

Contents

Preface	7
Part I Strategy	9
Chapter 1 Weaknesses	10
Chapter 2 Piece play	23
Chapter 3 Evaluating the position and planning	35
Chapter 4 Test	50
Chapter 5 Solutions	58
Part II Tactics	77
Chapter 6 Calculation	78
Chapter 7 Attack	85
Chapter 8 Defence	95
Chapter 9 Test	106
Chapter 10 Solutions	115
Afterword	136
Index of players	137

Preface

Dear reader,

The aim of this book is to improve your understanding of the game and your practical skills. By reading the book, you'll see that almost all diagrams are exercises. Please try to answer the question after the diagram. Active learning is a must if you want to improve.

This book has only junior games (from under 8 to under 14). It has two parts, namely 'Strategy' and 'Tactics'. Each part has five chapters, three of which have a theme, some theory and several illustrative games with exercises. The chapters on strategy (positional play) discuss 'Weaknesses', 'Piece play' and 'Evaluating the position and planning'. Those on tactics discuss 'Calculation', 'Attack' and 'Defence'. I assume that you have already an, albeit general, knowledge of strategic and tactical principles. There is a test at the end of each part with a set of positions to solve.

If you are a junior, I suggest that you look at this book as a challenge. Up to now, you have probably only looked at games played by masters when reading other books. Guessing the best move was undoubtedly a bonus for you. Now, it is different. The games in this book have been played by juniors in your age group. Guessing the best move now becomes a must.

If you are a chess instructor, this book will help you to identify typical mistakes made by juniors, and it will give you some tips to correct them. It also makes available interesting examples to show them.

I trust that the way chess is explained in this book will be easy to understand. Generally, a good understanding of what weaknesses are is essential, while good piece play is necessary to exploit weaknesses. Material, time and space are important if they are useful to create and exploit weaknesses. Strategy must produce weaknesses in the opponent's camp, and tactics must exploit them. Hence, everything revolves around weaknesses.

We may have a good understanding of weaknesses, and still not achieve the desired result! Often we lose not for a lack of knowledge, but because we are unable to use our knowledge. Typical situations are: blundering a piece, not seeing the best move, not seeing a threat, and losing on time. In every situation, there was a weakness (the chess clock is the 33rd piece). We had the knowledge to identify and exploit it, but we didn't do it. Why does this happen? Because we have to improve our way of thinking. This book provides some tools for doing this.

*Franco Zaninotto,
Milan, December 2017*

CHAPTER 3

Evaluating the position and planning

A plan in chess is a set of actions that have been thought of as a way to achieve something. Mating the enemy king would be the best result, but usually we must moderate our goal. As Steinitz showed, the plan must be realistic. Before planning, we must correctly evaluate the position. Steinitz described many elements of planning. I want to give you, very briefly, three more recent approaches.

In his book *Think like a Grandmaster*, Alekander Kotov identified four major categories of positional elements that are useful for evaluating a position (assuming material is equal). By comparing these elements, the chess player makes an evaluation of the position, sets a goal and prepares a plan.

- 1) Open lines and diagonals;
- 2) Pawn structure and weak squares;
- 3) Piece position;
- 4) Space and the centre.

In their book *Find the Plan*, Karpov and Matsukevich quote seven principles or reference points, according to which the study of any position should be undertaken:

- 1) Material relationship between the forces;
- 2) Presence of direct threats;
- 3) Positions of the kings, their safety;
- 4) Possession of open lines;
- 5) Pawn structure, weak and strong squares;
- 6) The centre and space;
- 7) Development and the position of pieces.

According to the authors, 'restricting the mobility of your opponent's pieces (and in association with this: domination by your own) is the most important law in chess.' Mate is an attack to a chess monarch whose movement is completely restricted.

In his book *How to Reassess Your Chess*, Jeremy Silman uses the term 'imbalance'. An imbalance denotes any difference in the two respective positions. The real goal of a chess game is to create an imbalance and try to build a situation in which it is favourable for you. There are seven kinds of imbalances:

- 1) Superior minor piece (the interplay between bishops and knights);
- 2) Pawn structure (a broad subject that encompasses doubled pawns, isolated pawns, etc.);
- 3) Space (the annexation of territory on the chess board);
- 4) Material (owning pieces of greater value than the opponent's);
- 5) Control of a key file or square (files and diagonals act as pathways for your pieces, while squares act as homes);
- 6) Lead in development (more force in a specific area of the board);
- 7) Initiative (dictating the tempo of a game).

I assume that you have some knowledge, albeit general, of the points quoted in these books. The better you know them, the more easily you'll identify the best plan. This is because, for finding the best plan, we must correctly evaluate the consequences both of our options and those of our opponent (prophylactic thinking teaches us that an optimal plan always has to take into account the opponent's options). To achieve this, we must know, for example, that with a particular pawn structure, certain pieces should be exchanged and others not, a certain kind of pawn thrust is profitable and another only provokes weaknesses, and so on.

You can use one of these three theoretical models when trying to solve exercises. During a chess game, it is practically impossible to do this, because there is no time for it. We must internalize these principles and use them when needed. To do this, we must often play in tournaments and solve chess exercises.

We'll use Kotov's approach (the simplest), mainly seeking weaknesses and paying great attention to piece play, as we did before, for example, when we exploited a hole. This will give us an evaluation of the position and the key for finding the right plan. But what can we do in a position where both players play well and there are no clear weaknesses? There is a general principle.

When you have to look for a plan, think first about what kind of pawn thrust you should be aiming for. If no pawn thrust is in prospect, ask yourself what to undertake with your pieces.

Nikoloz Kacharava

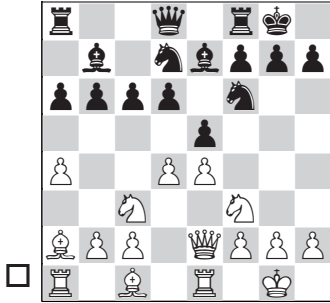
1939

Yaroslav Remizov

2088

European Youth Chess Championship
Porec 2015 (U12 Open)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♗c3 e5 4.♗f3
♜bd7 5.♙c4 ♙e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.♞e1 a6
8.a4 b6 9.♙a2 ♙b7 10.♞e2 c6



What is your evaluation of the position? What is a possible plan for White?

Black played a variation of the Philidor Defence that involves the fianchetto of the queen's bishop and queenside pawn expansion.

Let's remember Kotov's four points:

- 1) Open lines and diagonals;
- 2) Pawn structure and weak squares;
- 3) Piece position;
- 4) Space and the centre.

White has more space in this position, and the lines for the two bishops are open. Black is more passive, but White must act quickly, as Black is almost ready for counterplay. Regarding weaknesses, Black's weakness on f5 is evident, especially now that the ♙c8 has been fianchettoed. We can say that White must act on the kingside, exploiting if possible the f5-square weakness.

White doesn't have any pawn thrusts at the moment, so he must play with the pieces. But before putting the knight on f5, it is necessary to stabilize the centre.

11.dxe5! dxe5?!

11...♗xe5 was better, not yet closing the centre. For example: 12.♗xe5 dxe5 13.♙e3 b5, with only a small plus for White, as Black can exploit the b4-square with his bishop after 14.f3 ♙b4.

12.♞d1

This move was not strictly necessary, as on 12.♗h4, 12...♗xe4 is risky after 13.♗xe4 ♙xh4 14.♞d1. Anyway, it is a good move. The rook will be useful on the open d-file.

12...♞c7 13.♗h4 ♗c5

13...♙b4 14.♗f5

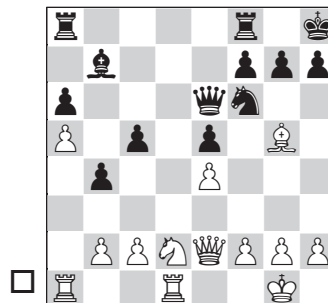
14.♗f5 b5 15.♙g5

15.♙e3 was better: 15...b4? 16.♞c4! ♗e6 17.♗d5+–

15...b4 16.♗b1 ♖h8

Black could continue with 16...♗xa4 17.♙xf7+ ♞xf7 18.♗xe7+ ♞xe7 19.♞xa4 a5, with a small plus for White.

17.♗xe7 ♞xe7 18.a5 ♗e6 19.♙xe6 ♞xe6 20.♗d2 c5



What is your evaluation of the position? An update of the old plan or a new plan?

Two knights and two bishops have been exchanged. By pushing the pawns, Black has left some weaknesses on his queenside. White's bishop is good, while Black's bishop is rather bad, as it is limited by the white pawn. The ♖a5 can't be successfully attacked, but White can use it for exploiting Black's weakness on b6. Nothing special is happening on the kingside. Hence, the position is clearly better for White. It's time for a new plan, this time on the queenside. White can exploit the c4-weakness with the knight or the queen, and attack the ♖c5 by playing ♕e3. Before playing ♕e3, White must protect his e4-pawn.

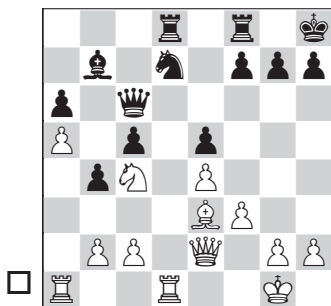
21.f3!

21. ♕e3 ♖xe4 22. ♖xe4 ♕xe4
23. ♕xc5 ♖g6 24.f3 ♖fc8 is less clear.

21...♖ad8

A clever try was 21... ♕c6 22. ♖c4 ♕b5 23. ♖xc5 (or 23. ♖xe6 fxe6 24. ♖b3 ♖ac8 25. ♕e3 ♖d7 26. ♖d6) 23... ♖fc8 24. ♖xb4 ♖xc2 25. ♖b1, with advantage to White.

22. ♕e3 ♖d7 23. ♖c4 ♖c6



How can White continue?

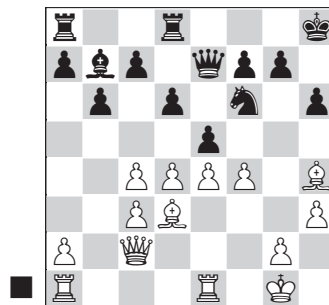
Here, White played 24. ♖d2?!, and after some mistakes by both sides, probably due to time pressure, the game ended in a draw.

Best was the simple 24. ♖d6 ♖c7 (24... ♖b5 25. ♖ad1 ♕c6 26. ♖d3 ♖c8 27. ♖b6 ♖xb6 28. ♖xb5 ♕xb5 29. axb6 f6 30. ♕xc5 ♖xc5 31. b7+–) 25. ♖ad1 ♖f6 (25... ♕c6 26. ♖d2 f6 27. ♖b6 ♖f7 28. ♕xc5 b3 29. c4) 26. ♖xd8 ♖xd8 27. ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 28. ♕xc5+–.

Teodora Rogozenco 1974
Jasmin-Denise Schloffler 1762

World Youth Chess Championship
Durban 2014 (U14 Girls)

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3. ♖c3 ♕b4 4. ♖f3 b6 5. ♕g5 h6 6. ♕h4 ♕b7 7.e3 ♕xc3+ 8.bxc3 d6 9. ♕d3 ♖bd7 10. ♖c2 ♖e7 11.e4 e5 12.0-0 0-0 13. ♖fe1 ♖fd8 14.h3 ♖f8 15. ♕g3 ♖g6 16. ♖h4 ♖xh4 17. ♕xh4 ♖h8 18.f4

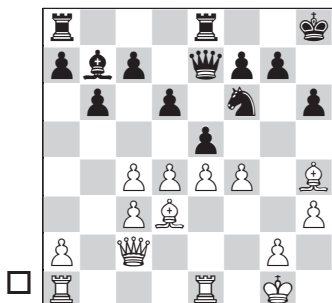


White is attacking. How must Black react?

A) Best is 18...exf4 19.e5 dxe5 20.dxe5 (20. ♖xe5 ♖d6=) 20... ♖xd3! 21. ♖xd3 ♖c5+ 22. ♕f2 ♖c6, exploiting the light squares and threatening mate. White must enter into a nearly equal endgame after 23. ♖f3 ♖xf3 24.gxf3 ♖h7 25.e6 ♖g5 26.exf7 ♖xf7+ 27. ♖f1 ♖h2+ 28. ♖e2 ♖f8;

B) It is risky to play 18...g5?! 19.fxg5 ♖h7 20. ♖f1 ♖xg5 21. ♖h1 ♖g8 22.d5.

18...♖e8



What is your evaluation of the position? What is a plan for White?

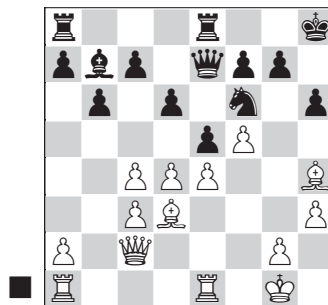
- 1) **Open lines and diagonals:** White can open the f-file, and in this way increase the pressure on the ♖f6, which is already under observation by the ♗h4;
- 2) **The pawn structure and weak squares:** White has doubled pawns, but at the moment they are safe. The four central pawns seem strong enough;
- 3) **Piece placement:** White's ♗d3 is rather passive. It's possible, therefore, if White is unable to find a better place for his bishop or to eliminate the ♖e5, that it will be difficult for White to make progress;
- 4) **Space and the centre:** White has more space and can easily move his pieces from one side to the other. We can conclude that White has better prospects and that there are two plans: closing the position with 19.f5 or leaving it open with another move. The first possibility is less challenging. White will have a quiet life, without much calculating, but the same goes for Black. To play 19.fxe5, opening the position, or another move requires a greater effort. White must calculate much

more, but it's clear that in this way White's pieces will be more active, and it will be more difficult for Black to defend.

Psychology plays an important role in positional play, as it can change the decision. Sometimes, it makes sense to choose a continuation that is not objectively the strongest, for example, as perhaps in this case, and make things easier. You save time, don't take risks at all and continue to keep up the pressure. This is called 'practical play'. Anyway, I suggest that you, between two more or less equivalent possibilities, choose the more challenging one. Accept complications! Only in this way can you see your limits, improve them and improve your understanding of the game. Moreover, don't accept or offer quick draws!

19.f5

19.fxe5 dxe5 20.♖f1 was better. For example: 20...g5 21.♗g3! (removing the ♖e5) 21...exd4 22.cxd4 ♖xe4 23.♖ae1 f6 24.♗f2 f5 25.d5 c5 26.♖e2 ♗g8 27.♗e1, with a strong initiative.

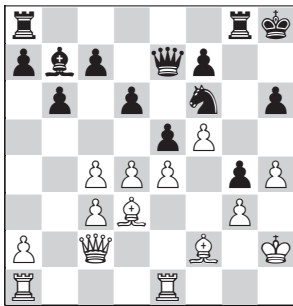


What is a plan for Black?

19...g6

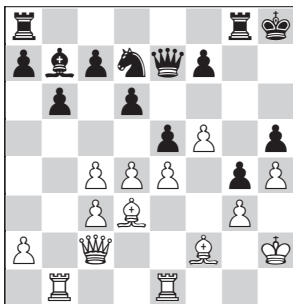
A strange move, but not a mistake. It was possible to play 19...g5 immediately (20.♙f2 ♜g8), building a barrier on the dark squares (the ♙d3 is blocked). It was also possible to play a waiting move, but probably before or after, Black would have to play ...g7-g5 anyway. For example: 19...♙c6 20.d5 ♙d7 21.g4 a5 22.♞f1 ♞f8 23.♚c1 (23.♚d2 ♞g8 24.♙h1? ♜xe4) 23...♞g8 24.♙h1 ♚f8 25.♚e3 ♜h7, and Black is passive.

20.♞e2 g5 21.♙f2 ♜h5 22.g3 ♞g8
23.♙h2 ♜f6 24.♞ee1 g4 25.h4



25...h5?!

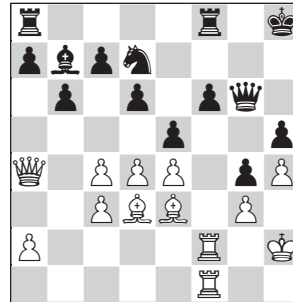
Now, a new weak square emerges: g5. Better was 25...♞ae8. For example: 26.♙e3 ♙h7 27.d5 ♜d7 28.♚c1 ♚f8, and Black is not worse.
26.♞ab1 ♜d7



27.f6!?

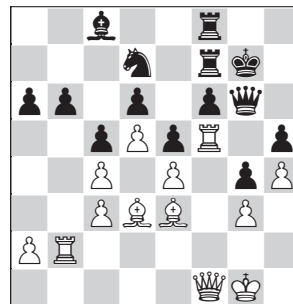
Teodora understands that it is not enough to have a space advantage (for example: 27.♚c1 ♙h7 28.♙e3 f6), and decides to sacrifice a pawn to open the f-file. The game continued with

27...♚xf6 28.♞f1 ♚g6 29.♙e3 f6
30.♞f5 ♙c8 31.♞bf1 ♞f8 32.♞5f2
♙b7 33.♚a4



33...♚h7

33...♙xe4 34.♙xe4 ♚xe4 35.♚xd7
♚xe3 36.♞f5 ♙g8 37.♞xf6 ♚e2+
38.♙g1 ♚e3+ 39.♙g2 ♚e2+ 40.♙g1=
34.♞f5 a6 35.♞1f2 ♞ad8 36.♚d1 ♚g6
37.♚f1 ♞f7 38.♙g5 ♞df8 39.♙g1 c5
40.d5 ♙g7 41.♚c1 ♙h7 42.♚f1
42.♙e3
42...♙g7
42...♙c8! 43.a4 ♙g8 44.♙e3 ♜b8
45.♞b2 ♙xf5 46.exf5 ♚g7 47.♞xb6
♞d8
43.♙e3 ♙c8 44.♞b2



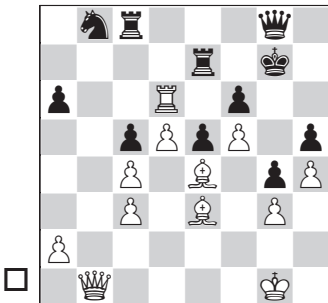
44...♜b8?

It seems that White can do nothing if Black simply waits, for example:

44...♖h8 45.♙c2 ♘g8 46.♙a4?! b5
47.cxb5 ♘b6 48.♙c2 axb5 49.♗xb5
(49.♗xb5?! ♗b7) 49...♙a6
45.♗xb6 ♙xf5 46.exf5 ♗h7 47.♗xd6
♗c8 48.♗b1 ♗e7?

Now, f6 is weak. Better was
48...♗h8 49.♙e4 ♗f8.

49.♙e4 ♗g8



How should White continue?

50.♗b6

This move is enough for winning, but better was 50.♗xf6! ♙xf6
51.♙g5+ ♙f7 52.d6 ♗d7 53.♙d5+.

50...♗f7?

A blunder. Better was 50...♗f7
51.♙g5 ♗cf8 52.♗xc5+-.

51.♙h6+ 1-0

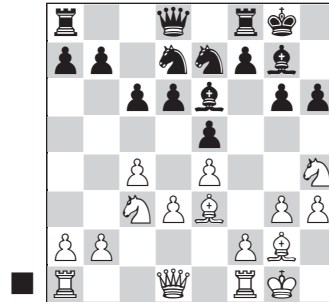
After six rounds of the 2016 World Championship (U12 Girls), Russian Bibisara Assaubayeva was clear first with 5.5 out of 6. Assaubayeva was the great favourite for the tournament, having an Elo of 2287, 161 points more than the second seed. Her opponent in the seventh round was Iranian Motahare Asadi (1980 Elo), one of seven players with 5 points. Clearly, Bibisara played for a win.

Motahare Asadi 1980

Bibisara Assaubayeva 2287

World Cadets Chess Championship
Batumi 2016 (U12 Girls)

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.g3 g6 3.♙g2 ♙g7 4.0-0
0-0 5.d3 d6 6.c4 ♘c6 7.♘c3 e5 8.e4
h6 9.h3 ♙e6 10.♙e3 ♘d7 11.♘d5
♘e7 12.♘h4 c6 13.♘c3



What is your evaluation of the position? What is a feasible plan for Black?

It seems that the position is equal, if not for the fact that Black, taking advantage of the unlucky position of the ♘h4, can improve the placement of her ♘e7. Black has a slight plus.

Both players want to attack on the kingside. It's clear that Black has to push a pawn, but which one?

13...g5!

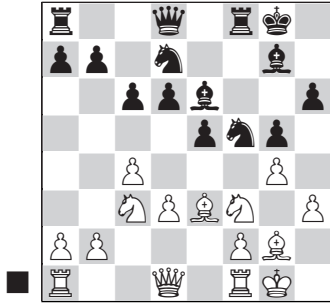
Playing 13...f5?! would have permitted White to justify the position of the knight. After 14.exf5 ♘xf5 (14...gxf5 15.f4, and White's king is safer than Black's king) 15.♘xf5 (not 15.♘xg6 ♘xe3 16.fxe3 ♗xf1+ 17.♗xf1 ♗g5 18.♘h4 ♗xg3) 15...gxf5 16.f4, the game would be more or less equal.

14.♘f3

Interesting, but doubtful, was 14.f4?! exf4 15.gxf4 gxf4 (15...gxh4 16.f5) 16.♖xf4 ♗g6 17.♗xg6 fxxg6 18.♖xf8+ ♗xf8, and Black is better.

14...f5 15.exf5 ♗xf5 16.g4

White didn't want to play passively with 16.♗d2, and invited Black to trade pieces and simplify the position.



What is your move?

16...♗e7

I suppose the Russian girl played this way to hold the tension. Probably 16...♗xe3 was more precise, but after 17.fxe3 d5 (having the two bishops, it's logical to open the position) 18.cxd5 cxd5 19.♖e2 ♖b6 20.♗d2, Black has a small plus, but with an open position, she must be very careful. This was what Bibisara wanted to avoid. It seems that 16...♗xe3 was the best theoretical move and 16...♗e7 the best practical move. Did Black choose well? It seems so, as her opponent has a lost position in a few moves.

17.♖c2 d5 18.cxd5?!

Not only does this leave Black with control of the important d5-square, but also White must pay attention to an eventual ...♖c8. When we make a pawn exchange, we must avoid improving the pawn structure

of our opponent! Better was 18.♗e2 b5 19.b3.

18...cxd5 19.♗xg5?!

White is already worse, but it was worth trying 19.♗b5. For example: 19...d4 20.♗c7 ♖c8 21.♗xe6 ♖xc2 22.♗xd8 dxe3 23.♗e6 e2 24.♖fb1 ♖f6 25.♗xg7 ♗xg7 26.♗e1 ♖d2 27.b4, and Black is better, but White can fight.

19...hxxg5 20.♗xg5 ♗f7 21.♗xf7

♖xf7 22.♗xd5 ♗c6 23.♗e3

23.♖ae1 ♗d4 24.♖c4 b5 25.♗e7+

♖xe7 26.♖xd4 exd4 27.♖xe7 ♖xe7

28.♗xa8 ♗c5

23...♗d4 24.♖d1 ♗f8 25.a4 ♗fe6

26.♗d5 ♗f4 27.♗xf7+ ♗xf7 28.♗g2

♗xh3+ 29.♗h2 ♗f4 30.♗xf4 exf4

31.♖c1 ♖h4+ 32.♗g1 ♖xg4+

White resigned.

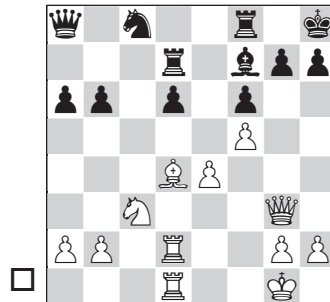
Assaubayeva won the gold medal with 10 out of 11, Asadi finished fourth with 8.

Javier Habans Aguerrea 1544

Spyros Hartofylakas 1254

European Youth Chess Championship

Prague 2016 (U8 Open)



What is your evaluation of the position? What is a good plan for White?

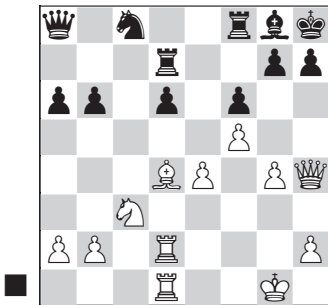
White is superior in the centre, and his pieces are better placed. Black's position is cramped, with many weaknesses. White has a clear plus.

White must act on the kingside. Here, Black has the ♔f6. Such an advanced pawn, if it can be challenged usefully, is called a 'hook'. How can White challenge it in the most effective way? It's simple: put the queen on h4 and push the g-pawn. This was the plan chosen by little Javier.

27. ♖h4! ♕g8

After 27...b5, White can attack the weak h7-square with 28. ♖d3! (28. a3 ♕c4 29.g4 ♘e7 30.g5 ♘c6 is less promising; 28. ♕xf6 gxf6 29. ♖xf6+ (29. ♖d3? ♖a7+ 30. ♔h1 ♕c4--+) 29...♔g8 30. ♖g5+ ♔h8 31. ♖f6+ ♔g8=). For example: 28...♖c6 29. ♖h3 ♕g8 30. ♘d5 ♖c2 31. ♖e1, with the idea of ♘d5-f4-e6.

28.g4



What is the best defensive plan for Black?

28... ♖b7?

A) Black had to try to remove the strong ♕d4, and at the same time exchange or improve his worst-placed piece: 28...♘a7! 29.g5 (29. ♕xb6 ♘b5, and Black has some

compensation, due to White's exposed king) 29...♘c6 30.g6 (30. ♕xb6 ♘e5) 30...♘xd4 31. ♖xd4 h6 32. ♖xd6 ♖xd6 33. ♖xd6 b5 34.a3, and White is better;

B) 28...d5?! 29.g5 fxg5 30. ♖xg5 dxe4 31.f6

In a worse position, usually the best plan is to slow down the opponent's attack by simplifying the position. As soon as possible, one needs to prepare a counterattack.

29. ♖g2?

A mistake. Much better was 29.g5! fxg5 30. ♖xg5 ♖df7 31. ♘d5 ♘e7 32.f6 ♘g6 33.fxg7+-.

29... ♖ff7?

Again, it was much better to play 29...♘a7! 30.g5 fxg5 31. ♖xg5 ♘c6 32. ♕e3 ♘e5.

30.g5 fxg5 31. ♖xg5 ♘a7

Black found the right plan, but too late. White could now play 32. ♘d5! (or 32. ♘e2!) ♘c6 33. ♘f4, with a decisive advantage. Instead, he played weaker and eventually won in 59 moves.

Shant Sargsyan

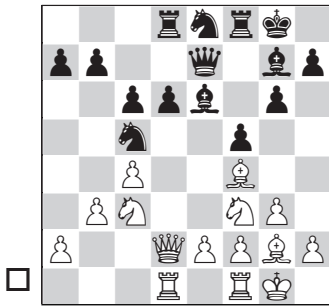
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Nodirbek Yakubboev

2207

World Youth Chess Championship
Durban 2014 (U12 Open)

1.d4 f5 2.c4 ♘f6 3. ♘f3 g6 4.g3 ♕g7
5. ♕g2 0-0 6.0-0 d6 7. ♘c3 c6 8.d5 e5
9.dxe6 ♕xe6 10. ♖d3 ♘a6 11. ♕f4
♘e8 12.b3 ♘c5 13. ♖d2 ♖e7
14. ♖ad1 ♖d8



What is your evaluation of the position? What is a good plan for White?

The white pieces are more active than Black's pieces. White has a well-built pawn structure, while Black has a weak d6-pawn. White has at least a small plus.

15. ♖e3!

The computer suggests 15.h4, but this doesn't seem to create anything after 15... ♗c8 16. ♘g5 h6 17. ♘h3 ♙h7 18. ♗e3 ♚f6. Instead, after 15. ♖e3!, White keeps the squares e6, e7 and a7 under control with the queen, and after 15... ♚f6 prepares the shot 16. ♗xd6! ♜xd6 17. ♖xc5. For example: 17... ♜fd8 18. ♜xd6 ♜xd6 19. ♖xa7 ♚e4 20. ♚a4, and Black doesn't have enough compensation for the two pawns.

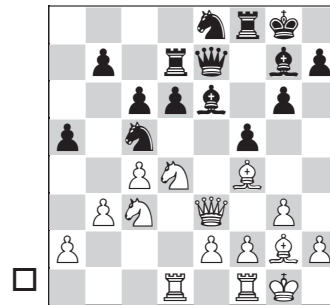
15... ♜d7 16. ♚d4?!

Better was 16.b4! (a pawn push, against the hook on c6, which is rather common with the pawn structure b7-c6 and the white bishop on g2. After b4-b5-bxc6, Black will have a weak pawn and the white bishop will be more active): 16... ♚a6 17.b5 ♚c5 (17... ♚ac7 18.bxc6 bxc6 19. ♚d4 ♗xc4 20. ♗xc6 ♖xe3 21. ♗xe3 ♜df7 22. ♜d2) 18.bxc6 bxc6 19. ♚d4 ♗xc4 20. ♖xe7

♜xe7 21. ♚xc6 ♜d7 22. ♗d5+ ♗xd5 23. ♚xd5 ♚e6 24. ♗e3, with at least a slight advantage for White.

16...a5?!

Black had to simplify the position with 16... ♗f7!. After 17. ♜d2 (17. ♖xe7 ♜xe7 18. ♜fe1 ♜d7) 17... ♖xe3 18. ♗xe3 ♚f6, the game is nearly equal.



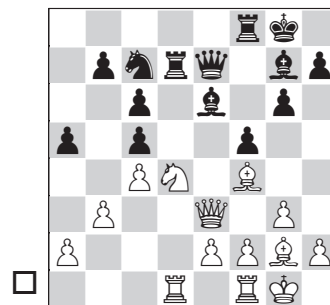
What is your move?

The ♚c5 holds Black's position. So, White has to exchange the best-placed black piece.

17. ♚a4! ♚c7?!

Again, it was better to simplify: 17... ♗xd4! (17... ♚xa4? 18. ♚xe6 ♚c3 19. ♜d3 ♚xa2 20. ♚xf8) 18. ♖xd4 (18. ♜xd4 ♚xa4 19.bxa4 c5 20. ♜d2 ♗xc4 21. ♖xe7 ♜xe7) 18... ♚xa4 19.bxa4 ♖f6±

18. ♚xc5 dxc5



What is your move for White?

19. ♚f3

Not bad, but more promising was 19.♘xc6! bxc6 20.♖xd7 ♖xd7 21.♙xc7. For example: 21...♙d4 22.♗f4 a4 23.♙e5 ♗d8 24.e3 ♙xe5 25.♗xe5 ♖d6 26.♗b2

19...♗fd8?!

Black had to try 19...♗a6 20.♖xd7 ♖xd7.

20.♙g5 ♙f6 21.♙xf6 ♖xf6 22.♖xd7 ♗xd7 23.♗xc5 ♖c3 24.e3

24.♗a7! ♗e8 25.♗g5 ♗f6 26.h4 h6 27.♗f3 f4 28.♗xa5

24...♗a6

24...♙f7 25.♗d4 ♗e6 26.♗xe6 ♙xe6 27.♙f3 a4 28.♗a3

25.♗a7 ♖b4?!

25...♖c7 26.♗d1 ♗f6 27.♗d4 ♙c8 28.c5 ♗e7 29.♖c1 a4 30.♙f1+-

26.♗d4

Black resigned: 26...♙f7 27.♙xc6

The following game is rather difficult, but is a very good exercise for tactics, too.

Luis Engel 2166

Mohammed Amin Tabatabaei 2488

World Youth Chess Championship

Halkidiki 2015 (U14 Open)

1.d4 ♗f6 2.♗f3 g6 3.♙f4 ♙g7 4.e3 0-0 5.h3 d6 6.♙e2 b6 7.0-0 ♙b7

This is a rather common variation nowadays. Black usually continues as in the game, leaving the ♖f8 at home, and using the queen to push ...e7-e5 and prepare an expansion in the centre or on the kingside, depending on how White plays.

8.a4 a6 9.♗bd2 ♗bd7 10.c3 ♖e8

11.♗c2 e5 12.dxe5 dxe5 13.♙g3

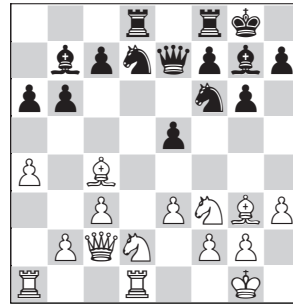
♗e7 14.♖fd1 ♖ad8

Both players had spent only a few minutes up to this point.

15.♙c4

White's last move is rather illogical, as now the bishop can easily be attacked with tempo.

15.a5 b5 16.c4 was interesting.

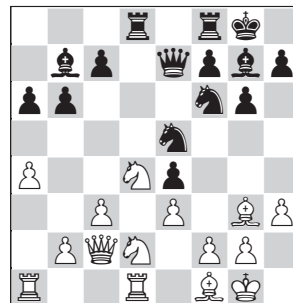


What is your evaluation of the position? What is a good plan for Black?

In practice, a weak move often creates the plan for the opponent or allows him to play a standard plan more effectively. Now, Black will fight to control the d-file and especially the hole on d3. Black now has a slight advantage and the initiative.

15...e4! 16.♗d4 ♗e5 17.♙f1

Or 17.♙e2 ♗d3 18.♙h4 c5.



17...c5?!

This move helps White, as now he can quickly defend the important

d3-hole. Besides, Black's queenside pawns are now weaker. It was better to wait a little bit.

After 17...♖d3 18.♙h4 (18.♘4b3 ♜d7 19.♗c1?! ♜fd8) 18...c5 19.♘4b3 ♜e6 20.♗c1 c4, Black has a slight advantage.

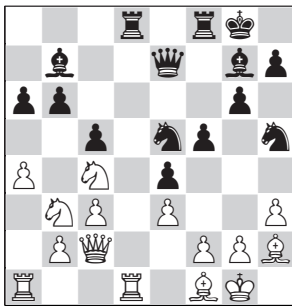
18.♘4b3! ♘h5!? 19.♙h2

19.♘xe4 c4 20.♘d4 ♘d3 21.♘d2! ♘xg3 22.♘xc4 ♘xf2 23.♜xf2 ♘e4!? 24.♜f4 ♙f6, and Black has compensation for the pawn.

19...f5

After 19...♘d3 20.♗c1 ♙e5 21.♘xd3 exd3 22.♜b3 ♙xh2+ 23.♙xh2, the position is nearly equal.

20.♘c4



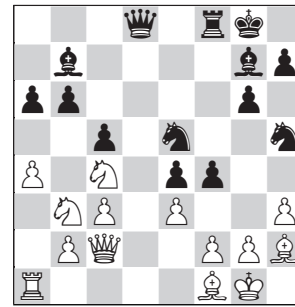
20...f4?!

Black decides to attack on the kingside, but he should have improved his position earlier and closed the d-file.

Best was 20...♘d3 (if Black doesn't want to take risks, possible is 20...♘xc4 21.♙xc4+ ♙h8, with a small plus for White) 21.♗c1 (21.♘xb6 f4 22.exf4 ♘hxf4 23.♙xf4 ♜xf4 24.♙xd3 exd3 25.♜d3 ♜xd3 26.♜xd3 ♜e6) with an unclear position.

21.♜xd8 ♜xd8

21...♜xd8!? 22.exf4 ♘d3 23.f5 gxf5 24.♘xb6 seems better for White, but it is not completely clear.



22.♘bd2

The idea of attacking the ♗e4 is good, but it was better to play 22.♜d1 first. For example: 22...♜c7 23.♘bd2 b5 (23...♘d3? 24.♘xe4!) 24.axb5 axb5 25.♘xe5 ♙xe5 26.♙xb5 fxe3 27.♙c4+ ♙g7 28.♙xe5+ ♜xe5 29.fxe3 ♘g3 30.♗f1, and White stands better.

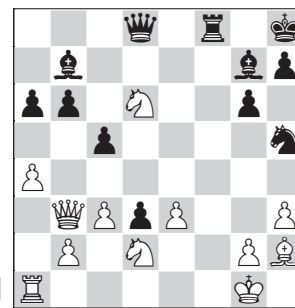
22...♘d3 23.♙xd3 exd3

Or 23...♜xd3 24.♜xd3 exd3 25.♙xf4 ♘xf4 26.exf4.

24.♜b3 fxe3 25.♘d6+?

A blunder. After 25.♘xe3+ ♙h8 26.♘dc4, White is slightly better. For example: 26...♜f6 27.♘e5 ♜e8 28.♘xd3

25...♙h8 26.fxe3

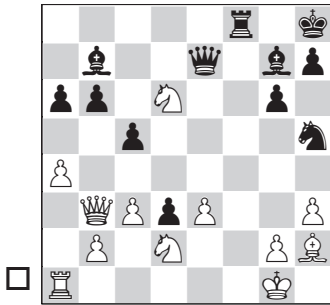


How should Black continue?

26...♜e7?

Black was winning after 26...♜g5!. For example: 27.e4 (27.♘xb7 ♜xe3+ 28.♙h1 ♜xd2 29.♜xb6 ♜e2 30.♜d6

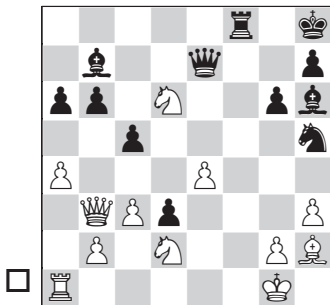
d2 31.♙g1 h6–+) 27...♖xd2 28.♘f7+ ♗xf7 29.♖xf7 ♖e3+ 30.♖f2 ♘h6–+



How can White now save half a point?

27.♘f1?

If you found 27.e4!, you are halfway:
27...♘h6



analysis diagram

What should White play now?

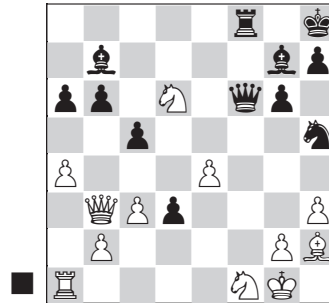
White must play actively with 28.♖f1! (28.♘f3 ♘xe4 29.♘xe4 ♖xe4 30.♘e5+ ♘g7 31.♖e1 ♖c6 leaves Black better). The position is equal, and the game would have probably ended with a perpetual check, by White or Black:

A) 28...♘d2 29.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 30.♘e5+ ♘g7 31.♘f7+ ♖g8 32.♘h6+ ♖h8 33.♘f7+=;

B) 28...♘f6 29.♘xb7 ♘xd2 30.♘d6 ♘e3+ 31.♖h1 ♘h5 32.♖xf8+ ♖xf8

33.♘xf8 ♘g3+ 34.♖h2 ♘f1+ 35.♖h1 ♘g3+=;

C) 28...♘f4 29.♘xf4 ♘xf4 30.♖xf4 ♖xf4 31.♖xb6 ♖f6 32.e5 ♖xe5 33.♖d8+ ♖g7 34.♘e8+ ♖f7 35.♖d7+ ♖f8 36.♘xf6 ♖e3+ 37.♖h1 ♖e1+ 38.♖h2 ♖e5+ 39.♖h1 ♖e1+=
27...♖f6! 28.e4



How can Black continue the attack?

28...h6?

Black loses an important tempo. He was winning with at least three moves:

A) 28...♖f2+ 29.♖h1 ♘f4 (Black played 28...h6, I suppose, because now, after 29...♖xf1+ 30.♖xf1 ♖xf1+ 31.♘g1 d2, White has 32.♘f7+. Black is winning, but must take some risks after 32...♖g8 33.♘g5+ ♖f8) 30.♘xf4 ♖xf4 31.♘xb7 (31.♖e6 ♘e5–+) 31...♖xf1+ 32.♖xf1 ♖xf1+ 33.♖h2 d2 34.♘d8 ♘h6–+;

B) 28...♘f4 29.♘xf4 (29.♘xb7 ♘e2+ 30.♖h1 ♖xf1+ 31.♖xf1 ♖xf1+ 32.♘g1 ♖xg1+ 33.♖h2 ♘e5+ 34.g3 ♘xg3#) 29...♖xf4 30.♘xb7 ♖f2+ 31.♖h1 ♖xf1+ 32.♖xf1 ♖xf1+ 33.♖h2 d2–+;

C) 28...♘c6 29.♘d2 (29.♖d1 ♖f2+ 30.♖h1 ♖xb2 31.♖b1 ♖xc3 32.♖xb6 ♘xa4–+) 29...♖f2+ 30.♖h1 ♖xd2 31.♖xb6 ♘f4 32.♘xf4 ♖xf4–+

29. ♖d1!

White defends the first rank. Not 29. ♘xb7? ♜f2+ 30. ♘h1 ♜xf1+–+.

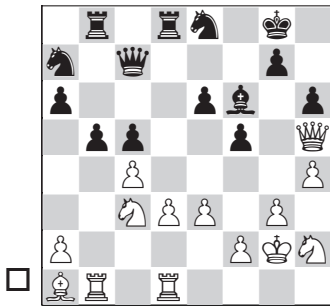
29... ♜f2+ 30. ♘h1 ♙c6 31. ♜xd3 ♜xb2 32. ♜b1 ♜xc3

Black is better, but won only after a long battle.

Alejandro Perez Garcia 2165
Timur Fakhрутdinov 2290

European Youth Chess Championship
Batumi 2014 (U14 Open)

1. ♘f3 d5 2. b3 ♘f6 3. g3 c5 4. ♙g2 ♘c6 5. ♙b2 e6 6. e3 ♙e7 7. 0-0 0-0 8. c4 b6 9. ♘c3 dxc4 10. bxc4 ♙b7 11. ♜e2 a6 12. ♜fd1 ♜c7 13. ♜ab1 ♜fd8 14. d3 ♘e8 15. ♙a1 ♜ab8 16. h4 h6 17. ♘h2 ♘a7 18. ♘g4 f5 19. ♘h2 ♙xg2 20. ♘xg2 b5 21. ♜h5 ♙f6



Try to evaluate the position after 22. ♘f3 and after 22.e4.

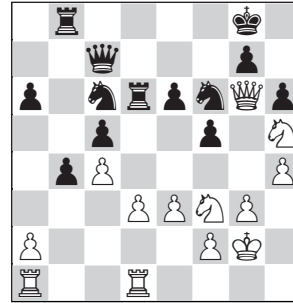
White has some problems on the queenside, and in the meanwhile has achieved nothing on the kingside.

22. ♘f3?

This loses by force. We already saw a similar situation when discussing piece coordination. The queen can face great dangers when entering too far into the enemy's camp, especially if you close her exit.

Much better was 22.e4. For example: 22...b4 23. ♘e2 ♙xa1 24. ♜xa1 ♘f6 25. ♜f3, with only a small plus for Black.

22...b4 23. ♘e2 ♙xa1 24. ♜xa1 24. ♘f4 ♜d6 25. ♜xa1 ♘f6 26. ♘xe6 ♜xe6 27. ♜xf5 ♜e7 28. d4 ♘e4–+ 24... ♘f6 25. ♜g6 ♘c6 26. ♘f4 ♜d6 27. ♘h5

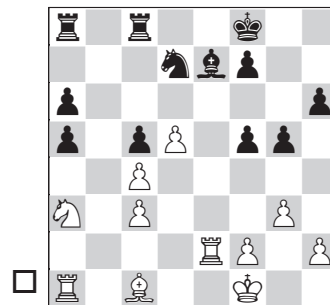


27... ♘e8! 28. ♘f4 28. ♘xg7 ♜xg7–+ 28... ♘e7 29. ♘xe6 ♜c6 0-1

The white queen was trapped in a nice way by the Russian boy. Timur won the gold medal.

Barnabas Persanyi 2237
Dambasuren Batsuren 2214

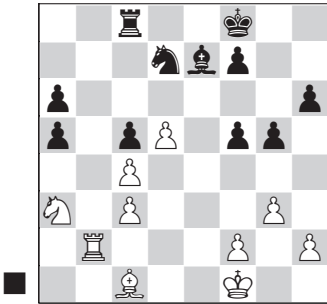
World School Chess Championship
Iasi 2017 (U13 Open)



Evaluate the position after 29. ♜b1 and after 29. ♘c2.

White decided to fight for the b-file. If you exchange pieces and enter into an endgame, you have to evaluate it correctly. The game went

**29. ♖b1? ♗ab8 30. ♗eb2 ♖xb2
31. ♖xb2**



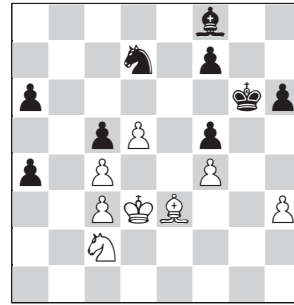
31... ♗f6?

Surprisingly, Black doesn't evaluate the endgame correctly, too. After 31... ♖b8 32. ♖xb8+ ♗xb8, Black would have been clearly better.

32. ♖b7 ♗e7 33. ♗d2?

33. ♖a7 was much better, for example: 33... ♗xc3 34. ♖xa6 ♖d8 35. ♗b5 ♗e5 36. ♗a7, with at least a slight advantage for White.

**33... ♖b8 34. ♖xb8 ♗xb8 35. ♗e2
♗d7 36. f4 gxf4 37. gxf4 ♗g7 38. ♗c2
♗f6 39. ♗d3 ♗g6 40. ♗e3 a4 41. h3
♗f8**



42. ♗e1?

After 42. ♗c1! ♗d6 43. ♗e1 ♗f6 44. ♗f3, White retains drawing chances.

42...a3 43. ♗c2 a2

This pawn did a good job, and now the white king can't defend the ♗c4. The ♗d5 will fall soon as well.

44. ♗b2 ♗b6 45. ♗xa2 ♗xc4 46. ♗g1

♗b6 47. ♗d3 ♗xd5 48. ♗b3 ♗d6 0-1

White had to play 29. ♗c2, attacking the black weaknesses and keeping the rooks on the board. After 29... ♗f6 30. ♗e3 (30. ♖xa5?! ♖cb8 gives Black good counterplay. For example: 31. ♗a3 ♗xc3 32. ♗xc5+ ♗g8 33. ♖a3 ♖b1+ 34. ♗g2 ♗b2 35. ♖a5 ♗c3 36. ♖a3 ♗b2=) 30... ♗xc3 31. ♖aa2, White is a little better.

Batsuren finished 1st-2nd, taking the silver medal on tiebreak.