

GM Alexander Shabalov Blitzes the Opposition at the 44th Eastern Open

by Tom Beckman

Tournament Results: The move to Tyson's Corner VA increased the turnout to 205 players in the 6-section, 7-round Eastern Open over December 27-30, 2017. GM Alexander Shabalov scored a perfect 7 wins. The decisive game came in round 4 when GM Shabalov downed GM Aleksandr Lenderman (last year's winner) to take a full-point lead over the field. GM Alexander Lenderman took 2nd with 5½ points. Section winners were:

Section	Winners	Score
Open	GM Alexander Shabalov	7
U2200	Ali Mirafzali	6
U1900	Matthew Orye & Arnav Tamna Gupta	5½
U1600	Carson Collier & Andrew Guo	5½
U1300	Sherlock Grigsby II	5
U1000	Ryan Ho	6

In addition to the main tournament, a day-long Scholastic tourney drew 57 players in 3 sections, and the Blitz tourney consisted of 38 entrants. A lecture by Alex Lenderman on active and defensive prophylaxis showcased the event.

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. A tournament e-booklet was sent out to all participants containing over 50 annotated and raw game scores, as well as brilliancies, puzzles, and an opening survey.

Featured Games from the 2017 Eastern Open:

All In: Both Alexs had perfect scores going into round 4, and it was likely that this game would determine the eventual tournament winner. This game won the 2nd prize for Best Played Game.

QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED (D30)

GM Alexander Shabalov (2629)

GM Aleksandr Lenderman (2687)

44th Annual Eastern Open (4)

Tyson's Corner, Virginia, 12.29.17

Notes by GM Alexander Shabalov (AS), GM Aleksandr Lenderman (AL), and Tom Beckman (TB)

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 a6!?

(AS) Wait a minute, this is exactly what I played against Lenderman a year ago at the same tournament with the colors reversed! While it is not a bad move itself, Alex lamented his choice after the game saying that inclusion of 3...Nf6 4.Nc3 is necessary if black intends to play this line. This is a little extreme statement, no doubt influenced by game result, and a lot of strong players, including Mamedyarov, would disagree. An out of form (and out of luck) Magnus Carlsen playing Black lost against his own second and good friend, Jon Ludwig Hammer, in the last round at Stavanger 2015. An unenviable situation for the Champion. It is therefore not a surprise that Carlsen now chooses to play something slightly different... 3... Nf6 4. g3 leads to a standard Catalan after 4... a6 5. Bg2 dxc4, and 4. Nc3 a6 is the move order Black is looking for.

(AL) Black should wait for White to play Nc3 before venturing a6. Thus, if 3. Nc3, then 3...a6 is OK; or if 3...Nf6 4. Nc3, then 4...a6 is OK.

4. Nbd2!?

(AS) Played after 20 minutes thinking. I seriously considered active options like:

1) 4. cxd5 exd5 5. Nc3 c6 6. e4 ((TB) 6. Bf4 may be better) 6 ...dxe4 7. Ng5 Nh6 8. Bc4 Be7 9. Ncxe4 Bf5 10. d5 O-O 11. O-O cxd5 12. Bxd5 Nc6 13. h3 Nb4 14. Bb3 Qd3 {1/2-1/2 (14)

Hammer,J (2630)-Andreikin,D (2734) chess.com INT 2017, or

2) 4. Bg5 1-0 (34) Hammer,J (2677)-Carlsen,M (2876) Stavanger 2015.

But in the end, I decided to stick with pregame plan: to check out how Alex's defense to the Catalan is doing.

4... Nf6?!

(AS) And this is already a misstep. However, 4... c5 deserved serious attention. It is hard to believe but the game can quickly stir into uncharted territory as early as move 6 in major 1.d4 opening! After 5. cxd5

- 1) 5... exd5 6. e4!? (Or 6. g3 Nc6 7. Bg2 Nf6 8. O-O Be6 with a kind of Tarrash setup) and now either:
 - a) 6... cxd4 7. exd5 with a totally original and fresh position, or
 - b) 6... Nf6 7. exd5 cxd4 8. Bc4 b5 9. Bd3 Be7 10. Nb3 Qxd5 11. Nbx4
- 2) (TB) 5... cxd4 6. Qa4+ b5 7. Qxd4 exd5 =
(AL) Weaker is 4... dxc4 5. Nxc4 b5 6. Nce5 f6 (6... Bb7 7. a4) 7. Nd3 ±

5. g3!

(AS) That's the point. While Nbd2 is a program move for White, a6 without taking on c4 first is does not look smart for Black.

(AL) This setup with Nbd2 and g3 is probably just good for White. That's why it's more accurate if you want to play the systems with a6, to play it only once White's knight is already on c3.

5... dxc4

(AS) 5... c5 now is a bit too late as after 6. Bg2 Nc6 7. O-O cxd4 8. cxd5 Nxd5 9. Nb3 White has a pleasant advantage.

(AL) 5... c5 6. Bg2 Nc6 7. O-O cxd4 8. cxd5 Nxd5 9. Nb3 Be7 10. Nbx4 Nxd4 11. Qxd4 +/-

6. Nxc4 b5

(AS) There are 2 additional options:

- 1) 6... b6 7. Bg2 Bb7 8. Nce5 Ra7 9. O-O Bd6 10. Bg5 O-O
 - a) 11.Qc1 and 1-0 (37) Istratescu,A (2589)-Secheres,A (2332) Corund 2017
 - b) (TB) Slightly better is 11. Rc1 Be7 12. Qa4 h6 13. Bxf6 gxf6 14. Ng4 f5 15. Nge5 Be4 16. Qb3 Qd5 17. Qe3 with a nice edge
- 2) 6... c5 led to a famous masterpiece in 7. Bg2 Nc6
 - a) 8. Nfe5 Nxe5 9. dxe5 Qxd1+ 10. Kxd1 Nd7 11. a4 Rb8 12. a5 ((TB) Slightly better is 12. Kc2 b6 13. Rd1 Bb7 14. Bxb7 Rxb7 15. Be3 ±) and 1-0 (36) Andersson,U (2640)-Lautier,J (2620) Biel 1996, or
 - b) 8. O-O!? cxd4 9. Bf4 Nd5? 10. Nxd4 Nxd4 11. Qxd4 winning.

7. Nce5 Bb7

(AS) Knowing how the game went, it is easy to recommend 7... Bb4+ 8. Bd2 Bxd2+ 9. Qxd2 Bb7 10. Bg2 O-O 11. Rc1 Qd6 12. O-O +/- but then Black has to forever abandon any ambitions of playing c5.

8. Bg2 Qc8

(AS) 8... Qc8 is an unfortunate necessity as Nxf7 followed by Ne5+ was already in the air. 8... Bd5 9. O-O Be7 10. Bg5 h6 11. Bxf6 Bxf6 12. Qc2 ±

(AL) Alternatives are:

- 1) 8... Bd5 9. O-O h6 (9... Nbd7 10. Bg5 or 10. Nxd7) 10. Bf4 (10. a4) ±
- 2) 8... Be7 9. Nxf7 Kxf7 10. Ng5+ +-

9. O-O Be7 10. Bf4 O-O 11. Rc1 Ra7

(AS) With simple moves, White achieved almost a decisive advantage and now has to choose from bunch of good plans.

(TB) Or 11... Be4 12. Ng5 Bxg2 13. Kxg2 Qb7+ 14. Kg1 Nd5 15. e4 Nxf4 16. gxf4 ±

12. Bh3

(AS) The Computer also likes to prepare for e4, but does it more precisely with 12. Nd3! Bd5 13. Re1 ±.

12... Bd5 13. Nd2 Qd8 14. Qc2 Nh5

(AS) After 14... Ba8 15. e4 Qxd4 16. Nxf7 Kxf7 17. Be3, White is winning.

15. Be3 f5 16. f3

(TB) Here White has several more promising options:

- 1) 16. Bg2 Nf6 17. Rfd1 a5 18. Bxd5 Nxd5 ±
- 2) 16. Nb3 ± stops c5 and puts Black in a permanent bind
- 3) 16. g4 fxg4 17. Bxg4 Nf6 18. Bf3 ±



16... Bd6?!

(AS) About 40 years ago, Mark Dvoretzky was giving a lecture on methods to change the course of poorly developing games during an annual Russian junior camp in the Armenian mountains. Had Alex Lenderman been at the camp, he would definitely choose to play c5 now or on the next move. After 16... c5!? 17. dxc5, Black can reach a reasonable position with either:

- 1) 17...Bf6 18. Bd4 Nd7 19. f4 g5 20. c6 Rc7
 - a) 21. Qd3 Bxe5 22. fxe5 Rxc6 23. Rxc6 Bxc6 24. Rc1 Bb7 +/-
 - b) 21. Qd1 Bxe5 22.fxe5 Bxc6 23.e4 g4 24. Bg2 +/- (TB), or
- 2) 17... f4 18. Bd4 fxg3 19. e3 gxh2+ 20. Kxh2 Qe8 21. f4 Bf6 +/- (TB)

17. Bf2 Qg5?

(AS) Better is 17... c5 18. e4 Ba8 19. Rce1 (or 19. f4 cxd4 20. Qb3 ±) 19... Rc7 20. exf5 cxd4 21. Qb1 ±

(AL) For better or worse, 17... c5 18. e4 Ba8 had to be tried here to get the rook from a7 into the game. Since I didn't play c5, I didn't have real chances after that.

18. Bg2

(AS) Now it is all over. Like in countless games before this one a well prepared e2-e4 wins in a 1.d4 opening.

18... Qh6 19. e4 Bb7 20. exf5 Rxf5 21. Ng4

(AL) 21. g4 also wins easily of course.

21... Qg6 22. d5 Ra8 23. dxe6 Qxe6 24. Rfe1 Qf7

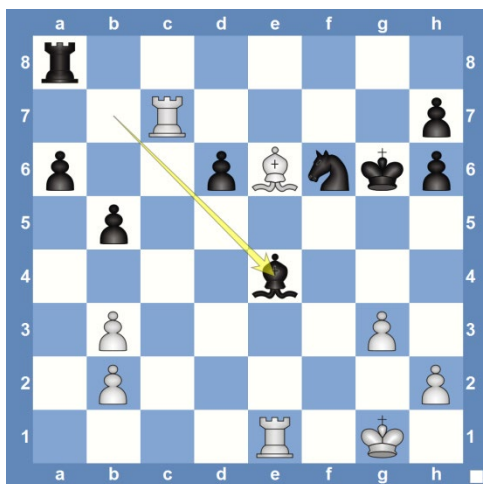


25. Bh3!

(AS) The key move that forces Black to sacrifice an exchange without a compensation.

25... Rxf3 26. Nxf3 Qxf3 27. Qb3+ Qxb3 28. axb3 Nd7 29. Nh6+! gxh6 30. Bxd7 Nf6 31. Be6+ Kg7 32. Bc5 Kg6 33. Bxd6 cxd6 34. Rc7 Be4

(AS) Here comes a thematic finish that reminds me of the famous Reti-Alekhine Baden-Baden 1925 finale.



35. Rxe4! Nxe4 36. Bd5 Re8 37. Bf7+, Black resigned.

Shabba's Secret Sauce: Alex had four games with Black in the tournament, and he was very consistent in his treatment of the opening. However, it was a very obscure variation, and to this author's skeptical eye, it seemed dubious at best. So, I asked Shabba about it, and was floored by his response:

1. e4 Nc6 2. d4 d6!

I must explain a little about this move order which New in Chess called a Pirc-Nimzo hybrid, which I believe is accurate. My personal journey into this line began in August 2017, when James Schuyler played it against me in the last round, I reacted with my standard three pawn's attack and quickly was worse.

3. Nc3 Nf6 4. f4 e5 5. d5 Ne7 6. Nf3 exf4 7. Bxf4 Ng6 8. Bg3 Be7 9. Bb5+ Bd7 10. Bxd7+ Qxd7?!

The first step in a wrong direction. After 10... Nxd7 11. O-O Bf6, Black is already better.

11. h3 O-O 12. Nd4 c6?!

And this is another false step as Black helps White to get rid of his e4 weakness.

13. O-O cxd5 14. exd5 Rfe8 15. Nf5 Rac8 16. Qd4 Bd8 17. Kh1 Ne5 18. Rae1 Rc4 19. Qxa7! +- 1-0 (35) Shabalov,A-Schuyler,J Norfolk (US Open) 2017

Everyone in Virginia knows that James plays this opening pretty much all of his life and in 2013 published a wonderful book (Everyman Chess) on the subject. But because not too many people know James outside of the state - nobody paid attention. Recently there were two events that hopefully will change that.

First there was an article by Jeroen Bosch in #6 New in Chess magazine of 2017 that drew attention of few players (including myself and I went 4-0 with it at the Eastern Open! Thanks Jeroen!) My biggest surprise came when I started analyze my games from Tyson's Corner and realized that I was not the only one who took a note of Bosch's suggestions.

There were a few other guys, and that's right, one of them was Magnus Carlsen, who employed it with a great success at the World Rapid and Blitz, occurring at the same time as the Eastern Open. Anand and Bortnyk escaped after being seriously worse and Movsesian lost badly. What is the main attraction of this line? In my opinion, what Black does is to draw opponents into a King's Indian structure, which is a challenge for many 1.e4 players.

The following game is an nice illustration of this concept. My opponent had a great tournament, beating a bunch of higher-rated players, but in this game he just could not get around without his dark square bishop.

PIRC-NIMZO HYBRID, SCHUYLER'S DARK KNIGHT SYSTEM (B00)

Missaka Warusawitharana (2190)

GM Alexander Shabalov (2629)

44th Annual Eastern Open (7)

Tyson's Corner, Virginia, 12.30.17

Notes by GM Alexander Shabalov

1. e4 Nc6 2. d4 d6! 3. c4 e5 4. d5 Nb8 5. Nc3 g6 6. Be3 Bh6

Slightly better was 6...h5! 7. Qd2 Bh6 8. Nf3 Nd7.

7. Qd2 Bxe3 8. Qxe3 Kf8 9. Bd3

Or 9. c5 Nd7 10. cxd6 cxd6 11. Be2.

(TB) 9. h4 h5 10. 0-0-0 Nf6 11. Be2 Kg7 12. Rf1 is also interesting.

9... Kg7 10. Nge2 Nh6 11. h3 c6 12. O-O-O

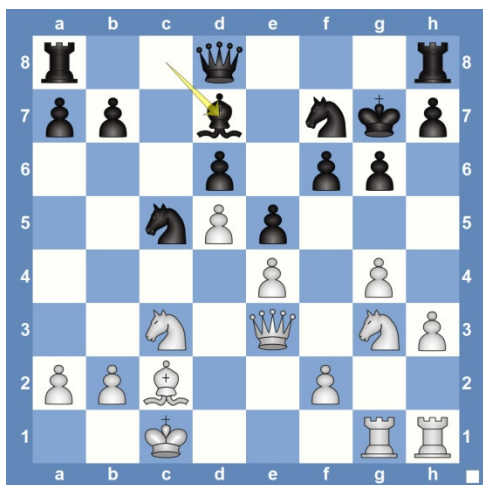
It seems that the idea to castle long is a mistake in this structure. White is unable to open files on the king-side, while Black has all the time in the world on the opposite side.

12. ... cxd5 13. cxd5 Nd7 14. g4 f6 15. Rdg1

Weaker was 15. f4 Nc5 16. Kb1 Nxd3.

15... Nf7 16. Ng3 Nc5 17. Bc2 Bd7

Somewhat better was 17... b5! 18. Nxb5 Qb6 19. Nc3 Rb8 20. Nd1 Ba6.



18. Kb1

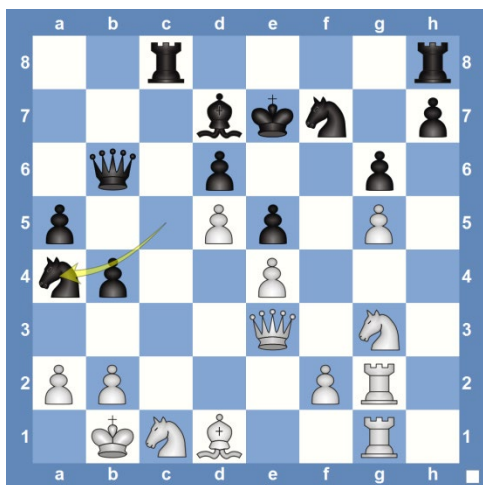
Or 18. b4 Na6 19. a3 Nc7 20. Bd3 Rc8 21. Kb2 Na8.

(TB) White's last chance for counter-play was 18. h4!? Bxg4 19. f3 Bc8! 20. Nf5+ Kf8 21. Nh6 Qb6 22. Qd2 with mutual chances.

18... a5 19. Rh2 b5 20. Bd1 Qb6 21. Rhg2 b4 22. Nce2 Rac8 23. Nc1 Kf8 24. h4 Ke7 25. g5?!

Another misstep. White creates a weakness which will decide any endgames in Black's favor. He should have started bringing his pieces to defend his king.

25...fxg5 26. hxg5 Na4



27. Qd2? (27. Nf1! +/-) 27... Nc3+ 28. Ka1 Nxd1 29. Rxd1 Rc4 30. Qe1 Rhc8 31. Nf1 Bh3 32. Rh2 (32. Rg3 Qxf2 -+) 32... Bg4 33. f3 (33. Ne3 Bxd1 34. Nxc4 Qd4 -+) 33... Bxf3 34. Nd2 Bxd1 35. Nxc4 Rxc4 36. Qxd1 Nxg5 37. Qd2 Qg1 38. Kb1 Ke8! 0-1

Chess Pirates: This amazing game won the 1st prize for Best Fighting Spirit, an Opening Innovation prize, and it was the first time that a player outside of the Open section has won a special prize.

FRENCH DEFENSE, WINAWER GAMBIT, EUWE VARIATION (C18)

Stephen Jablon (1980)

Konstantin Molodtsov (1984)

44th Annual Eastern Open (5)

Tysons Corner, Virginia, 12.29.17

Notes by Stephen Jablon

Konstantin Molodtsov and I have faced each other many times as we are both regulars at the National Institutes of Health Chess Club. During this rivalry, he has opted for a French Winawer whenever he had the black pieces, and I have always responded with the rare Euwe Variation. But while the same position keeps arising after White's tenth move, we try to outfox each other by coming up with new ideas later on.

1. e4 e6 2. d4 d5 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. e5 c5 5. a3 Bxc3+ 6. bxc3 Ne7 7. Qg4 cxd4 8. Qxg7 Rg8 9. Qxh7 Qc7 10. Kd1

This move initiates the Euwe Variation. He was threatening both 10. ... Qxc3+ followed by 11. ... Qxa1, and 10. ... Qxe5+ followed by 11. ... dxc3. The most common way of answering both threats is 10. Ne2, but 10. Kd1 ensured that my knight could quickly go to g5 via f3 and that my light-squared bishop's development wasn't hampered.

10. ... Nbc6 11.Nf3 dxc3 12.Ng5 Qxe5

This move was suggested by Viktor Korchnoi, abandoning the defense of f7 for active piece play. Molodtsov had played this tricky move twice before against me, winning once and losing once, and I had a feeling he was waiting for an opportunity to play it against me a third time.

13. Qxf7+ Kd7

Molodtsov had to block in his bishop because 13. ... Kd8 is met by 14. Qxg8+ Nxg8 15. Nf7+ followed by 16. Nxe5.

14. h4

I had played 14. f4 and 14. Bf4 against Molodtsov in previous encounters, so I wanted to surprise him with something he hadn't seen before. Lev Psakhis gave 14. Bf4 as the main move back in 2003 and mentioned 14. h4 as an interesting possibility without giving any analysis. In 2012, John Watson went so far as to recommend the move as favoring White and gave the sample line 14. h4 Qxd4+ 15. Bd3 e5 16. Be3 Qg4+ 17. Kd1, the same moves that were played in this game. There's only one previously recorded example of 14. h4, when Robert Schuermans employed it in 2013 to defeat Hansjuergen Kreschke at the European Union Team Championship in Dresden.

14. ... Qd4+

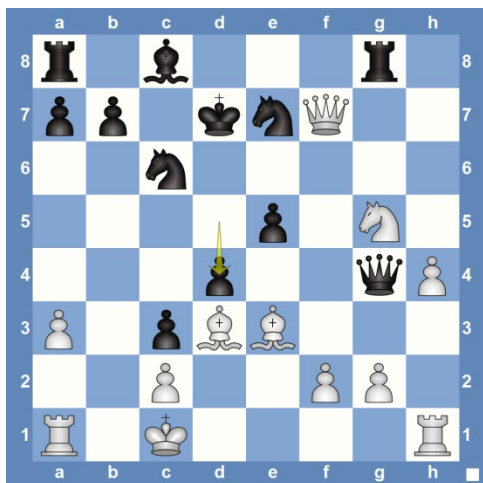
In the game mentioned in the previous note, Kreschke played 14. ... Rg7. Molodtsov was evidently surprised by 14. h4 as he thought for a long time before replying.

15. Bd3 e5 16. Be3 Qg4+ 17. Kc1

I paused before playing this, considering whether to play 17. Be2 or the move suggested by Watson. Had I played 17. Be2, Molodtsov wouldn't have been able to take the g2-pawn as 18. Bf3 would have trapped his queen, and after 17. ... Qf5 18. Qxf5+ Nxf5, I would have had the better endgame due to the connected outside passed pawns. With my king in the center, it was certainly tempting to play an endgame. But Molodtsov's king was also in the center, so I chose the trickier option.

17. ... d4

Molodtsov was at a crossroads here. He could have patiently prepared development of his bishop with 17. ... Kc7 or 17. ... b6, or pursued my precariously placed dark-squared bishop with 17. ... d4. Grabbing a pawn with 17. ... Qxg2 wouldn't have been good for him as after 18. Rd1, I would have been threatening 19. Bh7 followed by 20. Rxd5+.



18. Ne4

My opening preparation with the 14. h4 move consisted of a quick cram session with the fourth edition of John Watson's *Play the French* during the half hour between when the pairings were posted and the clocks were started. As this was the first move where I needed to think for myself, and my dark-squared bishop is hanging without any visible escape squares, I played 18. Ne4 to threaten a fork on f6 and free up g5 for my attacked bishop. But this gave Molodtsov the opportunity to double my pawns had he played 19. ... Be6 on his nineteenth move.

The alternative 18. Be4 is attractive, but Molodtsov had resources:

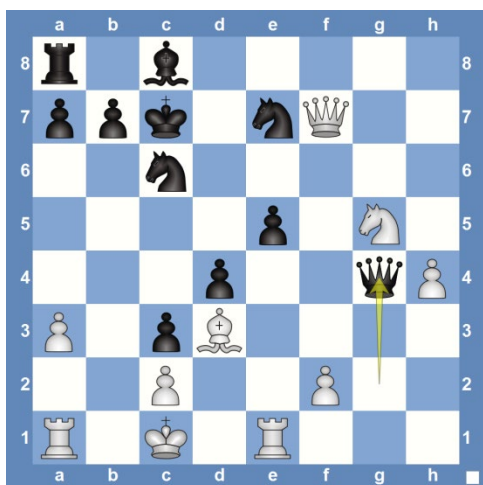
- 1) 18. ... dxe3 19. Bxc6+ Kxc6 20. Qxe7 b6 and now either:
 - a) 21. Nf7 Qe6 22. Nxe5+ Kd5 23. Qc7 Qxe5 24. Rd1+ Ke6 25. Qc4+ Ke7 26. Qxg8 exf2 27. g3 Rb8 28. Qh7+ Ke8 29. Qg6+ Ke7 30. Qh7+, and I would have been forced to give perpetual check.
 - b) 21. fxe3 Qxg2 22. Rd1 Bg4 23. Rd6+ Kb5 24. Qxe5+ Ka6 25. Qxc3 Rac8 26. Qd3+ Kb7 27. Kb2 would have left me with two extra pawns, but Molodtsov's pieces would have been so active that it is hard to see how the extra material matters.
- 2) Although 18. ... Kd8 would have freed his light-squared bishop, and then 19. ... Rxc5 would be possible as 20. Bxc6 no longer comes with check, declining the piece sacrifice still would not have worked. White had the fine intermezzo 19. Rd1! Rxc5 (19... Qxh4? 20. Bxc6 Rxc5 21. Qf6) 20. Bxc6 Rg7 (20. ... Rg8 21. Bf3 was also winning) 21. Qf8+ Kc7 22. Bf3 Qg6 23. Bf4!! exf4 24. Rxd4 Qh6 25. Qd8+ Kb8 26. Rd7 Qb6 27. Rxb7+ winning.

18. ... Kc7 19. Bg5 Qxg2

While Molodtsov received compensation for the forthcoming exchange sacrifice, a more solid alternative was 19. ... Be6 20. Qf3 Qxf3 21. gxf3.

20. Re1 Rxc5 21. Nxc5 Qg4

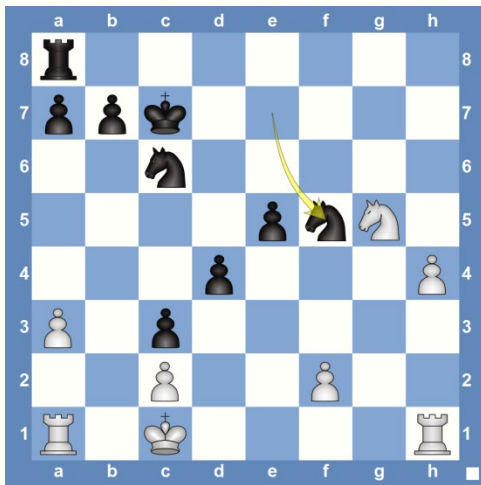
If Molodtsov could have reached an endgame before my king and a1-rook became active, then I wouldn't have been able to secure my h-pawn. Had he succeeded in trading my h-pawn for one of his other pawns (or won my h-pawn outright), I wouldn't have won the endgame. Molodtsov therefore prepared to liquidate pieces with 22. ... Bf5. However, the immediate 21. ... Bf5, with the idea of forking my bishop and rook after 22. Bxf5 Qxf2, would have gained a tempo, allowing my h-pawn to be more easily mopped up.



22. Rh1

This move defended my pawn on h4 and would have allowed me to take the seventh rank had he played 25. ... Rg8 later. Alternatives were 22. Nf3 and 22. Kb1.

22. ... Bf5 23. Bxf5 Qxf5 24. Qxf5 Nxf5



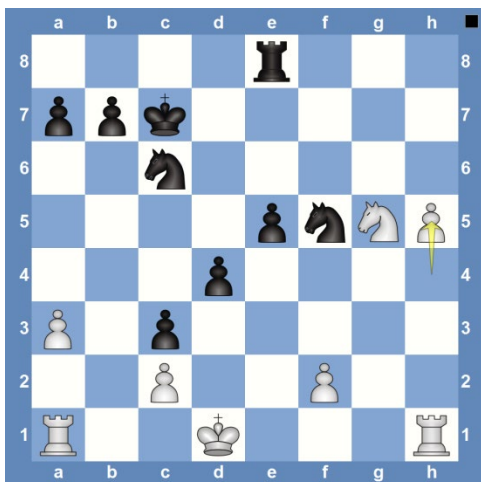
25. Kd1

The immediate 25. h5 was insufficient to win. For example, 25. h5 Rg8 26. Nf7 Rg2 27. h6 Rxf2 28. h7 d3 29. cxd3 Ncd4 30. h8=Q Rc2+ 31. Kb1 Rb2+ 32. Kc1, etc. As I couldn't hold on to the h-pawn, I focused on activating my king.

25. ... Re8

Molodtsov tried to mobilize his own pawn mass, but as my lone h-pawn was faster, he should have preferred 25. ... Rg8 because I couldn't have stopped 26. ... Nxf4. My intention was to meet 25. ... Rg8 with 26. Ke2. After 26. ... Nxf4 27. Rxf4 Rg5 28. Rh7+ Kd6 29. Rxb7, I would still have been playing for a win, but I shouldn't have been able to achieve it.

26. h5



26. ... e4?!

Even though he could no longer win my h-pawn, he could have made my task much more difficult by preventing my pawn from getting to h6. Both 26. ... Nh6 and 26. ... Rh8 come to mind.

27. h6 e3 28. Ke2 Ne5 29. h7 Ng6 30. Rag1

This move threatened 31. Ne6+ Rxe6 32. Rxg6. Preparing this move with the prophylactic 30. Rh2 was possible but not necessary.

30. ... Nf4+

Molodtsov could have tried to take advantage of my unguarded f-pawn with 30. ... d3+ 31. Kxd3 exf2 32. Rf1 Ng3 33. h8=Q Rxh8 34. Rxh8 Nxf1 35. Rh7+, but I could have rapidly mopped up his advanced pawns and won the game.

31. Kf3 exf2 32. Kxf2 d3 33. h8=Q 33. Rxh8 34. Rxh8 dxc2 35. Rhh1 Nd3+ 36. Kf3 Nb2 37. Ke4 Nd1

The most testing response, 37. ... Ng3+, wouldn't have saved Molodtsov due to 38. Rxc3 Nd1 39. Rxc3+ Nxc3+ 40. Kd3.

38. Rxd1 Ng3+ 39. Kd3 cxd1=Q+ 40. Rxd1, Black resigned.

Old School: Please note that all of Larry's post-game calculations and analyses were done without benefit of a computer to check the lines. In the search for truth, sometimes the computer can take the mystery out of the game. This game won 1st prize for Best Played Game.

KING'S INDIAN DEFENSE (E90)

FM Larry C Gilden (2243)

IM Prav Balakrishnan (2522)

44th Annual Eastern Open (2)

Tyson's Corner, Virginia, 12.28.17

Notes by FM Larry C Gilden and Tom Beckman (TB)

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nc3 Bg7 4. e4 d6 5. Nf3 O-O 6. Be3

I have consistently played this move from 2013 to the present. 6. Be3 serves the purpose of restricting Black's normal King's Indian plans. Now Black has the choice of several responses:

- 1) 6... e5 is the usual response when there follows 7. dxe5 dxe5 8. Qxd8 (8. Qc2 +/-) 8... Rxd8 9. Nd5 Nxd5?! (9... Rd7! =) 10. cxd5 c6 11. Bc4 cxd5 (11...Bd7 is possible) 12.Bxd5 Nc6 13. 0-0-0 or 13. Ng5 +/-.
- 2) 6... Nbd7 avoiding the exchange of queens allows 7. h3 when 7... e5 8. dxe5 dxe5 9. c5 has occurred in my games.
- 3) 6...Ng4 played by Prav in chasing the bishop creates play somewhat like T. Petrosian-Ya Yukhtman, 26th USSR Championship 1959. Later, Petrosian played 14.Bg4 to exchange off his bad bishop, and I played 18.Bg4 with similar effect.
- 4) 6...c5 (TB) is recommended by Stockfish and then:
 - a) 7. d5 a6 8. a4 Ng4 9. Bg5 Nd7 10. Be2 +/-
 - b) 7. dxc5 Qa5 8. Qd2 (8. Bd3 is also possible) 8... dxc5 9. Nd5 Qxd2+ 10. Nxd2 Nxd5 11. cxd5 Bxb2 12. Rb1 Ba3 13. Nc4 =
- 5) 6...Na6 (TB) is recommended by Nunn and Burgess in *The New Classical King's Indian* to avoid the Exchange Variation, and then:
 - a) 7. Be2 e5 (or 7... Ng4) 8. 0-0 transposes to the Gligoric System
 - b) 7. h3 e5 8. d5 is the main line of the Makogonov System
 - c) Other ideas are 7. Qd2 or 7. Bd3

6...Ng4 7. Bg5 c5

In a game 45 tourney from March 2015, Trung Nguyen tried 7... h6 8. Bh4 Nf6! and no refutation was forthcoming from me. (TB) Also possible was 8. Bd2 e5 9. d5 f5 10. Bd3 Nf6 11. 0-0 fxe4 12. Nxe4 Bf5 with a slight edge for White.

8. d5

I considered 8. dxc5, but Black's 8... h6 chases White's bishop from attacking e7 (if 9. Bh4, then 9... g5), and allows either 9... Qa5 or 9... dxc5 depending on where the bishop goes.

8... h6

(TB) And here Black has a somewhat better alternative: 8... Bxc3+ 9. bxc3 f6 10. Bd2 Nd7 11. Be2 Nge5 +/-

9. Bh4

(TB) Of course, which way to retreat the Bishop is always the question in this variation. Here 9. Bd2 may be the better choice after 9... Nd7 10. Be2 Nge5 11. Nxe5 Nxe5 12. 0-0 b6 13. Qc2 ±

9...Nd7 10. Qd2

(TB) The non-committal 10. Be2 +/- may be slightly better.

10... a6 11. a4 Ngf6 12. Be2 Qb6?!

(TB) Here Black has two decent options:

- 1) 12... g5 13. Bg3 Nh5 14. 0-0 =
- 2) 12... Qa5 13. Bxf6 Nxf6 14. 0-0 Bg4 =

13. O-O

(TB) Here White should flick in 13. a5! +/- driving the Black queen back now.

g5 14. Bg3 Nh5 15. a5

I had several other possibilities that I didn't consider during the game:

- 1) 15. h4 Nxg3 16. fxg3 g4 17. Nh2 Ne5 18. Nd1 with complicated play.
- 2) 15. Qc2 Qb4 16. a5 b5! and Black stands well.



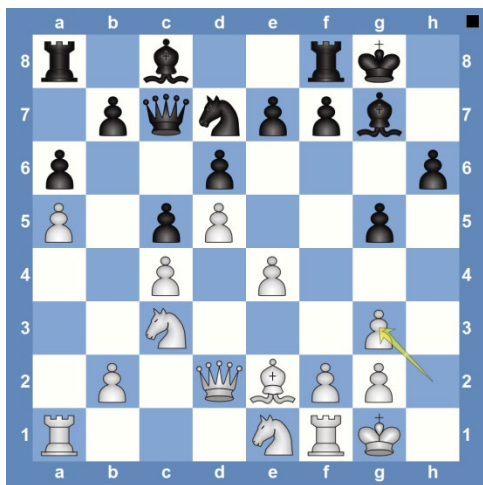
15... Qc7!

(TB) Larry thought that Prav could successfully play 15... Qb4!? as 16. Nxg5 Nxg3 17. hxg3 b5(!!) works, but the following sequence would have been much better for White: 18. Nf3 cxb4 19. Rfb1! Rb8 and now a rope-a-dope with 20. Ra4 Qb3 21. Ra3 Qb4 22. Qc1! guarding the Rook and 22... Qb7 23. Bxc4 ±. Black would have had to settle for 17... Ne5 18. Nf3 Nxc4 19. Bxc4 Qxc4 20. Na4 Rb8 21. Rfe1 Qb4 22. e5 +/- . So, the computer helps to demonstrate that Prav played the best move after all!

16. Ne1

(TB) An interesting alternative is 16. h4 Nxg3 17. fxg3.

Nxg3 17. hxg3



17. ... e5?

This move doesn't look right, but it is correct at this point. Evidently Prav properly feared the buildup with f4 and later e5. Besides the fortress created is difficult to breach.

(TB) Burying the King Bishop looks wrong, and is wrong. Black should have played on the Q-side with 17... b6! 18. f4 gxf4 19. gxf4 bxa5 20. Rf3 Rb8 21. Rg3 Kh8 22. f5 Qb6 with mutual chances.

18. Bg4!

Trading off the bad Bishop in blocked positions is correct as usual.

18... b6 19. Nc2

I think that 19. axb6 was more straightforward.

19... bxa5 20. Ne3 Nb6 21. Bxc8 Nxc8 22. Ne2

White now engages in a bit of unnecessary shuffling back and forth. But eventually I got the idea that my play was on the queen-side.

Ne7 23. g4

(TB) Also good was 23. Qxa5 Qxa5 24. Rxa5 Rfb8 25. Rb1 f5 26. exf5 e4 27. g4 ±

23... Rfb8



24. Ng3?!

This move allows Black play on the queen-side. White should prefer 24. Nc1 ±

24...Rb4 25. Ne2 Rab8 26. Ra2 Qb6 27. Rb1 Ng6 28. g3 Ne7 29. Nc1 Qc7 30. Rba1

Black is without counterplay as White slowly makes progress. Note how White makes use of the principle of two weaknesses over the next ten moves.

30...Qc8 31. Nd3 R4b6 32. Rxa5 Kh7 33. Qc2 f6?!

(TB) Defensive fatigue sets in. 33... Bf8 is somewhat better, as 33... f6 makes more holes in Black's king-side.

34. R1a3

(TB) It is safer to play 34. Kg2 to cover the h3 square, so Larry doesn't have to worry about h5 and Qh3.

34... Kg6

(TB) To avoid being smothered to death, the urge to do something active kicks in. However, other moves aren't much better.

DIAGRAM

35. Qa4! Ra8 36. b4!

The culmination of White's play. The further opening of the queen-side will expose Black's lack of piece activity.

36... cxb4 37. Nxb4 h5 38. gxh5+ Kxh5 39. Kg2 Kg6 40. Nd3

(TB) 40. c5 dxc5 41. Nd3 is more efficient.

40... Qh8 41. Ra1 Qh5 42. g4

(TB) Safest, but stronger is 42. c5! dxc5 43. Rh1 Qe2 Larry was worried about this Queen intrusion, but after 44. Qc4 Rb2 45. Nxb2 Qxb2 46. d6 Nc6 47. Rxc5 White wins handily.

42... Qh8 43. Nf5 Qd8 44. Rc1 Kf7 45. c5 dxc5 46. Raxc5 Ra7 47. Qd1

(TB) Crushing is 47. Qc4 Kg6 48. Rh1.

47... a5 48. Qh1 Nxf5 49. gxf5, Black resigned after 35 more moves.

Errant Knights: White has a good position until his knights go astray. After that, Black's knights go crazy. This game won the 1st Brilliancy Prize.

**SICILIAN DEFENSE,
ACCELERATED DRAGON (B38)**

Dominique Myers (2115)

FM Nathan Resika (2246)

44th Annual Eastern Open (4)

Tyson's Corner, Virginia, 12.29.17

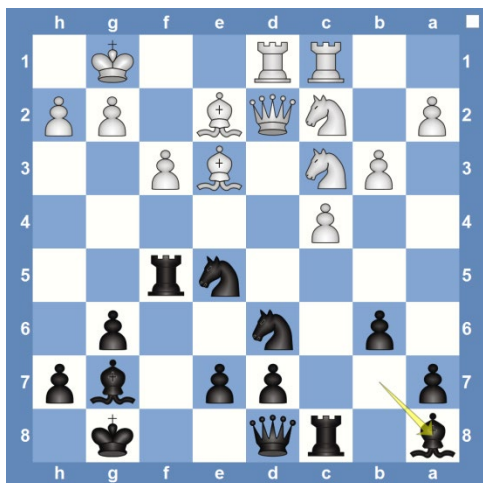
Notes by FM Nathan Resika and Tom Beckman (TB)

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 g6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Bg7 5. c4 Nc6 6. Nc2 Nf6 7. Nc3 O-O 8. Be2 b6!?

(TB) I once had this position as Black in a simul against Karpov shortly after he won the World Championship. The move 8. ... b6 was topical at the time. He thought for more than a minute before following the course of the game. Due to his handlers and my lack of Russian, I never had the chance to ask him why he took so long to select his move.

9. O-O Bb7 10. Be3 Rc8 11. f3 Ne8! 12. Qd2 Nd6 13. Rfd1 f5 14. exf5 Rxf5 15. Rac1 Ne5 16. b3 Ba8

(TB) White has built a very nice position, and Black is rather passive and cramped, but watch what happens now.



17. Nb4?!

(TB) White's first errant knight move. White has four knight moves, but he finds the worst one. Black's knight on d6 is holding his position together, so White should exchange it. Better was 17. Nd4! Rf6 18. Ndb5 Nxb5 19. Nxb5 a6 20. Nc3 Rd6 21. Qe1 Rxd1 22. Rxd1 d6 ±

17...Rf8 18. Nbd5?!

After being in a worse position for awhile, I was being very vigilant should my opponent go wrong in this full-bodied position, with so many pieces on the board. My opponent had just relieved the pressure on my backward center by playing the "normal" centralizing move Nb4 to d5?!, which allowed my pieces to start their migration toward the black king.

(TB) Now the position is equal. Again, White should have played 18. Ncb5 Nxb5 19. cxb5 e6 20. Rxc8 Qxc8 21. Rc1 Qb7 22. Bf4 d5 23. Nc6 Nf7 24. Bg3 +/-.

18. ... Nf5 19. Bg5 h6 20. Be3?!

20. Bf2 allows 20. ... Bh6 21. f4 e6!. Myers suggested 20. Bf4.

(TB) Better is 20. Bf4 e6 21. Ne3 Nh4 22. Bg3 Rxf3! 23. Bxh4 Qxh4 24. gxf3 Bxf3 25. Rf1 Qg5+ 26. Kf2 Qh4+ 27. Kg1 with a perp

20... e6!

Better than snatching the Bishop right away.

21. Nf4?

The final mistake. Going back where it came from to b4 was a must. Now Black has his opponent where he wants him.

(TB) 21. Nb4! leaves White in the game after 21. ... Nxe3 22. Qxe3 Qh4 23. Nc2 Rf7 24. Rd4 Qh5 25. Ne4 Rcf8 26. Ng3 Qg5 -/=.

21... Qg5!

Winning material, unless something better shows up...

22. g3?

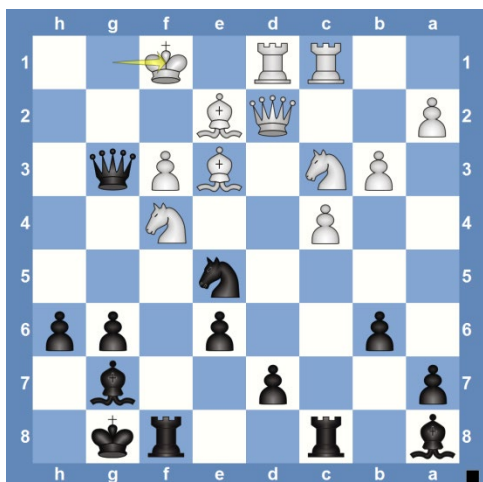
If you pretend you are White, you can understand cracking under the pressure of 6 Black pieces focusing like lasers on your f3 and g2 squares. But both 22. Bf2 and 22. Nxe6 are better ways to bail out.

22. ... Nxc3!

Better than just taking the f pawn.

23. hxc3 Qxc3+ 24. Kf1

The only move, considering the hidden nasty priest on a8.



24. ... Ng4!!

It was the 4th day of Christmas and I was thinking it was better to give than to receive pieces. I had about 3 minutes left for 17 moves., but still played this move mostly on instinct. It took Stockfish about half a minute, but it turns out to be the strongest of the several winning lines. It just "can-opens" both the f file as well as the long diagonal for Black's remaining army...as well as threatens 24. ... Nh2 mate.

25. Ng2

If 25. fxf4, then 25. ... Rxf4! 26. Bxf4 Rf8! 27. Nd5 exd5 does the job.

25. ... Nh2+ 26. Kg1 Bxf3 27. Bf1 Bxd1, **White resigned**, while his time ran out, as huge material losses follow.