕e3

The bishop is dominating here.

22. ♖b3 ♜b8

Opposing on the b-file. Black has no objection to the disappearance of the rooks from the board after 23. ♖fb1 ♙c6. That same ending will arise in the game, in a slightly different form.

23. ♙e2

Hoping for 23...d4 24. ♘c5. Tal, however, protects the bishop in a different way, keeping control of the c5-square.

23... ♜he8 24. ♙f3

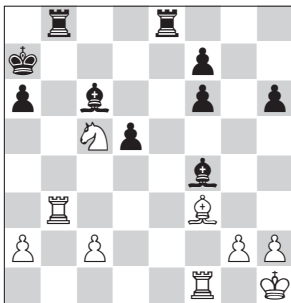
A strategically sound pawn sacrifice.

24... ♙xf4

The computer prefers 24...d4, but I can imagine that Tal didn't fancy parting with his bishop pair. He is going to do fantastic things with it in this game. Apart from this, the text move introduces a deep strategic trap.

25. ♘c5

A natural move. However, 25. ♖fb1 was a more tenacious defence.

25... ♙c6!

This looks less good because the queen's bishop is unprotected now. However, Tal has seen further.

26. c4 ♙d6!

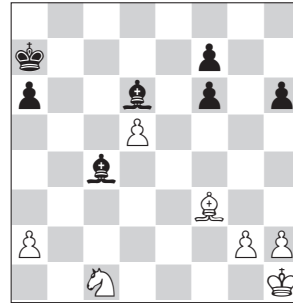
The point of the previous move. The knight appeared to have found a good position on c5, but it proves to be quite unstable there. From this moment on, Black's bishops cooperate magnificently.

27. ♖xb8

Forced. White has to exchange a pair of rooks, as after 27.cxd5 ♙b5 he would lose material.

27... ♖xb8 28.cxd5 ♙b5 29. ♖c1 ♜c8

Black forces the exchange of the other rook pair as well, trusting that he will reign supreme in the ensuing ending.

30. ♘b3 ♜xc1+ 31. ♘xc1 ♙c4

It's time to take stock. Structurally White is doing well. He has a passed pawn, while the black majority on the kingside has been shattered. However, what determines the assessment of the position is the activity of the pieces and the presence of the a-pawns. The white king is far removed from the scene of battle, while the black king supports its own a-pawn. White will have to sit and wait while the black bishop pair is going to besiege and conquer his a-pawn.

32. g3 ♜b6 33. ♜g2 ♙a3 34. ♘b3 a5!

All quite systematic. White is lost.

35. d6 ♙xd6 36. ♜f2 a4 37. ♘c1 ♙a3 38. ♙e2 ♙e6 39. ♙d1 ♙xc1 40. ♙xa4 ♙xa2 0-1

Rafael Vaganian

Mikhail Tal

Sochi 1970 (7)

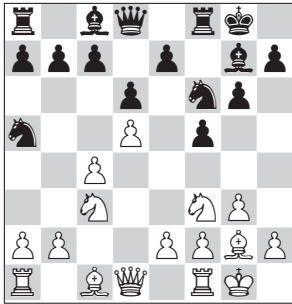
This game was part of a match between grandmasters and young players. It was the first game between Tal and Vaganian,

who would become a grandmaster one year later.

1.d4 f5

Tal tended to use the Dutch when he was out to win.

2.c4 ♘f6 3.♗c3 d6 4.♘f3 g6 5.g3 ♕g7 6.♕g2 0-0 7.0-0 8.d5 ♘a5



9.♘d2

In the Yugoslav Variation of the King's Indian, with the f-pawn on f7 instead of f5, this way of covering the pawn is the standard method. In these different circumstances, the knight move is rather passive.

The system that Tal plays here has fallen into disuse, because 9.♗a4 is very strong. After 9...c5 10.dxc6 bxc6, White has the strong positional pawn sacrifice 11.c5!, which was introduced into practice by Gelfand against Topalov, Dos Hermanas 1994.

9...c5 10.♗c2 e5

A good move. If White takes en passant, Black's mobilization will be completed. If he does not take, then Black has achieved a strategic success: in the King's Indian, Black, after having played ...e7-e5, has to prepare the advance of the f-pawn by playing his king's knight to h5 or e8. As a rule, the knight is then played back to f6 again. In this version, with the pawn already on f5, in principle Black has two extra tempi. This

does not mean that he can hope for an opening advantage; in the King's Indian – and also in this variation of the Dutch – White always has a space advantage thanks to his advanced d-pawn. In most cases, that is a guarantee for equality.

11.a3

A well-known recipe. White will drive the knight back to the passive b7-square.

11...b6 12.b4 ♘b7 13.♖b2 ♗e7

Black could already have increased his influence in the centre by 14...e4. However, Tal wants to transfer his queen's knight to the kingside first.

14.♞ae1 ♘d8 15.e3 ♘f7 16.f4 ♕d7



17.e4

A bit risky, as Black is ready for a confrontation in the centre. A reasonable alternative was 17.♘d1.

17...♞ae8

Tal has gathered all his battle forces on the kingside and in the centre. He can look toward the coming skirmishes with confidence.

18.exf5 ♕xf5 19.♘ce4 exf4!

Based on sharp calculation. The second exchange in the centre will eventually provide Black with a strategic advantage.

20.gxf4 ♘h6

Now that White controls the e5- and g5-squares, the knight moves to a better position.

21.♗c1

White has to take a time-out to unpin the knight. Black uses this opportunity to liquidate into a favourable endgame.

21...♖xe4 22.♘xe4 ♘xb2 23.♙xb2



23...♙xe4!

An important exchange. Black will be left with a strong knight against a slightly weak bishop.

24.♙xe4 ♗g7 25.♙xg7+ ♔xg7

Just like in the previous game, Tal has no objection whatsoever against a queen exchange, as long as the strategic factors favour him.

26.♙xe8 ♙xe8 27.bxc5

Vaganian wants to open the b-file, looking for counterplay.

27...bxc5

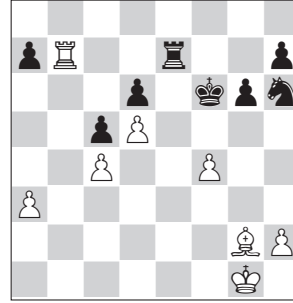
An important alternative was 27...dxc5. Black keeps the b-file half-closed and aims to move his knight to d6. It is not easy for White to find an appropriate defensive scheme here. The best reply is 28.a4, with the intention to push the a-pawn further. After 28...♘f5, he then first has to organize his defence: 29.♔f2 ♘d6 30.♙c1 ♔f6 31.♙f1. Now, White is ready to play 32.a5. On 31...♙e4, he has 32.♔f3. The position is just about defensible for White.

28.♙b1 ♔f6

A strong move, especially in a psychological sense. Tal allows the white rook to go to the 7th rank, and

then he wants to offer an exchange of rooks, hoping that White will not go for this exchange. The alternative was 28...♙e7, which is met by 29.♙b8, with just enough counterplay for White.

29.♙b7 ♙e7



30.♙b8?

Tal gets his way! Vaganian should have exchanged the rooks. After 30.♙e7 ♔xe7 31.♔f2 ♔f6 32.♙e4 ♘g4+ 33.♔g3 ♘e3 34.♙d3, Black can make no progress. The white bishop is not a giant, but it does keep all the entrance gates to White's position closed.

30...♔f5

Black has an extra tempo, and this allows him to penetrate decisively with his king.

31.♙f8+ ♔g4 32.♔f2 ♘f5

The black pieces are cooperating harmoniously.

33.♙d8 ♙b7

Now, Tal uses the b-file for his rook. There is no defence for White.

34.♙e4 ♙b2+ 35.♔g1 ♔xf4

36.♙xf5 gxf5 37.♙xd6 ♔f3 38.h3

♔g3 39.♔f1 f4 0-1

Our games

In the summer of 2013, more than a quarter of a century after Tal and I had played our last mutual game, I had the following dream.

Tal and I would be playing each other. We were already sitting at the board. To my right was Petrosian, who also participated in the tournament. Curiously, the playing material had not arrived yet; we had no boards or pieces. Tal and I sunk into thought. I felt tired. I had played a tournament shortly before this game, and so this brief moment of rest suited me fine. At a certain point, someone brought us a book or an article that I had written in Dutch. Tal started reading it. It was about the difference between the Najdorf Variation and the Scheveningen Variation in the Sicilian. Someone else asked me to give some further explanation. I rose from the board in order not to disturb Tal. There was a certain phrase, a passage, that the questioner did not understand. I explained that in the Scheveningen, the white bishops are generally developed to e2 and e3, while in the Najdorf the queen's bishop is often played to g5, while the king's bishop is sometimes sacrificed on b5. From some distance, Tal was listening carefully to my explanation. The two World Champions, who both died in their mid-fifties – in this dream, I played them again in a tournament decades later! My explanation of the Najdorf Variation is interesting. I was a witness when Tal played the following brilliant attacking game.

Mikhail Tal
Michael Stean

Hastings 1973/74 (12)

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 a6 6.♗g5 e6 7.f4 ♗bd7 8.♖f3 ♖c7 9.0-0 b5 10.♗xb5 axb5 11.♗dxb5 ♖b8 12.e5 ♗b7 13.♖e2 dxe5 14.♖c4 ♗c5 15.♗xf6

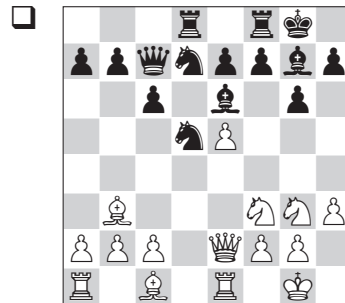


16.♗xd7 ♗e3+ 17.♖b1 ♖xd7 18.♗d1+ ♗d4 19.fxe5 fxe5 20.♗xd4 exd4 21.♖xd4+ ♖e7 22.♖c5+ ♖f6 23.♖f1+ ♖g6 24.♖e7 f5 25.♖xe6+ ♖g7 26.♖e7+ ♖g6 27.h4 ♗a5 28.h5+ ♖xh5 29.♖f7+ ♖h4 30.♖f6+ ♖g3 31.♖g5+ ♖h2 32.♖h4+ ♖xg2 33.♖f2+ ♖g1 34.♗e2#

That game hadn't been very difficult for Tal, because the brilliant Latvian master Vitolins had already beaten Anikaev with the same sacrifices. It was just the thing for Tal to adopt this attacking system and put his own stamp on it. It must have made a deep impression on me – otherwise I wouldn't have dreamed about it so many years later. Now, I will present a fragment from the game where Tal presented me with his cigarette lighter at the highest setting.

Mikhail Tal
Jan Timman

Skopje ol 1972 (3)



Black has completed his development, but he hasn't solved his opening problems. The outpost on e5 gives White attacking chances. Tal finds a strong plan.

15. ♖e4!

On its way to h4.

15... ♜fe8 16. ♖h4

Although the computer does not see a big advantage for White here, the situation is certainly not easy for Black. He cannot take on e5: on 16... ♜xe5 17. ♘g5 is crushing, whereas after 16... ♙xe5 17. ♘xe5 ♜xe5 18. f4 ♘d7 19. f5! gx f5 20. ♙xd5 cxd5 21. ♘h5 White has a decisive attack.

16... f6

The best defence.

17. ♙h6 ♜xe5?

But this is still impossible! 17... ♜c5 was necessary, after which White's advantage remains within bounds.



18. ♜xe5!

The elegant refutation.

18... ♜xe5 19. ♘g5

Certainly not 19. ♙xc3? ♜xc3 20. ♘g5 in view of 20... ♙g8. With the text move, White exploits the position of the black queen.

19... ♙f6 20. ♘xe6 **1-0**

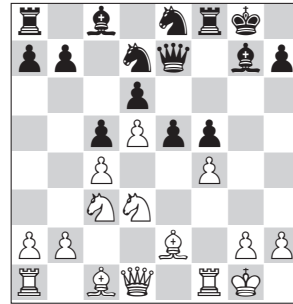
In the second game, six months later, in a sense I was playing against the two World Champions from my dream.

Jan Timman

Mikhail Tal

Tallinn 1973 (9)

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 c5 3. d5 g6 4. ♘c3 ♙g7 5. e4 d6 6. ♘f3 0-0 7. ♙e2 e5 8. 0-0 ♜e8 9. ♘e1 ♘d7 10. ♘d3 f5 11. f4 ♖e7 12. exf5 gxf5



This position originates from a mix of the Benoni and King's Indian Defences. White has not played in the most accurate way, and it is questionable whether he can hope for an opening advantage.

13. ♙h1

'Clearly White is uncertain how to proceed', Cafferty remarks in Tal's 100 Best Games. He is right, but an even more important factor is that I didn't know two of Petrosian's games. In Donner-Petrosian, Santa Monica 1966, the diagram position had also appeared on the board after a slightly different order of moves. That game had continued as follows: 13. g4 e4 14. ♘f2 ♙xc3! 15. bxc3 fxg4, and Black obtained a strategic advantage. As said, the move order in the Santa Monica game was different. Donner had exchanged on f5 one move earlier, so Black could, instead of developing his queen to e7, immediately have played 12... e4, followed by 13... ♙xc3. Why hadn't Petrosian done this? For an answer

to this question, his comment in the tournament book is a clue:

'To my knowledge a similar idea was first tried in my game with Bronstein in the Candidates Tournament in 1956. The object of the move is to lessen the sphere of activity of White's QB, limited by the pawns on c3 and f4.'

Aha, he had played it before. In Bronstein-Petrosian, Leeuwarden 1956 (two rounds of this Candidates' tournament were played not in Amsterdam, but in Leeuwarden), the following position arose in the middlegame:



Petrosian didn't hesitate and presented his opponent with the bishop pair: 17...♖xc3!

The exclamation mark is from Euwe in the tournament book. He writes: 'Auf diese Weise verhindert es Schwarz endgültig, das sein Gegner zu gegebener Zeit mit b2-b4 den Angriff gegen den Damenflügel durchsetzt. Es ist übrigens bemerkenswert, dass das Fehlen der im allgemeinen sehr wichtigen schwarzen Königsläufer sich hier nicht fühlbar macht.' ('In this way, Black once and for all prevents his opponent from carrying through an attack against his queenside with b2-b4. It is remarkable, by the way, that the absence of the generally very important king's bishop is not felt here.') The further course of the game is instructive; with accurate play by

both sides, neither of the two will be able to make any progress.

In Santa Monica, Petrosian had a bad start with 1.5 points out of 4 games. He was probably hoping for a win against Donner, and he didn't want the game to peter out to a draw, as had happened against Bronstein.

13...e4 14.♟f2 ♖xc3!

Apparently, Tal is not afraid that the game will peter out to a draw. There can be no doubt that he knew both of Petrosian's games.

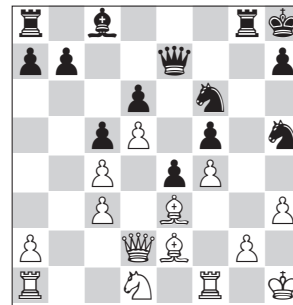
15.bxc3 ♜df6 16.♙e3 ♜h8 17.h3?

A bad move, which weakens the g3-square. I should have followed Bronstein's plan here with, for example, 17.♞d2, followed by 18.♞g1 and 19.g3.

17...♞g8 18.♞d2 ♜g7 19.♜d1

I wanted to bring the knight over to e3, but this plan is much too time-consuming.

19...♜gh5



The passive knight has turned into a fierce attacker.

20.♙xh5

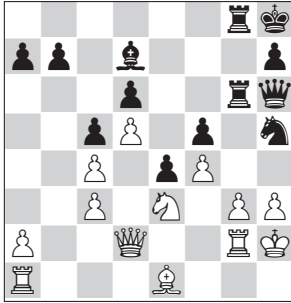
Relatively best, since after 20.♙f2 ♞g7 Black's pressure would become too strong.

20...♜xh5 21.♙f2 ♜d7 22.♙e1 ♞af8 23.♜e3

This is consistent, but the knight has no business here, especially because the f-pawn is no longer solidly protected.

More tenacious was 23.a4, to bring the rook to a2 for the defence.

**23... ♖f6 24. ♘h2 ♗h6 25.g3 ♜f6
26. ♜g1 ♜fg6 27. ♜g2**



27... ♘xf4!

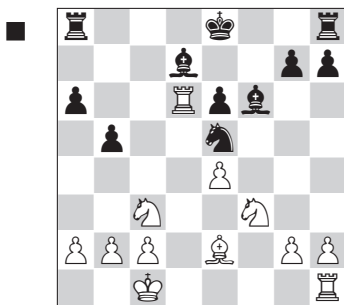
Not one of the most difficult sacrifices in Tal's career.

**28.gxf4 ♗xf4+ 29. ♘g1 ♖f3 30. ♖f2
♗xh3 31. ♜b1 f4 32. ♜b2 f3 0-1**

After these two defeats, our 8 next encounters all ended in draws. Here is an interesting moment from our game in Las Palmas.

**Mikhail Tal
Jan Timman**

Las Palmas 1977 (2)

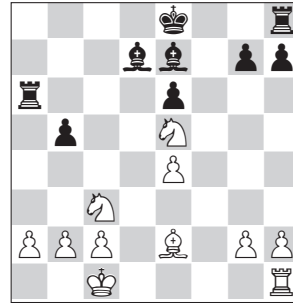


A well-known type of position in the Rauzer Variation. Black has sacrificed his pawn for pressure on the dark squares. A good move here is 16...♗e7. I decided on something different.

16... ♗e7 17. ♜xa6!?

A total surprise. I had assumed that White would withdraw the rook.

17... ♜xa6 18. ♘xe5



A difficult situation for Black. He has to take care that White does not get three connected passed pawns on the queenside. Fortunately there is a way out.

18... ♜a5! 19. ♘xd7 b4!

Thus Black keeps one of the pawns, after which he has nothing to fear.

**20. ♘b5 ♘xd7 21. ♜d1+ ♘c6
22. ♘d4+ ♘b6 23. ♗c4 ♜g5 24.g3
♜e5 25. ♘xe6 ♜xe4 26. ♗b3 g6
27.h4 ♜e8 28. ♗a4 ♜a8 29. ♗b3
♜e8 30. ♗a4 1/2-1/2**

My first victory against Tal came at an unexpected moment.

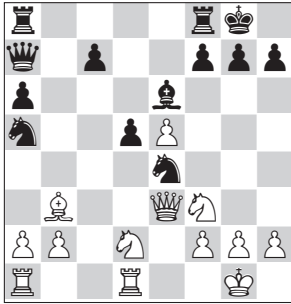
In the Hoogoven tournament in 1982 I had to cope with terrible sleeping problems, resulting in a disastrous score. So it was only fitting that I won in the last round, which began in the morning; if you can't sleep anyway, it's better to start early.

**Jan Timman
Mikhail Tal**

Wijk aan Zee 1982 (13)

**1.e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. ♗b5 a6 4. ♗a4
♘f6 5.0-0 ♘xe4 6.d4 b5 7. ♗b3 d5**

8.dxe5 ♖e6 9.♗e2 ♙e7 10.♖d1 0-0
 11.c4 bxc4 12.♙xc4 ♙c5 13.♙e3
 ♙xe3 14.♗xe3 ♗b8 15.♙b3 ♘a5
 16.♘bd2 ♗a7



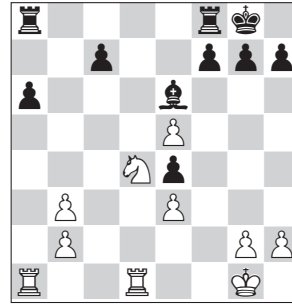
Tal offered a draw after making this move. I was inclined to accept. This system in the Open Spanish was reputed to be reliable, while the text move was regarded as the most accurate. A few months before, I had had the position on the board with black, against Van der Sterren. He had exchanged on a7, after which I had won the endgame. The most common move was 17.♘d4, but with that move Kavalek had not achieved any advantage in Montreal 1979 – neither against Karpov, nor against Tal. Tal had been Karpov's second during two World Championship matches against Kortchnoi; he was bound to know all the ins and outs of the Open Spanish. So there were many reasons to accept the draw offer. While I was contemplating this, something happened that is unusual in Wijk aan Zee in winter: a ray of sunlight fell into the playing room. Possibly, it opened a hatch in my brain. I suddenly saw a new idea in the position.

17.♘xe4

The idea of this exchange is that White forces a queen exchange on his own terms. He has no objections to having

doubled e-pawns, since this will give his knight a nice support on d4.

17...♗xe3 18.fxe3 ♘xb3 19.axb3
 dxe4 20.♘d4



20...♖ab8

Later, 20...♖fb8 became the most popular move, to prevent White from getting a passed b-pawn. It was played for the first time in Tal-Sturua, Yerevan 1982, one month after Wijk aan Zee. Tal did not achieve much with it, but in the end Sturua got caught in a mating net.

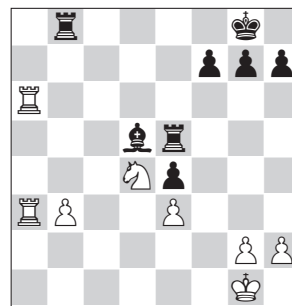
21.♖dc1 ♙xb3 22.♖xc7 ♖b6
 23.♖a7 ♙d5 24.b3!

An important little move. White keeps the b-pawn.

24...♖bb8

A better defensive chance was 24...♙b7, to retain the a-pawn for as long as possible.

25.♖a3 ♖fe8 26.♖7xa6 ♖xe5



27.♖d6!

A strong technical move, after which Black has trouble organizing his defence.

**27...f6 28.♖a7 ♖b7 29.♗xb7 ♕xb7
30.b4 ♗d5 31.♗xd5 ♕xd5 32.b5**

The wholesale rook exchange has brought Black no relief. In the following phase, he cannot prevent the white king invading on the kingside.

**32...♔f7 33.♔f2 g6 34.♔g3 ♔e7
35.♔f4 ♔d6 36.♗e2!**

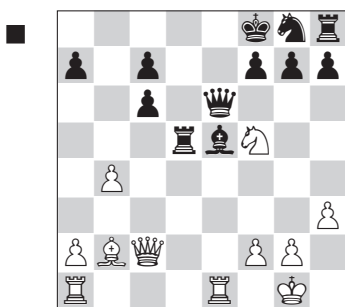
White is ready to win the black pawns.

**36...♔c5 37.♗c3 ♖a8 38.♗xe4+
♔xb5 39.♗xf6 ♕xg2 40.♗xh7 ♖f1
41.♗f8 ♔c6 42.♗xg6 ♔d6 43.♔f5
♕h3+ 44.♔f6 ♖g4 45.♗f4 1-0**

In the Candidates' tournament in Montpellier 1985, Tal and I shared fourth place, half a point behind the winners. A playoff match over 6 games had to determine who would qualify for the matches. As my Sonnenborn Berger score was better, 3-3 would suffice for me. At first, everything seemed to be going smoothly. After a solid draw, I won the second game.

Jan Timman Mikhail Tal

Montpellier m 1985 (2)



Tal has not managed to come out of the opening unscathed. If he doesn't take care, the pins will prove fatal for him.

23...♖xf5

In itself, this is an ingenious way to carry through a queen exchange. The problem for Black is that White's attack continues unabated even without queens.

**24.♖xf5 ♕h2+ 25.♔xh2 ♗xf5
26.♗ad1**

The killer.

26...♗d5 27.♗xd5 cxd5 28.♗c1

Black resigned. His queenside pawns will be lost.

Black's pieces on the kingside are a sorry sight.

'Next time I will open with 1...♗f6', Tal said to a journalist afterwards, and he kept his word.

The third and fourth games also ended in draws, leaving me at only half a point's distance from qualification. Then things went wrong. The signs were bad already. A Dutch television crew had arrived in Montpellier. They didn't have much time and couldn't wait until the end of the game. I had to be interviewed before the game. The television producers understood that the news value of the interview would be slight as long as the result of the game was still unknown. So they thought of something; I had to give two interviews, one in case I would qualify, the other in case I should lose. The power of television!

I was much too forthcoming in those days. Hardened Soviet officials would have uttered a formal 'nyet' (no), but I agreed. But even if I had said 'nyet' the situation would have been unpleasant. Why didn't they bother Tal with this nonsense? Then, my fellow countrymen would have been of some use to me at least.