

Jan Timman

Timman's Triumphs

My 100 Best Games

New In Chess 2020

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Introduction

In August 2018, I started making a selection of 100 of my best games for this book. As I had expected, it was a difficult task. When you've had a long career in chess, and played many thousands of games, there will be hundreds among them on which you can look back with satisfaction. Siegbert Tarrasch published his book *Dreihundert Schachpartien* in 1895, when he was 33 years old. In such a case, with so many games, the selection process is much 'looser'. In 1998, Anatoly Karpov also published a selection of 300 games from a period of three decades. Thus, he, too, had more freedom to show all his special victories to the public.

I myself published *Timman's Selected Games* with Cadogan in 1995, which was brought out by New In Chess under the title *Chess the Adventurous Way*. It features 80 games from the period 1983-1994. Curiously, I have only included 10 games from that selection in this book. This illustrates the difficulties I experienced with my new selection. Sometimes you think back with great pleasure on games that, after a check with the computer, turn out to be not so good after all. The reverse also occurred: games I had considered to be messy at the time, turned out to be very well conceived.

Notably, also, while I was making my first selection for the present book, the final two games, against Feygin and Bartel, hadn't been played yet. Thus, a period of 52 years has now been covered. I have included only two draws – the first from the beginning of my career, the second from my later years. It would have been different if I had brought out a selection of my most interesting games. Such a selection would also have included several of my losses. Perhaps I will write such a book someday.

There have been much-applauded victories in my career in which the element of a struggle was lacking. For example, in the first SWIFT tournament in Brussels, 1986, I won the brilliancy prize for my game with Tony Miles. However, this was a walkover. It was decided in an elegant way, but in this case many roads would have led to Rome. The same goes for my 5th match game against Robert Hübner at Sarajevo 1991. At an early stage, Hübner made a very grave mistake, which I adequately exploited. Also here, many roads led to Rome (this game can be found in *Selected Games*).

I haven't included any rapid games in this selection. This is a matter of principle. Nevertheless, I almost deviated from this principle in one case. I am talking about my White game against Garry Kasparov in the Immopar tournament in Paris 1991.

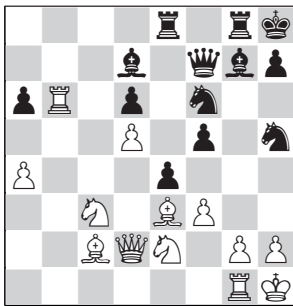
King's Indian Defence

Jan Timman 2630

Garry Kasparov 2770

Paris Immopar rapid 1991 (4)

1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♙g7 4.e4
 d6 5.f3 0-0 6.♙e3 c6 7.♙d3 e5 8.d5
 cxd5 9.cxd5 ♟h5 10.♟ge2 f5 11.exf5
 gxf5 12.0-0 ♟d7 13.♖c1 ♘c5
 14.♙c4 a6 15.b4 ♟d7 16.a4 ♚e8
 17.♟h1 ♟df6 18.b5 ♚g6 19.♙d3 e4
 20.♙c2 ♙d7 21.bxa6 bxa6 22.♖b1
 ♖ae8 23.♚d2 ♟h8 24.♖b6 ♙g8
 25.♙g1 ♚f7



26. ♖xa6

Up to this moment, I had played in exemplary fashion, building up a winning position by strategic means. However, the text move is too rash. White should have played first 26.♙d4!, to exclude any counterplay by Black. After 26...♚f8 27.♖xa6 ♙h6 28.f4, Black has nothing left to hope for.

26...f4

The only chance.

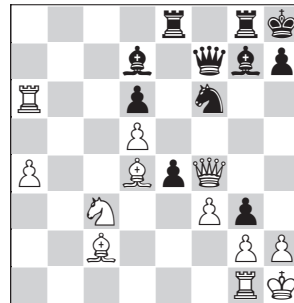
27. ♙d4

Strategically correct, but tactically this is a mistake. With 27.♙xf4 exf3 28.gxf3 ♟xf4 29.♚xf4, White could have maintained his advantage,

although after 29...♖ef8, Black has some compensation for the pawns.

27...♟g3+ 28.♟xg3 fxg3 29.♚f4

I played this quickly, and apparently self-confidently, speculating that Kasparov, who had almost run out of time, would fail to find the right path. Necessary was 29.♟e2, although Black has the advantage after 29...exf3.



29...gxh2

An enormous relief. If Kasparov had had more time, he would certainly have found 29...♚h5 30.♚xg3 ♟xd5. The white queen has no squares. On the next day, Kortchnoi gave me a hand-written note on which he had jotted down a few variations. He claimed that after 31.♚xg7+ ♖xg7 32.♟xe4, White wouldn't have had reason to despair. I appreciated this gesture highly; he wanted to hearten me. Indeed, this doesn't look too bad for White, but the computer is relentless: after 32...♖e6 33.♖a8+ ♙e8, Black is winning.

30. ♖f1 exf3

Now everything turns out right after all. With 30...♖gf8 Black could have held the balance.

31. ♖xf3

The pin along the f-file is deadly.

**31... ♖ef8 32. ♜xd6 ♙g4 33. ♜xf6
♙xf3 34. ♜xf7 ♙xg2+ 35. ♗xh2 1-0**

This was almost a model game! But anyway, my victory in the Immopar tournament was no less glorious for it.

There were also games with the classical time control that I would have included if there hadn't been serious errors in the conversion. An example is the following game.

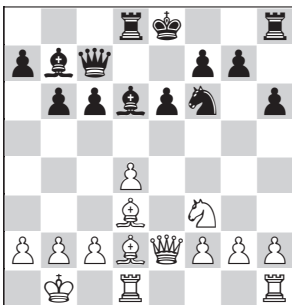
Caro-Kann Defence

Jan Timman 2590

Peter Leko 2630

Groningen 1996 (1)

**1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3. ♘d2 dxe4 4. ♗xe4
♗d7 5. ♙d3 ♗gf6 6. ♗g5 e6 7. ♗1f3
♙d6 8. ♖e2 h6 9. ♗e4 ♗xe4
10. ♖xe4 ♗f6 11. ♖e2 ♖c7 12. ♙d2
b6 13.0-0-0 ♙b7 14. ♗b1 ♜d8**

**15. ♜hg1**

This little move had been played shortly before by Topalov in Las Palmas in his game against Ivanchuk. White prepares to push his g-pawn.

15...c5 16.dxc5 ♖xc5 17.a3!

This little pawn move too stems from Topalov.

17...a5

The first new move. Ivanchuk had opted for 17...0-0, but after 18.g4 ♖d5 19.g5! ♖xf3 20.gxf6 g6 21. ♙xh6, White had a large advantage. The drawback of the text move is that the b-pawn becomes weak.

18. ♙e3 ♖c7 19. ♙b5+ ♗e7 20. ♗d4!

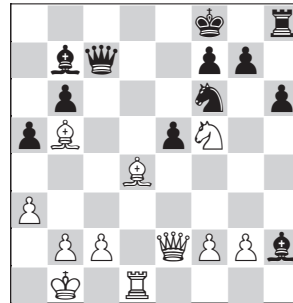
On its way to f5.

**20... ♙xh2 21. ♗f5+ ♗f8 22. ♜d8+
♖xd8 23. ♜d1 ♖c7 24. ♙d4!**

The point of the 20th move.

24...e5

**24...exf5 25. ♙xf6 gxf6 26. ♜d7 ♖e5
27. ♜xb7.**

**25. ♙xb6!**

A vigorous piece sacrifice.

**25... ♖xb6 26. ♜d6 ♖c7 27. ♖c4 ♖b8
28. ♜b6**

The most elegant path to the win was 28. ♖c5 ♗g8 29. ♖b6 ♗h7 30. ♜xf6 gxf6 31. ♖xf6 ♖f8 32. ♙c4, followed by the capture on f7. Black is powerless.

28... ♖c8 29. ♜xb7?

A combination with a big hole.

With 29. ♙c6 ♖xf5 30. ♜xb7, White

could have decided the game in a simple way.

29... ♖xb7 30. ♘d6 ♜e7

Fortunately, Leko doesn't see it. With 30... ♘e4!!, Black could have turned the tables. Suddenly White has to fear for his life.

31. ♜c8+ ♘e8 32. ♘f5

Now the combination works out well.

32...h5

After 32... ♜e6 33. ♙d7, the queen has no squares.

33. ♘xe7 ♘xe7 34. ♜d7+

Black resigned.

My error in the conversion in this game was not entirely coincidental. While screening my games, I saw this pattern more often; even in my best games, irregularities occurred in the final phase. I also noted that I regularly got dubious positions with black in the opening phase. In a number of cases, this had to do with the fact that I was playing for a win with black. Sometimes, I got into trouble due to superior preparation by my opponent, like in the second match game against Kortchnoi in Brussels 1991 (Game No. 65). This is a far from flawless struggle that I have included anyway, after long hesitation, because my counterattack was very well conceived.

Three games that just failed to make it to the selection each contained a magnificent, study-like move.

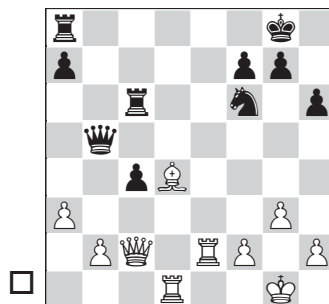
Jan Timman

2550

Haji Ardiansyah

2330

Luzern of 1982



25. ♙xa7!

This looks like a simple win of a pawn, but there is more to it.

25...c3 26.bxc3 ♜xc3 27. ♜xc3 ♜xe2 28. ♜e1 ♘d5

It looks as if Black has created just sufficient counterchances.

29. ♜c8+!!

A fantastic desperado, and at the same time the real point of White's 25th move.

29... ♜xc8 30. ♜xe2 ♜c3 31. ♜a2

Thus, White manages to maintain his extra pawn.

31... ♜c1+ 32. ♘g2 ♘c3 33. ♜b2 ♜a1 34. ♜b3

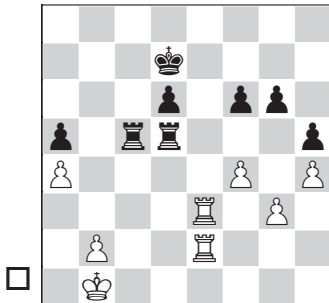
It's a close call, but White hauled in the point after the technical phase:

34... ♘e2 35. ♙e3 g5 36. ♘f3 ♜a2 37. ♜d3 f5 38. ♜d2 ♜xd2 39. ♙xd2 ♘d4+ 40. ♘g2 ♘f7 41.a4 ♘c6 42.a5 ♘b8 43. ♘f3 ♘e6 44.h4 g4+ 45. ♘e3 ♘a6 46.h5 1-0

In the World Cup tournament in Belfort 1988, not much was going my way. Still, I managed to beat

Believsky, who was a difficult opponent for me in most of our encounters.

Alexander Believsky 2645
Jan Timman 2675
 Belfort 1988 (2)



This double-rook ending is equal. In the time-scramble, however, both of us became ambitious:

33. ♖e6 ♜e5!!

A staggering resource that puts Believsky off-balance.

34. fxe5 ♜xe6 35. exf6+ ♜xf6 36. ♜e3

A hesitation that turns out fatal for White. After 36. b4 axb4 37. ♜b2, the draw would be on the horizon.

36... d5 37. b3 ♜f5

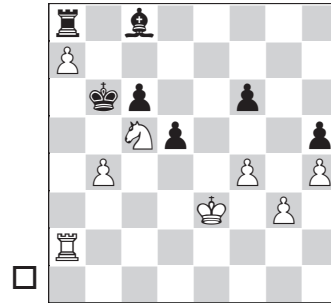
Suddenly, White has no defence against the march of the d-pawn.

38. ♜b2 d4 39. ♜e8 d3 40. ♜d8 ♜e4

41. ♜d6 ♜d5 0-1

I won the Koge Open tournament in 1997 together with the Estonian grandmaster Lembit Oll. Against the Russian grandmaster Yuri Yakovich, I played an excellent game.

Jan Timman 2625
Yuri Yakovich 2610
 Koge 1997 (8)



White has a plus pawn, but Black is threatening to win it back. Energetic play is called for.

52. g4!!

A fantastic breakthrough.

52... ♟xg4

If Black takes with the pawn, the white h-pawn decides the issue.

Now, however, the a6-square becomes available for the rook.

53. ♜a6+ ♜b5

The alternative 53... ♜c7 would amount to the same after 54. ♜d4 ♟c8 55. ♜a5 ♜b6 56. ♜a4+.

54. ♜d4 ♟c8 55. ♜a5+ ♜b6 56. ♜a4+

♜b7 57. b5 cxb5 58. ♜xb5+ ♜xa7

59. ♜a5+

Here, Black lost by forfeit, before he had time to resign. White will liquidate to a winning pawn ending.

In this fragment, my great penchant for endgame studies comes clearly to the fore.

For my analyses of the games in this book, I have used the engines Stockfish 10 and Houdini 5. For the final chapter I have used Stockfish 11.

I'd like to express my gratitude to Erwin l'Ami, who ran an extra check on all the analyses in this book, which resulted in a number of useful corrections and additions.

Jan Timman,
Arnhem, March 2020

CHAPTER 1

The road to the top (1967-1977)

In the life of a 20-year-old professional chess player, ambitions go hand in hand with dreams that are nourished by restless travelling from one tournament to another, from one country to another. In such a life, there are no school desks or college halls, there's no pressure to get up early, no duty to give account for anything. A triumphant feeling takes possession of you. You are your own boss, governed only by your own abilities.

During tournament games, the chess clock is the only instrument that exerts control on a player's thoughts. Forty moves have to be made within 2½ hours, then 16 within an hour. The monotonous ticking of the clock is anchored in the chess player's brain. A rising flag causes the tension to mount, and the heart to pound faster. Then, after the time control, the player feels freedom again – for an hour. After the game is over, your freedom is limitless – at least until the next game begins. The end of a tournament is the onset of an even longer period of freedom.

That is how I saw it in the old days, more than three decades ago. The above is, word for word, what I wrote in my book *Het smalle pad* ('The narrow way'), which is about my experiences in the World Championship cycles until 1986. I was talking about the year 1972, the time of the Spassky-Fischer match in Reykjavik. Shortly after that match, I played my first zonal tournament in Finland – the first step on the long road to the World Championship title.

How different things are today! A chess player's thinking time is more limited now, and there are no more adjourned games. You can no longer hear the chess clock ticking, as we have electronic clocks now. Also, there are no flags anymore. But above all, professional chess is now ruled by the computer. I think that in these times I wouldn't have become a professional chess player. Knowledge has become too important, you cannot live on your talent only.

Chess used to be different. I won't say 'better', since computers are a blessing for me when I make endgame studies. Still, I am glad that my great models, my sources of inspiration, were made of flesh and blood: Mikhail Botvinnik and Vasily Smyslov, Boris Spassky and Bobby Fischer. They were the players who pointed out the course that I followed.

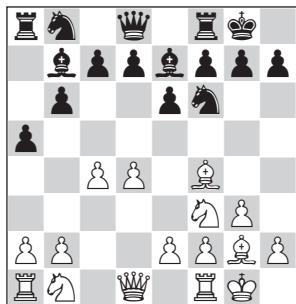
Actually, I never doubted that I would become a professional player. At 14, I earned my first money prize by winning the 'Haagse Schaakdagen'

('The Hague Chess Days'): 75 guilders. 'You have to do something special with that money,' adult members of the Delft Chess Club told me. I didn't. I saw the money as a first instalment of what was coming: a regular income, to be earned by sitting behind the chessboard and making moves. A visual artist once told me how much he admired my trade: earning your money exclusively by thinking. After all, the moves I carried out on the chessboard were much less of an exertion than his brushstrokes on the canvas.

In my secondary school years in Delft, however, there was hardly any time for intensive chess study. I was only able to play in tournaments during holidays. My first success was third place in the World Junior Championship in Jerusalem 1967, shortly after the Six-Day War. For political reasons, there were no representatives from the Eastern Block, with the exception of Romania, who did send a youth player to Jerusalem; Ceausescu was pursuing his own policy at the time. Nevertheless, the field of participants was strong, as is shown by the fact that Robert Hübner came in fourth. In the summer vacations that followed, I twice won the Biel Open tournament – the first time shared with the Swiss master Edwin Bhend. First prize was 800 Swiss francs, which was a lot of money for a schoolboy. During Christmas holidays, I twice played in the Niemeijer youth tournament, which later developed into the European Youth Championship. A high point was the traditional Hastings tournament, which was held at the turn of the year 1969/'70. It felt an honour to be invited, and I didn't disappoint the organizers. With black, I made good draws against Smyslov and Portisch. This gave me hope for the future, but first I had to take my final exams at grammar school.

By winning the Hoogovens Masters group in 1971, I became an International Master. After that, I suffered something of a standstill. Other champions of my generation developed more quickly. Henrique Mecking was a prodigy, and there is no need to mention Anatoly Karpov; he was already playing Candidates Matches in 1974. But also Ljubomir Ljubojevic, Ulf Andersson and Zoltan Ribli joined the world elite more quickly than I did.

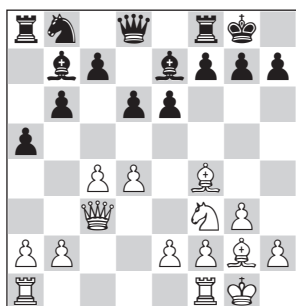
Nevertheless, in May 1974 I became the youngest grandmaster-but-one in the world. This was because I was the youngest-but-one of my generation; only Mecking was one month younger. With the grandmaster title, my travels around the world intensified; tournament victories alternated with disappointments. It was a fantastic profession, a great life, but my discipline wasn't always optimal. Only as late as 1978 did I manage to stabilize my play and push through to the world top, at 26 years of age.



9. dxc3 dxe4 10. c2

The standard move, but 10. b5 came into great consideration in these altered circumstances. After 10... a6 (on 10...d6, 11. d2 is strong) 11. c2, Black has no easy task, as practice has borne out.

10... dxc3 11. cxc3 d6



Black can be satisfied with the result of the opening, as it is not at all certain whether White's queen's bishop is standing well on f4.

12. c3

With the clear intention to push e2-e4.

In the game Giri-Rapport, Wijk aan Zee 2017, White opted for the alternative 12. c2, but after 12...f5 13. ad1 e4 14. c1 e8, he had no advantage.

12...f5

Best. In a rapid game Ding Liren-Wang Yue (2015), Black allowed the march of the e-pawn, but White was better after 12... d7 13. e4 f6 14. e3 g6 15. ad1.

13. e3 d7 14. g5

The only way to play for an advantage.

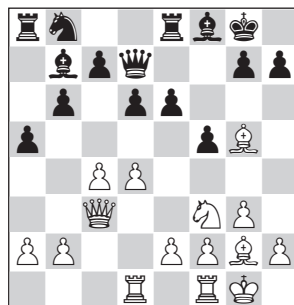
14... e8

The most flexible reaction. Now, White achieves nothing with the bishop trade.

15. ad1 f8

A good move, as White now has to take care of his queen's bishop. But Black could have achieved equality also with 15... e4.

16. c3



16... e4

A strategic move that mainly serves as preparation for the knight development to c6. An interesting alternative was 16...c5, which is possible as the d-pawn is solidly protected. White wouldn't have any way to obtain an advantage in that case.

17. d5 exd5

Black lifts the tension in the centre, to take aim at the white d-pawn next. The alternative was 17... a6. After 18. d4 xg2 19. dxe6 xe6

20.♔xg2 ♖e4, chances are almost equal.

18.cxd5 ♜f7 19.♙e3 h6 20.a3



20...a4

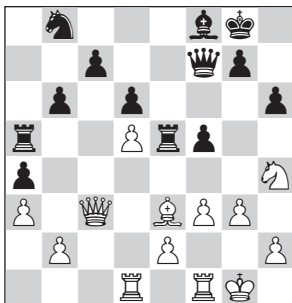
Somewhat committal, but Kortchnoi has a special intention with the march of his a-pawn.

The alternative was 20...♘a6. After 21.♜c6 ♘c5 22.♘d4 ♙xg2 23.♔xg2 a4, the position is balanced.

21.♘h4 ♖a5

That was the idea; Black is going to further harass the white d-pawn. An interesting alternative was 21...g5, after which the play becomes very sharp. A possible continuation is 22.f3 ♙xd5 23.♖xd5 ♜xd5 24.f4 ♜e6 25.fxg5 ♖a5 26.♙d2, and White has sufficient compensation for the exchange.

22.♙xe4 ♖xe4 23.f3 ♖e5



Kortchnoi must have underestimated my next move. Better was the retreat 23...♖e8 when 24.♘g2 g5 25.h4 ♙g7 is approximately even.

24.♙d4!

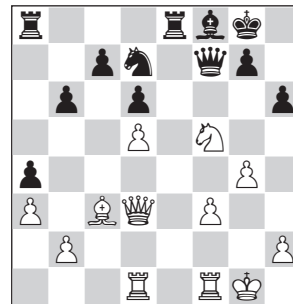
Bull's eye! I had carefully prepared this powerful bishop move.

24...♖xe2

It wasn't very well possible to capture the d-pawn. After 24...♖exd5 25.e4 ♖db5 26.♘xf5, White has a large advantage.

25.♜d3 ♖e8 26.♙c3 ♖a8 27.♘xf5 ♘d7 28.g4!

Strongly played. The characteristics of the position justify White's expansion on the king's wing.



28...g6

This is a weakening that the black position can no longer bear. He should have tried 28...♘e5, even though White has a large advantage also in that case after 29.♜d2.

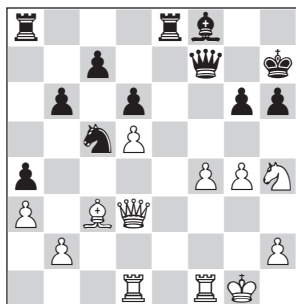
29.♘h4 ♔h7

29...♘e5 was a better defence, as after 30.♙xe5 dxe5 31.♘xg6 ♙c5+ 32.♔g2 ♖ad8, Black has good chances to hold the ending. I think, however, that Kortchnoi was not so pessimistic about his position and didn't fancy playing an inferior endgame.

30.f4!

Further expansion.

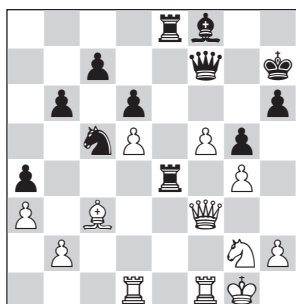
30...♖c5



31.♖f3

Up to this moment, I had played excellently, but now, plagued by slight time pressure, I failed to put the crown on my work. White could have obtained a winning attack with 31.♖h3!. During the game, I didn't see how to continue after 31...♗e4, but then White can push through with 32.g5! ♖g8 33.f5! ♗xc3 34.bxc3 hxg5 (or 34...gxf5 35.g6, with death and destruction) 35.fxg6 ♗g7 36.♖f7 ♖h6 37.♖h7 g4 38.♖xg4 ♗e3+ 39.♗h1, and Black can still trade the queens, but this doesn't stop the attack. Incidentally, also after the text move, White keeps a large if not winning advantage.

31...♗e4 32.f5 g5 33.♗g2 ♖ae8



34.♖fe1

A wrong plan that had a mainly psychological background. Because my score against Kortchnoi was bad – 6-1 with 7 draws – I had a lot of respect for him. Moreover, I was impressed by the way he had activated his pieces. It seemed to me that we were engaged in a battle for the initiative, and that I had to neutralize the pressure on the e-file. I didn't realize that actually the rook on e4 is only in Black's way, as it blocks the square for the knight, which is thereby shut out of the defence. This is a problem that Black cannot easily solve, as there are hardly any squares available for the centralized rook. So, there is every reason for White to keep on playing for the attack.

In themselves, these considerations do not look all too complicated. And yet, I didn't condemn the text move in my book *Studies and Games*, and neither did Robert Byrne in his *New York Times* column. And neither was this moment discussed during the post-mortem.

A strong move was 34.f6. The play might continue as follows: 34...♖g6 35.♖d2 b5 36.h4 gxh4 37.♗f4 ♖g5 38.♖g2 ♖e3 39.♖f2 ♖8e4 40.♗d2, and Black will have to give the exchange to escape the pressure.

34...♖g8

It was better for Black to enter a wholesale rook trade here: 34...♖xe1+ 35.♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 36.♗xe1 ♗g7, and the position is equal. It looks as if Kortchnoi was very

ambitious during this stage of the game.

35.h4

Despite the fact that I had little time left on the clock, I decided to sharpen up the play nevertheless. Objectively, 35.♖f1 was the correct move, after which White can retain an advantage.

35...♗g7

During the game – and after it – I was impressed by this plan, which appears to be sharply calculated. In spite of this, Black had two stronger continuations: he could still have opted for the rook trade, but also 35...h5! was an excellent attempt to grab the initiative. There could follow: 36.f6 ♖xg4 37.♖xe1 ♜xe8 38.♜f5 gxh4 39.♖f1 ♜g6 40.♜xg6+ ♖xg6 41.f7+ ♗h7 42.♗h2, and in the endgame, the chances are approximately equal.

36.f6



36...gxh4

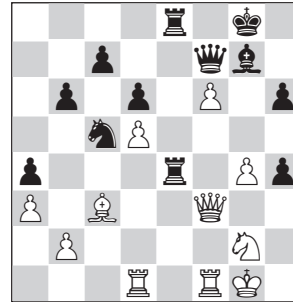
The consequence of Black's play, but also here, 36...♖xe1+ was stronger. White can take back in two ways:

A) 37.♗xe1 ♗h8! 38.♗g2 ♗e4 (38...♗d7 is also possible) 39.♖f1 ♗xc3 40.bxc3 ♖f8 41.hxg5 hxg5 42.♗e3 ♗xf6 43.♗f5, and White

has sufficient compensation for the pawn, but not more than that;

B) 37.♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 38.♗xe1 ♗f8 39.hxg5 ♜g6! (stronger than 39...hxg5, upon which White can take full control of the position by 40.♗d3 ♜g6 41.♗f2!) 40.♜f4 ♜xg5 41.f7+ ♗h7 42.♗g2 ♜xf4 43.♗xf4 ♗d7 44.♗g2, and the ending offers White winning chances.

37.♖f1!



The fact that I had to calculate the tactical possibilities in this position put me back on the right path. White again has a decisive attack.

37...♗f8 38.♗xh4

Without thinking, I took back the pawn, thereby complicating the attack. White had the powerful move 38.♜f5! Black still has the problem that the e4-square is inaccessible to the knight, so he has no good way to avert the threat of the g-pawn push. To avoid being swept away in an onslaught, Black has to give up the exchange, but after 38...♖4e5 39.♗xe5 ♖xe5 40.♜f3, White's win is a matter of technique.

38...♖e3 39.♜g2

A natural move, but 39.♜f4 was stronger, since White can still

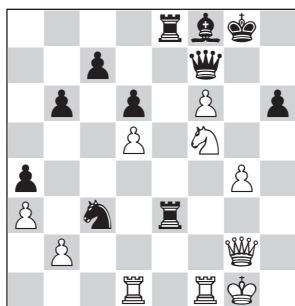
take advantage of the lack of coordination between the black rooks. However, it was very hard to see that after 39...♖8e4 40.♚f5 ♜g3+ 41.♝h2 ♜gxg4, White is still calling the shots. With 42.♞g1 h5 43.♞xg4+ ♞xg4 44.♞d4, he manages to exchange all the rooks while maintaining his attack.

39...♞e4

Finally, the black knight reaches the ideal square.

40.♞f5 ♞xc3

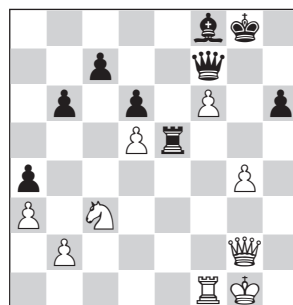
Kortchnoi thought for quite a long time about this logical move. With hindsight, he suggested that the surprising exchange sacrifice 40...♞e2 might have been better after all. During the post-mortem, we came to the conclusion that this move would indeed have been playable, but we missed an important finesse. After 41.♚xe2 ♞xc3, White has the surprising zwischenzug 42.♞e7+!. After 42...♞xe7 43.♚d3 ♞xd1 44.fxg7 ♚xe7 45.♚xd1, Black has insufficient compensation for the exchange. After Kortchnoi had captured the bishop, the game was adjourned.



41.♚xe2

The sealed move. During the two-hour break, I thought at first that I had good winning chances. When I rushed to the playing hall after a frantic analysis, however, I had already reconciled myself to a draw. A closer analysis had borne out that the black defensive line was strong enough to avert any danger.

41...♞xd1 42.♞xd1 ♞e5 43.♞c3



43...♞g6?

A pleasant surprise. Already two moves after the adjournment, Kortchnoi commits a serious mistake. In my analysis, I had mainly reckoned with 43...♞g5, and this is indeed Black's strongest move. White has the following options:

A) 44.♞f4 is a logical move that Kortchnoi had considered so strong during his analysis that he had assessed the adjourned position as bad, if not lost. However, Black has nothing to fear after the cautious 44...♞g6. A possible continuation is 45.♚f3 h5 46.♝f1 ♚h6 47.gxh5 ♚xf4 48.hxg6 ♚xf6 49.♞xa4 ♝g7, and the position is nearly even;

B) The sharp knight move 44.♞e4 was indicated by Robert Byrne. Its

intention is to meet 44...♖xd5 with 45.g5. However, now Black saves himself with 45...♖h7! instead of Byrne's 45...♖g6, which runs into the strong 46.f7+;

C) The rook move 44.♖f5 looks promising, but after 44...♖xf5 45.gxf5+ ♖h7 46.♗e4 ♖h5, Black has enough counterplay thanks to his active queen.

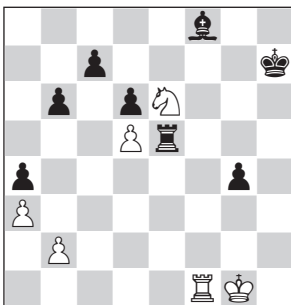
44.f7+ ♖h7



45.♗e2!

The refutation of Black's 43rd move. The knight is on its way to e6, rendering the loss of a piece inevitable for Black.

45...h5 46.♗f4 ♖xg4 47.♖xg4 hxg4 48.♗e6 ♗e7 49.f8♖ ♗xf8



50.♖f7+!

The most precise. With this in-between check, White indirectly protects his d-pawn.

50...♖g6 51.♖xf8 ♗e1+ 52.♖g2 ♖c1 53.♖f2 c6 54.dxc6 ♖xc6 55.♖g3 ♖c4 56.♖f4

With the exchange of rooks, White breaks all further resistance.

56...♖xf4 57.♗xf4+ ♖f5 58.♗d5 b5 59.♗c3 d5 60.♗xb5 1-0

My first victory over Tal was achieved in the final round of a tournament in which almost nothing had gone my way. Perhaps it had to do with the fact that I drove to the tournament from Amsterdam by taxi every day; it's always better to stay in the town itself.

On the evening before the final round, I had visited the poetess Judith Herzberg, and we had talked about all kinds of things. Late at night, shortly before my departure, I told her I had to play Tal the next morning. Thereupon, she conjured up a tube of ointment with the superscription 'Tal' – also in Hebrew; in that language 'tal' means 'dew'. She advised me to rub some of this ointment on my hands before the game. Absent-mindedly, I put the tube in my coat pocket. The next morning I arrived early in Wijk aan Zee and decided to take a walk on the beach. I felt the tube in my coat pocket and rubbed some of the ointment on my hands – I didn't want to disappoint Judith. Did it help? Whatever the case may be, the game with Tal was very good from a technical point of view, just like my last-round game with

Andersson had been in the previous year. In those morning rounds, I didn't excel in sharp battles, but I did in technical endgames.

Game 39 Ruy Lopez

Jan Timman 2655

Mikhail Tal 2605

Wijk aan Zee 1982 (13)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♘xe4

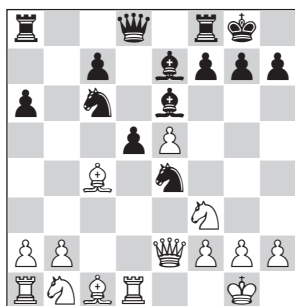
It was no surprise to me that Tal played the Open Spanish. He had worked as a second for Karpov during the latter's matches against Kortchnoi; he must have done extensive research on this variation during the preparation.

6.d4 b5 7.♙b3 d5 8.dxe5 ♙e6 9.♚e2

The Keres System, so called because Keres beat Euwe with it in Moscow 1948.

9...♙e7 10.♚d1 0-0 11.c4 bxc4

12.♙xc4



12...♙c5

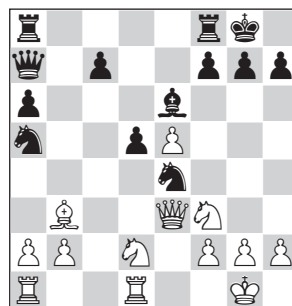
Euwe's old move, which had been given a new lease of life by Kortchnoi. Larsen's move 12...♚d7 has fallen into complete disuse. The best method to obtain an advantage

is 13.♘c3. After 13...♘xc3 14.bxc3 f6 15.exf6 ♙xf6, Fischer's move 16.♙g5 is considered strongest. White exerts strong pressure on the black position.

13.♙e3 ♙xe3 14.♚xe3 ♚b8 15.♙b3 ♘a5 16.♘bd2

The old move. In Caruana-Giri, Shamkir 2016, White played 16.♘d4, after which the further course of the play is forced: 16...c5 17.♘xe6 fxe6 18.f3 c4 19.fxe4 cxb3 20.exd5 bxa2 21.♚xa2 ♘c4 22.♚d4, and things weren't easy for Black.

16...♚a7



After making this move, Tal offered a draw. After a long think, I decided to refuse; I had seen a new idea in the position:

17.♘xe4

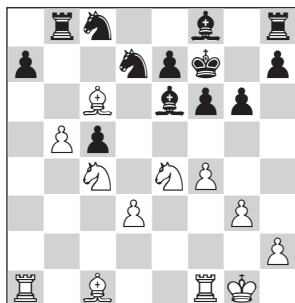
This offers White more perspectives than the trade on a7.

17...♚xe3 18.fxe3 ♘xb3 19.axb3 dxe4 20.♘d4 ♚ab8

Later that year, Tal got the same position with the white pieces against Sturua in Yerevan. Here, Black deviated with 20...♚fb8, which was repeated several times later on. After 21.♚dc1 ♙xb3 22.♚xc7 ♙e6, it is hard for White to

Now, the same position has come on the board as two moves earlier, but without the white e-pawn. This is a well-known theme in the world of endgame studies: a piece or a pawn disappearing via a sacrifice.

19. ♖xb7 ♜b8 20. ♙c6 g6 21. ♜ac4 ♜c8 22. ♜e4 ♔f7



23. ♜e5+!

An elegant pseudo-sacrifice.

23... ♜xe5

Or 23...fxe5 24. ♜g5+ and wins.

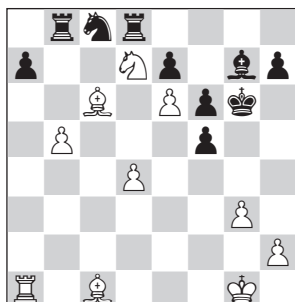
24. fxe5 ♙f5 25. ♜xc5 ♙g7 26. d4

White could have already sacrificed on f5 here, but there is no hurry.

26... ♜d8 27. ♜xf5!

Now, yes, the exchange sacrifice.

27... ♗xf5 28. e6+ ♔g6 29. ♜d7



Total domination.

29... ♜d6 30. ♜xb8 ♜xb8 31. ♜xa7 ♜xb5 32. ♜xe7 ♙h6 33. ♙e8+ 1-0

In 2014, I did do well in the Challengers; I shared second place with Baadur Jobava. It could have been even better, however. In the fifth round, against Benjamin Bok, I allowed a draw by repetition in a winning position. This had never happened to me before, and there was a special cause. I had broken my hand in a fall shortly before the tournament. This meant that I had to write down moves with my left hand. My notation was virtually unreadable. And so, I wasn't able to check my scoresheet deep into the endgame.

Otherwise, miraculously, my broken hand had a positive effect. I slept well, and my concentration was excellent. Towards the end of the tournament, fatigue started playing a role. In the eleventh round, I let an easily won endgame slip against Jobava, and in the penultimate round, I ceded a draw against Merijn van Delft because I was exhausted.

I played my best game against the 15-year-old Jan-Krzysztof Duda, who grew up to be a top-20 player a few years later. The struggle is worthwhile in all its phases.

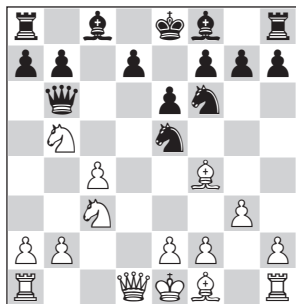
Game 97 English Opening

Jan Timman 2607

Jan-Krzysztof Duda 2553

Wijk aan Zee 2014 (9)

1. c4 c5 2. ♜f3 ♜c6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♜xd4 ♜f6 5. ♜c3 e6 6. g3 ♜b6 7. ♜db5 ♜e5 8. ♙f4



In general, this bishop move is ascribed to Kortchnoi; he beat Greenfeld with it in 1995. However, it had already been played 17 years earlier by the Malaysian FIDE master Christie Hon Kah Seng. Probably, it is insufficient for an opening advantage, but it does lead to highly interesting and sharp positions.

8...d7g4 9.e3

The alternative is Aronian's 9.♖a4.



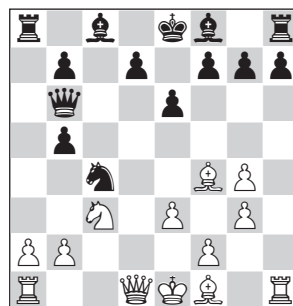
analysis diagram

It is downright staggering that White can just allow Black to capture on f2. However, the sharp edges of this queen move were already softened a long time ago, since it leads to a draw by force. In Shankland-Leko, Tsaghkadzor World Teams 2015, there followed

9...g5 10.♙xe5 ♖xf2+ 11.♗d1 ♗xe5 12.♘c7+ ♕d8 13.♗xa8 ♖d4+ 14.♗c2 ♗xc4 15.e4 ♖d2+ 16.♗b3 ♖xb2+ 17.♗xc4 ♙g7 18.♖a5+ b6 19.♖xg5+ f6 20.♖b5 ♙a6! 21.♖xa6 f5 22.♖xa7 ♖xc3+ 23.♗b5, and here a draw was agreed. Black gives check on c6, after which perpetual check becomes unavoidable.

9...a6 10.♖a4

In the stem game Hon Kah Seng-Mascarinas, Jakarta 1978, White played 10.h3. Objectively, this is probably White's best choice, but after 10...axb5 11.hxg4 ♗xc4,



analysis diagram

he doesn't have an advantage:

A) 12.♖b3 d5 13.♙xc4 dxc4 14.♖xb5+ ♖xb5 15.♗xb5 ♖a5, with an equal ending;

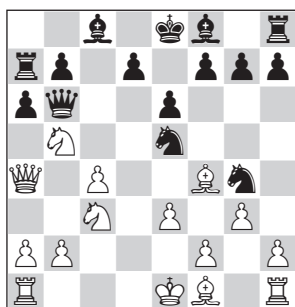
B) Anish Giri surprised Ian Nepomniachtchi with 12.♖c1 in the first round of the Candidates Tournament that was broken off halfway this year. After 11 minutes' thought, Black found the best reply: 12...d5! (12...♖a5 was played in an email game Sedlacek-Suarez Sudeno in 2004. After 13.b3 ♙a3 14.bxc4 ♙xc1 15.♖xc1 bxc4 16.e4, White had a winning position) and the game

took a highly interesting course: 13.b3 ♖b4 14.bxc4 ♜a3 15.♙e5 f6 16.♙d4 ♚a5 17.♙e2 ♙xc3+ 18.♜xc3 ♜xc3 19.♝f1 b4, and the position was balanced.

The text move stems from Maxime Vachier-Lagrave. I had prepared this thoroughly, and realized that White cannot boast any opening advantage. What mattered to me were the interesting complications.

10...g5

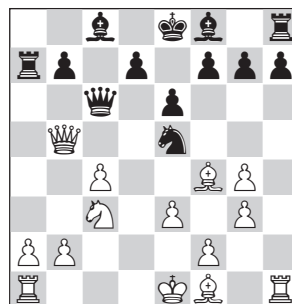
For the moment, Duda follows the game Vachier-Lagrave-Dominguez, Istanbul 2012. With the text move, Black forces a trade on e5, gaining the bishop pair. The drawback of the push is that it weakens the black position. During my preparation, I had mainly occupied myself with the question of what White should do against the improbable little rook move 10...♜a7!?



analysis diagram

Two years later, this was indeed played in the game Topalov-Caruana in the Candidates Tournament in Moscow. The play develops as follows: 11.h3 axb5 12.♚xb5 ♚c6, and now:

A) After 13.hxg4, the lines split up again:



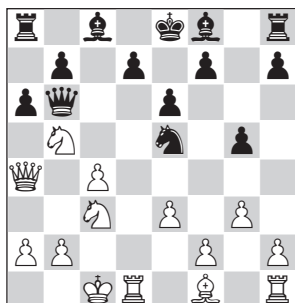
analysis diagram

A1) 13...♚xh1 14.♙xe5 ♚c6 15.♙d4 ♜a8. Thus far, Topalov-Caruana. Now, 16.0-0-0! (instead of the game move 16.a3) would have been strong. White doesn't have to worry about his a-pawn. After 16...♚xb5 17.♞xb5 ♜xa2 18.♝b1, White is better;

A2) 13...♞d3+! is a useful *zwischenzschach* that was played in Rambaldi-Nagy, Wunsiedel 2016: 14.♙xd3 ♚xh1+ 15.♙f1 ♚c6 16.0-0-0, and here the situation is less favourable for White than in Topalov-Caruana, since the white bishop is less active. Nonetheless, White has sufficient compensation for the exchange, e.g. 16...b6 (if 16...f6, White continues 17.e4) 17.♚b3 ♜a5 18.♞b5 f6 19.e4 ♙e7 20.♙d2 ♜a8 21.♙b4, and the position is dynamically balanced.

B) 13.♙xe5 (thus, White prevents the *zwischenzschach* on d3) 13...♞xe5 14.♚xe5, and now, if Black captures the rook, the white queen will invade on b8. But Black has the powerful push 14...b5!, after which things can continue as follows:

15. ♖xb5 ♜xh1 16. ♗a7 ♘b4+
 17. ♙e2 ♘b7 18. ♗b5 ♙f3+ 19. ♙d3
 0-0 20. ♗d4, and this uncommon
 position is balanced.
11. ♙xe5 ♗xe5 12.0-0-0



White has reached the position he wanted, but he doesn't have a clear opening advantage.

12... ♙e7 13. ♙e2 0-0 14. ♗d4 d6

Duda is on his guard. The text move is much stronger than 14... ♜b4, the move Dominguez played. The reason is that the endgame is clearly better for White, as I had found out in my preparation. After 15. ♜xb4 ♘xb4 16.f4 gxf4 17.gxf4 ♗g6, White could have obtained a large advantage with 18. ♜hg1. After the text move, the position is probably dynamically balanced.

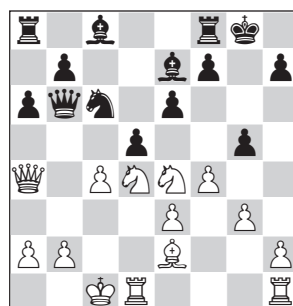
15.f4 ♗c6 16. ♗e4

The most direct continuation.

White wants to induce Black to swap on f4. The standard move was 16. ♖b1. After 16... ♘d7 17. ♜b3, it is best for Black to agree to the queen exchange, after which the endgame is slightly more pleasant for White. Less good is 17... ♜a5, on account of 18. ♜c2 b5 19.c5! dxc5 20. ♗f5!, with a large advantage to White.

16... ♘d7

Highly interesting was the sharp 16...d5. White can react in two ways:



analysis diagram

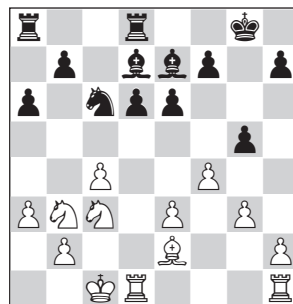
A) 17. ♗xg5 e5 18. ♗c2 h6 (less good is 18...dxc4 as after 19. ♙xc4 White is better) 19. ♗f3 ♙f5, with sufficient compensation for the pawn;

B) 17.cxd5 exd5 18. ♗xg5 ♘d7 19. ♜b3 (19. ♖b1 h6 20. ♗gf3 ♜fe8) 19... ♜xb3 20. ♗xb3 ♗b4, and White has to return the extra pawn.

17. ♜b3! ♜xb3

Best. If Black evades the queen swap with 17... ♜c7, White gets the upper hand. After 18. ♖b1 ♜ac8 19. ♜c1, it is hard for Black to create counterplay. The white c-pawn is firmly protected, and there are no good breaking moves.

18. ♗xb3 ♗b4 19. ♗c3 ♜fd8 20.a3 ♗c6



21. ♖e4

Again, I opted for the most direct continuation, and this time with success. If 21. ♖b1, Black plays 21... ♗e8, with equality.

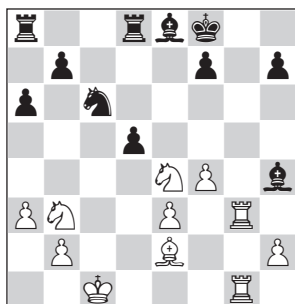
21... ♗xf4

In principle, this is a concession, since now the g-file is opened as an attacking base for the white rooks.

Black had the hidden option of 21... ♖a7! 22. ♖xg5 (22. ♖d4 b5 (22... e5 is also interesting) 23. cxb5 d5 24. ♖xg5 axb5 25. ♗h5 ♗e8 26. ♖b1 ♗f6, and Black has sufficient compensation for the pawn) 22... ♗a4 23. ♖d3 ♖ac8 24. ♖d2 ♖xc4, with roughly equal chances.

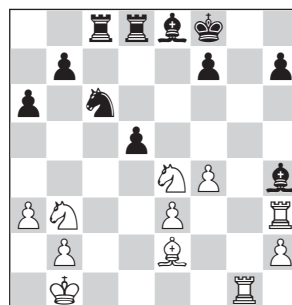
22. ♗xf4 ♗e8 23. ♖hg1+ ♖f8

In a certain sense, this is a natural move; Black wants to keep his forces together. Yet, it is a serious mistake, since the black king will land in big trouble. During the game, I didn't know exactly what to do against 23... ♖h8. Probably best is 24. ♖b1 f6 25. ♖g3, with a slight positional edge.

24. ♖g3 d5 25. cxd5 exd5 26. ♖dg1 ♗h4**27. ♖h3**

It was very hard to see, but here it was even stronger to first force

the black king to e7, and only then attack the bishop. After 27. ♖g8+! ♖e7 28. ♖8g4, White probably has a decisive advantage, e.g. 28... ♖ac8 29. ♖b1 ♗d7 30. ♖xh4 ♗f5 31. ♖bc5! ♗xe4+ 32. ♖xe4 dxe4 33. ♖xh7, and White has a healthy extra pawn. Moreover, his bishop is slightly stronger than the black knight.

27... ♖ac8 28. ♖b1**28... ♗d7!**

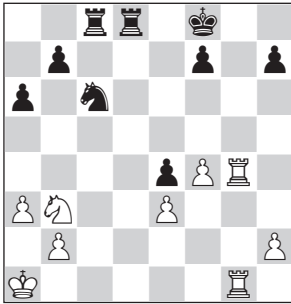
A fantastic move, which I had missed in my calculations. The bishop is on its way to f5.

29. ♖xh4 ♗f5 30. ♖a1

The wrong square for the king; probably, my concentration was slightly affected by missing Black's 28th move. 30. ♖a2! was stronger. The point becomes clear after 30... dxe4 31. ♗g4 ♖e7 32. ♗xf5 ♖xf5 33. ♖xh7 ♖xe3 34. ♖e1. With the king on a1, this entire variation would be impossible. White wins the e-pawn, after which he has winning chances.

Incidentally, 30. ♖bc5 was not effective under these circumstances, in view of 30... ♖e7!, and here it becomes clear why White had to force the black king to e7 on move 27.

30...dxe4 31. ♘g4 ♙xg4 32. ♖hxg4



I was disappointed by the recent developments here. My advantage had gone, but I still had some hope of achieving something in the time scramble after all.

32... ♙e7

This gives me new chances. After 32... ♗e7 33. ♗d4 ♖c5, the position would have been balanced.

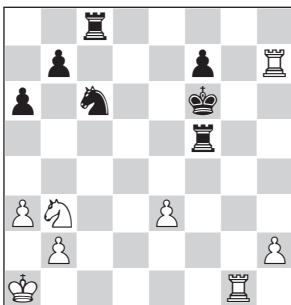
33.f5!

Of course. Black can't defend the e-pawn.

33... ♖d5 34. ♖xe4+ ♙f6

Also 34... ♗e5 35. ♗c5 wouldn't have solved Black's problems.

35. ♖h4 ♖xf5 36. ♖xh7



White has won a pawn after all. However, the win is still far off. Black has no weak spots in his camp, and material has been depleted.

36... ♖d8 37. ♖h6+ ♙e7 38. ♖c1

White starts to manoeuvre, to place his pieces as favourably as possible. Here, I was already intent on the possibility of a double-rook ending.

38... ♖d6 39. ♖h4 ♖e5 40. ♖c3 b6

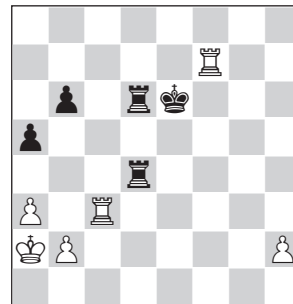
41. ♙a2 a5 42. ♖hc4 ♙d7 43. ♖f4 f5 44. ♗d4!

A good decision, especially from a practical viewpoint. The double-rook ending poses Black some tough problems.

44... ♗xd4 45. exd4 ♖e4

More accurate was 45... ♖ed5. After 46. ♖g3 ♖xd4 47. ♖xf5 ♖h4, Black is more active than in the game.

46. ♖xf5 ♖exd4 47. ♖f7+ ♙e6



48. ♖h7!

An important move. White prevents Black bringing a rook to the h-file.

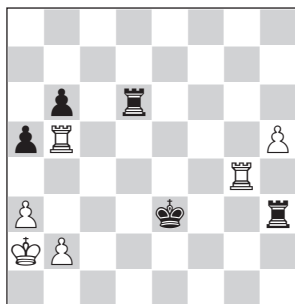
48... ♖d2 49. ♖c1 ♙d5 50. ♖h5+ ♙d4 51.h4

It's time to get the passed pawn moving. The problem for Black is that his king is much less favourably placed than White's. With the king on, e.g., a6, he would have good drawing chances. Under the current circumstances, his queenside pawns are permanently weak.

51...♖f6 52.♗g1 ♖h2 53.♗g4+ ♔d3
 54.♗d5+ ♔e3 55.h5 ♖h6 56.♗g3+
 ♔e4 57.♗gg5 ♖h3 58.♗ge5+ ♔f4
 59.♗g5 ♔e4 60.♖b5

An ideal square for the rook.

60...♗d6 61.♗g4+ ♔e3



62.♗g6!

Thanks to this elegant finesse, White reaches a technically winning endgame.

62...♗d1

On 62...♖xh5, White had the winning intermediate check 63.♖b3+ up his sleeve.

63.♗gxb6 a4 64.♗e6+ ♔f3 65.♗f5+
 ♔g4 66.♗a5 ♖hh1 67.♗e4+ 1-0

Since 2014, Loek van Wely is the tournament director of the annual Hoogeveen tournament, which has been held since 1997. The first change he implemented was an excellent one: he replaced the double-round four-player event by two six-game matches. There was a time when Loek wanted to stand diametrically opposed to me, like a fighting cock, but these days the sharp edges have been softened – we get along well. This also meant that I got another chance to play in Hoogeveen for the first time in 14

years. My new debut was miserable: Jobava beat me convincingly.

In the next year, I got a second chance. Against 16-year-old Jordan van Foreest, I did much better.

The third game was especially instructive: I demonstrated how to manoeuvre strategically when your opponent remains passive.

Game 98 Caro-Kann Defence

Jorden van Foreest 2548

Jan Timman 2562

Hoogeveen m 2015 (3)

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♗f5 4.♘f3 e6
 5.♗e2 ♘d7 6.0-0 ♘e7 7.♘bd2 h6
 8.c3

More common is 8.♘b3, but Van Foreest had also played the text move in the first game against me. He wants, if possible, to transfer his knight to f1.

8...♖c7

I played 8...♘g6 in the first game, and it ended in a draw after many wild adventures. After the opening, however, White was winning; it is not good to block the return route of the bishop on f5 – at least, not in these circumstances.

9.♗e1

