

GM Aleksandr Lenderman Tops the 43rd Eastern Open

by Tom Beckman

Tournament Results: 170 players came ready to play in the 5-section, 7-round Eastern Open, held in Bethesda MD over December 27-30, 2016. GM Aleksandr Lenderman scored 6½ points out of 7, drawing only with GM Alexander Shabalov. The decisive game came in round 5 when GM Lenderman downed GM Sergey Erenburg (last year's winner) to take a ½-point lead over the field, which he did not relinquish. GM Alexander Shabalov took clear 2nd with 6 points. Section winners were:

| Section | Winners | Score |
|---------|---------------------------------------|-------|
| Open | GM Aleksandr Lenderman | 6½ |
| U2200 | Alex Jian | 5½ |
| U1900 | Nicolas Xie | 6½ |
| U1600 | Theodore Covey | 5 |
| U1300 | Nikki Khmelnitsky & Prani Gunasekaren | 5 |

Due to the number of fine submissions, it was quite difficult to settle on the winners of the special prizes, the source for this article. The number of special prizes were increased in the 3 categories: Best Played Game/Best Fighting Spirit, Brilliancy, and Opening Innovation. In addition to the main tournament, a one-day Scholastic Tournament drew 40 players in 3 sections.

The Winner's Perspective: GM Aleksandr Lenderman, one of four GMs who competed in the event, won clear first place in the open section for the third time and said he considers the Eastern his "lucky tournament." "I don't win clear first very often but somehow this is just my lucky tournament," said Lenderman, who also won clear first place at the Eastern back in 2009 and 2010. Aleks said he enjoys playing in the Eastern because he has several good friends in the area, including tournament organizer Tom Beckman, GM Larry Kaufman, and one of his students, Carla Naylor.

The Organizer's Perspective: This year, more than 60% of the entrants were scholastic players, over 35% were from out of town, and 50% of the entrants were first-timers at the Eastern Open. The tournament was ably directed by TD's Mike Adkins and Andy Rea. This year I experimented with the Power Move prize where players submit positions with their best move: a good cheapo, tactic, attack, or defense. Then players in their section vote on the submitted positions and moves. Finally, a tournament e-booklet was sent out to all participants containing over 65 annotated and raw game scores, as well as brilliancies and an opening survey.

Featured Games from the 2016 Eastern Open:

QUEENS GAMBIT DECLINED (D30)

GM Aleksandr Lenderman (2658)

GM Alexander Shabalov (2670)

43rd Annual Eastern Open (4)

Bethesda, Maryland, 12.29.16

Notes by GM Aleksandr Lenderman [AL] and GM Alexander Shabalov [AS]

[AL] In this game I'm playing White against GM Alex Shabalov, who historically has been a very tough opponent for me, especially in decisive games. In this point in the tournament, we both have perfect scores (3/3), and I just made sure to be ready for a good fight because Alex Shabalov is always going to create a good fight. And indeed that's exactly what happened :). I decided that my best preparation for this game is to get a good night sleep since Alex Shabalov usually surprises me anyway, and therefore I am not often able to guess his openings.

1.d4

[AS] This game felt like a rematch of our decisive game at the 2016 US Open.

1...d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 a6

[AL] I was happy to see this move, since that meant that I was correct not to prepare for this game :). By the way, this move isn't as silly as it looked. It was played by none other than Magnus Carlsen, along with some other decent players.

[AS] A new strange way to meet Queen's Pawn openings that been popularized lately by one of the top Russian juniors, Fedoseev. Even the world champion, Magnus Carlsen, jumped on the bandwagon recently.

4.e3

[AL] Ultimately I decided to play this move for two reasons: to avoid any kind of Alex's deep preparation, and because GM Peter Svidler mentioned this way of playing when he commented his game from the Russian Super Finals against GM Vladimir Fedoseev, who used this a6 idea also against him, though it might have been in a slightly different move order. For other ways to play, including 4.cxd5 and 4.Bg5, see the Opening Review.

[AS] This humble move cannot create serious problems for Black as he is getting a favorable version of some Slav lines.

4... Nf6 5.b3

[AL] So now we have transposed into a 1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.e3 a6 5.b3 Colle-Zukertort line. I thought that this is a reasonable line for White, since I wasn't sure if a6 is the main move for Black there.

5...c5

[AS] 5... b6 is another good way to proceed for Black.

6.Bb2 cxd4 7.exd4 Nc6 8.Nbd2 g6!?

[AL] Now this was relatively new to me. I was only familiar with Be7 setups or maybe Bd6. I guess that's the plus of playing a semi-useful 3...a6 move and not committing to developing the Bishop on f8 right away.

9.c5?!

[AL] My strategy of gaining space didn't work out too well in the game since Black got a comfortable game as a result. Likely better is 9.g3, so that if Black takes his time building his harmony, I can afford to do the same thing. After 9...b6 10.Bg2 Bb7 11.O-O Bg7 12.Qe2 O-O 13.Rfd1 Rc8 and now either 14.Rac1 or 14.Nf1 yields White active play.

[AS] This is a super-ambitious push. 9.Be2 led to a standard structure with mutual chances.

9...Bg7 10.Rc1 O-O

[AL] After 10...Nh5!? 11.Be2 (11.g3 f6 was also very interesting) 11...Nf4 with a fight.

11.Be2 b6 12.O-O bxc5 13.Rxc5

[AL] Already I made this move not being very happy. I had planned to take 13.dxc5 but then I realized that Black's center will just be way too strong: 13.dxc5 Qc7 14.a3 e5 15.b4 Nh5 or 15...e4 16.Nd4 Ng4 and Black has the initiative. Playing a position like this with White against Shabalov is really asking for it :).

[AS] Forced for White, as after 13.dxc5 Qc7, he cannot stop e6-e5 and faces a tough task to stop Black's central pawns.

13...Bb7

[AL] Or 13...Qb6!?

14.Qa1!?

[AL] At least I am trying to defend the d4 pawn and to connect my Rooks, but I already felt like I was getting outplayed here.

[AS] I thought that delegating your strongest piece to an exile cannot be correct, but it turned out to be an interesting way to continue.

14...Ne4 15.Rc2?!

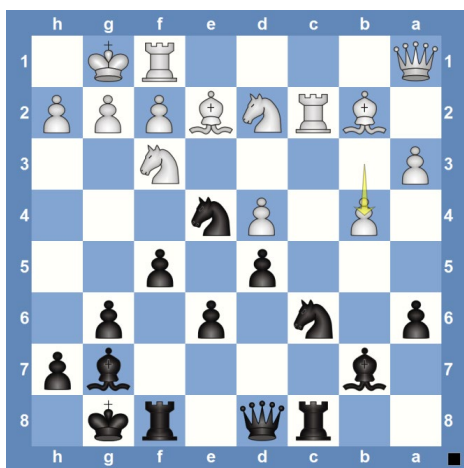
[AL] 15.Nxe4 dxe4 16.Ne5 Nxe5 17.dxe5 Qd2 followed by e3 didn't appeal to me, even though objectively it might have been not so bad for me.

15...f5?!

[AL] A very ambitious move, but I was happy to see this move since I thought now at least I will get a chance to exploit Black's weaknesses if I'm able to beat back Black's attack. The better 15...Rc8 16.Rfc1 Bh6 would have been very unpleasant for me, as Black's pieces are clearly dominating mine.

16.a3 Rc8 17.b4

[AL] To be honest, I miscalculated a bit in the end, but I really wanted to play this move positionally, so I tried hard to make it work. And since I wasn't particularly thrilled with the alternatives anyway, I gambled that it might work. Further, I thought that my opponent might not work out 17...Nxd4 so cleanly, and even if it works for Black, it still looked unclear to me.



17...g5?!

[AL] Better is 17...Nxd4! 18.Bxd4 (if 18.Nxd4?! Rxc2 19.Nxe4? Rxb2) 18...Rxc2 19.Bxg7 (19.Nxe4!? fxe4 20.Bxg7 Rf7! 21.Nd4 Rxe2 22.Nxe2 Rxg7 23.Qe5 Is also a respectable alternative for White, with some compensation for the pawn) 19...Nxd2 20.Nxd2 Rf7! (if 20...Rxd2 21.Bh6 was my point) 21.Bh6 Qh4! This move I missed. After 22.Bd1 Qxh6 23.Bxc2 Qxd2, I'm groveling for a draw.

[AS] Still under impression that White cannot launch a successful defense with the Queen on a1, Black misses a sudden tactical chance with 17...Nxd4! 18.Bxd4 Rxc2 19.Bxg7 Nxd2 20.Nxd2. I stopped my calculation here assuming that 20...Rxd2 fails to 21.Bh6, but the engine continues the line for two more moves 20...Rf7 21.Bh6 Qh4! and Black wins.

18.Nb3 g4 19.Ne1

[AL] Stronger is 19.Nfd2! trying to eliminate the knight on e4 right away. Somehow I thought 19.Ne1 was also strong, getting it to d3, and fighting for the c5 square, but this turned out to be weaker than 19.Nd2.

19...Qg5

[AL] Interesting is 19...Qh4!?

20.Nd3 f4

[AL] A worthwhile option is 20...g3!? 21.hxg3 Nxd4 22.Nxd4 Bxd4 23.Rxc8? (23.Rfc1! spoils black's fun after 23...Be3! 24.Rxc8 Rxc8 (if 24...Bxc8 25.Rc7) 25.Rxc8+ Bxc8 26.Bf3) 23...Nxc3!! Wow! :) What a line!

[AS] I was sure that the game wouldn't last long here as 21.f3 fails to both 21...Ng3 or 21...Nxd4 and Black wins quickly.

21.Qc1!

[AL] This move was important, otherwise I would face a very dangerous attack. Weaker is 21.Nbc5? f3 22.Nxe6 Qh4 or 22...Qe7 is too dangerous for White.

[AS] White's Queen gets back just in time and surprisingly Black's position is just bad now!

21...f3

[AL] If 21...Rf6 then 22.Nbc5 or 22.f3.

22.Qxg5 Nxg5 23.Bd1

[AL] Here I was very happy with my position. I got Queens off the board, and I still kept most of my positional trumps. Black's attack failed perhaps because his bishop on b7 was a bad piece.

23...fxg2 24.Kxg2 Nf3 25.Ndc5 Nd8

[AL] Taking on d4 didn't work as 25...Ncx4 26.Bxd4 or 25...Nfx4 26.Nxd4 Nxd4 27.Bxd4.

26.Be2?!

[AL] This move seems so natural, pressuring a6, activating the Bishop, and next move trying to activate the Rook, but in fact it was inaccurate according to the computer. Better is 26.Rc3! which also threatens Nxb7 but also attacks his very active Knight on f3. So the 2 main defensive moves I missed involved trying to challenge Black's most active piece. I guess that's something I have to keep in mind for future games since it's a pattern already.

26...e5!?

[AL] A very interesting try, activating his passive Knight from d8. Objectively, even stronger is 26...Rc7! since Black is still solid, his next move will be Bc8, and he can keep all his ideas in reserve. After 27.Rfc1 Bh6 is very annoying as we will later see.

27.dxe5 Ne6!

[AS] I was able to find some defensive resources in time trouble, but White is firmly in control.

28.Bxf3

[AL] 28.Bd1!? was possible, but I finally wanted to trade off all the Knights and get rid of a lot of dynamics. However, there are still more dynamics to come:).

28...Rxf3 29.Nd4 Nxd4 30.Bxd4 Rxa3 31.Rfc1 Ba8

[AL] And originally I thought here I should be nearly winning, but then after 15 minutes of thought, I simply couldn't find a knockout blow. No matter where I move my knight, Black has 32...Rc4, a very strong counterplay resource.

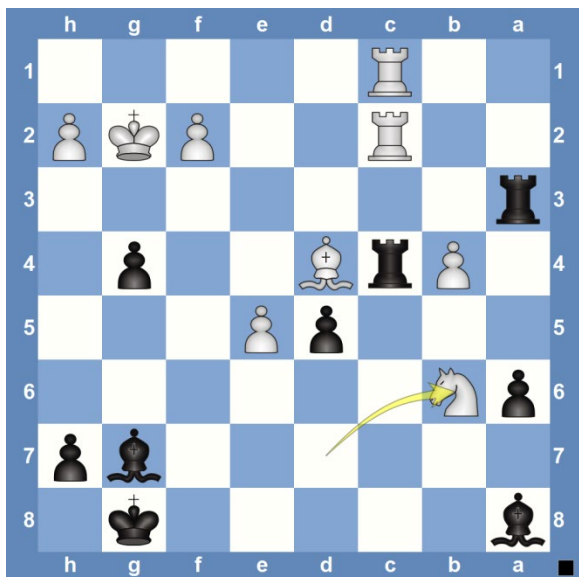
32.Nd7?!

[AL] 32.Rd1 and 32.Kg1 +/- were viable options, but I wanted more.

[AS] Alex Lenderman miscalculates here. Simply 32.Rd1 would leave Black's position pretty grim.

32...Rc4! 33.Nb6

33...???



33...Bh6!!

[AL] Unfortunately I missed this move. 33...Rd3 was also possible. However, I'm much better after 33...Rxd4? 34.Rc8+ Kf7 (or 34...Bf8 35.Nd7 Rf3 36.Rxa8 +/-) 35.R1c7+ Kg6 36.Rg8 and I'll win both his bishops.

[AS] White missed this strong Zwishenzug and should be happy not to lose right away.

34.Be3

[AL] 33...Bh6 was a cold shower for me, so I needed some time to gather myself and find the right way to continue.

[AS] Nearly forced, but perhaps White may survive with 34.Nxc4 dxc4+ 35.Kf1 Bxc1 36.Rxc4! Rd3 37.Rxc1.

34...Rxc2

[AS] Or 34...Bxe3 35.fxe3 Rxc2+ 36.Rxc2 Rc3.

35.Rxc2 d4+ 36.Nxa8 dxe3 37.e6!

[AL] I realized that I still have practical chances here since he has to be a bit careful with my passed pawn and he still has to make move 40 and he's in huge time pressure here.

[AS] This should not give Black too much trouble, but with few seconds left on my clock I made two bad mistakes in a row.

37...Kf8?!

[AL] 37...Bg5 might have been safer.

38. Nc7 Ke7?

[AL] But this is already a serious inaccuracy after which Black's position becomes suddenly nearly critical. Better is 38...Rd3! 39.Rc5 e2 40.Re5 Ke7 41.Rxe2 Bf4 42.Nxa6 Rh3 with a draw, but finding such precise lines with seconds on the clock is very hard to do.

39.fxe3! Rd3!

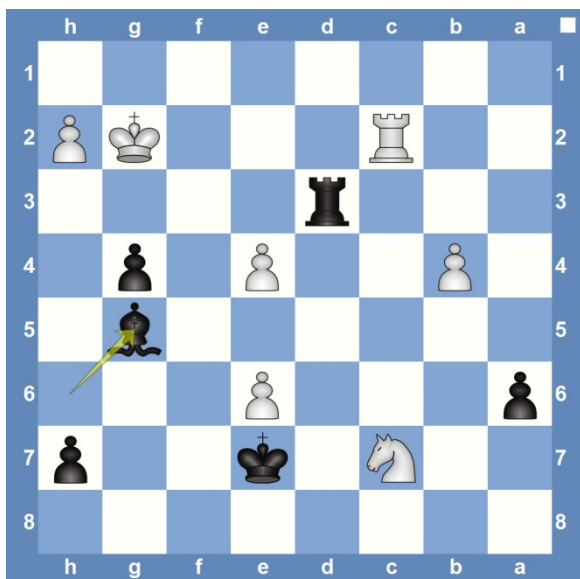
[AL] Alex to his credit gathered himself very well and found the best practical resource instead of just giving in mentally after he realized his mistake. 39...Bxe3 is not good because of 40.Re2! and now Rxe3 is a big threat and Black will have to give up his Bishop after 40...Bg5 (if 40...Kd6 41.e7 Kxe7 42.Rxe3+ Rxe3 43.Nd5+ with decisive advantage) 41.Nd5+ Ke8 (or 41...Kd6 42.e7 Bxe7 43.Nxe7 Ra4 with vague drawing chances, but my guess is White is more likely winning than Black drawing) 42.e7 wins.

40.e4?!

[AL] 40.Rc4 was better.

40...Bg5?!

[AL] And this last move before time control is a mistake. Better is 40...Rd2+! Maybe this would have worked, but it is very hard psychologically to transpose into an endgame unless you're sure it is definitely a draw, especially on the last move before time control. Now 41.Rxd2 Bxd2 42.Nxa6 Kxe6 should lead to a draw though. White's Knight is sort of clumsy and Black has enough counterplay with his active King.



41.Nxa6?!

[AL] Not taking advantage of my chances. Honestly speaking, this tough game took a toll on me and I was starting to get very tired. This tends to happen all the time when I play against Alex Shabalov, since he plays interesting unconventional chess and forces you to solve problems all the time. Better is 41.Rc6! Rd6 42.Rc5! I didn't see this idea, I only looked at 42.Rxd6 which I calculated to a draw after 42.Rxd6 Kxd6 43.Nxa6 Kxe6. Now Black has to play probably "only" moves to possibly survive by the skin of his teeth after 42...h6 (42...Bh4? 43.Rh5) 43.Kg3 Rd4! 44.Kxg4 Rxe4+ 45.Kf5 Rxb4! and this accurate move looks like it makes a draw, despite the high evaluation given by the computer. White will probably not be able to make progress after 46.Nd5+ Kd6 47.Nxb4 Kxc5 48.Nxa6+ Kd6 due to the fortress-like defensive structure. If Shaba had played 45...Re2?!, then I should be winning after 46.Rd5 Kf8 47.Rd7 +-. [AS] My opponent falters at the technical stage. 41.Rc6! would finish this game up.

41...Bf4!

[AS] Now Black gets enough counterplay and finally steers this game toward the draw.

42.Nc7 Bd6

[AL] 42...Bxc7 was also fine for Black after 43.Rxc7+ Kxe6 44.Rxh7 Ke5.

43.b5 Rh3

[AL] Now Black has very good counterplay, and from here on I didn't have any real winning chances anymore, although I did try a bit :).

44.Kg1 g3 45.hxg3 Rxg3+ 46.Kf2 Rh3 47.Nd5+ Kxe6 48.Rc8 Rb3 49.b6 Ke5 50.Re8+ Kd4 51.Ke2 Bc5 52.Re6 h5 53.Kf2 h4

54.Kg2 Rg3+ 55.Kh2 Bxb6

[AL] This move may be unnecessary as 55...Rb3 gives equal chances.

56.Rxb6 with a draw after another 30 moves.

[AL] It was a very interesting tough battle. I was quite happy with this game overall. It wasn't perfect, but compared to my last few games against Alex Shabalov, this game was a big improvement, and I felt like in the battle I was able to match him and also find some interesting ideas.

[TB] This game jointly won the prize for Best Played Game.

FRENCH DEFENSE, TARRASCH VARIATION (C07)

GM Sergey Erenburg (2647)

GM Aleksandr Lenderman (2658)

43rd Annual Eastern Open (5)

Bethesda, Maryland, 12.29.16

Notes by GM Aleksandr Lenderman

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 c5 4.Ngf3

This approach is rather popular today. 4.exd5 is of course the most popular move. See the Opening Survey for two examples of the long variation.

4...cxd4 5.Nxd4 Nc6 6.Bb5 Bd7 7.Nxc6 bxc6

7...Bxc6 8.Bxc6+ bxc6 9.c4 leads to a position which should be equal but Black has to be a bit precise to equalize without many winning chances. It's not my type of position. 7...bxc6 is heading for more dynamic play.

8.Bd3 Qc7!?

And now the point of my opening idea. Well, actually the credit goes to my coach, Giorgi Kacheishvili here, who found it.

9.Qe2 Ne7

The point. I don't want to commit to Bd6 yet, as I want to see first what plan white chooses.

10.O-O Ng6

See the Opening Survey for details on this variation.

11.Nf3 Bd6

It's too early for 11...Nf4?!, since I'm not well-developed yet and the game can open up quickly after 12.Bxf4 Qxf4 13.exd5 cxd5 14.Bb5 +/- 11...Be7 12.c4 dxc4 13.Bxc4 O-O 14.b3 +/- Is comfortable for White.

12.Re1 Nf4

Alternatives are 12...0-0 and 12...Rb8.

13.Bxf4

This honestly surprised me a little bit. I was more worried about white giving up his d3 bishop. But possibly objectively 13.Bxf4 is indeed the best move. Alternatives are 13.Qe3 and 13.Qd1.

13...Bxf4 14.g3 Bd6 15.c4

15.exd5!? cxd5 16.Rac1 maybe was worth a try. Here I would have to play carefully though 16... Qb6 should solve the problems.

15...O-O

15...dxc4 was probably a little bit more accurate after 16.Bxc4 O-O 17.Rad1 Rfd8 18.Rd3 Be8 and Black should have no problems at all here.

16.Rac1

16.exd5 cxd5 17.Rac1 would be awkward for me as I already mentioned earlier after 17...Qb6 18.Qc2! 18.Rxc4 Qb6 19.Rd4.

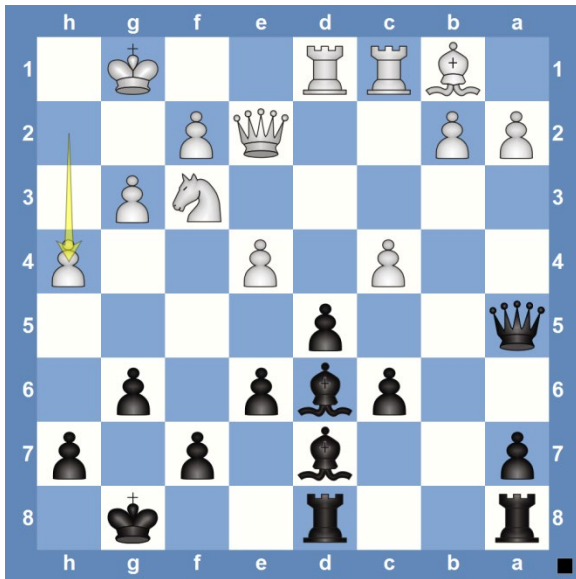
16...Qa5

Again, 16...dxc4 is preferred.

17.Bb1

Somewhat better is 17.exd5 exd5 (17...cxd5 18.a3!? dxc4 19.Bxh7+!? Kxh7 20.Red1 Bc6 21.Rxd6 is strong.) 18.Qc2 g6 19.c5 Bb8 20.Re3 with some pressure for White.

17...g6 18.Red1 Rfd8 19.h4



19...dxe4

19...dxe4 is an important move. When being attacked on the wing, I wanted to make sure I counterattack in the center, and clarify the situation there before I start having problems on the kingside. Objectively, a slow move such as 19...Rab8 should also be OK here.

20.Qxe4?!

This is harmless, after which now I definitely get a comfortable game, where in fact only I can claim to be pressing slightly due to 2 bishops and potentially a stronger center. Besides, I had a big time advantage by now, so already here I was starting to become ambitious. I think White should have tried a Pawn sacrifice, which was something I was slightly worried about, and turned out rightfully so. Better is 20.Rxd6 exf3! 21.Qd3! (21.Qxf3 Be8 is harmless.) 21...Be8 22.Rd1 Rxd6 23.Qxd6. Now Black should equalize, but it is

clear that White has some initiative here for the pawn. Sergey has control of the d-file, and the f3 pawn is hardly a factor right now. Also the c6 pawn is quite weak, and the only role for my Bishop on e8 is defending some weak pawns or squares.

20...Be8 21.Kg2 Bf8 22.Qe2 Bg7 23.b3 c5 24.Be4 Rxd1 25.Rxd1 Rd8

I wanted Rooks off the board so that if White ever opens the h-file, I will never be even close to getting mated there.

26.Rxd8 Qxd8 27.Qe3 Qc7 28.h5 gxh5!

Seems unnatural and Sergey told me he was surprised by this move. However, White doesn't have much of an attack, my Bishop on e8 will now have a very good role, defending a Pawn, and also in the future, this Pawn will advance to h4 when the time is right. In the meantime, it is very hard for White to actually attack my Pawns on h7 or h5, and even if he does, that will disrupt the coordination of his pieces. Also, I will be able to get some active play.

29.Ng5 h6 30.Nf3

30.Nh3 Qe7 31.Nf4 h4 is an example of what I wanted. Here I would just have a healthy extra Pawn.

30...Qe7 31.Kg1 Kf8 32.Qf4 f5 33.Bc2 Kg8 34.Qb8 Kh7 35.Ne5?

And now in huge time pressure, Sergey makes his first real mistake, although I didn't take advantage of it.

35...Bf6?!

This seems like a good move, trying to build harmony, but I missed an even stronger idea. 35...h4! 36.gxh4 (36.g4 h5! 37.gxf5 Qg5+ and White loses a piece by force, and probably soon gets mated too.) 36... Bh5 -/+.

36.Kf1 Kg7 37.Nd3 Bd4 38.Nf4 Bf7 39.Ne2 Bf6 40.Nf4

Sergey made this move with 1 second left on his clock!

40...h4 41.gxh4 Bxh4 42.Nd3 Bf6 43.Qg3+ Kh7 44.Ne5 Be8 45.Qe3 Qd6 46.f4 Bc6?!

A perhaps counterintuitive idea. I wanted opposite colored Bishops since I thought White's King is weaker than mine, and with Queens on the board, opposite colored Bishops can help my attack. However, I underestimated a very strong idea for White counterplay.

47.Nxc6?!

White missed his opportunity. Now I get an endgame which is very pleasant for me to play especially having roughly 1 hour against White's 10 minutes. Better 47.b4! and now either:

- 1) 47...Bxe5 48.fxe5 Qe7 I would have to go for this but here White already has more counterplay than he should've gotten after 49.b5! Bb7 50.Bd1! and White is still defending successfully.
- 2) 47...cxb4?! 48.Qxa7+ Bg7 49.Qf7! I think I missed this move. I was getting very tired, having played a very long game against Shabalov the round before, and now playing already 3 more hours in this game.

47...Qxc6 48.Ke2 Qg2+ 49.Kd1

49. Qf2 Qg4+ 50. Qf3 h5 I wanted to get this position which I thought I would be winning, even though I'm not 100% sure.

49...Qh1+

I decided to repeat a few times, trying to eat some time off Sergey's clock, and also setting a few traps along the way.

50.Kd2 Qc6

I knew I can always return to square one, and since there is no increment, I don't risk anything with that strategy, since he can never gain time.

51.Ke2 a5 52.Bd3

(52.Qf3 Qd6)

52...Qg2+ 53.Kd1 Qc6 54.Ke2 Qd6 55.Qf3 Bd8

Now I found an plan to try to pressure the f4 pawn some more.

56.Qh5 Kg7 57.Qe8 Bf6 58.Bc2 Bb2 59.Qa8 Bc3 60.Qg2+ Kf6 61.Kf3 Bd2 62.Qh2 Kg7 63.Qh4 Kh7 64.a4 Bc1 White lost on time

And here Sergey in a very tough position lost on time. In fact I thought that he was in Zugswang, as no matter what he does, he weakens his position some more. His best try might be to give up the f4 Pawn with check and hope for some desperate counterplay. But in a practical game, it should be winning for me regardless. I was very happy to win this game being very tired, and also with Black against a very formidable GM who has always been and still is a very difficult opponent for me. After this game I started to believe I had very good chances to do well in this tournament. This game won the 2nd prize for Best Played Game and tied for the Opening Innovation Prize.

**ENGLISH OPENING,
ANGLO-GRUENFELD (A16)**

GM Alexander Shabalov (2670)

WFM Carissa Yip(2307)

43rd Annual Eastern Open (5)

Bethesda, Maryland, 12.29.16

Notes by GM Alexander Shabalov [AS]

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 g6 3.g3 d5 4.cxd5 Nxd5 5.Bg2 Nb6 6.Nf3 Bg7 7.d3 e5 8.Be3 O-O 9.O-O Nc6 10.Rc1

After witnessing the demolition of GM Erenburg in a previous round, it is little wonder that White chooses a quiet line without any hope for the advantage.

10...Nd4 11.Nd2 c6 12.b4

Technically a novelty.

12...Re8 13.a4 a5?!

During the game i felt that this gives White control of squares.

14.b5 Bd7 15.bxc6 Bxc6 16.Bxc6 Nxc6?

This is the first real mistake on Carissa's part. 16...bxc6 should have been preferred. This is a counterintuitive decision as Black creates a weakness on c6, but increased light squares control is more important here.

17.Qb3 Nd4 18.Bxd4 exd4 19.Nb5!

This pawn sacrifice was probably underestimated by the young player.

19...Rxe2 20.Nc7

The interesting attempt 20. Ne4 fails to Qd5 21.Qd1 Qa2!)

20...Rb8

Black should have played the more dynamic 20...Rc8 21.Qxb6 Rxd2 22.Qxb7 Qd7 (20... Rxd2? was losing to 21.Nxa8 Nxa8 22.Qxb7 Nb6 23.Rc7).

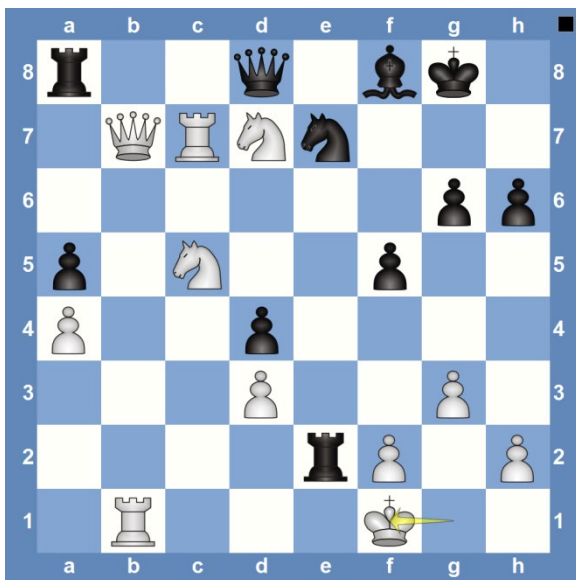
21. Ne4 Nc8?

Here comes the blunder. 21...Nd7 22.Nd5 was unpleasant, but still playable for black.

22.Na6! Ra8 23.Qxb7 Ne7 24.Rc5 h6 25.Rb1

With the funny idea of 25.Nb8.

25...f5 26.Rc7 Bf8 27.Nec5 Re5 28.Nd7 Re6 29.Nac5 Re2 30.Kf1! 1-0



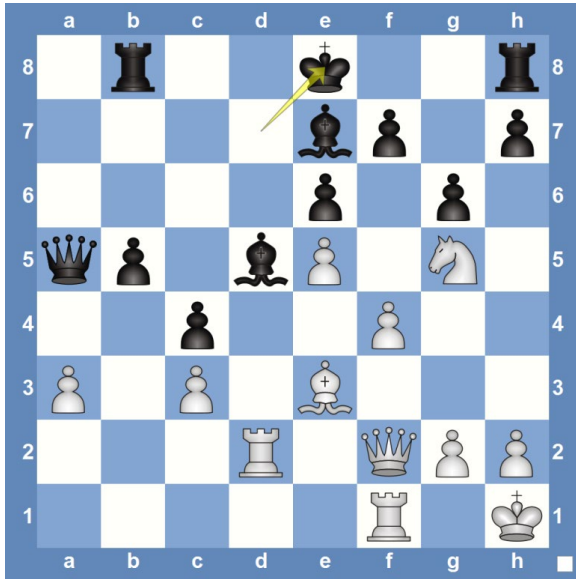
A nice finishing touch. The Rook has to leave e2 and then 31.Nxf8 decides. The final position is a picture of total domination.

Brilliance Prize:

Full Speed Ahead: GM Alex Shabalov(2670)-Sahil Sinha(2309), (7)

Black's King is in the center. White's pieces look powerful, but how to breakthrough?

29.???

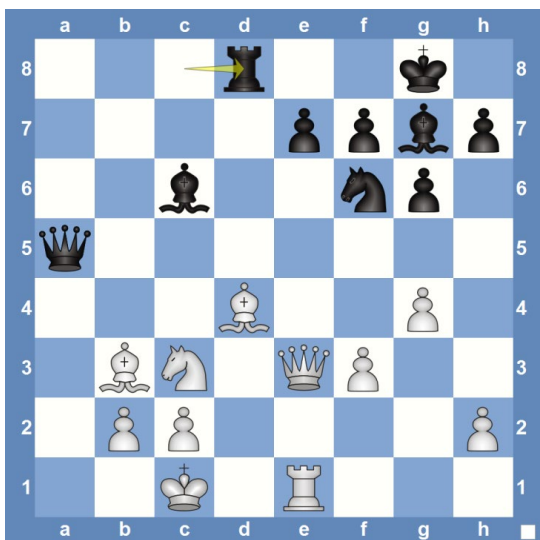


29.f5!! [AS] "As usual, the break in the most protected spot decides." 29.Rxd5 also wins. **29...gxf5 30.Rxd5! h6?** Losing on the spot. Better but hopeless is 30...exd5 31.Qxf5 Qc7 32.Qxf7+ Kd7 33.Qe6+ Ke8 34.Rd1 Rf8 35.Nxh7 Qc8 36.Qxd5 Qf5 37.Nxf8) **31.Nxf7** (or 31.Ne4) **31...Kxf7 32.Rd7** Black is helpless against numerous threats. **32...Rhd8 33.Ra7 Qxc3 34.Qh4 Re8 35.Qf6+ Kg8 36.Qxe6+ Kh8 37.Qxh6+ Kg8 38.Ra6 Rf8 39.Qg6+ Kh8 40.Qh5+ 1-0**

Chess Blindness...Did I Really Miss That? GM Sergey Erenburg(2647)-WFM Carissa Yip(2307), (3)

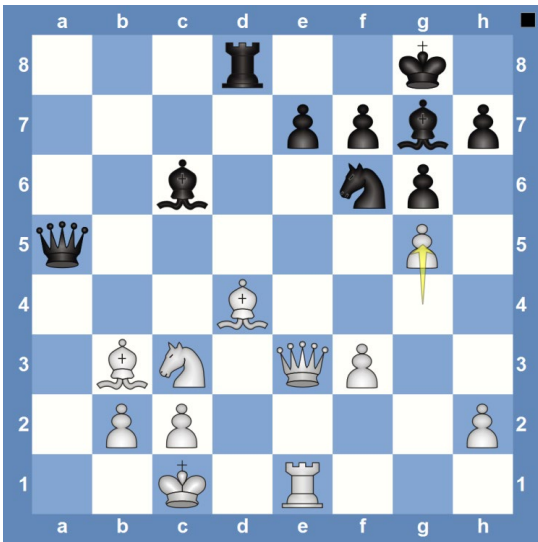
Last year, GM Erenburg breezed through the competition to win the tournament handily. This year, things didn't go so smoothly...

24.???



After outplaying his young opponent in a Yugoslav Dragon Sicilian, Sergey uncharacteristically fails to find the coup de grace. Crushing is **24.Bxf7+ Kxf7** (24...Kh8 is also hopeless) **25.Qe6+ Kf8** **26.Qxe7+ Kg8** **27.Qe6+ Kh8** **28.Bxf6 Qa1+** **29.Nb1**. Instead, GM Erenburg played **24.g5?**.

24...???



And Carissa doesn't miss her chance for glory! She finds **24...Rxd4!!** **25.Qxd4?** White's best chance is **25.Bxf7+ Kxf7** **26.Qxd4 Qxg5** although Black should still win. **25...Ne4!** Note that this Knight move covers the d2 escape square. And now there are several options, but they all lose:

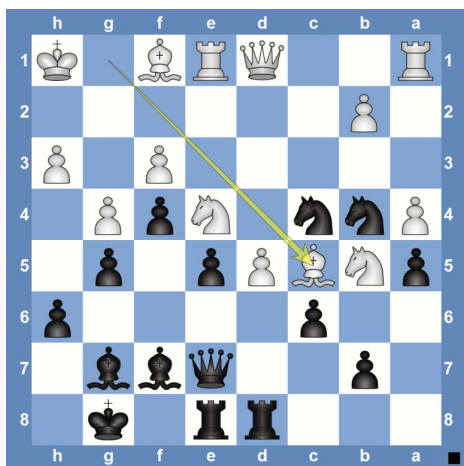
- 1) **26.Qxg7** Played in the game and White's best chance. **26.Qxg7+ Kxg7** **27.fxe4 Qxg5+** **28.Kb1 Qd2** **29.Re2 Qf4** Better is **29...Qd4**, but this is good enough. **30.Bc4 h5** **31.Bd3 Qe5** **32.Kc1 g5** **33.Kd1 g4** **34.Ke1 h4** **35.Kf1 Qf4+** **36.Kg1 Qc1+** **37.Kg2 f5** **38.h3 Qxb2** **39.Nd1 Qe5** 0-1
- 2) **26.Qxe4 Bxe4** **27.Rxe4 Qxg5+** **28.Kb1 e6** **29.Nd1 Qg1**
- 3) **26.Rxe4 Bxd4** **27.Rxd4 Qxg5+** **28.Kb1 Qg1+**
- 4) **26.Qc4 Qxg5+** **27.Kb1 Nd2+**
- 5) **26.Qe3 Bxc3** **27.Kb1 Nd2+** or **27.bxc3 Qa1#**

To Sac or Not to Sac, That Is the...Gazorninplat! [Evan Ling\(2089\)-David Bennett\(2231\) \(7\)](#)

In "An Infinite Number of Monkeys" sketch, comedian Bob Newhart imagines that although an infinite number of monkeys given enough time would type out "all the Great Books," someone must check their work to see if they are "turning out good stuff." In the sketch, after reading through much gibberish, one of the monitors exclaims: "Hey Harry, I think this one has got something – "To be or not to be, that is the gazorninplat."

So, should Black sac his Q with **26...Qxc5**, or wimp out with **26...Qd7**? And, without a computer to check, can you really be sure?

26...???



Well, perhaps only Stockfish or Komodo can ferret out the truth. Over the board, with the clock counting down, what to do?

The Wimp: **26...Qd7! 27.Bxc4 cxd5 28.Bxb4 axb4** -/=

The Hero: **26...Qxc5?!! 27.Nxc5 cxb5 28.axb5** and now either:

- 1) **28...Bxd5 29.Qxd5+!** The irony is that only this Queen countersac wins! **29...Nxd5 30.Bxc4 Kf8 31.Nxb7 Rd7** and now White is likely winning, although Black may have chances to hold.
- 2) **28...Ne3?!** As played in the game. **29.Rxe3!** Rather than this strong countersac, White played 29.Qe2? and subsequently lost. **29...fxe3 30.d6! Bd5 31.Ne4 Rf8 32.Be2** (32.Rxa5 Rxd6 +/-) And here the question is, can Black set up a fortress given all of his piece activity... **32...Rf4!** Black doesn't have time for 32...b6 33.Rc1! **33.Rxa5 Bf8 34.Ra7 Bxd6 35.Nxd6 Rxd6 36.Ra8+ Kg7 37.Kg1 Rd7 38.Qc1 Bxf3 39.Qxe3 Nd5 40.Qxe5+ Nf6** and despite a computer score of +2.07, it isn't clear how White can make progress. Stick that in your computer program!

Opening Survey: This year's Eastern Open was rich in opening innovations, and near innovations. As with all the special prizes, it takes two to tango, play well, and in this case, produce interesting opening novelties.

Sicilian, Yugoslav Dragon [B78]:

GM Sergey Erenburg(2647)-WFM Carissa Yip(2307) (3): **1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 g6 6.Be3 Bg7 7.f3 O-O**

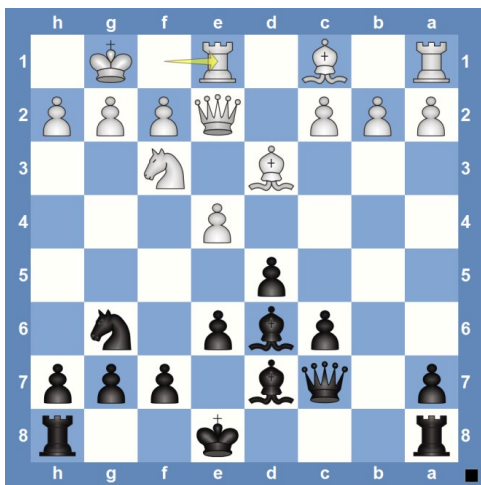
8.Qd2 Nc6 9.Bc4 Bd7 10.O-O-O Rc8 11.Bb3 Nxd4 The old mainline goes 11...Ne5 12.h4 h5 13.Bg5 Rc5. However, 11...Nxd4 has gained some traction recently, and appears like a good try for equality! I used to play the Dragon...who knew 11...Nxd4 was correct!
12.Bxd4 b5

- 1) **13.h4** The most common and critical move. **13...a5 14.h5 a4** with a mess **15.Bxf6 Bxf6 16.hxg6 e6! 17.e5! Bg5 18.f4 fxg6 19.Bxe6+ Bxe6 20.fxg5 b4 21.Qxd6 Qxd6 22.Rxd6 bxc3 23.Rxe6 cxb2+ 24.Kxb2 Rf2** with equality if you believe Stockfish!
- 2) **13.a3** Played in the game. **13...a5**
 - a) **14.Rhe1 Bc6 15.h4 b4 16.axb4 axb4 17.Na2 Ra8 18.e5 dxe5 19.Bxe5 Qc8** with a slight edge.
 - b) **14.e5 dxe5 15.Bxe5 b4!** The weaker **15...Bc6?!** was played in the game. **16.Bxf6 Bxf6 17.Ne4 Rc7 18.Nxf6+ exf6 19.a4 Qb8**
 =

French Tarrasch [C07]: And here we have 3 games of theoretical interest after **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 c5:**

GM Sergey Erenburg(2647)-GM Aleks Lenderman(2658) (5): Notes by Lenderman [AL]. **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nd2 c5 4.Ngf3 cxd4 5.Nxd4** Some people play 5.exd5 here to transpose back into the mainline. **5...Nc6 6.Bb5 Bd7 7.Nxc6 bxc6 8.Bd3 Qc7!?** And now the point of my opening idea. Well, actually the credit goes to my coach, Giorgi Kacheishvili, who found it. **8...Bd6** is the more common way to play here. **9.Qe2 Ne7** The point. I don't want to commit Bd6 yet. I want to see first what plan white chooses. Here White has either 10.0-0 or 10.Nf3:

10.O-O Ng6 11.Nf3 Bd6! 12.Re1 and now there are fascinating possibilities:



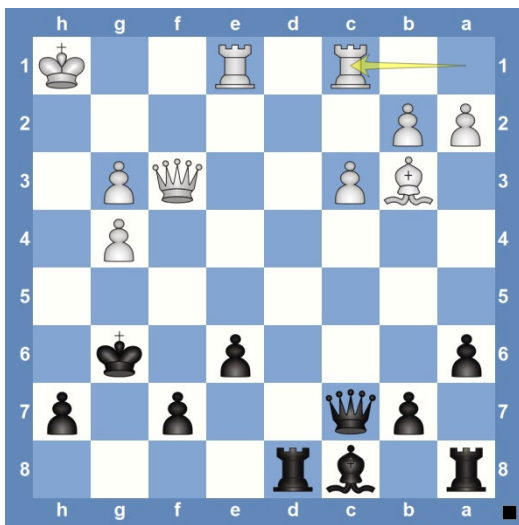
- 1) **12...Nf4** and now either:
 - a) **13.Bxf4!** This move honestly surprised me a little bit. I was more worried about White giving up his d3 bishop. But possibly objectively 13.Bxf4 is indeed the best move. **13...Bxf4 14.g3 Bd6 15.exd5!?** 15.c4 was played in the game. **15...cxd5 16.Rac1** Maybe was worth a try. Here I would have to play carefully with **16...Qb6 17.c4 dxc4 18.Rxc4 Rd8 19.Ne5 Bxe5 20.Qxe5 O-O 21.a3 Be8 22.Rb4 Qd6** And Black should be close to equal here.
 - b) **13.Qd1 Nxd3 14.Qxd3 f6!?** (14...0-0 15.e5 Be7 16.Ng5 This actually could've been a bit dangerous for me and I was kind of worried about it. Stockfish doesn't see the danger right away but after thinking for a while it starts seeing black's position is something to worry about.) **15.exd5 cxd5 16.Qxd5 0-0 17.Qe4 Rfe8 18.b3 Bc6 19.Qc4 Qd7** Would have been very interesting, with hidden compensation. Black gets 2 Bishops, a strong center and strong pressure along the b and c-files. White doesn't have a clear plan, and I realized that whenever we sacrifice material, but opponent doesn't have a good clear plan to take advantage of it, very often that means there is good compensation for the sacrificed material.
 - c) **13.Qe3 f6!?** (for 13...Nxd3, see 13.Qd1) **14.e5** (14.Bf1 0-0 15.c4 e5) **14...fxe5 15.Nxe5 0-0 16.g3 Nh3+ 17.Kg2 Bxe5 18.Qxe5 Qxe5 19.Rxe5 Nxf2** with a slight edge for Black [TB].
- 2) **12...O-O 13.e5 Bc5!?** (13...Be7 14.h4 f5 15.h5 Nh8 Nh2 +/-) **14.c3 a5 15.h4 h6 16.b3 Ne7 17.Nd4 f5 18.Qf3 Kh8 19.Rb1 Bb6** with a slight edge for White.
- 3) **12...Rb8 13.e5** Is rather pointless for Black, but what does White have after [TB] **13...Be7 14.b3 c5**
 - a) **15.Ng5 0-0 16.c4 dxc4 17.bxc4 Bc6 18.Qh5 Bxg5 19.Bxg5 Rb2 20.Bc1 Rb7** =

b) 15.c4 0-0 16.cxd5 exd5 17.Bd2 Rfe8 18.Rac1 Qb6 =

c) 15.c3 Bc6 16.Ng5 c4 17.bxc4 dxc4 18.Bxg6 hxg6 19.Qxc4 0-0 20.Qh4 Bxg5 21.Bxg5 Rb2 22.c4 Bb7 is nearly equal
10. Nf3 In another game, my GM opponent played 10.Nf3, and here was the first time I got to execute me and my coach's idea accurately with **10...Ng6 11.e5 f6!** The point. I allowed e5, but since I didn't lose on a tempo, I am able to chip away on his center very quickly, and after a few inaccuracies from my opponent, I already got a much better position out of the opening. **12.Bxg6+ hxg6 13.Qd3?!** 13.O-O Would lead to a normal dynamic position. **13...Kf7 14.Qd4?!** Very strange dubious maneuverings by White with the queen. I had a feeling I should already be a bit better. **14...Qb6!** It makes sense to trade off his active piece, especially since he spend so much time moving it around :). **15.Qf4 Qb4+ 16.Qxb4 Bxb4+ 17.c3 Be7 18.Be3 g5** +/- And later I won without too much trouble against P. Idani at the 2016 World Team Championship.

Vishal Kobla [VK]-Beckman/Shen: 1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nd2 c5 4. exd5 Qxd5 5. Ngf3 cxd4 6. Bc4 Qd6 7. O-O Nf6 8. Nb3 Nc6 9. Nbx d4 Nxd4 10. Nxd4 a6 11. Re1 Qc7 12. Bb3 (12.Qe2 is a recent try for an advantage, but Black equalizes with Aagaard's 12...h6!) 12...Bd6 13. Nf5 Bxh2+ 14. Kh1 O-O 15. Nxg7 Rd8 16. Qf3 Kxg7 17. Bh6+ Kg6 18. c3

Vishal Kobla(2180)-Tom Beckman(2055) (3): 18... Nh5! 19. Bc1 Bf4 20. g4 Ng3+ 21. fxc3 Bxc1 [VK] To summarize so far: Following a piece sacrifice by White, Black returned the piece and has a fairly stable position in return. The only nuisance being the king out in the open on g6, so White henceforth attempts to take advantage before the Black king can find safe haven. **22.Raxc1**



[TB] This is the tabiya that all 3...c5 French players must know in order to successfully play this line, and this was my first game. I was relieved that I had recalled everything correctly until here. For some reason, I relaxed too soon and forgot that **22...b6** is necessary and correct with **23.Qe3 Bb7+ 24.Kh2 Qc5** equalizing. In the game, I played **22...b5? 23.Qe3!** (23.Bc2+?! was played in the game, and Black could have equalized.) **23...Bb7+ 24.Kh2 Qe7** (Here Black can't play 24...Qc5 to equalize.) **25.Rf1 Kg7 26.Rf2 Bd5 27.Rcf1 Bxb3 28.axb3 f6** +/-

Vishal Kobla(2180)-Christopher Shen(2229) (5): 18...e5? [TB] This move and 18...Nd5 are what I was afraid of blundering...only 18...Nh5 equalizes. **19.Bc2+ e4** [VK] It is at this move that White must commit to his intentions. The bishop pair becomes extremely strong on such an open board after the R sac:

1) **20.Bxe4 Bxe4 21.Rxe4 Qc6 22.Qe3 Qb5 23.Rh4** [TB] and Black is on life-support without sacing a R.

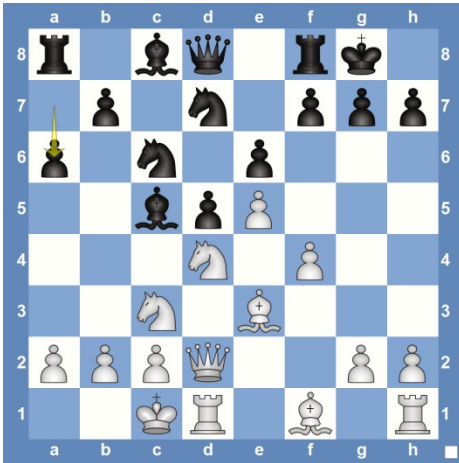
2) **20.Rxe4?! Nxe4 21.Qxe4+**

a) [VK] **21...Kxh6** is another try, where the engine says that a perpetual is the best option for White. I have a feeling that if the engine is left to calculate this position for a few hours, it might find a better continuation. In either case, it's a fairly complicated position.

b) **21...f5? 22.Qh4 Be6** The winning continuation was **23.Re1!** (23.Qg5+ was played in the game with a draw although White had another chance to play Re1 with good winning chances), where I missed the key move after **23...Be5 24.f4** +- This move happened to slip out of my conscious at the time. Now that I reflect back on it, I find it quite surprising that I missed it, but oh well.

French Steinitz [C11]: GM Larry Kaufman and his opponents produced two games of interest after **1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.e5 Nfd7 5.f4 c5 6.Nf3 Nc6 7.Be3**

GM Larry Kaufman(2401)-Tom Beckman(2055) (7): went 7...cxd4 The other recommended approach, 7...a6 8.Qd2 b5, was played in another game, although 7...Be7 has been tried on occasion. 8.Nxd4 Bc5 9.Qd2 O-O 10.O-O-O a6 and the battle lines are drawn: White will attack on the K-side, while Black attempts to breakthrough on the Q-side.



11.Nb3 (This is the tabiya for this variation. This move and 11.Qf2 and 11.h4 are considered most challenging to Black. Other tries are 11.Kb1, 11.g4, and 11.Nce2.) **11...Bb4!** Perhaps less good is 11...b6 12.h4 Qc7 13.h5 h6 14.g4 Bb7 +.28/24. **12.Bd3** Or 12.a3 Be7 followed by b4 =. **12...b5** And now there are several options:

- 1) **13.Qf2! N** White is not afraid of the doubled cPs and likely loss of a P because he sees that his K-side attack may gain momentum, while Black's attack has been slowed somewhat. Larry's intuition is terrific! Critical is the obvious **13...Bxc3** (13...Na5?! was played in the game) **14.bxc3 Na5 15.Nxa5 Qxa5 16.Kb1 Qxc3 17.Bd4 Qb4+ 18.Ka1** and Black can reach quality with **18...f6!**.
- 2) Cyrus Lakdawala's book on the Classical French analyzes Anand-Morozevich, FIDE World Ch, San Luis 2005 which starts with **13.Rhf1**.
- 3) Gharamian-Ni Hua, Biel 2011 went **13.g4** and now Stockfish prefers **13...Bb7! 14.a3 Be7 15.Kb1 b4 -/=**.
- 4) Also OK is **13.Kb1 Bb7 14.Qf2 Bxc3 15.bxc3 Rc8 =**.

QGD [D30]: Lenderman-Shabalov (4) -- Notes by GM Aleksandr Lenderman [AL] and GM Alexander Shabalov [AS]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3

3...a6 [AS] A new strange way to meet Queen's Pawn openings that been popularized lately by one of the top Russian juniors, Vladimir Fedoseev. Even the world champion, Magnus Carlsen, jumped on the bandwagon recently.

[AL] After **3...Nf6**, White too can avoid mainlines with **4.e3** (Mainline is 4.Nc3) **4...c5** and then either:

- 1) **5.cxd5 exd5 6.Bb5+ Bd7 7.Bxd7+ Nbx d7**
- 2) **5.Nc3 Nc6 6.a3 cxd4 7.exd4 g6** or **7...b6 8.cxd5**
- 3) **5.b3** or **5.a3**.

4.e3 Other ways to play are [AL]:

- 1) **4.cxd5!?** is probably the most critical move and then **4...exd5 5.Nc3 Nf6** (or 5...c6 6.e4!?) **6.Bg5 Be6** and now it transposes into several games played by Fedoseev.
- 2) **4.Bg5** is another try that was played by Hammer against Carlsen. After **4...Be7**, Black probably has a good chances to equalize. Sharper is **4...f6**. Carlsen played this ambitious move, trying to win and hold on to the c4 pawn, but later on Hammer got a strong initiative and ended up beating Magnus. After **5.Bxe7 Nxe7** (or 5...Qxe7) **6.e3 O-O 7.Nc3**.
- 3) Finally, **4.Nc3 dxc4** transposes into good lines for Black in the QGA after **5.e3 Nf6** (or 5...b5 6.a4) **6.Bxc4 b5**.

4...Nf6 5.b3 c5 [AS] 5...b6 is another good way to proceed for Black.) **6.Bb2 cxd4 7.exd4 Nc6 8.Nbd2 g6!?** [AL] Now this was relatively new to me. I was only familiar with Be7 setups or maybe Bd6. I guess that's the plus of playing a semi-useful 3...a6 move and not committing to developing the Bishop on f8 right away. Next move, likely better is **9.g3** (9.c5?! N was played in the game), so that if Black takes his time building his harmony, I can afford to do the same thing. After **9...b6 10.Bg2 Bb7 11.O-O Bg7 12.Qe2 O-O 13.Rfd1 Rc8** and now either **14.Rac1** or **14.Nf1** give White an active game:

- 1) **14.Rac1 Qe7 15.Nf1 Rfd8** (15...Nb4!?) **16.Ne3 +/-**
- 2) **14.Nf1** and now I get to put my knight on a move active, e3 square where it pressures the center more, staring at the d5 pawn, and does not duplicate my f3 knight. Then **14...dxc4 (14...Qe7 15.Ne3 Rfd8 16.Rac1 dxc4 17.bxc4 Na5 18.Bh3 Rc7 19.Ne5) 15.bxc4 b5 16.Ne3** with interesting play.

Catalan, Closed [E06]: Christopher Shen(2229)-GM Larry Kaufman(2401) (6): Although Black can equalize with 4...Bb4+ as Larry demonstrated in his book, *The Chess Advantage in White and Black*, he now plays a line with more dynamic chances.

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 d5 4.g3 Be7 5.Bg2 0-0 6.0-0 by transposition **6...c6 7.Qc2 b6 8.Nbd2 Bb7 9.e4 Na6** and now there are several options:

1) **10.a3 c5**

a) **11.e5 Nd7 12.dxc5 bxc5 13.cxd5 exd5 14.b3 Nc7 15.Bb2 Ne6 16.Rfe1 a5 17.a4 Nb8** as in the game, or **17...Rb8** -/= with a nice edge for Black

b) **11.exd5 exd5 12.dxc5 Nxc5 13.b4 Ne6 14.Bb2 Rc8 15.Ne5 Rc7 16.Rad1 Qa8 17.Qf5 g6 18.Qh3 Ng5 19.Qh6 Nh5 20.h4 Re8 21.c5 bxc5 22.bxc5 Ne6 23.c6 Bxc6 24.Nxc6 Qxc6 25.Qe3** -/+

2) **10.e5 Nd7 11.a3 c5 12.Re1 Rc8 13.b3 Rc7 14.cxd5 cxd4 15.Qb1 Bxd5 16.Bb2 Qa8 17.Bxd4 Rfc8 18.Bb2 Nac5** -/=

3) **10.b3 Nb4 11.Qb1 dxe4 12.Nxe4 c5 13.Nxf6+ Bxf6 14.dxc5 Qd3 15.Ne1 Qxb1 16.Rxb1 Bxg2 17.Kxg2 Nxa2** =

4) **10.Ne5 Qc7 11.exd5 cxd5 12.b3 Nb4 13.Qc3 Rac8 14.Bb2 Rfd8 15.Rfc1 dxc4** -/=

5) **10.Rd1 c5 11.dxc5 Nb4 12.Qb3 Bxc5 13.a3 Na6 14.exd5 exd5 15.cxd5 Bxd5 16.Qf4 Qc8 17.Qf4** -/=