

**Walter Browne**

**The Stress of Chess ... and its Infinite Finesse**  
**My Life, Career and 101 Best Games**

**New In Chess 2012**

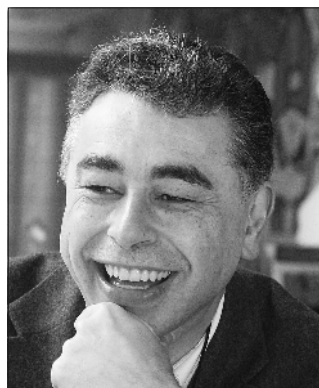
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## Foreword by Yasser Seirawan

Everyone who has played competitive chess for any length of time has at least one rival who, for a certain period, has had their number. The games involved are not so much a well-contested face-off with a dreaded arch-rival; rather, they are akin to being body-slammed from the top rope in a wrestling match. The battles tend to be one-sided. Even in those very rare contests where we manage to mix things up and play decently, at least for a time, we somehow manage to walk into the one true hay-maker on the board, allowing yet another brilliant win. In short, we lose yet again.



While we take our own customers for granted, of course, being someone else's client is intolerable. In my own case I've had at least half a dozen or more such dreaded rivals who schooled me. My earliest and most terrifying were firstly GM Peter Biyiasas of Vancouver BC, who regularly played in Open Swiss events in the Northwest during the 1970s when I was growing up in Seattle, and, secondly, GM Walter Shawn Browne. None of my later rivals did I find as frightening as Walter.

In the case of Walter, our rivalry started in 1976, when we shared in a three-way tie for first place in the American Open. Fortunately for me, we tied without having to play one another. But that was the start of the rivalry, and it continued for the next 20 plus years.

Walter went on to win six US Championship titles, while I won four. On the circuit, Walter earned two nicknames. The first of these, 'Six-time', was an obvious reference to his number of championship victories. The second nickname was 'King of the Swiss', and his success on the Swiss Open tour was truly remarkable. Anyone who has won a major Swiss event knows that it takes a combination of good luck, daring and the need to come through with a clutch win in the last rounds of play. Oftentimes a Swiss win even requires a clean sweep. Walter was incredible. I don't think there were any major American Swiss tournament events that he didn't win at least once. Some he won multiple times. His success and his talent for victory were off the chart. How did he do it?

In my attempts to analyze Walter's game and to sum up his strengths and weaknesses one thing has always stood out for me: his absolute competitiveness. Walter strongly believes that if anything is worth doing it is worth doing well. In all things and at all times, Walter *applies* himself. Those who have competed against him or

merely watched him at the board cannot help but notice the extraordinary amount of energy that he expends. He is a living cauldron of moving, boiling, seething energy. From his facial expressions, with grimaced lips, you can see that he has calculated a particular variation at great length and found a miracle saving-move for his opponent. Frustrated, he shakes his head, pulls himself up to the board, extending his height, and applies himself once more, trying hard, desperately searching for the right move, as well as the right *series of moves* that will bring victory. It is a vast understatement to call him a hard worker at the board. He never stops. Not until both score-sheets have been signed.

One of Walter's extraordinary gifts in chess is his ability to calculate. Even in simple positions he can apply himself and look deeply into the entrails of the position. But it is the complex positions that excite him the most. They bring out the best in him, and the trickier the position the better for him. Walter loves the tactical challenge, the combination, above all else. In fact, this amazing ability to calculate is his greatest strength but also his greatest weakness.

Let me explain. In the many games that we contested we held a deep post-mortem. Often these lasted for hours and during them it was obvious, time in and time out, that Walter had out-calculated me. We had looked at the same variations, but he had calculated them more deeply than I had. In many instances Walter went far beyond the point where I had stopped, being satisfied with a line. Walter wanted to be sure. When he felt a win existed he wished to nail it down with calculation and cold-blooded determination. When I asked why he didn't just play an obviously good move, he would often say that while his 'instinct' had told him to play the 'natural' good move it was his calculation that guided him to consider other possibilities, and what ultimately caused him to come to a decision was the calculated line.

In most cases Walter's instinct and calculation were one and the same, producing the same move, which he would then play. But here comes the rub. He would go into deep concentration, using large amounts of time on his clock to confirm his instinct with concrete calculation. The result? Chronic time trouble. The flip side of his greatest strength, calculation, was that it often led to harrowing time-scrambles.

Bingo! Wonderful, you may think. All I'd have to do is present enough problems for Walter early and often enough and he would drift into time-trouble, at which point I might take advantage... Unfortunately, it was precisely here, when he was in time-trouble, that Walter was at his most dangerous. Cobra fast, he could make 20 moves within one minute, and those 20 moves were like perfect links in a chain leading to victory. It was truly remarkable to see him in action while in time trouble. He was a demon. Anyone caught playing time trouble blitz against him would likely fail as again and again Walter would come through the most harrowing clock-pressure in better shape than when he started. How he kept his nerves during these episodes remains a mystery to me.

The above insights might, at long last, lead us to some type of weakness to exploit: fatigue. Walter would pour his heart, soul, imagination and all his mind-power into a tough tournament game. Fatigue would rear its ugly head, and it was there that he was vulnerable. And if this makes it sound as if he was a tough player to beat, trust me, he was.

In many ways, our careers paralleled each another. For example, in 1980 I received an invitation to the Crown Group of the traditional Wijk aan Zee tournament. This was the 'big leagues,' and the tournament featured two of the highest-rated players in the world at that time, Viktor Kortchnoi and Jan Timman. As a rookie in my first big-league event, I shocked myself by scoring 10 points out of 13. Before the last round, my closest rival for first was... Walter, who was trailing me by half a point. He was to have White against the world's number two ranked player, Kortchnoi, and he would have to win to tie for first, assuming that I drew my game. I wished Walter good luck and mentioned that he had a tough game ahead. His instant response was, 'Yeah, but he (Kortchnoi) has got a tough game too!' And so it was. Walter won, and we tied for first place. In 1981, we were equal first in the US Championship as well. And so it would go. We would duel one another for years to come all over the world. On many occasions first place rested on the outcome.

In 1988 I went out on an interesting adventure and started a bi-weekly magazine, *Inside Chess*. In the third issue of our initial year, Mary Lasher interviewed Walter, who came up with a line that I've long remembered. I could just picture him saying this with his unique Brooklyn accent combined with California laid back: 'Well, when I played Spassky it was still early in the tournament and I was content. And now I made the GM title. And in that year only one other person made the title - K-a-r-p-o-v. Nowadays, 20 people a year make the title. It's like super inflation. In those days there were tough requirements.'

No kidding! There is something about this quote that just tickles my funny bone. After 12 years of publishing *Inside Chess* magazine and after all the interviews made, it is this line I remember best. The idea that only two players were awarded the GM title in a given year. Put another way, I'm certain Walter was a deserving recipient of the grandmaster title. But how could we be sure of the unknown Soviet guy?

Besides our contests against one another on a national and international scale, our careers paralleled each other in a second way as well: in publishing. In the late 1970s, well before the Internet era, getting a hold of games from international tournaments was a very difficult undertaking. In those days, the *Chess Informant* was a near bible for professional and semi-professional players alike. The games and annotations were solid gold. But in many ways, as a *Chess Informant* reader I felt cheated. The editors naturally picked the best games from a select event, such as the USSR Championship. But I wanted to see all the games from the tournament. This is where Walter came into the picture. He had the same wish. At his own personal cost he would write to organizers, journalists, fans and friends, paying them to

air-mail to him the tournament bulletins if they were available. Walter reasoned that if he wanted to see the games of the entire event, other American players would as well. He would then mimeograph the bulletins and offer them for sale to defray his costs. Often he scribbled an annotation mark for a particular move or two, and I'd challenge myself to try to understand why he had made such an annotation.

His bulletin service came first and *Inside Chess* magazine came second, but I'm sure both paved the way for Walter's creation, the World Blitz Chess Association (WBCA) and his *Blitz Chess* magazine. Walter was simply an outstanding blitz player, and to this very day continues to win blitz tournaments. In the 1980's and 90's there simply were not enough blitz events, and Walter wanted to change the picture. He embarked on what was virtually a one-man crusade to advertise blitz chess and to encourage players and organizers to support it.

But if you really stop and think about it, why did Walter have to work so hard to encourage the 'official' world of chess to support blitz chess? Blitz chess is the primary form of chess played around the world. Whether you go to the beaches, parks, community centers, coffee shops or clubs, if chess players are engaged they'll probably be playing blitz chess. Yet the clubs and federations of the world support lengthy tournament play – and even correspondence chess play where the contests last for years. It seems that within the confines of organized chess play, blitz chess doesn't receive the support it deserves. It is just the players who play blitz who enjoy it the most. Chess officials don't.

While Walter did a great deal – in fact, more than anyone – to encourage blitz events, he has been only partially successful. He did indeed raise the stature of blitz, and there were many more blitz events thanks to his efforts, but when he stopped publishing *Blitz Chess* magazine the blitz events more or less returned to the norm that existed before his efforts had begun. He pushed the boulder up the mountain, but it rolled back down.

Because Walter Shawn Browne has had such a long, distinguished and successful career it is nigh impossible to offer sweeping statements and generalities to describe the chess force that he has been. About him as a player, I can only say that he was the toughest competitor I ever faced at the chess board. I knew that if I didn't spear him, he would unquestionably spear me. No quarter was ever given. What a player.

Yasser Seirawan  
Amsterdam, Holland,  
April 22, 2012

## Preface

The age-old question has always been; why do we play chess?

Chess is a natural cerebral high and for me it surpasses any physical pleasure or material possession.

Paraphrasing a Greek philosopher, president John Fitzgerald Kennedy once said: 'The wisest thing a man can aspire to is to live his life in an intellectual way.'

As we are a playful species and chess is the highest form of intellectual combat, it seems only natural to be immersed in it.

It is almost unequalled as a teaching tool, especially for the young who will learn to think ahead creatively and logically. Who will learn to manage resources, patience and, hopefully, determination and respect for their adversaries as well as good moral character.

I have struggled with my artistic and competitive desires. My desire to be creative and to win led to not only a struggle on the board, but with my adversary, and ultimately myself.

I threw caution to the wind on many an occasion as I pushed an advantage to the bone in dry technical positions. Aware of the audience at the moment, or maybe in the future, I often aimed for the most brilliant line. Draws were anathema to me especially in my early career, unless it would put me in a very strong position to win the event.

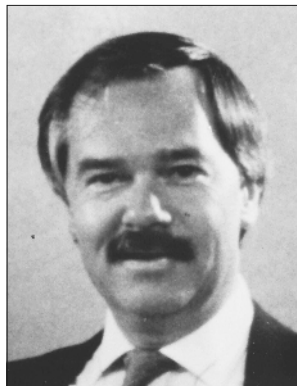
I wasn't just aiming to win, on occasion I was very ambitious and I aimed to create a masterpiece whenever feasible. I preferred an unknown, exciting, sharp line to the mundane with lengthy maneuvers. I also chose originality over the status quo.

Preparation was the key to try to stay ahead of the clock and put my adversaries under pressure early with new ideas. Endgame knowledge was essential, so I always carried and studied a rook-ending book.

I firmly believe that by competing you are a winner, no matter the result.

Many times I felt like a frustrated alchemist who could not make the position gel, but when things clicked, there seemed a natural, almost divine logical flow. Time pressure was a natural outcrop of these desires as I suffered the deepest lows, but also many Houdini-like miracle highs, when I saved a lost or difficult game where I had been able to turn the tables. Conversely I experienced the shock and depression of occasionally spoiling a nice position.

On occasion there was mutual time pressure, but this was usually to my advantage as I was more in control than my adversaries; and with the advantage of my ability in blitz made me more confident under the increasing pressure towards the end of the game.





GM Anatoly Lein has said that two draws or a win and a loss are the same. Actually I think that for your own development two decisive results are better, and the crowd watching loves it! From a hard-fought event you will learn a lot more and in the long run you will improve quicker. Consider it an investment in your future!

Adjusting to the environment has always been the quintessential human survival skill, fighting the elements. Perhaps like the struggle of our pre-historical ancestors is the struggle within myself that I project onto competing at different games.

Whether it is the preparation, sometimes months prior to an event, or the enormous amount of stamina needed to play, chess requires tons of energy.

On the contrary, poker needs little preparation and requires approximately 5% of the energy of chess. Whereas in chess due to the creative elements and clock pressure, it inevitably seeps to the surface as the game intensifies.

After almost three decades in, 1991 Joel Salmon began the monumental task of inputting my vast collection of games, and he finished in 1995. By 2007 IM John Grefe helped keep the collection up to date, which consists of around 3,000 tournament scores. Sadly, many of my early games have been lost. With some valued opinion from John I was able to finish the lengthy filtering process.

I chose what I believe are 101 of the most dynamic, instructive, enlightening, surprising and entertaining encounters from my long career. Within each struggle I tried to focus on my adversary with some personal info and key thoughts on the game. I hope that these unique struggles bring you as much joy and pleasure as I've had doing the analysis, aided by Fritz.

I'd also like to thank IM John Donaldson for analyzing and co-annotating the game with GM Furman, and his invaluable help in the research for this book; 1973 US champion IM John Grefe for his analysis and co-annotating 19 games, which was an excellent contribution.

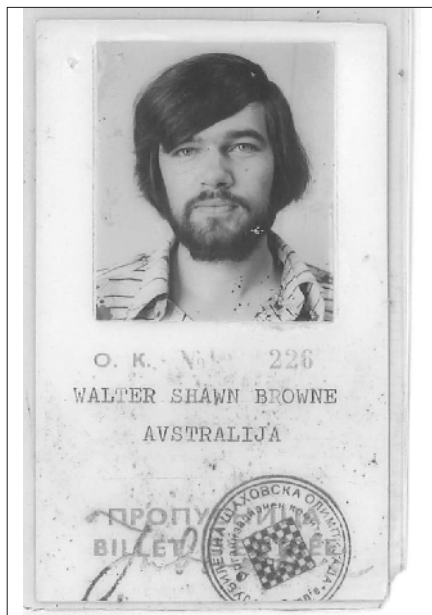
I am grateful to Allard Hoogland, the publisher of New In Chess, for taking on a project which turned out to be a bit more than he expected; and the considerable and fine editorial job by Peter Boel.

My wife Raquel was instrumental, recalling details of events that escape my memory.

*Skak-begivenhed i Randers*



**Appearing in a newspaper after playing a 4-player round-robin in Randers, Denmark, 1969.**



**My Australian team badge during the Skopje Olympiad, 1972.**



**Playing blitz with Bobby Fischer in 1972.**

**1970**

**AL 7.10 (B04)**

**Game 5**

**Walter Browne**

**Robert Fischer**

Zagreb 1970 (15)

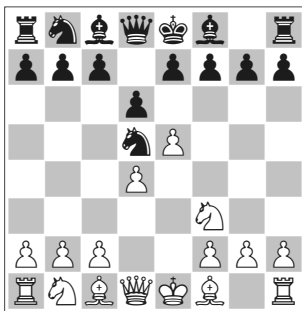
The first half of this event was played at a beautiful resort on a small island in the town of Rovinj in Yugoslavia, close to Italy. We played in the 15th round in a large hall with around 3,000 spectators in Zagreb. Bobby had a two-point lead over the guys chasing him. Despite this and with only three rounds left, he was still trying to win!

This was an epic encounter that lasted four days over several adjournments. Bobby had a big edge after the opening, but one slip and the whole position unraveled. By the 40th move I won the exchange, then the real battle began!!

**1.e4 ♘f6**

Many grandmasters employ the Alekhine Defense occasionally, but no elite GM has ever made it a regular part of their repertoire. Bobby played it twice in his 1972 championship match against Spassky, scoring 1½-½ in two fascinating battles.

**2.e5 ♘d5 3.d4 d6 4.♗f3**



**4...g6**

Bent Larsen, the strongest non-Soviet GM of the day, had the ‘chutzpah’ to play the provocative 4...dxe5 5.♗xe5

♗d7 against Tal, but the ‘Wizard of Riga’ declined to enter the wild sacrificial line 6.♗xf7 ♖xf7 7.♖h5+ ♖e6 8.c4 ♗5f6 9.d5+ ♖d6 10.♖f7 and here 10...♗b8! may be best.

**5.♗e2 ♗g7 6.c4 ♗b6 7.exd6 cxd6**

**8.♗c3 0-0 9.0-0 ♗c6 10.♗e3**

10.d5 is fine for Black after 10...♗a5 but he must avoid the greedy 11.♗d2 ♗xc3? 12.bxc3 ♖c7 13.♖b1 ♗axc4? 14.♗xc4 ♗xc4 15.♗h6 and White wins.

**10...♗g4 11.b3**

Black was threatening to take on f3.

**11...d5**

11...e5 12.d5 e4? (12...♗xf3 13.♗xf3 ♗d4 is slightly better for White) 13.♗xe4 ♗xa1 14.dxc6 and Black’s attempt to complicate fails miserably.

**12.c5**



**12...♗c8!**

A strong new idea, to reroute the knight via e7 to f5, putting pressure on d4.

**13.h3?!**

Now that the pawn structure has been defined and in lieu of the pressure on d4, 13.b4, to keep the option of b4-b5, was best, as Bobby himself advocated in *Informator*.

**13...♗xf3 14.♗xf3 e6**

Black will lay siege to the ‘base’ at d4.

**15.♖d2 ♗8e7 16.♗b5?!**

This ambitious knight sortie, in conjunction with White’s next move, results in Black seizing the initiative.

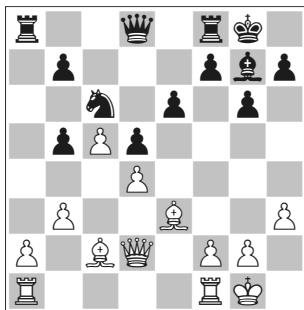
16. ♖e2 ♗f5 17. ♖ad1 h5 18. g4 hxg4 19. hxg4 ♗xe3 20. fxe3 ♕h6 leaves Black's king safer and puts pressure on e3, with a slight edge.

**16...♗f5 17.♕g4**

17.g4 looks better than the game move, though it's messy: 17...♗h4 (17...♗xe3 18.fxe3 leads to balanced chances; 17...a6 18.gxf5 axb5 19.fxe6 fxe6 20.♕g4 with equality) 18.♕h1 a6 19.♗d6 ♖f6 20.f4 ♗xd4 21.♖ac1 (etc. 21.g5? ♗df3+ and wins; 21.g5? ♗df3+ leaves White muttering!)

**17...a6 18.♕xf5 axb5 19.♕c2**

Other bishop retreats are no better.



**19...♖a3**

Fischer had several other tempting ideas besides the rook move, and it wasn't easy to choose from among them – they all look promising for Black. Bobby suggested 19...♖a5! or 19...b4! but gave no analysis.

A) 19...♖a5!? 20.♖xa5 ♖xa5 21.♖fd1 ♖fa8 22.a4 ♗b4 23.♖ac1 ♗xc2 24.♖xc2 bxa4 25.bxa4 ♖xa4 26.♖b2 and it looks like White can hold;

B) 19...e5!, exchanging White's main problem, looks counter-intuitive till you notice that White can't take on e5. White would have to go in for 20.a3 (or 20.b4 exd4 21.♕g5 ♖d7 22.♕d3 ♗e5 and after the knight grooves into c4 White will be in dire straits) 20...exd4 (20...♗xd4 21.♕xd4 exd4 22.♕d3 with a slight

edge for Black) 21.♕g5 ♖d7 and Black's central pawns and control of the a-file cause problems;

C) 19...b6?! 20.b4 bxc5 21.bxc5 ♖a3 22.♖fb1 b4 is equal; 22...♖h4 23.♖d1 b4 24.♕b3 ♖fa8 25.♖ab1 h6 and Black's pressure on the d-pawn is countered by the passed c-pawn. Also his knight has to guard the b-pawn while the a-pawn is adequately protected.

**20.b4 f5**

20...b6 was an interesting alternative.

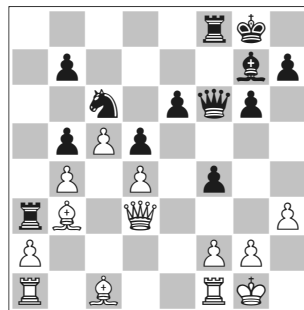
**21.♕b3**

Not 21.f4?? ♖xe3.

**21...♖f6 22.♖d3**

This counterattack on the weak b-pawn staves off immediate disaster, but White is still on the defensive.

**22...f4 23.♕c1**



**23...♖a6??**

Bobby considered his last move a blunder, though he still had an edge. He had missed the powerful 23...♖xb3! 24.axb3 (or 24.♖xb3? ♗xd4 25.♖d3 f3, winning) 24...♖xd4 25.♖xd4 ♕xd4 26.♖b1 (26.♖a2 e5 and Bobby in his notes to the game in *Informator* felt Black was much better. Indeed it's hard to do anything as Black can expand with ...e5-e4 and ...g6-g5 plus the bishop on d4 is very restrictive) 26...♗xb4 27.♕b2 ♕xc5 and against three pawns, two of which are strong, central and connected, White has an uphill battle.

1990

SI 11.13 (B92)

Game 75

Daniel King

Walter Browne

Reykjavik 1990 (1)

Just two months previously my three adversaries in this Summit match had all qualified to the PCA World Championship in Palma de Mallorca, Spain! I decided to make special preparations as I realized that they all play 1.e4 and wouldn't shy away from an open Najdorf! To understand my joy you have to go back about a decade, when I could go through a whole event with all my opponents dodging it. A talented young player, Daniel would in later years be well known for being an excellent commentator at World Championship matches. This game flowed very naturally in classic style all the way. As this was the first round, it put me in a positive state of mind for the rest of the event.

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4  
4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♗c3 a6 6.♙e2 e5  
7.♗b3 ♙e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♙e3 ♙e6  
10.♗d5 ♗bd7

10...♗xe4 11.♙b6 (11.♗b6 ♖a7  
12.♗c4 ♖a8=) 11...♗d7 12.♗c7  
♗c6∞.

11.♗d3 ♙xd5 12.exd5



12...♗c5!

A recent idea of GM Ljubojevic of Yugoslavia. At first it seemed illogical to exchange his poorly placed knight on b3, but then my bishop can go to d6, blocking the d-pawn, when after ...e5-e4 it can put pressure on the b8-h2 diagonal.

13.♗xc5 14.♗fd1 e4

Immediately putting the question to his queen before I reveal my intentions. Besides he may try to prevent ...e5-e4.

15.♗d2 ♙d6 16.a4

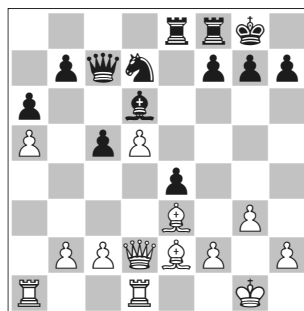
16.h3 ♖e8 17.c4 ♗e7 18.♖ab1 ♗e5  
19.g3 ♖ac8 was roughly equal.

16...♗c7 17.g3 ♖ae8

With this and my next few moves I announce my intentions to attack on the kingside.

18.a5 ♗d7

18...♖e5!? 19.c4 ♖fe8 20.♙f4 ♖f5  
21.♙xd6 ♗xd6 22.♖a3 h5 23.♖b3  
with an idea to play ♖b6, dislodging the queen with a possible b2-b4, gives White an edge.



19.♙f4?!

At first it seemed strong, however the eventual exchange of bishops will allow the inevitable ...f5-f4 breakthrough, unfavorable to White.

19.♗c3 f5 20.♖a4 f4 21.gxf4 ♙xf4  
22.♙xf4 ♗xf4 (22...♖xf4 23.d6 and the  
d-pawn is stronger than Black's attack)  
23.♗g3 ♗e5 (23...♗f6 24.♙g4 and the

threat of ♕e6 will bear fruit) 24. ♖xf4 ♗xf4 25. d6 with a slight edge.

**19... ♖e5 20. c4 f5 21. ♗ac1?!**

Playing by rote, but in a few moves it will become apparent that his counterplay is woefully late. Therefore, 21. ♗a3!, guarding key squares on the third rank, was more circumspect. Also ♗b3-b6 might be possible at some point.

**21... h6 22. h4**

Allowing ...g7-g5 would invite an unpleasant pawn storm, but the text weakens g3, which is highlighted by the coming exchange.

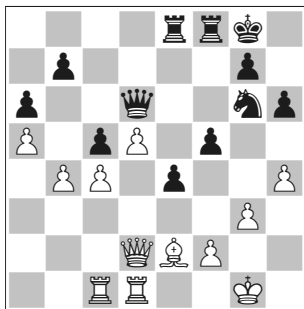
**22... ♖g6! 23. ♕xd6**

The alternatives were rather grim: 23. ♕h5 ♖xf4 24. ♕xe8 ♖d3 25. ♕h5 (on 25. ♕g6 ♖xc1 26. ♗xc1 ♕xg3 27. fxg3 ♖xg3+ crushes) 25... f4 with a lethal attack.

23. ♕e3 f4 24. gxf4 ♖xf4 25. ♕g4 ♖d8 with a vicious attack.

**23... ♖xd6 24. b4?**

A serious misstep, ignoring my threat. There were several tries, but in any case I had a strong initiative: 24. ♕h5 f4! 25. ♗c3 e3 26. fxe3 (26. ♖e1 ♗e5 27. ♕xg6 ♖xg6 28. fxe3 fxg3 29. ♗d2 ♗h5 and there is no defense) 26... fxg3 27. ♕xg6 ♖xg6 28. d6 ♗f7 and while the d-pawn is contained, my pressure on the kingside will mount.



**24...e3! 25. ♖e1**

A sad retreat, yet 25. ♖d3 ♖f4! 26. gxf4 ♖xf4 27. ♗f1 exf2+ was equally devastating.

**25... f4!**

Hoping to deflect my queen, however it is also quite effective on c5.

**26. bxc5**

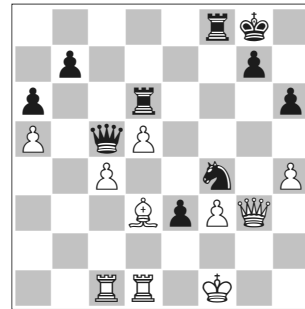
26. ♕g4 fxg3 27. fxg3 (on 27. fxe3 ♖xh4 shatters his kingside) 27... ♗f2 and White must sacrifice the queen.

**26... ♖xc5 27. f3**

Positionally disastrous, avoiding immediate ruin – still it is a sure, slow death. 27. ♗c2 fxg3 28. fxg3 ♗f2 29. h5 ♖d6 forcing White to sac his queen.

27. ♕h5 fxg3 28. fxg3 e2+ wins a rook.

**27... fxg3 28. ♖xg3 ♖f4 29. ♖f1 ♗d8 30. ♕d3 ♗d6**



The knight on f4 combined with the pawn on e3 and my well-placed queen allow me to line up my rooks for the *coup de grace*.

**31. ♗c2 ♗df6 32. ♕e4 e2+**

Equally strong was 32... ♗e8, threatening to take the bishop. This forces a humble retreat and after 33. ♕d3 ♖xa5 34. c5 ♖a4 the combined threats are overwhelming.

**33. ♗xe2 ♖xe2 34. ♖xe2 ♖xc4+ 35. ♗d3 ♖a2+ 36. ♗d2 ♖c4+**

Saving some time to make the time control comfortably!

**37. ♗d3 ♖a2+ 38. ♗d2 ♖xa5 39. d6 ♖b5+ 0-1**