

Ulf Andersson's opening repertoire – introduction

The Anti-Repertoire

The most delusional of beliefs is that we are able to control the outcome arising from chaos. Yet this repertoire attempts to do just that, and weirdly enough, it seems to work.

Ever since computers inserted themselves into our chess lives, two generations of chess players suffered the oppression of having to be on high alert for comp-generated tactical landmine preparation from our more comped up opponents. Then there is the danger of rote memorization without actually understanding, where sometimes we 'remember' more than we actually study and bang out a fictional 'book' move.

The Ulf Andersson repertoire insulates you from such dangers, since the lines are heavily strategic/conceptual, rather than mathematical/memory-dependent. Today, dependency on a comp's assessment and analytical power are an addiction for many in the chess world. I promise you that with this repertoire, your comp's assessment will not play a domineering role. When we take up a new opening system, sometimes we wish FIDE would issue learner's permits, since our alien, tangled lines are so difficult to navigate. Andersson's repertoire won't feel this way, and

yet it may take you your entire lifetime to master its subtleties. When we are young, we are anxious to discover our chess identity. It's a special time in our lives when we connect with a pursuit of the heart. For me it was the discovery of Ulf Andersson's style and opening repertoire. When I first became aware of the Swedish GM and his white repertoire in the early 1980's, I desperately sought out his games from magazines (it's hard to believe but there were no chess databases in those days), the way an adopted child craves a meeting with his birth-parent.

Normally I'm a capricious flirt when it comes to openings, switching to a new partner every six months. One thing I've never abandoned is Ulf's repertoire. Is it possible to proceed with flair and ingenuity in outwardly barren positions? The answer is yes, if you've discovered Ulf Andersson's games. His completely original opening choices veer from the well worn grooves of the ordinary, with what can only be accurately described as an anti-repertoire. Of all the white opening repertoires you can pick, at first impression it feels as if Ulf's is the one with the slimmest prospects to even extract our natural birthright '±' edge. Whenever possible he

removes the queens from the board to enter instant endings, where our resources feel scant, to the point of non-existent. His lines operate in a kind of parasitic fashion, sucking the vitality out of the game, where only strategic considerations and endgame skills count.

The principal requirements for success with Ulf's anti-repertoire are:

1. You are essentially a strategist, rather than a natural attacker/tactician/open game/initiative based player.
2. You score well in controlled, quiet maneuvering games.
3. You possess enhanced late middlegame and endgame skills for your rating level.
4. You have a sharp eye for the potential for weak squares in the enemy camp.
5. You are skilled in reaching favorable minor piece versus the opponent's bad minor piece situations.
6. Do you hate opening lines where if you forget the book move, you are as good as dead? No worries about that in this one, since this repertoire is completely conceptual, based on understanding, rather than forcing tactical variations. Some of us go through the opening to escape something: knotted theory or tactically tangled lines. While memorization of complex opening lines torments others, we of the fortunate Ulf Clan escape without a scratch.
7. Are you genetically predisposed to caution? We must be careful

though not to allow this to morph to paranoia. Sometimes when our tendency is to play ultra-safely, we are like a child whose mouth is scalded by too-hot pizza and now blows on a cold, refrigerated slice the next day.

8. You are willing to win your games in 80 moves, rather than in 20. Just remember: in complications, naturally aggressive tactical players have the ability to see in the dark. Yet in simplified/logic-based positions, many of them are blind to the ordinary, unaware of the details and slight strategic shifts, if initiative, attack and tactics are removed from the equation.

9. Your inability/incompetence in open/initiative-based positions is a source of periodic depression.

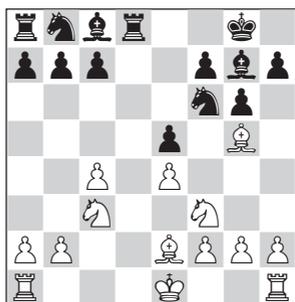
10. Your prime directives in the opening phase are simplicity and clarity, as opposed to the tactician/anarchist who lives life in eternal rebellion against order on the chessboard.

For most of us the opening phase represents a repetition of ideas which were played over and over by others before us. Andersson's repertoire never wears thin, since its subtleties are endless. As a chess antique I prefer to surround myself with simple, vanilla, easy to play opening lines.

I once read that ancient sea captains had to judge the benefits of the extra firepower of more cannons, with the slowing displacement of the added weight. Some captains armed their ships lightly, hoping

that the increase in speed and nimble ability to shift directions would compensate for the enemy's extra cannonballs. In this repertoire we choose speed over armament, throwing the weight of most mainstream theory overboard and drawing our opponents into a fight in our specialty positions, and therefore our realms.

Just as a sampler, here are a few tabiya positions from the book, which give the impression of a strangely frictionless quality:

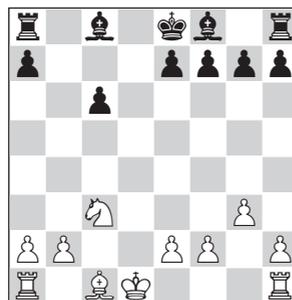


Well, what did you expect from Ulf? Zeus hurling thunderbolts? White's chances feel as empty as the wind and many games in the book feel like almost-battles, which look like they will take place, but never do. Where queens are removed as early as possible.

Keep in mind: just because a position is simplified doesn't mean the battle lacks intensity. Ulf is a master of this position and understands every detail of this ending, and so will you when you study it deeply. This repertoire can be described as eliministic, in that we strive for clarity, as well as seeking to suck the dynamism from our opponent's position.



You may find it odd when I declare to you that I love White's position here. On his last move, Ulf played 6 dxc3!?, capturing away from the centre, while allowing Black to wreck his castling on the next move with a queen swap – and there lies his weapon. Ulf understands the sub-details of this position better than anyone in the world and keeps winning with this line. He has been known to drive some of his opponents to the brink of madness via carefully applied tedium. At first sight it feels as if one cannot accurately describe White's position as one heavy in natural reserves. Yet in my database Ulf keeps scoring wins from this position, and so do I.



Once again Ulf dials back the intensity level from a normal eight to about a three! In our present age we tend to conflate theory with

entertainment, as if the latter is somehow a necessary element, and it is un-sportsman-like to play chess in any other way.

This is another of Andersson's specialty openings/instant endings, where he has given up castling rights to swap queens and then follows by handing over his precious light-squared bishop on c6 for a knight to inflict damage upon Black's structure. I can tell you from experience, it isn't so easy to play Black here, since many of the lines are phantoms, devoid of form or substance, which fail to offer the adventure-loving opponent targets of opportunity of any kind.

The optimal white repertoire?

Mirror, mirror on the wall, what is the best opening repertoire of them all? Before ladling out advice to my students, I try and make certain that I am acquainted with their stylistic dispositions and aptitudes. Many of us pick our repertoires based on which line is popular, rather than which fits our stylistic requirements. When we learn a new opening, most of us arrive encumbered with our stylistic preconceptions of right and wrong.

No, this clearly isn't the optimal white repertoire, since in many lines we are not all that concerned if Black equalizes! This concept may sound ridiculous, but keep in mind that Ulf's repertoire is based on beating the opponent due to our deeper understanding of subtleties, rather than an over the board '±', carefully nurtured to a win.

Remember this: the court of public opinion means little in chess. In the 1980's, the London System and the Italian Game were considered a waste of the white pieces. Today they are all the rage. Do the London System and the Italian Game offer White an edge if Black knows theory? The answer is 'no'! Yet most of the world's top 10 players, including World Champion Carlsen, eagerly continue to play them. Andersson's repertoire has never been considered an 'optimal' way to use the white pieces either. The bottom line is, can you win with it? You can and you will, if your style is in harmony with it. The repertoire resembles movies in slow motion. But are these lines really as characterless as they appear? When you study them you realize the answer is 'no,' since vague strategic unease tends to flow through Black's positions like unseen ocean currents. We see Ulf's opponents throw punches, which only connect with empty air.

The Other Capablanca: Ulf's style

Many chess players equate talent with tactical ability. Yet there is a secondary, under-the-radar type of natural ability of planning, logic, and insight into simplified positions and endings – like the homely girl in her youth, who later in life walks the runway as a supermodel. GM Ulf Andersson is exactly such an under-the-radar strategic genius. He was a consistent World top-10 player throughout the 1970's and '80's and his fans range from the fanatical to the devout. A while ago I received

an email from an Ulf fan in England who theorized: if Capablanca had reached adulthood in the 1970's, rather than the 1920's, he would play exactly like Ulf Andersson, who is clearly his modern extension. Yet somehow Ulf's style also slightly differs from Capa's, in that it somehow feels more laid back, more filled with a 'Who cares?' attitude, than Capa's. Picture an aging hippie who shows up at the corporate job interview wearing suit and tie, but also with long hair and sandals – that is Ulf's chess.

If he lived today, I'm 100% certain Capa would have played this repertoire as well. If you are a Saint Capa fan like me, then I urge you to study Andersson's games and opening choices, since his white repertoire is a palace of Versailles for the player who never wants to lose, and is okay with a draw and the occasional win. Andersson pushes Muhammad Ali's float-like-a-butterfly-sting-like-a-bee philosophy to its furthest limits on the chessboard.

In fact, I will bet that if you were shown a Capablanca game and then one of Ulf's games, and then you were asked: 'Which one of the two is the Capablanca game?' I suspect you would pick Ulf's game, which, stylistically, generally out-Capas Capa! By playing through Andersson's games, we hope to acquire the same skill sets to beat our opponents.

Can an opening book also double as an endgame manual? This one does, since a huge percentage of Andersson's games in this book

reach either instant or eventual endings. The study of these games is of profound value for our endgame skills, even if you don't play this repertoire, since I believe Ulf's technical endgame skills were only below Karpov's and Kortchnoi's in his peak day. He is the master of the simmering pot strategy, where he outplays his opponent in the simplified situation and somehow manages to keep the position on an eternal '±' flame, until his opponents finally crack with inaccuracies and outright errors.

Strategic chess, like time pressure, is an effortless, instinct-driven endeavor. Ulf's play follows the philosophy: combat is wasteful of resources and energy. So he somehow learned to win without fighting. Within the realm of quiet positions, Andersson reached a Capablanca-like perfection, seemingly with no strategic detail escaping his observational powers. The best way to describe his play is that he follows the murder detective's golden rule: never reveal what you know about the murder, until you get the suspect to commit to his or her version of the story. In this way, Andersson tends to hold back his central pawns, keeping them fluid and uncommitted, until his opponent takes a firm structural stance. Only then does Ulf's set-up reveal itself.

The book's format

As you may have surmised, most of the games in this book are ones played by Andersson himself.

I added some of mine, when I couldn't find wins in a particular line from Ulf's games.

Opening theory has altered somewhat since Ulf's heyday (although not as much as you may believe, since his systems are so sedate), so I filled in the theoretical gaps whenever possible, within the notes.

This book is not just intended as an opening manual. It's also a games collection of a great player (and his dorky/devoted sidekick, me) and also an endgame manual.

When it comes to non-stop lecturing, your writer is immensely gifted, so I will stop here and allow Ulf's remarkable games

and completely original opening repertoire speak for itself.

When I first discovered Andersson's repertoire, it felt like I had seen a cosmic vision and pursued a lifelong quest to discover its inner meaning. I hope after taking a look at his style and repertoire in this book, it will have the same effect on you.

Many thanks to Allard, René and Nancy. Good luck in your Ulfieization process. Mine has been going on for close to four decades and I'm not done yet!

Cyrus Lakdawala,
San Diego, December 2017

CHAPTER 2

The Pseudo-Grünfeld

What is the ‘pseudo’ part of Andersson’s Grünfeld system? Well, for one thing, White never plays d2-d4. Furthermore, we usually reach a queenless middlegame by move seven!

Game 16

Ulf Andersson

2560

Marcelo Tempone

Buenos Aires 1979 (4)

1.c4 ♖f6 **2.♗c3** g6 **3.♗f3** d5 **4.cxd5**
♜xd5 **5.e4** ♜xc3 **6.dxc3!**?



Ulf refuses to walk an obedient three steps behind mainstream theory. All rise. Don't look so shocked. Must I remind you that the Ulfian prime directives are: simplicity and clarity? So slow moving are some of Andersson's opening ideas, that they almost give off the feel we are going over a game while drugged.

On the surface it feels as if there is absolutely no logical basis of designation for such a meek move. But this is another of Ulf's specialty positions, which follows

his goal to remove the queens from the board as early as possible. Having played this position since the early 1980's, I can testify that there is a lot more here than meets the eye:

1. Since it becomes an instant ending when queens are removed from the board, White's king, which shifts to c2, is an asset rather than a liability.

2. White's e-pawn sits on e4, so our side already owns slightly more central space.

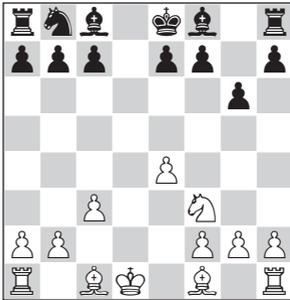
3. White is well equipped to gain queenside space with a2-a4, a4-a5 and possibly b2-b4.

Conclusion: I don't believe the position is as equal as theory claims. In my database, Andersson earned a healthy 70% lifetime score from this position, with zero losses, while mine is around 90% (against much lower rated opposition, when compared to Ulf's opponents). So it can't be all that drawish!

Of course, for Ulf to enter a normal Grünfeld with 6.bxc3 c5 7.d4 ♔g7 is an unnecessary complication and as unlikely as a guy spontaneously declaring to his wife: 'The house looks a tad messy, so I will clean

and vacuum... then I will start on the yard.'

6... ♖xd1+ 7. ♔xd1



7...c5?!

Believe it or not, this move is inaccurate since it offers White stationary targets on the queenside. Next game we will look at 7... ♖g7?! Then later in the chapter we will examine 7... ♖d6?! and 7...f6!.

8. ♖e3 b6 9.a4!

Intending to loosen Black's queenside with a4-a5.

9... ♖c6 10. ♖b5 ♖d7

On the more natural 10... ♖b7 follows 11.a5! 0-0-0+ 12. ♖e2! and now 12... ♖xa5? is met with 13. ♖g5! when Black has no good way to defend f7.

11. ♖c2 ♖g7 12. ♖hd1!

The correct rook. Suddenly Black experiences problems castling.

12...a6

Now the a6-pawn requires nursing care.

A) 12...0-0-0 13. ♖g5! ♖df8 14.a5! exploits the fact that Black's knight is tactically unable to capture on a5;

B) 12... ♖d8?? 13. ♖d2! (threat: 14. ♖ad1 and 15. ♖xd7!) 13... ♖c8 14. ♖ad1 ♖d4+ (on 14... ♖e6??

15. ♖xc6+! forces mate) 15. ♖xd4! cxd4 16. ♖xd4 wins a pawn and retains the initiative.

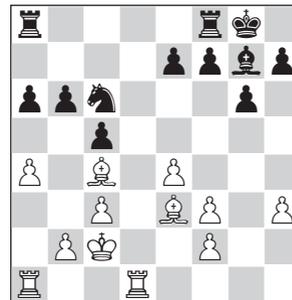
13. ♖c4 ♖g4?!

Black will soon regret handing over the guardian of his light squares.

14.h3! ♖xf3

Since Black got crushed the way he played, it may occur to you that he may have been better off with the nauseatingly servile 14... ♖c8. Not so. White wins with the forcing line 15.a5! ♖xa5 16. ♖xa5! bxa5 17. ♖d5 ♖a7 18. ♖xc5 ♖c7 19. ♖b6 ♖d7 20. ♖c6. Black must return the exchange, with a completely busted position.

15.gxf3 0-0



16.f4!

Denying Black's pieces the use of e5, while gaining useful central space.

16... ♖a7

Guarding against ♖d7.

17.e5

Further restricting Black's bishop.

17...a5!?

Gulp! One cannot accurately describe this move as one which embodies the noblest of chess principles. Yet the move is

somehow perversely logical, since at some point he wants to free his babysitting a7-rook. To do so he voluntarily Swiss cheeses his queenside light squares.

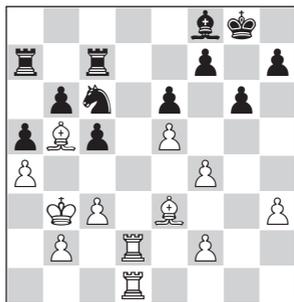
The calmer 17...♖c8 was almost certainly a superior choice.

18. ♖d2

Andersson prefers the slow squeeze, over winning a pawn with the variation 18. ♖a3 (going after b6) 18...♜b8 19. ♜b3 ♜c7 20. ♙xc5! ♜xe5 21. ♙xb6 ♜xc4 22. fxe5 ♜xa4 23. ♙d4 with a healthy extra pawn for White.

18...e6 19. ♖ad1 ♜c8 20. ♙b3! ♙f8 21. ♙b5 ♜cc7?!

21...♜e7 22. ♖d8 ♜ac7 23. ♜xc8 ♜xc8 24. ♖d7 also looks pretty miserable for Black, but still better than the game's continuation.



Exercise: Do you get the sense that the black defenders run low on food and ammunition? White has access to two winning ideas, one tactical, and one strategic. Find one of them.

Answer: 22. ♙xc6!

Exchange on c6 and then walk into the queenside light squares with your king, with ♙c4 and ♙b5, after which Black collapses.

Also deadly is **Answer #2:** 22. ♖d6!. If the knight moves, then the rook simply chops b6. If Black accepts the offer with 22...♙xd6 'Thank...' (the bishop was about to say 'Thank God,' but paused, remembering that he no longer believes in Him) 23. exd6 ♜c8 24. d7 ♖d8 25. ♙xc6 and Black can resign.

22... ♜xc6 23. ♙c4!

This game exudes a deceptively effortless Capablanca-like quality.

23... ♙e7 24. ♖d7 ♜cc7 25. ♜xc7 ♜xc7 26. ♙b5 ♜c8

26...♜b7 27. ♙a6 ♜b8 28. ♖d2! (the immediate 28. ♙a7 allows 28...♖d8) 28...♙f8 29. ♙a7 ♖d8 30. ♙xb6 and Black's pawns fall.

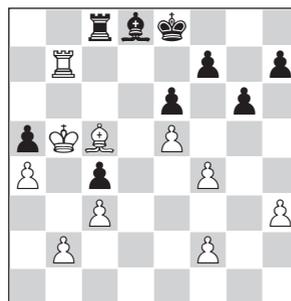
27. ♖d7 ♙f8

27...♙d8 28. ♙a6 Threat: 29. ♙b7, forcing Black's bishop to move away with 28...♙h4 when 29. ♙xb6 wins.

28. ♙xb6 ♙e8 29. ♖b7 ♙d8+ 30. ♙b5 c4

When we have nothing to fall back on, then there is only one direction to go: forward.

31. ♙c5!



Black resigned. The c4-pawn falls as well.

Game 17

Cyrus Lakdawala 2595**Wageeh Boctor** 2335

Buena Park 1994 (4)

**1. ♖f3 ♗f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♗c3 d5 4. cxd5
 ♗xd5 5. e4 ♗xc3 6. dxc3**

When I showed one of my students this game, he told me that Andersson's anti-fun repertoire is perfect for the mentally unbalanced, since erratic behavior (like handing our opponents equality, if in exchange we get the queens off the board!) is its norm. Our natural abilities urge us to discard some stylistic tendencies, while magnifying others.

I realize this move looks as bland as a sandwich where the middle is a third slice of bread, and it appears as if those who champion this line have the souls of accountants, rather than artists. But I love the bewildered looks my opponents always get when I play Ulf's outwardly milquetoast line.

In this case Ulf's line was a perfect choice. This was the final round of the 1994 State Championship and I was leading by a full point, so a draw insured me of clear first. Then my domineering wife Nancy reminded me that if I won, the 6.5 out of 7 score would be a State Championship record, so I was advised/ordered not to chicken out and offer a quick draw against my 2330 rated opponent.

So Ulf's line allowed me to play for a win, with a 99% safety

margin, with a position devoid of traditional tactical apprehension. Having played this line for close to four decades, I have yet to lose a game with it, mainly since it's virtually impossible for me to hang my queen (unless I promote a pawn to a new queen, and then hang it!).

6... ♙xd1+ 7. ♚xd1 ♜g7?!



Yes, this move, the most obvious one on the board, is also inaccurate, after which I don't believe Black can equalize.

8. ♗f4

A key move, which creates weakness in Black's queenside pawn structure.

8... c6

8...c5 9.a4! (9. ♖c2 0-0 10.a4 a6? 11.a5 ♗c6?! 12. ♗e3 dropped a pawn in Lakdawala-Vajapeyam, San Diego rapid 2011) 9...0-0 10.a5! ♗d7 11. ♗e3 ♖c8 12. ♗d2 ♗e6 13. ♗c4 ♗xc4 14. ♗xc4 ♗d7 15. ♖c2 f5!? 16. ♖hd1 ♖c7 17.exf5 gxf5 18. ♖d5! e6 19. ♖d6 ♗f8 20. ♖ad1 The grandmaster was already fighting for his life.

This game is annotated in Chess for Hawks, Lakdawala-Laylo, San Diego rapid 2014.

9. ♖c2 ♗d7 10. ♗c4

More accurate than immediately staking out queenside space with 10.a4 e5 11.♙e3 ♘f6 12.♞xe5 (if 12.♞d2?! ♞g4 picks up the bishop pair) 12...♞xe4 13.♞c4 0-0. The comp still prefers White here, while I think Black is okay.

10...0-0 11.a4

Beginning the familiar a4-a5 clamping mechanism.

11...♞c5

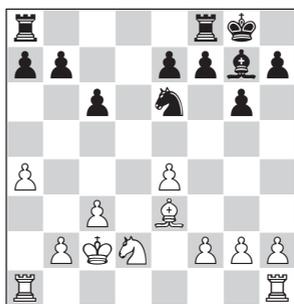
A) 11...b6 12.♙e3 ♞e5 13.♞xe5 ♙xe5 14.♞hd1 and Black experiences difficulty developing with harmony;

B) 11...e5 12.♙e3 ♞f6 13.♞d2 ♞g4 14.♙c5 ♞e8 15.f3 ♙f8 16.♙g1! ♞f6 17.♙e3 b6 18.♞hd1 and Black remains counterplayless and still under strategic pressure on the queenside.

12.♞d2 ♙e6 13.♙xe6

This gets him to block his e-pawn, which means that White earns more space in the centre, as well as the queenside.

13...♞xe6 14.♙e3



14...♙e5!

This is a good defensive idea. Black wants to transfer his bishop to the other wing to help defend his

queenside. 14...♞fd8 would be met with 15.a5.

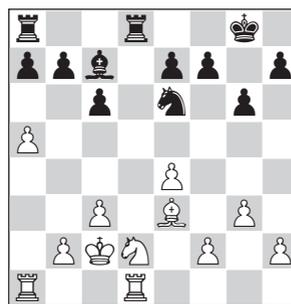
15.g3

Preventing ...♙f4.

15...♞fd8 16.♞hd1

Slightly inaccurate, since when I play ♞c4, Black can remove at least one pair of rooks from the board. So my move actually violates the **principle** that the side with more space should avoid trades. Today, having benefitted from a quarter century of further understanding of the structure, I would probably play 16.♞c4, which keeps all the rooks on the board.

16...♙c7 17.a5!



Oh, no you don't! I push my a-pawn to the fifth to halt ...♙b6, which would ease his position.

Outwardly, Black's position appears okay, while disturbing abnormalities lurk under the surface. In reality his position isn't one of a person content with his life:

1. Black literally has no central control with his pawns, while White will expand with f2-f4.
2. Black nurses his a7-pawn and a weak square on c5. He will either

have to play ...b7-b6, or ...a7-a6, both of which weaken his queenside. If he plays ...a7-a6, then he must watch out for ideas involving ♖c4 and ♙b6, or ♖b6. White can also play for the idea of b2-b4, ♖b3, f2-f4, f4-f5, chasing Black's knight away from e6, and then ♖c5, which pressures b7.

3. Black, although relatively solid, lacks an active plan and can do nothing constructive.

17...a6!?

Weakening b6 is a serious concession.

The alternative is to go for 17...b6 (if he refuses to play either ...b7-b6 or ...a7-a6, then his a8-rook is perpetually consigned to its square of origin to cover the a7-pawn):

18.f4 f6 19.axb6 axb6 20.♖c4 ♜xa1 21.♜xa1 b5 22.♖d2 ♜c8 23.♙a6 and White still exerts slight but nagging pressure.

18.b4

Clamping down on the c5-square.

18...♙g7

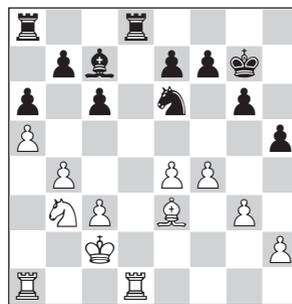
On 18...♜d7 I planned something like 19.♖b3 ♜ad8 20.♜xd7 ♜xd7 21.♜e1, intending f2-f4, which threatens f4-f5, followed by ♖c5, with simultaneous attacks on the d7-rook and the b7-pawn.

19.♖b3 h5

Black hopes to generate some kingside play in a counterplayless position.

20.f4

Now Black must worry about both e4-e5, with a squeeze, or f4-f5, followed by ♖c5.



20...f5!?

At last, contact!

A) 20...♜xd1 21.♜xd1 ♜d8 22.♜e1! (**principle:** the side with extra space should avoid swaps) 22...♜e8 23.f5 ♖f8 24.♖c5 ♜b8 25.♙d4+ also looks unpleasant for Black, who remains tied down;

B) Maybe he should have tried 20...h4 to try and open kingside lines. Even there the comp assesses rather harshly for Black.

21.♙b6!?

Once we seize power we grow greedy at clinging to our sense of ascendancy. If he swaps, I recapture and then plant a knight on a5, perpetually endangering b7. But sometimes the best way to win a position of advantage is to maintain the status quo, allowing the frustrated opponent to ferment in his or her strategic misery, the natural psychological progression of which is that they often take action, even when they shouldn't. Why do so many frustrated defenders embrace this negative trait over and over? The nature of paranoia is that if there is no external threat or enemy facing you, then a fictional one must be invented.

The calmer 21.♖e1 is probably the move I would choose today.

21...fxe4!?

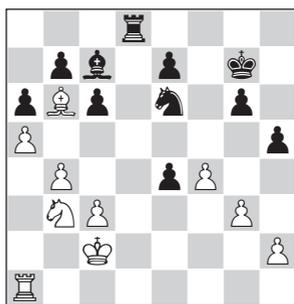
He searches for counterplay based on ideas of ...♖f6, ...♖f5, and then invade my kingside.

22.♖xd8?!

Not the best. Black is strategically busted with the simple 22.♙xc7! ♟xc7 23.♖e1 ♖e8 24.♖xe4, when I don't see how Black successfully covers b7, e7 and the invasion on d7.

22...♖xd8?

He had to try 22...♙xd8 23.♖e1 ♙xb6 24.axb6 ♖f6 25.♖xe4 with a difficult but still playable game for Black.



Exercise: Black's last move allowed a combination, which even I saw. If I can see it, then so can you.

Answer: 23.♟c5!

Overloaded defender/zwischenzug. After this move there arises a contingency for which Black is completely unprepared, since in every variation he tosses away material like confetti on New Year's Eve.

23...♟xc5

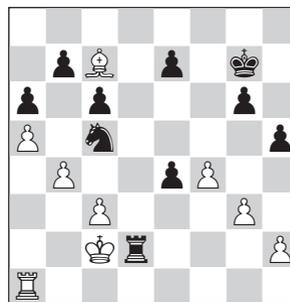
A) 23...♙xb6? loses to 24.♟xe6+ ♖f6 25.♟xd8;

B) 23...♖f6? 24.♟xe6 ♖xe6 25.♙xc7 with an extra piece for White.

24.♙xc7

I thought he would resign here and missed his next shot, which actually makes the game close, and I win by just a single tempo.

24...♖d2+!



My recollections of events long past tend to be a tad embellished to make myself look slightly less stupid to the reader than I actually am. Here I'm willing to confess to you the unvarnished truth: after my opponent's shocking last move, my mouth gaped open, reminding the spectators of a disgruntled trout who bit down too hard on the baited hook.

Black attempts a sci-fi-like radical reconstruction of his position at a cellular level with a clever try. He saw that 24...♖d7? loses instantly to the zwischenzug 25.♙e5+ ♖f7 26.bxc5 with an extra piece.

25.♟xd2 ♟b3+

This is not such a free rook, since Black's knight is doomed in the corner. The worry for White is that my king is a million miles away, allowing his lone king a chance to raid my unguarded kingside and

help support his passed e-pawn. At this point I panicked and was mentally cursing myself for marrying such a bossy woman (Nancy had suggested/ordered me not to offer an early draw and secure clear first!).

26. ♖c2 ♜xa1+ 27. ♖b2 e3 28. ♙b6 e2 29. ♙f2 ♖f6

This king is a Dauphin to an impoverished kingdom.

30. ♖xa1 e5

30... ♖f5 31. ♖b2 ♖e4 32. ♖c2 ♖f3 33. ♙e1 ♖g2 34. h4 ♖f1 35. ♖d2 is similar to the game's continuation: 35...e6 36.c4 – zugzwang.

31. fxe5+ ♖xe5 32. ♖b2 ♖e4 33. ♖c2 ♖f3 34. ♙e1 1-0

After 34... ♖g2 35. h4 ♖f1 36. ♖d2 White's king arrives just in time. Black's king must give way.

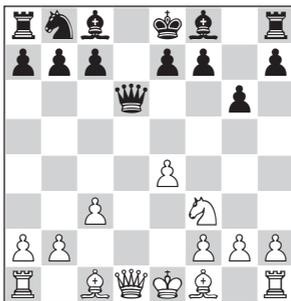
Game 18

Ulf Andersson 2585

Bachar Kouatly 2350

Malta ol 1980 (1)

1. ♜f3 ♜f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♜c3 d5 4. cxd5 ♜xd5 5. e4 ♜xc3 6. dxc3 ♚d6?!



There is but a fraction of an inch between curiosity and recklessness.

We must take care that our modification doesn't turn into a distortion. With each theoretical novelty we seek to challenge the old norm with the hopefully improved new – which isn't the case here.

Kouatly decides to veer off the mapped road into uncharted territory by agreeing to a queen swap, but only on his terms.

6... ♜d7?! also fails to equalize:

7. ♙c4 e6 (7... ♙g7?? walks into

the combination 8. ♙xf7+! and if

8... ♖xf7 9. ♜g5+ wins. If Black's

king goes to e8, White smother's and wins Black's queen with ♜e6. If the king moves to f8, then there is a knight fork on e6. If the king moves to g8, then ♚b3+ forces mate in three moves) 8.0-0 ♙g7 9. ♙g5! with mounting pressure for White.

7. ♚b3!

Did we just see Ulf Andersson decline a queen swap? Normally we see him proceed with the extreme caution of a person who gingerly dips a toe into a pool to gauge its temperature. Remember that a mercenary has no ideological stake in a fight. He simply joins the side which pays most. In this case Andersson correctly obeys the position's requirements, rather than catering to personal stylistic inclinations.

By this queen move to b3, suddenly Black's queen on d6 becomes a target for harassment from White's pieces, and Black falls behind in development, which is the chess equivalent of refusing to pay your

mortgage and then hoping the bank does nothing. After 7.♖xd6 cxd6 Black is the one who structurally benefits from the queen trade.

7...♙g7

There is a twisted logic to dodging a queen swap earlier, and then submitting to it later in an inferior form: 7...♖b6 8.♙c4 ♖xb3 (it is to take something which already exists and then deconstruct it to rebuild it to its original state) 9.axb3 and White gets a better version than normal, with the open a-file.

8.♙e3 0-0 9.♞d1 ♖c6 10.♙c4! ♘a6?

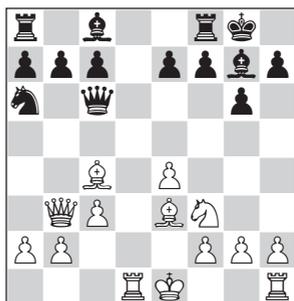
As our troubles multiply, so does our error rate.

A) By pawn grabbing and falling behind in development, we chance the ire of our enraged opponent:

10...♖xe4?? 11.♙xf7+! ♔h8 (11...♞xf7 12.♞d8+ ♙f8 13.♘g5 ♖f5 14.♞xc8! Black is crushed) 12.♙d5 wins:

12...♖g4 13.♘g5 and nothing will numb Black's pain;

B) 10...e6 is Black's relatively best move. White can continue with the promising pawn offer 11.h4!, playing directly for mate.



Exercise: Black's kingside is like a community of crickets who suddenly grow silent, due to the

unexpected presence of a predator. Try and work out Andersson's multi-step combination.

Answer: 11.♙xf7+!

Attraction/double attack/pins.

'I recognized your weaknesses and yet you were unable to recognize my abilities,' says the bishop. Here's looking at you, Tal. The reality is far worse than the imagined.

Andersson opens the game with the most boring possible opening choice and then later plays for mate! In fact, this game may be the chess version of the movie *Freaky Friday*, where the players seem to have magically switched styles.

Step 1 is to attract Black's rook to the pinned f7-square.

11...♞xf7

The realization that we have miscalculated only jabs our already raw-edged nerves, if our position was bad to begin with.

12.♞d8+!

That which was once a single problem (Black's pinned f7-rook), now becomes plural. White's move ties Black's queenside pieces up, while pinning the f8-bishop.

12...♙f8 13.♘e5 ♖f6 14.♘xf7 ♖xf7



Now Black threatens 15...♙e6.

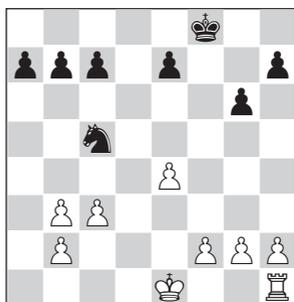
15. ♙h6!

Which is ignored! Threat: 16. ♖xf8 mate.

15... ♙e6 16. ♖xa8!

It's not so scary to walk into a dormant volcano. White's intent clicks into place, since the queen sacrifice is merely temporary.

16... ♙xb3 17. axb3 ♘c5 18. ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 19. ♙xf8 ♙xf8



Black can resign, especially since White is one of the greatest technical players in the world.

20. ♙e2 ♘xe4

Hey, I just said 'Black can resign'!

21. ♙e3 ♘d6 22. f4 e5 23. ♖a1 a6

24. ♖a5 ♘f7 25. ♙e4 ♙g7

25...exf4 26. ♙xf4 and conversion is just a matter of time.

26. ♖xe5! 1-0

The king and pawn ending is an easy win.

Game 19

Ulf Andersson 2560

Zenon Franco Ocampos 2360

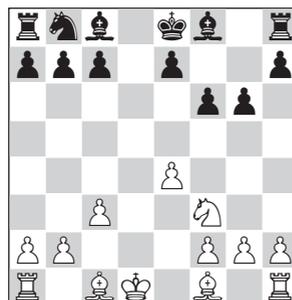
Buenos Aires 1979 (8)

1. ♘f3 ♘f6 2. c4 g6 3. ♘c3 d5 4. cxd5

♘xd5 5. e4 ♘xc3 6. dxc3

Even when our favorite opening line produces no theoretical advantage, we are blinded by love of our system and continue to play it.

6... ♗xd1+ 7. ♙xd1 f6!



Black's move, intending ...e7-e5 and seizing his fair share of the centre, is supposed to be the theoretical equalizer. However, according to my database Andersson has a 70% score from this position. So, equal or not, I for one will happily continue to play it. In this game Franco made but a couple of inaccuracies, and that was all it took for Andersson's technique to kick in and win the game.

8. ♙e3 e5 9. ♘d2

9. ♙c4 ♙d6 10. ♙c2 ♙e7 11. ♘d2

♘d7 12. b4 ♘b6 13. ♙b3 ♙e6 14. a4

a5 15. ♙xe6 ♙xe6 16. ♙xb6! cxb6

17. ♙b3 ♖hd8 18. ♘c4 with advantage for White, who has both a better pawn structure and a good knight versus a slightly bad bishop,

Lakdawala-Düsterwald, San Diego rapid 2007.

9... ♙e6 10. ♙c4

Swapping off Black's most active and only developed piece.

10... ♙xc4

After 10...♔f7! (Tseshkovsky) 11.♖c2 ♘d7 12.♞ad1 a5 13.a4 ♘c5 14.♙xc5 ♙xc5 15.f3 c6 16.♙xe6+ ♖xe6 17.♘b3 ♙e7 18.♞d2 b6 19.♞hd1 the position is even. This didn't stop Andersson from squeezing out a win in 68 moves in Andersson-Atakisi, Budva 2009.

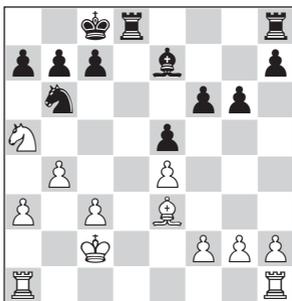
11. ♘xc4 ♘d7

Intending 12...♙c5, ridding himself of his slightly bad bishop.

12. b4 ♘b6

12...h5 is possible, where Black attempts to unload his bishop via h6: 13.♖c2 (13.f3, intending to hang on to the bishop, is too slow: 13...♙h6 Now if 14.♙f2?! ♘b6! Black is ready to castle queenside and may even stand a shade better, as in Andersson-Mestel, Hastings 1978/79) 13...♙h6 14.♙xh6 ♞xh6 15.♞hd1 0-0-0 16.♞d3 ♞hh8 17.♞f3! I slightly prefer White, who can work targets on the kingside, while expanding on the queenside.

13. ♘a5 0-0-0+ 14. ♖c2 ♙e7 15. a3



Perhaps thinking about c3-c4 and c4-c5 later on.

15...f5!?

To take the strategic plunge, or not? On the one hand Black faces long-

term danger from the potential weakening of his e-pawn. On the other, an attractive object comes within his grasp: potential activity. It's one thing to understand our problem, and it's quite another to know what to do about it. The text, which smacks of angry resolution, probably shouldn't have been played, since it weakens e5.

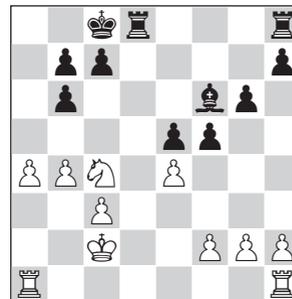
16. ♙xb6!?

Andersson is quick to seize upon an imbalance to play for a win. Komodo likes 16.f3, giving White an edge.

16...axb6 17. ♘c4 ♙f6?!

This may be the start of Black's problems. Black should have gone for 17...fxe4! 18.a4! preventing ...b6-b5: 18...♞hf8 19.♞hf1 ♞f5 20.♘d2 e3! 21.fxe3 (White may later try and post his knight on e4) 21...♙g5 with decent play for Black.

18. a4!



A good negotiator rarely accepts the first offer. 18...fxe4 isn't really a threat. Typically, early in his games, Ulf's ideas are not designed to destroy, but to limit. Advantage White...

1. ... whose knight, now securely posted on c4, is superior to Black's remaining bishop, since the

e5-pawn is fixed on the wrong color.

2. Black's e5-pawn represents a target. If Black plays ...f5-f4, to relieve the pressure on the pawn, his bishop automatically gets worse.

18...♙g7 19.♖he1 ♜he8 20.b5!

Andersson continues with laser-like constancy of purpose. a4-a5 is coming.

20...f4?!

Black's bishop will pay the price of relieving the pressure from the e5-pawn. Franco incorrectly believes that his counterplay – or lack of it – is a time-sensitive project, which requires immediate attention.

21.a5 bxa5 22.♞xa5 b6

Black's bishop winces in pain, since yet another pawn is fixed on its color. Not much choice, since 22...♙f6? is met with 23.b6! with a strategically won game for White.

23.♞a7 ♙f6 24.♞ea1 ♞e6 25.♞1a6!

Strategic threat: ♖a5 and ♗c6.

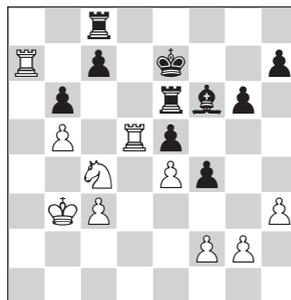
25...♞de8 26.♙b3!

Domination of the light squares is the binding force behind Andersson's coming moves. We envision a king march, similar to the Tempone game from this chapter.

26...♙d8 27.♞a8+ ♗d7 28.♞a2

Re-routing the rook via the d-file. There was a stronger continuation in 28.♞6a7!, threatening 29.♞b8! and 30.♗xb6+. Black can barely move: 28...♙h4 29.♞xe8 ♗xe8 30.♞xc7 ♙xf2 31.♞xh7 – Black is down a pawn and busted.

28...♙f6 29.♞d2+ ♗e7 30.♞a7 ♞c8
31.♞d5 ♗e8 32.h3 ♗e7



Exercise: Come up with a clear way for White to make progress.

Answer: 33.♗b2!

White plans to enter Black's fort via the plan ♗b2! intending ♗d3, c3-c4 and c4-c5.

33...♗e8 34.♗d3 ♙g7

34...c6 35.♞dd7 cxb5 36.♞xh7 ♙e7 37.♗b4 ♙xb4 38.♙xb4 (threatening mate on h8) 38...♞f6 39.♙xb5 and Black is helpless.

35.c4!

Step 2 of his plan.

35...♙f6 36.c5 bxc5

36...♙g7 37.♗b4 ♙f6 38.f3 h5 39.cxb6 cxb6 40.♗c6 g5 41.♞b7 wins the b6-pawn and the game.

37.♗xc5 ♞e7 38.♞a6!

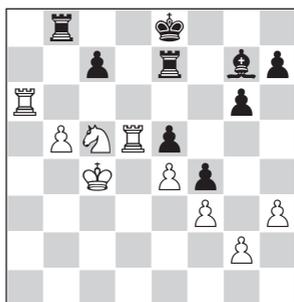
Multipurpose:

1. The rook prevents ...c7-c6 liquidating ideas.
2. The rook gains a tempo on Black's loose bishop on f6.
3. The rook plans to enter c6, pressuring Black's c-pawn and also worrying Black with b5-b6 ideas.

38...♙h8 39.♙c4 ♙g7 40.f3

Typical Andersson, who plays with the air of a man on a family picnic. There is no rush.

40...♖b8



Exercise: Black's defensive attempts, having run their course, now fall apart. What is Andersson's winning plan?

Answer: 41.♗e6!

Target c7 with ♗e6 and ♖c6, after which Black is tactically unable to effectively defend c7.

White's forces lurch for c7 with the psychotic glee of my dogs on a walk, when they spot one of the neighbourhood cats.

41...♙f6 42.♖c6! 1-0

The defence of c7 is an issue which demands recognition. 42...♖c8 (42...♖b7 walks into mate in two with 43.♗d8+ ♔f7 44.♖f8#) 43.b6! ♙h4 44.b7 ♖b8 and now White forces promotion with the removal of the guard shot 45.♗d8+!

Game 20

Cyrus Lakdawala 2555

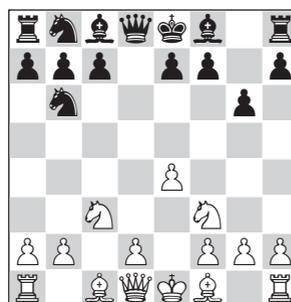
Marc Düsterwald 2419

San Diego rapid 2007

1.♗f3 ♗f6 2.c4 g6 3.♗c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♗xd5 5.e4 ♗b6?!

Why do we take rash risks and when they fail, resent the price we

are later forced to play? My belief in this line skirts the edges of legitimacy.



By dodging the ending and not exchanging on c3, Black violates the **principle** that the cramped side should not evade exchanges. Now he gets a Grünfeld without the normal accompanying pressure on White's centre.

6.h3!

6.d4 allows 6...♙g4 when Black challenges a defender of d4.

6...♙g7

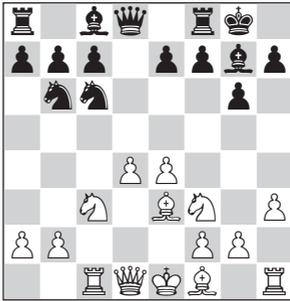
6...c5 7.d4 cxd4 8.♖xd4! (of course!

When does an Ulfeite turn down a chance to remove queens from the board and enter a favorable ending?) 8...♖xd4 9.♗xd4 ♙g7 (after 9...a6 10.♙e3 ♙g7 11.f4 Black is already in trouble) 10.♗db5 ♗a6 11.♙e3 – advantage White, since the b5-knight isn't going anywhere soon. Black must also watch out for future ♗xa7 and ♙xb6 tricks.

7.d4 0-0 8.♙e3 ♗c6 9.♖c1

I wanted to get him nervous about sudden lunges toward c7 with a future d5 and ♗b5. I thought 9.♙b5 would be met with 9...♗a5, which induces the potentially weakening

10.b3. The comp still likes White here.



9...e5

Otherwise he is unable to challenge White's centre. Back can also consider 9...f5!? 10.exf5 ♖xf5 11.♗b3+ ♜h8 12.d5 ♘e5 13.♗xe5! (stronger than 13.♘d4 c6! when Black's piece activity makes up for his inferior structure) 13...♙xe5 14.g4! ♙d7 15.♙g2. The d5-pawn exerts a heavy cramping influence on Black's position.

10.d5 ♘b8!?

This is awfully relaxed. I expected 10...♘e7.

11.♗b3

Clearing the way for a future ♖d1, when he plays ...c7-c6.

11...c6 12.♙e2

I wanted to keep developing, castle, and then move my f-rook to d1, rather than the already-developed c1-rook.

12...cxd5 13.exd5

Most pure positional players like me regard isolanis as charcoal-stained Dickensian orphans, who are always tugging on your coat, asking you for money. In this case I realized the isolated d-pawn is more

a strength than a weakness, due to its severe cramping influence on Black's game.

13...e4!

He wants to make trouble in the centre by disrupting White's f3-knight and clearing e5 for his pieces.

14.♘d4 ♗h4?!

He wants to discourage kingside castling, due to a bishop sacrifice on h3, while defending e4. The trouble with the move is that it leaves c7 unguarded, which I exploit with my next move.

I think Black was better off offering the e-pawn with 14...♘8d7!?

15.♘db5!

The direct threat is 16.♘c7, while 16.♘xa7 is the indirect one.

15...♘8d7 16.a4!



Threatening to win a piece with 17.a5.

16...a6!?

Oh, no! Why must the crazy of the world always make demands upon the sane?

Visiting German Senior Master Marc Düsterwald's move is based on the philosophy: the nature of survival in a harshly demanding

environment is that it sometimes requires savage decisions of us. He offers me a piece, for who-knows-what? compensation. I expected 16...♗e5 17.a5 ♖bd7 18.g3 ♗d8 19.♗xe4 ♗xa5+ 20.♕f1 with a massive positional advantage for White, whose knights are ready to invade c7 and d6.

17.♗c7 ♖b8



18.g3!?

It's human nature to distrust that which we fear. Extreme caution leads either to self-preservation, or to its opposite, mediocrity. If Black's message is that he is playing like a frothing lunatic, then my response is that I'm not going to allow the position to get any frothier.

A) The way I looked at the piece grab 18.♗xb6!?: was: it's similar to the greedy man who murders his rich 105-year-old aunt to inherit her money. It's a bad gamble. If he waits it out for a few months, or, at the most, a year, it allows nature to do its dirty work on her decaying body, and he gets the money without risk of imprisonment for life.

I felt White had a strategically won game without taking his piece. 18...♗xb6 19.♗xb6 Now the move which got me nervous was 19...e3!. Black is still probably busted but gets decent practical fishing chances along the dark squares. My fear was that White's king, once fabulously wealthy, would soon do his own laundry and dine on ramen for breakfast, lunch and dinner each day;

B) The cool-headed 18.♖d1! may be White's strongest continuation: 18...♗e5 19.d6 ♗a8 20.♗7d5! ♗xd6 21.g3 ♗d8 22.♗xe4 ♗e5 23.0-0 ♗g5 and Black's dark squares are close to implosion.

18...♗f6 19.a5?!

A cheap copy of the original plan isn't necessarily better than no plan at all. Your confused writer is way beyond his depth here. This move reduces White's advantage, since it allows Black a relieving swap. 19.♗b4! ♗a8 20.d6 leaves Black in a bad way.

19...♗a8 20.♗xa8 ♖xa8 21.♗xe4!? ♗e5!?

After 21...♗xb2 22.♗xb2 ♗xb2 23.♖b1 ♗g7 24.0-0 White applies strong Benko Gambit-like pressure to Black's queenside.

22.♗c3 ♗f6 23.♗f4 ♗e7 24.d6 ♗d7 25.♗a4!?

Threatening a cheapo on b6. 25.g4!, preventing 25...♗h5 while preparing castling, was worthy of consideration.

25...♗f5



26. ♘b6?!

Your writer with the initiative is the same as a chimpanzee with a diamond: he soon tires of his new toy and tosses it to the ground. The battering ram leaves indentations, yet fails to break down the defence's gate. A knight on b6 doesn't bother Black at all, since he can work his pieces around it.

White retains a clear advantage with 26. ♘c5! ♘d7 27. ♘xd7 ♙xd7 28. 0-0! ♚xh3 29. ♖c7 ♙c6 30. ♙f3.

26... ♙e6

26... ♚xa5+?? drops material to 27. ♙d2. Black's queen and rook hang simultaneously.

27. ♚a4 ♖ad8 28. ♖d1?!

At this point I was talking to myself under my breath, having a quiet discussion with thin air, on the cruelties of Fate, since I sensed that my previous advantage had vanished. My move is another inaccuracy. The position continues to offer only contradictions to 'natural' moves.

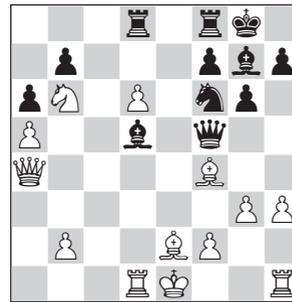
The comp recommends the inhuman line 28.g4! ♚e4 29. ♚xe4

♘xe4 30. ♖d1 ♙xb2 31.0-0 ♘c3 32. ♖d2 with pressure for White due to his all-powerful d-pawn.

28... ♙d5?

Black's attempt to seize the initiative is one of those neighbour's signs which warn: 'Beware! Guard dog on patrol!' and then you see the runty/elderly/obese Chihuahua come to the house's window, baring his teeth.

28... ♘d5! was correct, when Black stands no worse.



Exercise: Black's last move was a tactical error. Find White's winning idea and the chaotic jumble abruptly spins into perfect order.

Answer: 29. ♘xd5!

Step 1: Attraction. Eliminate Black's bishop, while deflecting Black's knight away from coverage of g4.

29... ♘xd5 30. ♙g4! 1-0

The bishop wraps the young black queen in his unholy embrace.

Step 2: Overloaded defender. Black's queen is pushed away from covering her knight. After 30... ♖fe8+ 31. ♔f1

b5 32. ♚b3 32. ♚b3 ♚e4 33. ♚xd5

White picks up a piece.