

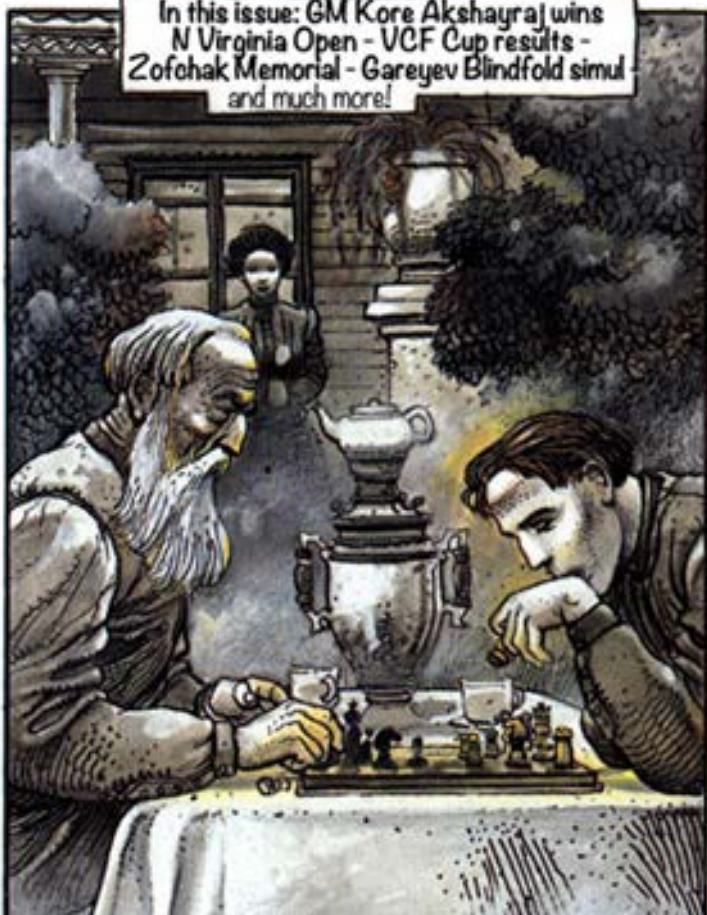
VIRGINIA CHESS

Newsletter

The bimonthly publication of the
Virginia Chess Federation

2017 - #6

In this issue: GM Kore Akshayraj wins
N Virginia Open - VCF Cup results -
Zofchak Memorial - Gareyev Blindfold simul
and much more!



VIRGINIA CHESS

Newsletter

2017 - Issue #6

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Northern Virginia Open

GRANDMASTER Kore Akshayraj swept the field at the 22nd Northern Virginia Open, scoring 5-0 to top a field of 98 players at the Dulles Marriot, Nov 18-19. Maryland IM Tegshsuren Enkhbat tied with masters Sahil Sinha & Akshay Indusekar for runners-up honors with 4½ points apiece.

Evan Ling, David Siamon & Darrin Berkley each scored 4-1 to share the top Export prize. The same score earned Jason Liang top A and Saad Al-Hariri top class B prizes. Li Mengyi won both the C prize and an Upset prize for his round 4 takedown of expert Patrick Beatrez. Ananya Ananth also won an Upset prize—a 656 rating point disparity! Naveen Balakrishnan was top class D, and Alexander Yao took the Under 1200/Unrated prize.

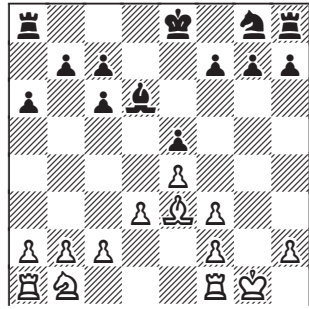
Kore Akshayraj - Praveen Balakrishnan Ruy Lopez

Notes by GM Kore Akshayraj

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Bxc6 [In one of the earlier rounds, Praveen's opponent played the Exchange variation in Spanish. I was not particularly impressed how he handled the endgame, and so thought of repeating this variation against him. Turned out to be the right decision.] **4...dxc6 5 O-O Bg4 6 d3** [A quiet approach. His previous game went 6 h3 h5 7 d3 Qf6 8 Nbd2 Bc5 9 Nc4 Bxf3 10 Qxf3 Qxf3 11 gxf3] **6...Qf6 7 Be3 Bxf3 8 Qxf3 Qxf3 9 gxf3** [The difference between that previous game and this position is that White's pawn is still on h2. On h3, the pawn is weaker. This might not be a big factor, but in a positional game as this one, every small advantage counts.] **9...Bd6** (*diagram*)

White's ultimate goal is to play f4 and dissolve the doubled pawn. The next few moves revolve around that. White tried to play f4; Black tried to prevent it.

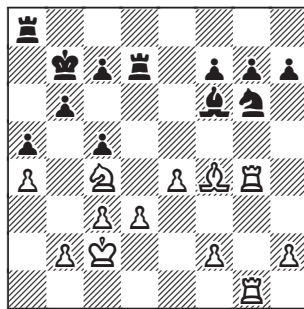
10 Nd2! [10 Nc3 Ne7 11 Ne2 Ng6 Black stops f4 and the Ne2 is not well placed. If White plays 12 Ng3 then 12...Nh4!] **10...Ne7 11 Nc4** [White tries to support f4 indirectly by threatening the bishop (if ...exf4 then e5).] **11...Ng6 12 Rfd1** [White wants to play d4 sometime in the future.] **12...O-O 13 Kf1 c5** [stopping d4] **14 Rdb1!** [I am proud of this move. It looks very unnatural, but the pawn on c5 provides a new target for White to attack by playing b4] **14...Be7 15 a3 b6 16 Ke2** [16 b4 cxb4 17 axb4 Kb7 is also fine. I wanted to improve my position first.] **16...a5?** [I think Black should allow b4. After the text, his light squares become very weak. If you compare the current position with that of a few moves earlier, you will notice that Black has started to make some serious positional concessions. Much later in the





game this light square weakness becomes decisive.] **17 Rg1** [The rook has nothing to do on the b-file anymore.] **17...Kb7 18 a4** [From an equal opening, White has now secured a small tangible advantage due to his excellently placed knight.] **18...Bf6 19 Kd2 Rhe8** [19...Nf4 20 Bxf4 exf4 21 e5 and g7 falls] **20 Rae1!**? [again preventing Nf4] **20...Re6 21 Rg4** [At length White gets back to his main strategic goal: to play f4] **21...Rde8 22 c3 Ra8?!** [The point of White's last move was that if 22...Nf4 23 Nxe5 Bxe5 24 Bxf4 b2 is protected. Still, Black's reply is hard to understand. Perhaps he wanted to discourage me from playing b4. Or maybe, my rook maneuvers earlier got in his head, and he wanted to emulate them?] **23 Kc2 Re7 24 Rg1 Rd7 25 f4! exf4 26 Bxf4** (*diagram*)

26...Rad8 [The best way to counteract. 26...h5 27 Rxc6! had to be foreseen before white started with his rooks on the g-file 27...fxg6 28 Rxc6 Rad8 29 e5 Bh4 30 Be3 Rxd3 31 Rxc7 R3d7 32 Rg6 Rf7 33 f4 I prefer White.] **27 Bc1** [27 R1g3 h5 28 Rxc6 fxg6 29 Rxc6 Rxd3 is better for Black, who has an extra tempo compared to the previous variation.] **27...Rxd3 28 f4** [threatening e5 and then f5] **28...Rf3** [if 28...Nf8 29 e5; or if 28...Be7 29 f5] **29 Be3! Rh3 30 R1g2 Ne7** [Black's minor pieces are very awkwardly placed on f6 and g6, and he felt the need to untangle.] **31 R4g3!** [Not 31 e5 Bh4 32 Rxc7 Nf5. Instead White exchanges Black's only active piece, after which Black is hard pressed to find any semblance of activity for this pieces.] **31...Rxc3 32 hxc3 g6 33 g4 Rh8** [intending ...h5] **34 f5! gxf5** [34...h5 35 g5 Bg7 36 f6] **35 gxf5** [Now White has a clear upper hand. Black cannot prevent e5.] **35...Nc6 36 Bf4 Re8 37 Kd3 h5 38 Re2! Bds** [The rook endgame after 38...Ne5+ 39 Nxe5 Bxe5 40 Bxe5 Rxe5 is no good for Black, eg 41 Rh2 Kc6 42 Rxh5 Re8 43 Rh6+ Kd7 44 Rh7 Rf8 (44...Ke7 45 e5) 45 e5] **39 e5 Ne7 40 Ke4 Ng8 41 Kf3 Ne7 42 Ke4 Nc8 43 Rd2** [Stopping Nd6; now White's plan is simple (although this took like another 15 moves): centralize his pieces, play f6, attack h5, capture h5, attack f7, capture f7!] **43...Kc6 44 Kf3 b5** [44...Ne7 45 Ne3] **45 axb5+ Kxb5 46 Ne3 Nb6** [White threatened Rd7] **47 f6** [Black's bishop is very bad.] **47...Kc6 48 Rh2 Rh8 49 Ke4 h4 50 Nf5 Nd7 51 Nh6! Rh7 52 Rxh4 Nf8 53 Rh1 Ne6 54 Be3** [Black is offering great resistance on kingside, so we switch to queenside.] **54...Kd7 55 Ra1** [the next five moves are forced after this] **55...c6 56 Rd1+ Ke8 57 Nf5 Bc7 58 Bh6! Rh8 59 Ng7+** [Black is forced to take, giving White the deadly pawn on g7] **59...Nxc7 60 fxg7 Rg8 61 c4!** [Black is paralyzed] **61...a4 62 Kf5 Bd8 63 Ra1** [White harvests his seeds] **63...Kd7 64 Rxa4 Re8 65 Ra7+ Bc7 66 Bf4 Rc8 67 Rxc7+ Kxc7 68 e6+ 1-0**





2018 Virginia State Scholastic & College Chess Championships

Friday Night, Saturday and Sunday, March 2nd – 4th, 2018

WHERE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • William Fleming High School – 3649 Ferncliff Ave NW, Roanoke, VA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Please do not contact the High School about the tournament. If you have any questions, contact us (see below).
Tournament Information	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>THERE ARE THREE TOURNAMENTS</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Main Event—2018 VA State Scholastic & College Championships: Games played on <u>Saturday and Sunday</u>, March 3rd and 4th. Players play in one of 5 Sections, K-3, K-5, K-8, K-12 or College. There are 4 Rounds on Saturday, and 2 on Sunday. One half-point Bye will be allowed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saturday: Rd 1 at 9AM, Rd 2 at 12-noon, Rd 3 at 3PM, Rd 4 at 6PM • Sunday: Rd 5 at 8:30AM, Rd 6 at 12-noon • College Section plays only 4 rounds, all on Saturday. 2. Friday Night Blitz: <u>Friday, March 2nd</u>. (Sorry, there is no Bug-house.) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration for Blitz will be available online and on-site. Trophies for Individuals AND Teams in Blitz. Blitz is played in three sections: K-5, K-12 and College. College Blitz may be cancelled if there are not enough players in the section. THERE IS NO BUGHOUSE. 3. 4-Round Parents and Friends (P&F) Tournament: 3 rounds on Saturday, 1 round on Sunday. One ½-point Bye will be allowed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saturday: Rd 1 at 12:30PM, Rd 2 at 3:30PM, Rd 3 at 6:30PM • Sunday: Round 4 at 9AM
Registration	<p>Advance Registration: <u>Opens Friday, Dec 15th, 2017</u> at www.vachess.org.</p> <p>There will be three ways to Pay: 1) PayPal when you register online, 2) Mailing your payment to us by U.S. Mail, or 3) Credit card, check or cash at the Registration Desk on FRIDAY evening, March 2nd.</p> <p>Team Rooms: A limited number of classrooms will be made available by the school for use as Team Rooms, usually 15-20 or so. Minimum team size is 10 players. Smaller teams can book a Team Room together. Sign-up will be handled on-line only, no team room sign-up by email. Do not contact the High School about your team rooms, sign-up and team room questions will be handled by us (see below).</p>
Chess Stuff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We provide: Chess sets and notation sheets for you to record the moves in your games. • You provide: Pencils, chess clocks, your own score-book (optional). Chess Notation is required in the K-5, K-8, K-12 and College sections. Notation is <i>optional</i> in K-3; however, K-3 players who "play up" MUST take notation. • US Chess Federation membership is required for all events (www.uschess.org) • We will have vendors at the site selling Chess Equipment, hoodies, shirts, hats, etc.
Hotel Info	<p>See www.vachess.org</p>
Questions	<p>If you have questions: Email Mike Hoffpauir at mhoffpauir@aol.com or see the information posted at www.vachess.org</p> <p>Information about <u>player and team eligibility</u> also is available at www.vachess.org</p>



Timur Gareyev Blindfold Simul

by Adam Chrisney

The Arlington Chess Club (ACC) hosted a blindfold simultaneous exhibition by the widely recognized Blindfold King, Grandmaster Timur Gareyev on November 11. GM Gareyev was very generous to ACC with his time; he also gave a small group lesson to 11 players on October 4, plus he dropped by the Friday club meeting on October 6 for another impromptu lecture.

Originally from Uzbekistan, Gareyev has ranked as high as the #3 rated player in the nation with a peak USCF rating of 2780. However, he is best known for his exceptional blindfold chess ability. Last December, in Las Vegas, he broke the world record for number of opponents (48) in a blindfold simul.

Gareyev is also an active and successful tournament player, having won the recent Atlantic Open with final round wins over former state champions Andrew Samuelson & Jennifer Yu, and GM Sergey Erenberg.

For his ACC simul, Gareyev's lecture offered a general discussion of blindfold play followed by a Q&A session. After about an hour, he was ready to take on all challengers. Unlike typical simuls, where the grandmaster moves from board to board, Gareyev remained on a stationary exercise bike, literally blindfolded, while a "Mover" took care of executing his moves on each board. In an unusual twist, the grandmaster played Black on all boards. Also a departure from normal 'simul' practice, all players were put on clocks.

The GM's final tally for the exhibition was 15 wins and 1 draw, which he yielded to young Ronen Wilson. Ronen said, "It was an honor to play the Blindfold King. I felt really good that I was able to get a draw." Ronen's dad noted, "It was a rare and





thrilling experience playing Timur. He is a great guy and a wonderful ambassador for chess.” Gareyev offered one additional draw, to yours truly, but the offer was declined to see how the game unfolded (I lost on time). I was amazed how quickly he played from move-to-move and board-to-board, averaging only about 1-2 minutes on each move throughout the event.

Ronen Wilson - GM Timur Gareyev Scandinavian

1 e4 d5 2 exd5 Nf6 3 d4 Bg4 4 Be2
Bxe2 5 Qxe2 Qxd5 6 Nf3 e6 7 c4 Qe4
8 Qxe4 Nxe4 9 Bf4 Nd7 10 a3 O-O-O
11 O-O Be7 12 Re1 Ndf6 13 Nbd2 Nd6
14 d5 Nh5 15 Bxd6 Rxd6 16 dxe6 f6
17 g3 Rhd8 18 Re2 a5 19 b4 a4 20 Nf1
g6 21 Rae1 Rd3 22 Re3 Ng7 23 Rxd3
Rxd3 24 Re3 Rd1 25 g4 b6 26 Kg2 c6
27 h3 Kc7 28 N1d2 f5 29 gxf5 Nxf5 30
Rd3 Bd6 31 c5 bxc5 32 bxc5 Bxc5 33
Rd7+ Kc8 34 Ne4 Rc1 35 Nxc5 Rxc5
36 Ra7 Kd8 ½-½

Adam Chrisney - GM Timur Gareyev Scotch

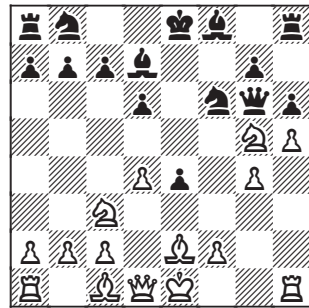
Notes by Adam Chrisney

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 exd4 4 Nxd4
Qf6 [Haven't seen this version OTB
in years, completely forget the line.]
5 Nxc6 Bc5 6 Qf3 [Willing to play
doubled f-pawns either after or without
castling; considering 0-0-0; need to
catch up in development and control
center.] bxc6 7 Bc4 d6 8 Nc3 Be6 9
Bb3 Qg6 [Around here I was eying the
move e5 to isolate his c-pawns or further
weaken the c/d pawns.] 10 O-O Ne7 11
Be3 Bb6 12 Ne2 Qg4 13 Nd4 Qxf3 14
gxf3 Bh3 15 Rfe1 a5 16 Ba4 Bd7 17
Kg2 f6 18 Rg1 Rb8 19 Rad1 Rf8 20
c4 [to control or open d5] 20 ... f5 21
Rd3 Rf7 22 Kf1 c5 23 Bxd7+ Kxd7 24
Ne2 [The computer suggest taking f5,
but I was aiming to keep kingside more

closed and reorganizing knight to d5]
24...Nc6 25 Bf4 [controlling e5 and
preventing ...f4] 25...Rbf8 26 e5 Nd4
27 exd6 cxd6 28 Nc3 Re8 29 Nd5 Bd8
30 Be3 Ne6 31 f4 Kc6 32 Rb3 Rb7 33
Rxb7 Kxb7 [breathing easier with one
set of rooks off the board] 34 Kg2 Bc7
35 Rd1 Bd8 36 Rd3 Nc7 37 Bd2 Re4
38 b3 Nxd5 39 Rxd5 g6 [Short on time,
I was wondering why he hasn't moved
...Rd4] 40 Be3 a4 41 Rxd6 [Turns out
he thought his king was on c6 for a few
moves—the perils of blindfold play!]
41...Be7 and White loss on time 0-1

Kenneth Cobbs - GM Timur Gareyev Latvian Gambit

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 f5 3 Nxe5 Qf6 4 d4 d6 5
Nf3 fxe4 6 Ng5 Qg6 7 Be2 Nf6 8 Nc3
Bf5 9 g4 Bd7 10 h4 h6 11 h5

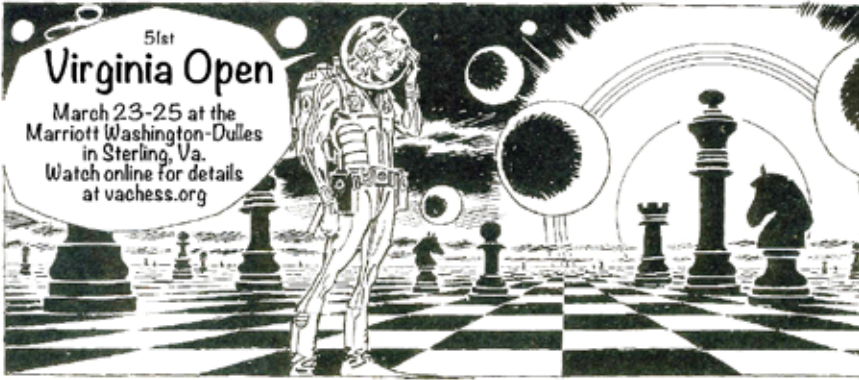


11...hgx5 12 hxg6 Rxh1+ 13 Bf1
Bxg4 14 Qd2 Bh3 15 Qxg5 Nc6 16
Qe3 Rxf1+ 17 Kd2 Bg2 18 Qg3 Nxd4
19 Qxg2 Nf3+ 20 Ke3 Re1+ 21 Kf4
d5 22 Qh3 Bd6+ 23 Kf5 Nd4+ 24
Kg5 Rg1+ 25 Kh4 Nf3+ 0-1



David Zofchak Memorial

DANIEL MILLER convincingly won the 25th annual David Zofchak Memorial, Nov 4–5 in Norfolk. Nathan Lohr, Patrick Spain & Jacob Tarallo each scored 3 ½ to tie for 2nd–4th. Jonathan Kenny took the Open section's Under 1800 prize. The Under 1800 section saw a 3-way tie for 1st between Tom Belke, Ilya Kremenchugskiy & Jessica Crouch. Lee Bennett & Bruce Flores shared the class C prize. Curtis Anderson was top D. Blaine Eley won the E prize and Stephen Lapinel was top Under 1000. A total of 42 players competed in the two sections. Ernie Schlich directed, with assistance from Jeffery Forbes.



VCF Cup *by Andrew Rea*

PER USUAL, the 2017 VCF Cup featured many close races in all categories! With seven tournaments, opportunity abounded. Congratulations to our champions and prizewinners—a very good year for IM Praveen Balakrishnan! Our VCF Cup is however not just a matter of the top overall, but also various class categories. Additionally, as the goal of the VCF Cup remains to promote increased participation, there is also a prize for Most Games. Consistency and quality of results are rewarded, as in past seasons! Congratulations are in order for all of our prizewinners, they most assuredly earned their good marks!

Overall

1. Praveen Balakrishnan
2. Evan Ling
3. Robert Fischer

Expert

1. Mark Hyland
2. Alex Jian
3. Mike Fellman

Class A

1. David Long
2. Alexander Kane
3. Ronen Wilson

Most Games

1. Sudarshan Sriniaiyer

*Class B*

1. Jay Lalwani
2. Bradley Guo
3. Frank Huber

Class C

1. Akshay Kobla
2. John Brockhouse
3. Adamson Steiner

Class D

1. Jonah Treitler
2. Thai Nguyen
3. Parth Jaiswal

Class E/Unrated

1. Shaurya Bisht
2. Brenan Nierman
3. Brighton Sujit Roy

AS WE BEGIN the new year of the VCF Cup—the kickoff event will be the Washington Chess Congress, October 6-9 in Crystal City—a few reminders re eligibility and scoring. To be a part of the Cup race, events have to be inside the friendly confines of Virginia, they have to be open to all players—so, yes, out-of-state players are most certainly eligible to play and to receive prizes, in the spirit of increased participation—and they need to have at least 30 days advance notice, via a Tournament Life Announcement or having posted their participation on www.vachess.org at a fee of \$1 per paid entry (fee paid at conclusion of event). Please note that scholastic events, senior events, the Virginia Closed, as tournaments with restrictions on participants, are not eligible. No change in the VCF Cup rule that “quads” are likewise not eligible. Otherwise, weekend Swisses, class tournaments (players are allowed to play up, there is choice!), small 1-day events—they are all eligible per the qualifications listed.

Then there is the matter of how points are earned! Before getting to that, please be aware that when standings are listed, occasionally there are tied players. There is no tiebreak, so the listing is in random order; if these players remain tied and are eligible for same prize, the prize would be divided equally. Back to scoring points! Our formula is posted on www.vachess.org: There are rewards for volume and for quality. Clearly the more events one plays in, the more points will be accrued! However, the quality factor stems from the matter that the stronger a section is, the more difficult it is to win games, and our formula allows more reward for this greater challenge. One additional bonus applies regardless of section or event: the 3-point play-win clear first-gain an additional 3 points. Per Plato (Socrates!?), virtue is its own reward!

The 2018 VCF Cup figures to have at least 7 events. We know that in addition to the Washington Chess Congress, we also have later the Emporia Open, the David Zofchak Memorial, the Northern Virginia Open—it's a quick start! I look forward to the upcoming competition and seeing several new players impacting the standings!

Changing Address?

Please notify the membership secretary if your address is changing! You can email changes/correction to Georgina Chin at membership@vachess.org



Why Blunders Happen

by *Aleksey Bashtavenko*

THERE is a difference between an inferior position and a hopeless one. The value of initiative and the nature of a psychological advantage can seldom be quantified. This is even more the case in competitions between amateur players, who are less likely than professionals to understand the objective merits of their positions.

To be sure, the objective quality of the following game is lacking—yet, therein lies its instructional value. Such encounters are often decided by outright blunders. Consequently, it is important to study the circumstances under which they arise and develop ways to play more accurately under these conditions.

It seems that so-called ‘simple positions’ are surprisingly fertile ground for cultivating ‘inexplicable’ blunders. I’d surmise that errors of this nature stem from failure to appreciate the subtlety of apparently simple positions. Simple positions invite players to form hasty generalizations and jump to conclusions. That is, certain ideas may seem unquestionably true, but in the end, the most intuitive answer turns out to be an illusion.

This phenomenon is similar to the following puzzle: *A ball and bat cost \$1.10; the difference in price between the items is one dollar; how much does each item cost?*

The correct answer is \$1.05 and 0.05. Yet in a recent study, a significant percentage of college students at Ivy League universities selected the more “intuitively obvious” but incorrect answer \$1.00 and 0.10.—a difference in price of 90 cents, not one dollar!

PSYCHOLOGIST Keith Stanovich developed a ‘rationality test’ consisting of similar questions designed to measure ability to avoid similar cognitive pitfalls. In contrast to standard cognitive ability tests, the rationality test does not evaluate potential to understand complex ideas. Instead, it measures ability to reason in a logical rather than in an intuitive fashion. Natural patterns of cognition lead people to demand a sense of intellectual closure, which often compels them towards answers that are only superficially plausible. True rationality is the ability to resist such temptations.

Chess offers an abundance of similar rationality tests. For example, mate may appear to be forced when the defending side has a theoretically winning position. Or an endgame may seem ‘obviously’ winning—until closer analysis reveals that the defender’s resources are adequate. In this light, ‘obvious’ or simple positions appear as treacherous as narrow ledges near the peak of mountains. In other words, they tend to be ‘blunder-inducing’ and should be treated with great care.



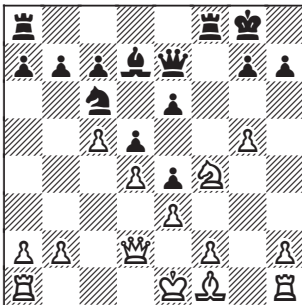


Aleksey Bashtavenko – Ted Covey

Washington Chess Congress

Dutch

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 f5 4 g4 Nf6 5 g5 Ne4 6 Nxe4 [The exchange seems premature. White would have been well-advised to continue development with 6 Nf3.] 6... fxe4 7 Bf4 Bb4+ [This is a strategic error on Black's part. Given that his pawns are on light-squares, the dark squared bishop is an asset.] 8 Bd2 Bxd2+ 9 Qxd2 O-O 10 Nh3 [I also could have played 19 f4 or 10 h4. In that manner, I could have attacked the king with two pawns. However, I opted for more rapid development instead. The knight on h3 will eventually advance to f4 and contribute to the kingside initiative.] 10...Nc6 11 e3 Qe7 12 c5 [A positional mistake because it allows Black to undermine my pawn chain. White will likely castle queenside or stay in the center, but now a timely b6 could undermine White's king security. However, I played it to prevent Black from forcing an exchange of queen with ...Qb4. While it is unclear if such a move would be favorable to Black, an exchange of heavy pieces sharply diminishes White's chances of staging a mating attack. 12 g6 was playable and would have substantially weakened the crucial squares around Black's king.] 12... Bd7 13 Nf4

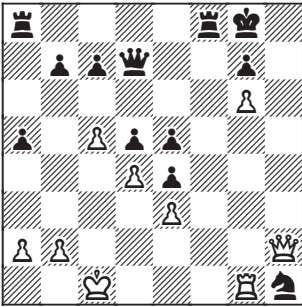


This is a critical moment illustrating the key theme of the game. With respect to objective qualities, 13...Qxg5 is quite plausible. The engine evaluates taking the pawn quite highly and indicates that Black's position is defensible. However, that defense is easier said than done and in light of common human errors, such a task often proves to be a tall order.

13...Qxg5 14 h4 Qe7 15 Bh3 [White targets the weakest link in Black's pawn-chain and Black prepares to siege White's king on the queenside.] 15...a5 16 Ke2 [White refuses to castle long direction. The erroneous rationale is predicated on the hasty generalization that with the center closed, the king should be safe in the middle of the board. However, Black has a light-squared bishop and White's own light-squared bishop is not capable of defending the king. Hence, Black's unopposed bishop poses a substantive threat to the security of White's king. 16 O-O-0 does not thwart Black's counter-attack either, but it forestalls the onslaught longer than 16 Ke2 does.] 16...Nb4 17 Rag1 Kh8 [Whereas White ignored Black's threat and continued with his own attack, Black plays the prophylactic 17...Kh8 when the more active 17... Bb5 was called for. That would have immediately taken advantage of White's weak squares in the center. White's attack is not sufficiently far advanced to pose a threat to Black's king.] 18 h5 e5 [The old maxim holds true: when attacked on the flank, counter-attack in the center.] 19 Ng6+ [Now or never, and fortune favors the brave. The sacrifice is completely unsound,



but alternatives leave White in a lost end-game with a shattered pawn structure.] **19...hxg6 20 hxg6 Kg8 21 Bxd7** [Were it not for the pawn on h5, 21 Be6 would have been instant mate. The h-file must be cleared before a mate is conceivable. After playing 21 Bxd7 I was down to 25 minutes on my clock with still 19 moves to go until time control. I realized that my position was lost; there is no sacrifice on h8 because my queen cannot arrive on h1 in time to deliver mate on h7. Likewise, Rh7 can be countered with Ra6 planning to eliminate the crucial g6 pawn. After...] **21...Qxd7 22 Ke1 Nd3+ 23 Kd1 Nxf2+** [23...Rxf2 wins immediately. Yet, the superficial luster of a fork and immediate material gain proved irresistible.] **24 Kc1 Nxe1 25 Qh2**



25 Qh2 seems to force mate, but that simply is not true. At this point, I still had seven seconds on my clock, but my opponent had over 80 minutes. He had every right to spend at least 30 minutes analyzing all possibilities, but instead, he seems to have bought into the bluff and assumed that the mate was all but unstoppable.

25...Rf1+?

Turns a decisive advantage for Black into a mate in four for White. To avoid mate, Black needs to create a flight square for his

king. This is best achieved through 25...Rf5. While the solution may seem obvious to many readers, it is also instructive to consider how amateurs may have trouble finding the accurate defense. If the rook stays on the 8th rank, mate is unstoppable. Hence, the rook must move up the f-file, and there is no time to waste. In and of itself, this is not a challenging puzzle. However, it is an instance of a rationality test. Whether Black is able to find the correct solution depends not only on his ability to recognize tactical patterns, but also to avoid the misleading “intuitive answers” of vacating f8 with “gain of time” (ie, check).

26 Rxf1 1-0 Black resigned for the White rook controlling the f-file renders his clearing of f8 futile, and now mate on h7 is inevitable.

Seemingly, my opponent understood the idea of vacating f8, but it is deeply puzzling why he opted to sacrifice his rook rather than place it on a safe square. I suspect this is an example of misleading intuitive perceptions, where careful calculation is what was called for. White’s threat appears to have prompted Black to act rashly. Another psychological dynamic also played a significant role—White had just seven seconds remaining on his clock. Under these circumstances, Black was sorely tempted to move quickly in order to push his beleaguered adversary over the time limit.

However, such a course of action is known to be a fundamental cause of disastrous moves. Most USCF events are played with a five or a ten second delay. In the event of a blunder, even a player who is nearly out of time may well be in the position to win the game just playing on the delay.





Reflections

REFLECTIONS



Looking Back on an Amateur Chess “Career”

by Mark Warriner

PRACTICE (Part I)

“We’re talking about practice. Not a game, not a game, we’re talking about practice. We’re not talking about an actual game, when it matters, we’re talking about practice.”

Thus was Allen Iverson famously quoted in an interview after missing a practice session. His nickname was “The Answer,” a reference to the NBA’s marketing quandary in the wake of Michael Jordan’s 1994 retirement after three straight Finals victories. Supposedly, Iverson was going to be the one to dazzle fans in MJ’s absence. Well, Iverson never won a single Finals championship, and Jordan went on to yet another three-peat, winning six in total and arguably becoming the greatest player ever.

Jordan treated practice like war. He pushed his teammates mercilessly, even coming to blows with Steve Kerr on one occasion. Two decades later, Steve has coached his team to two Finals victories and a NBA record best 73-9 season. He runs some of the toughest practice sessions. Bobby Fischer was once asked about the “key to success in chess” and his answer was simple: *“Practice, practice, practice.”* There are literally thousands upon thousands of chess books, articles and DVD’s about practicing and practices. There is simply no other way.

One way of practicing that’s not heard about quite so much as it used to be is the good, old fashioned over-the-board (OTB) training match. Garry Kasparov famously prepared for World Championships by playing six-game training matches with the likes of Ulf Andersson, Robert Huebner, Tony Miles and Jan Timman. Did he take practice seriously? He won them all, including 5½-½ over Miles, who said: “I thought I was playing the World Champion, not a monster with a thousand eyes who sees everything.” Fair to say, practice matters.

With that in mind, I gave some thought to returning to OTB chess this year. I had hoped to play in the Virginia Closed State Championship. Unfortunately, personal issues/responsibilities prevent me from playing tournaments right now, especially since most events take at least two days over the weekend. And my level of ability doesn’t produce results sufficient to satisfy my competitive nature. But before that became clear, I decided to play a training match to warm up. My friend Joe Faries called me early in the year and asked if we could play some training games. It fit perfectly with my plans at the time, so we worked out a schedule. We had originally decided to play a 6-game match, but events conspired such that it eventually became an 8-game match.



As it so happened, Joe and I wound up playing the same two ECO codes in each of our respective games as White and Black: C00 with me as White, and B50 with Joe as White. (That's irregular French, and Sicilian with 2...d6, for those who haven't committed the ECO taxonomy to memory.) Principled chess! No flinching and no cowards in this group. Joe understands well what works for him, and has a great deal of experience, hundreds of games over the past four decades. He's currently at or about his floor, but that didn't faze me as he's had some good results in the past few years, winning tournaments and drawing a couple players rated over 400 pts higher (Expert+). He has a tendency, as do many of us (and I include myself in this group), to play to the level of his opponent. I knew we both were going to have to work to overcome this. One curious fact to throw in before looking at the games: despite both of us knowing each other and playing in Virginia for decades, somehow we've never met in rated tournament play. We had played about a dozen casual games prior to this in the past six years.

Mark Warriner – Joe Faries
2017 Training Match G1
French

My first surprise in this match occurred before the first move! Typically, when playing casual games prior to this match, Joe and I alternated colors. Going by our last prior game I had expected to have Black in the first game of the match. My pre-match prep had focused on what to play as Black, as had my energies the night before, so already my equilibrium was tested when Joe fooled me and insisted on I play White in the first game. And so, the first lesson: always be ready for the unexpected! It is critical to be able to handle unanticipated sporting situations because they *will* occur.

1 e4 e6 2 Nf3 d5 3 e5 c5 4 b4 [The French Wing Gambit, my favorite way to tackle the French Defense. Of course it is not sound, so kids, don't try this in a tournament game unless you're more concerned with having fun than a good result. My decision to specialize in this line was inspired by a neat book *French Defense: New and Forgotten Ideas!* by

Nikolay Mineev (ISBN 0-938650-36-X, Thinker's Press, 1988).] **4...b6** [Solid, if not adventuresome. 4...cxb4 5 a3 d4; or 4...d4 give White more headaches. Joe knew I played this and his move was an attempted improvement. Well he landed the second surprise because I wasn't expecting 4...b6 and was already on my own and out of 'prep'. An interesting side note: I don't know whether our Editor remembers this or not, but years ago, in the late 80s or early 90s, he was waiting around a tournament (I think it was in Fredericksburg) to collect his winnings. The amount depended upon the last game to finish and he was killing time by playing one or two blitz games with yours truly. It was there that he showed me this idea of Black putting the pawn on d4 to give White fits. Long time ago, but the memory stuck!] {*I confess I do not remember, but I have indeed ventured this French Wing Gambit several times in tournaments. In reply to 4...b6, I recommend neither what you played nor either of the moves in your next note, but 5 d4! If Black then goes 5...cxb4 you're back*



in the main line except Black has already committed to ...b6; and if instead 5...cxd4 (universally played, in my experience) then you go 6 a3 and continue with moves like Bd3, O-O, Qe2, N-d2-b3, adapting particular order to Black's response and eventually recover the pawn on d4. Only play b5 in reply to ...a5, when you no longer have to worry about the "bothersome" ...a6 in your note two moves below. Looking now at my personal database, I see that exactly this line (5 d4 cxd4 5 a3) occurred in Shibut-Lee, 1993 Fredricksburg Open (1-0, 35 moves) and I wonder if perhaps that was also the occasion of the conversation Mark recalls. —ed} **5 b5** [Falling back on my online experience/reflexes. Much more common by top players is either 5 a3 5 c3 Interestingly though, my choice scores best, albeit in a small data pool.] **5...Nd7** [Already we're down to less than a handful of games where this has been played. 5 a6 would have been slightly more typical and certainly more bothersome to me.] **6 c3** [My "novelty." Previous attempts included 6 c4 or 6 Bb2] **6...Bb7 7 d4 Rc8** [I was much more concerned by moves like 7...c4 or 7...f6] **8 Bd3 cxd4** [8...f6] **9 cxd4 Bb4+?** [Black will either trade off his needed dark-squared bishop or lose time helping me develop pieces. Unfortunately for Joe, he does both.] **10 Bd2 Bxd2+ 11 Nbx d2 Qc7?** [What's the plan here? The queen can't do anything on the c-file, it's locked down tight. I was hoping he'd get the queen sidetracked out of play and that's exactly what happened. Probably this was his last chance to get in 11...f6 with any effect.] **12 O-O Qc3 13 Qe2?** [My turn to get sidetracked. 13 Nb3 made much more sense. I thought about it, but

mistakenly rejected it thinking the knight would be out of play.] **13...Ne7** [13...Nh6] **14 Nb3** [back on track] **14...O-O?** [Whoa! Inviting an attack.] **15 Rac1 Qb4 16 Bxh7+?** [Wildly optimistic. The simple 16 Rb1 kept up the pressure. My move doesn't lose, but it chucks a winning advantage. Unfortunately, I'd used a lot of time (the control for our match was 90m+5s delay) so I decided to go for broke.] **16...Kxh7 17 Ng5+ Kg8?** [Most unfortunate. The thematic 17...Kg6 had to be tried.] **18 Qh5** [Black can flail but there's no escape.] **18...Rfd8 19 Qxf7+ Kh8 20 Nxe6 Nf5 21 Qxf5 Qe7 22 Nxd8 Qxd8 23 Rxc8** [Inaccurate. 23 Qh5+ Kg8 24 e6 Nf6 25 Qf7+ Kh7 26 Qxb7] **23... Bxc8 24 Rc1 Nc5?** [Time was getting low and I think Joe was rattled by the turn of events.] **25 Qh5+ Kg8 26 dxc5 1-0**

Joe Faries – Mark Warriner 2017 Training Match G2 Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 [My pre-match 'prep' and surprise for Joe. In all our previous games, I'd played 2...e6. To his credit he was not fazed a bit and played on without hesitation.] **3 Nc3 Nf6 4 d3** [Expected. Joe tends to play conservatively, luring his opponents into unsound attacks while constructing solid, if unadventurous, setups. Fortunately for me, I anticipated his ideas almost perfectly.] **4...Nc6 5 Be2 g6 6 O-O Bg7 7 h3 O-O 8 Be3 h6** [A rare choice, but it scores well for Black. So far, I'd guessed his exact move choices, including his next.] **9 Qd2 Kh7 10 Rab1** [Joe's novelty. That I did not anticipate and so sunk into my first think, though not too long. One problem that



did plague me throughout the match was taking too long on practical decisions and sometimes 'only' moves. I never did solve it, though at least I have an appreciation of one of my weaknesses now.] **10...e5 11 Nh2** [an interesting idea] **11...Nd4** [Okay, but I really wish I'd played 11...Be6 instead.] **12 Bd1!** [During the game I thought this was a horrible move, disconnecting his rooks. But(!) engines say "nope, great repositioning of the bishop!" The position is now about equal. Wow.] **12...d5** [12...Be6 13 f4 exf4 14 Rxf4 Ng8 15 Bg4 f5 16 exf5 gxf5 17 Be2 Be5 18 Rff1 Qh4 19 Bf4 Rf7 20 Bxe5 dxe5 21 Rbe1 Rg7 22 Kh1 Nf6 23 Bf3 Nd7 24 Qf2 Qe7 25 Nd5 Qd6 26 Ne3 Rag8 27 Nc4 Bxc4 28 dxc4 e4 29 Bd1 Rxcg2 30 Qf4 Rg1+ 0-1 Mabrook-Tork, Egypt 2009] **13 Kh1?** [This lands White in hot water. 13 Ng4 was more in keeping with his setup.] **13...Ne6** [Tosses Black's gains. 13...Be6 kept up the pressure and continued development. For the life of me I can't remember the train of thought that led me to this move.] **14 exd5 Nxd5 15 Nxd5 Qxd5 16 b3?** [16 Bf3] **16...Nd4?** [16...f5] **17 f4?** [I just flat missed the improvement 17 c4 over what he chose.] **17...e4?** [still oblivious!] **18 c3?** [18 c4 and White's game picks up steam.] **18...Nf5 19 dxe4 Qxd2 20 Bxd2 Ng3+ 21 Kg1 Nxe4!** [21...Nxf1 22 Nxf1 b6 is playable but there's no need to give White even that much counterplay.] **22 Rb2?** [22 Be1] **22...Nxd2** [Okay, but perhaps either 22...Rd8 or 22...Nxc3 are better.] **23 Rxd2 Bxc3 24 Rc2** [24 Rd6] **24...Bd4+ 25 Kh1 Bf5 26 Rd2 Rad8?** [26...Bc3 27 Rd5 Rad8] **27 Nf3?** [27 Bg4 Be4 28 Bf3 Bxf3 29

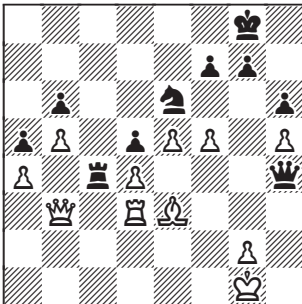
Nxf3 is still problematic but better than the game continuation.] **27...Be3 28 Rxd8 Rxd8 29 Ne5 f6?** [29...Bxf4] **30 Ng4 Bxf4 31 Rxf4?** [Although Black is in the driver's seat in any case, 31 Nxf6+ Kg7 32 g4 is still a better version than the game.] **31...Rxd1+ 32 Kh2 Bxc4 33 Rxc4 b6?** [Ouch! I was too confident and got careless. Fortunately, it didn't pitch the win, but my poor technique made converting the advantage more difficult. 33...Rd4] **34 Re4 Rd7 35 Re6 Kg7 36 Rc6 Kf7 37 a4 Rd3 38 Rc7+ Ke6 39 Rxa7 Rxb3 40 Ra6 Ke5 41 a5 c4 42 axb6 c3 43 Ra5+ Kd4 0-1**

Mark Warriner – Joe Faries 2017 Training Match G3 French

Okay, so we'd drawn the battle lines and now it was time to find out if anyone flinched or whether they believed in their opening choices. **1 e4 e6 2 Nf3 d5 3 e5 c5 4 b4 b6 5 c3** [I changed up to the most commonly played continuation, trying to keep Joe off-balance.] **5...c4 6 a4** [Joe surprised me with 5...c4 and I promptly forgot my preparation of 6 d4! No answer here except that I didn't spend enough time memorizing the correct continuation.] **6...Nd7** [I was pleased to see this as I felt the knight was a bit awkwardly placed.] **7 d4 cxd3 8 Bxd3 Qc7?** [8...a5; 8...Ne7] **9 Qe2?** [Ouch. I was not aware of the thematic idea 9 0-0 and the e-pawn is poison: 9...Nxe5 10 Nxe5 Qxe5 11 a5] **9...Ne7?** [9...Bxb4 and doesn't White look silly?] **10 Bf4?** [10 O-O My equilibrium was destroyed at this point and I used huge amounts of time trying orient myself. The consequence of this should have been a loss.] **10...Nc6** [10...Ng6 11 Bg3 a5] **11**



O-O a6 12 Re1 Bb7 13 Nbd2 h6? [13... a5 14 b5 (14 bxa5 Nxa5 15 Nd4 Qxc3 16 Nb5 Qc8 17 Qg4) 14...Ne7 15 Nb3 Rc8] **14 h4?** [14 Nb3] **14...Be7 15 Nf1** [15 Nb3] **15...Qd8** [15...g5] **16 h5 Bg5 17 Bg3 d4?** [17...O-O] **18 Nxd4 Nxd4 19 cxd4 O-O 20 Bc2** [Here I began to get desperately low on time and went for obvious tactics, knowing they didn't work. Foolish! I'd have been better off investing even more time finding a better plan. 20 Ne3] **20...Re8 21 Qd3 Nf8 22 Ne3 Bxe3?** [22...Rc8] **23 Qxe3 Rc8 24 Rac1?** [24 Bd3] **24...Rc7? 25 f3?** [No need to move the pawn and create a weakness. 25 Bd3 Qd5 26 Be4] **25...Qd7 26 Bb3?** [The frustrating thing for me in this game is that I never was able to find my balance and puzzle out good moves or plans. 26 Bd3] **26...Rec8 27 Bf2** [27 Rxc7 Qxc7 28 Bf2] **27...Bd5 28 Rxc7 Rxc7 29 Bxd5?** [29 Ra1 Bxb3 30 Qxb3 is at least a little bit better for White. I just kept giving away any advantages I had!] **29...exd5 30 Qb3 Rc4 31 Be3 Ne6 32 Rd1 Qc7 33 Rd3 Qe7 34 b5 a5** [34...axb5] **35 f4?** [I finally cracked in time pressure and it should have cost me the game.] **35...Qh4 36 f5** [desperation]



36...Nxd4

Hard to fault Joe for not finding the crushing combo here, we were both getting low on time. 36...Nc5! 37 Qb1 (37 dxc5 Qe1+ 38 Kh2 Rh4 *mate* is the point!) 37...Nxd3 38 Qxd3 Qe1+ 39 Kh2 Rxa4

37 Bxd4 [37 Qd1 Nxf5 38 Bf2 Qf4 39 g3 Qg5 40 Qe1 Rc1 41 Rd1 Rxd1 42 Qxd1 Nxc3 43 Qxd5 Nxe5+ is better resistance, but still losing.] **37...Rxd4?** [37...Rc1+ 38 Qd1 (38 Rd1 Qxd4+) 38...Rxd1+ 39 Rxd1 Qxh5] **38 Qd1?** [38 e6] **38...Rxd3?** [38...Rxa4 39 e6 fxe6 40 fxe6 Re4 41 g3 Qh3 42 Rxd5? (42 Qd2 Rxe6) 42...Qxc3+ 43 Kf1 Rf4+] **39 Qxd3 Qe1+ 40 Kh2** [The rest of the game was a very messy time scramble full of inaccuracies. Suffice it to say Black missed a lot of opportunities in time pressure to have ended the game. I relied heavily on my online bullet reflexes to just keep making trouble as best I could.] **40...Qxe5+ 41 g3 d4 42 Kg2 Qd5+ 43 Kh3 Qc5 44 Qe4 Qc4 45 Kg4 Qxa4 46 Qe8+ Kh7 47 f6 d3+ 48 Kh3 Qd4 49 Qxf7 Qxf6 50 Qd5 Qf1+ 51 Kh2 Qe2+ 52 Kh3 d2 53 Qf5+ Kg8 54 Qc8+ Kf7 55 Qd7+ Kf6 56 Qd4+ Ke6 57 Qxb6+ Kd5 58 Qc6+ Kd4 59 Qd7+ Kc3 60 Qxc7+ Kc2 61 Qc7+ Kb1 62 Qh7+ Kc1 63 Qc7+?** ½-½ Black is crushing White, but he had just seconds left on his clock and I didn't want to win the game that way as it would not have been sporting after such poor play on my part so I offered a draw.

Joe Faries – Mark Warriner
2017 Training Match G4
Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Be2 [This didn't surprise me at all as Joe had showed it



to me earlier in our casual games before this match. We just transpose to our *tabiya*.] **3...Nf6 4 d3 Nc6 5 O-O e5** [I decided to try placing my dark-square bishop differently this game. I misplayed it subsequently, which led me to go back to fianchettoing later in match.] **6 c3 Be7 7 Bd2** [A novelty in this position, though I was not totally surprised. The bishop would be better placed on g5 or e3.] **7...O-O 8 a4 Bg4** [8...d5 was a better choice probably and the most principled. I was trying to provoke 9 h3 but to Joe's credit he was having none of that.] **9 Na3 d5 10 exd5 Qxd5 11 c4?** [No need to create a position weakness on d4 like that. 11 Re1] **11...Qd7 12 Be3** [12 Be3] **12...Rfd8 13 Nb5 a6** [Why help the knight to it's desired square? Just 13...Bf5] **14 Nc3 Bf5 15 Ne1?** [15 Bg5] **15...Nd4** [15...Qe6] **16 Bxd4** [16 Bg5] **16...Qxd4** [What a groaner. I can't believe I did that, even as I played it I felt it was a mistake. 16...exd4 is simple and dominating.] **17 Qb3 Rab8 18 Rd1** [After 18 Nc2 Black has to start all

over again.] **18...Qd7** [18...Qd6; 8...Qf4] **19 Bf3 Qc7** [19...Qe6] **20 Nd5** [20 Be4] **20...Nxd5 21 Bxd5 Bf6** [21...Bd7 may be better but I had something in mind and we were both trying to manage our clocks.] **22 Nc2 Bg5** [Engines seem to want either 22...Qd6 or 22...Bd7 but I like my sporting decision.] **23 Ne3 Bg6 24 Qc3 b5 25 axb5 axb5 26 b3** [26 Ra1] **26...h5** [A bit wild but I was trying to make him think something was up and that I had an attack.] **27 Be4** [And he bites!] **27...Bxe3 28 fxe3 b4** [fixing the weak, backward b-pawn] **29 Qc2 Bxe4 30 dxe4 Rxd1 31 Rxd1** [The superior 31 Qxd1 would have avoided what happened.] **31...Ra8** [Give me that a-file!] **32 Rd5** [Very naughty, careful!] **32...Ra1+ 33 Kf2?** [Falling into my trap; 33 Rd1 had to be played.] **33...Qe7 34 Rd1 Rxd1** [or 34...Qh4+] **35 Qxd1 Qh4+ 36 Kg1 Qxe4** [Black's queen is dominant, controlling all the right squares, while White lacks coordination.] **37 Qxh5?** [falling into another trap] **37... Qxe3+ 38 Kf1 Qxb3 39 Qxe5 Qxc4+ 0-1** The pawns march.

What conclusions could be drawn after the first half of the match? Well, my play was very rusty after what was tantamount to a 26-year retirement from OTB play. Specifically, my calculations were horrible in the middlegame. I've played so much bullet and blitz online that accuracy was practically nonexistent. I was relying almost exclusively on intuition and general evaluation, which weren't awful but insufficient for overall good play. My time management was off-base, with me frequently taking far too much time from a practical point of view, resulting in unnecessary time scrambles. My openings held up pretty well, my preparation was fair, though the French Wing Gambit is probably a poor choice in general. As far as sporting results, they were simply in line with our ratings. I could only have improved by half a point. It's pretty sobering knowing that as the higher rated player, only a near perfect result would have guaranteed keeping one's rating and significant gain would have been impossible! I was happiest with the fact that while I used to get very nervous before games, now I seem to be able to handle that quite a bit better (age perhaps?). I was able to enjoy the games more and worry about results less. No doubt this also was the result of the awareness that this was only training after all. *To be continued...*



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