

Charles Hertan

Strike Like Judit!

The Winning Tactics of Chess Legend Judit Polgar

New In Chess 2018



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Published by New In Chess, Alkmaar, The Netherlands

www.newinchess.com

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Cover design: Volken Beck

Supervision: Peter Boel

Editing and typesetting: Frank Erwich

Proofreading: Peter Boel

Production: Anton Schermer

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ISBN: 978-90-5691-770-8



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Explanation of symbols

The chessboard with its coordinates:



White to move



Black to move



King



Queen



Rook



Bishop



Knight



White stands slightly better



Black stands slightly better



White stands better



Black stands better



White has a decisive advantage



Black has a decisive advantage



balanced position



good move



excellent move



bad move



blunder



interesting move



dubious move



novelty

PREFACE

Thoughts on chess play and analysis in the Computer Age

Chess players are like canaries in a coal mine, when it comes to feeling the effects of computerization on the human psyche. Our venerable game is the first important creative pursuit in which computers have established absolute dominance. While metaphorically licking their boots, we carve out an accommodation and collaboration with our new masters. Rather than consigning the beloved chessmen to the dustbin of history, we soldier on in a world of parallel but overlapping universes: the Valhalla of computer chess hovering above, and the flesh-and-blood struggle of human ingenuity down at the tournament table. In our studies we draw inspiration from the computer 'God', but for now we still make the actual decisions at the board, using the engine as a 3500-rated trainer-on-steroids. Incidentally, this democratizes chess achievement, since being able to afford the best seconds is far less important than in the past.

Our particular cohabitation with the mega-brains we created is unique to chess players. In my tragically divided country we fret about losing jobs overseas, responding with fear and contraction. We rarely talk about the overriding reason for job loss automation. My home state Massachusetts recently ripped out the toll booths on its main highway, replacing them with computer sensors. Four hundred well-paying jobs vanished overnight. Those poor folks certainly felt the impact of

computerization, but they didn't stand out on the highway and work as subordinates to the machines, which is pretty much what we chess players do now.

Judit Polgar cut her teeth in the pre-computer era, solving thousands of problems which her father Laszlo lovingly gathered, spending countless hours analyzing positions with her gifted older sisters Zsuzsa and Zsofia, and with trainers. Engines were just coming into play in the early nineties, and by the time they were firmly established as essential training tools, she was already competing at the highest levels. The advantage of being an analytical genius was much more marked in those days, especially when it came to opening preparation. If you made some brilliant discovery by dint of hard work, the odds were very slim that your opponent had also found it.

The advent of databases made it much easier for the opponent to anticipate your pet lines. My first exposure to this came at Vienna 1996, where my roommate Bill Paschall brought his newfangled Fritz engine. Before my game with GM Zoltan Almasi's brother Istvan, we punched him into the database, and out popped several games featuring a sharp sideline against the Caro-Kann:

Game 1

Istvan Almasi

Charles Hertan

Vienna 1996



1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♘f5 4.h4 h5 5.c4 e6 6. ♖c3 ♗d7 7.cxd5 cxd5 8. ♘g5

♙ag8



The young IM scored extremely well with this debut, one idea being that if the dark-squared bishops get exchanged, White's ♖c3 may hop to b5-d6. Facing this sharp idea unprepared would be daunting, if not hopeless. But Mr. Fritz, the personal 'spy', spoiled the surprise. Just before the round, IM Joe Fang suggested the bold and attractive idea of 8...f6, with the plan of hiding the king on f7 and attacking on the g-file, which he thought he recalled from a Karpov game. It looked like fun, so:

8...f6! ♗g5 9.exf6 gxf6 10. ♘e3 ♙b6 11. ♙d2 ♘b4 12. ♘d3 ♖e7 13. ♗ge2 ♚f7 14.0-0

The database transformed the tenor of the game – instead of being surprised and disoriented I had apparently unleashed a viable novelty (according to my opponent in the next *Informant!*), and it was he who sank into perilous time trouble and lost.

Computers are great equalizers in the realm of analyzing chess games. Modern GM's must accept the reality, that sublime variations they unearth may be replicated by some 1400-rated bloke sitting in his pajamas at the kitchen table, with a PC and a \$100 software disc. The antidote to this unprecedented access to



world-class analysis may lie in the genius of Magnus Carlsen. 20th century chess thought was dominated by the Soviet School, reaching its pinnacle with Garry Kasparov. Chess was regarded as a science, whose secrets could only be unlocked by dint of deep, collaborative preparation and correct dynamic and technical play. Kasparov forged a razor-sharp, deeply refined opening repertoire for Black, secure that his knowledge of these complex positions could withstand any human test.

Computer dominance makes this approach seem absurd and antiquated. The search for 'truth' in chess became pure hubris overnight, as our 'scientific' aspirations as chess players were revealed to be pathetically flawed. Even aspects of grandmaster wisdom honed over centuries of practice had to be modified. For instance, Judit notes in her memoir the challenges of attacking, in an era when players now know that positions which were routinely considered indefensible, often contain miraculous 'computer move' refutations. The master sense of danger may still warn 'too dangerous'; but the engine's advice now whispers in the other ear: 'look deeper – there may be a win!'

Into this zeitgeist steps Magnus, the first true champion of the Computer Era. Sidestepping the democratization of prepared analysis, he strives for amorphous positions where humans are stripped of preparation and thrown back on their own devices. Lasker famously opined that chess was neither art nor science, but above all 'What human nature mostly delights in – a fight.' Carlsen's approach sources a new truth revealed by the ascendance of computers – even 'harmless' positions,

thought unwinnable for decades, hold enough analytical juice to outplay world-class GM's. All it takes is a stunning blend of computer-like analysis and intuitive/positional genius.

Nearly a century ago, Capablanca fretted that chess was becoming 'played out' by advances in defensive technique. But any 2600 combatting the strongest computer from a theoretically equal, 'innocuous' middlegame, would beg to differ. What remains to be seen is whether any other human can duplicate the prodigious, engine-like feat of Magnus and ascend the highest peak, without the benefit of Kasparovian theoretical opening dominance.

While some purists and old-timers take a dystopian view of these developments, it's plausible to argue that the 'Brave New World' of chess practice and analysis is a fine and fertile planet, with its own special merits. Human play at the highest level still garners tremendous interest and respect. Our love of the aesthetics of a well-played game or combination is undiminished. We discover that chess beauty still thrills diehard fans, whether the source is a machine, a human, or some combination of both. The new era is placed in its best possible light when you compare chess players to astronomers, peering into the astonishing depths of the cosmos with our marvelous 21st century instruments. Like gazing into the heart of some exquisite new galaxy, computer analysis reveals depths of beauty and wonder lurking unseen at the core of chess positions.

While our inferiority to our own creation sometimes makes the wonders of grandmaster calculation seem too mundane, top players can take solace in the fact that computer democratization of analysis has definite limits. Only the best scientist can properly utilize the finest instrument, and the best rocket ship on earth will never take you to Mars, if you point it at Jupiter.

Game 2

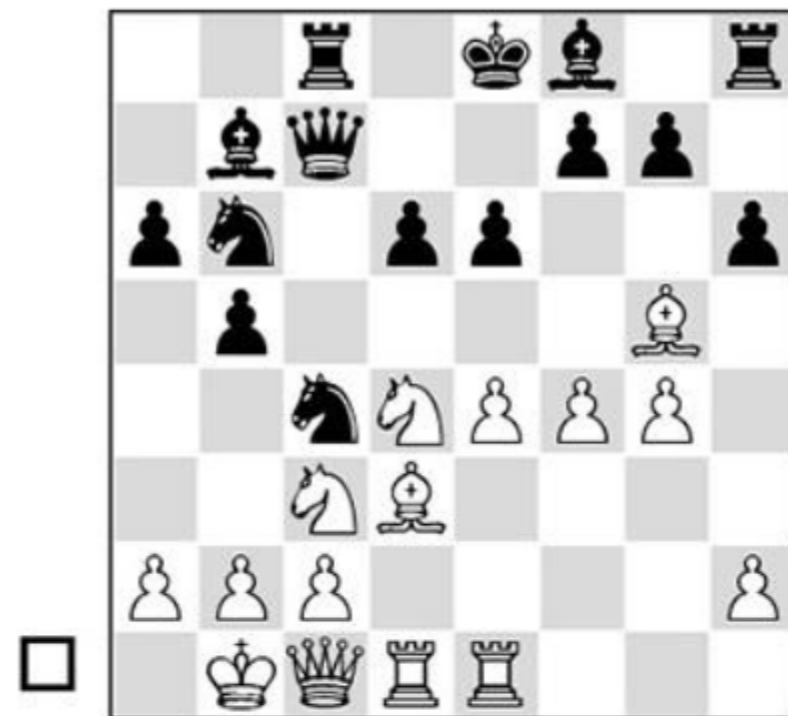
Judit Polgar

2718

Viswanathan Anand

2774

Mainz m rapid 2003 (5)



I had analyzed this position extensively with Rybka, but cross-checking my notes with Judit's, I was in for the kind of shock her opponents so often felt over the board!

After 17. ♖d5! Anand answered 17... ♜c5. Judit's analysis of 17... ♖xd5 inspires joy and humility: 18. exd5 hxg5 19. dxe6 gxf4 20. ♜xf4 ♖e5 21. exf7+ ♜xf7 22. ♝xe5+ dxe5 23. ♜xe5+ ♙e7 24. ♞f1 ♜d5 25. ♙g6+ ♚d8





White would be almost forced to resign if not for JP's find 26. ♖d1!!, winning! – if 26... ♗xe5, 27. ♘e6#.

Judit doesn't claim to have seen this over the board, but when you pair a tactical genius with a mechanical megalith, look what happens. The moral is this: even the strongest engine doesn't serve you the best, most relevant variations on a platter. You need a 'captain of the ship', an expert guide, to take the miasma of raw data and mold it into some usable form. The best players now use their talent to hone in on the important variations and ask the computer the right questions, with

quick, coherent results. The rest of us schlumpfs have to work a lot harder, and plow ahead a bit slower.

Game 3

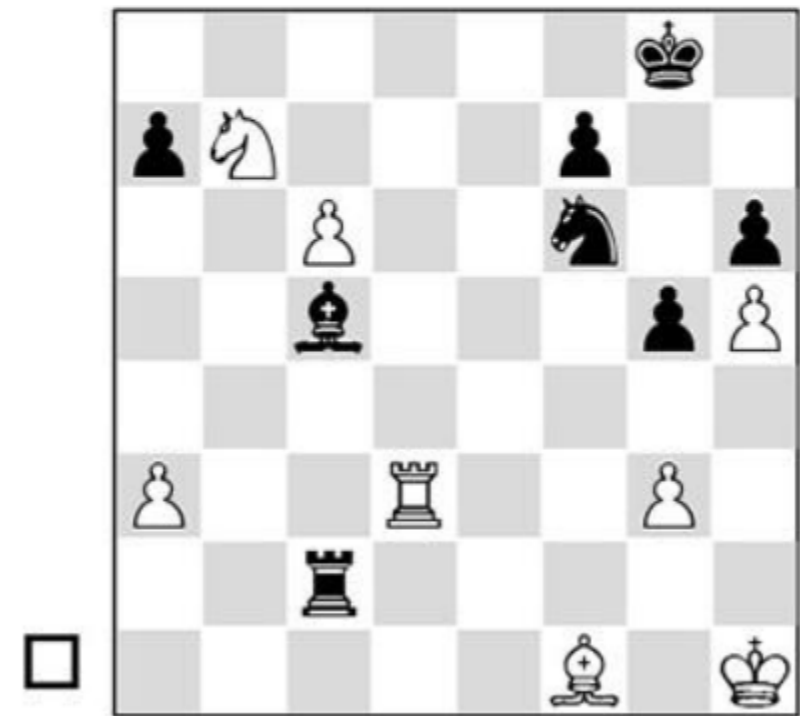
Judit Polgar

2575

Oscar Panno

2485

Aruba tt 1992 (7)



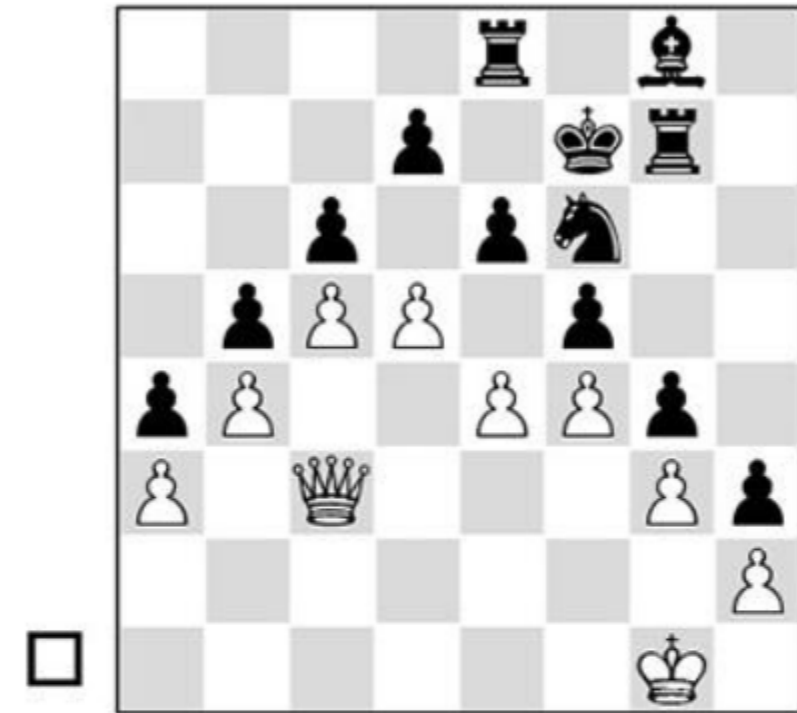
analysis diagram

When I load this ending into my engine, out spews a cascade of raw data like the following: 44. ♖d2 ♜c1 45. ♗xc5 ♝xc5 46. ♙g2 ♚g7, etc., etc., with a slight black advantage. That's dandy, and 44. ♖d2 is a cute move which hadn't crossed my mind, but that still misses the point. The human master jumps straight to a critical question: what happens on 44.c7 with 45. ♜d8+ coming? If you don't ask this question, you're merely computer-gazing, not making sense of the position. Find the right question and manually force 44.c7, and the engine answers in a heartbeat – the only move 44... ♗f8!, stopping rook checks, wins the pawn with advantage. Congrats! Now you know what's really going on.

Try as we might, our human minds can't grasp chess logic by merely shoveling heaps of information. We need some method to winnow out the chaff from the wheat, and organize the kernels in some meaningful way. The analyst's primary challenge and responsibility in the computer age is to translate random computer porridge into a tasty, nutritious meal that can be properly digested and enjoyed by the mortal palette.

As the first-time father of a two-year-old, I'm astounded to witness the importance of stories as a uniquely human way of imparting information. Keeping a toddler's attention is tricky. But once a story is told, my daughter Emma's eyes light up, and she is instantly transfixed. You can almost see the little wheels at work, carefully

calibrating and digesting these simple kids tales. In like manner, we need a coherent 'plot' to absorb a chess game, and it strikes me now what an amazing and powerful primal tool our stories are for encoding and sharing information:



'Old Chestnut'

If memory serves, Vukovic's *The Chess Sacrifice* first introduced me to this type of composition. Feed it to your engine and see what happens! Mine spits out tens of thousands of bytes, and after every strand of data proclaims Black's huge material

edge decisive, hour after hour. But genus Homo Sapiens still possesses a secret weapon to lord over the mighty microprocessor. I told an eleven-word 'story' about this position to a 1200-rated friend, and he understood at once: the game is drawn after 1. ♖xf6+! ♘xf6 2. e5+ ♘g6 3. d6!.

The story goes like this – 'Black can't break the blockade, assuming White refuses to capture anything.' It's remarkable but true: eleven words distill everything you need to know about this position. Comprehend the story, and you can throw your engine out the window, and still hold against God. The computer can and will analyze 100,000 possible variations from the diagram, but you can bet the ranch that no amount of calculation will grasp the essence of this problem as well as one simple sentence.

A fascinating new genre has evolved – discovering other special positions which stump the computer, making it wallow in a sea of variations, somehow blind to the conceptual sea monster human eyes plainly see. If, or when, the computer learns to distill a conceptual story like my inquisitive daughter, I'm curious and maybe somewhat afraid of what comes next...

So the writer's challenge today, as I see it, is no longer to be the ultimate analyst, but to weave the computer-trainer's otherworldly musings into a coherent, amusing, and instructional tale. If there's one thing human chess players delight in as much as a good battle, it's probably a well-told story.

Charles Hertan

Northampton, March 2018

INTRODUCTION

Judit Polgar's Chess Legacy

The basic facts about Judit's storied career are mostly well-known, but still astounding: born in July, 1976, she learned the rules at age 5 and played her first tournament a year later. Her parents home-schooled Judit and her older sisters Zsofia and Zsuzsa, with a chess-based curriculum developed by their father Laszlo. This consisted of daily game study, blitz and blindfold play, and solving 30 problems a day posted on a wall of 'homework'. Years later, the 'Big Book' of Laszlo's exercises was published, which remains a great training tool for beginners and beyond.

At age 10 the youngest Polgar won the strong unrated section of the New York Open, gaining instant notoriety. From there her career took off like a rocket, winning the World (Boys) Under-12 Championship in 1988, ranking 55th in the world at age 12, winning the World (Boys) Under-14 Championship in 1990, and beating her first GM, Lev Gutman, brilliantly, at age 11 (Brussels, 1987). Even World Champions began singing her praises; Mikhail Tal proclaimed her the leading young title contender, and Vasily Smyslov coined the moniker, 'Tal in a skirt'.

In 1991 she won the powerful Hungarian Championship, thereby eclipsing Bobby Fischer's record, by becoming the youngest grandmaster ever at age 15 years, 5 months. She reached 2600 in 1993 and became a fixture on the super-tournament circuit in 1994, winning a Category 15 event in Madrid and nearly

beating World Champion Kasparov in her first appearance at the super-tournament in Linares, regarded then as 'the Wimbledon of Chess'.

Well before her 20th birthday, Judit was already unquestionably the strongest female player who ever lived. But 'women's chess' never interested her. Getting habitual invitations to the world's strongest events is an incredible achievement, requiring phenomenal strength and dedication. Playing for the Women's Championship at that point would mean taking a few steps backwards! Would Kasparov or Anand skip Category 16 Dos Hermanas, to play a match against a 2550 GM? Given her giftedness, JP was rightly focused on the whole ball of wax – becoming World Champion.

Scaling the rocky terrain between becoming a top-echelon GM and a serious title contender, is a grueling uphill climb. Many 2600 GM's briefly crack the super-tournament circuit, but find they've gone as far as talent and hard work can carry them. Talent was never the issue with Judit, but she had some chinks in her armor against the very best. Judit, and her biographer Tibor Tolnai, both cited her opening preparation as a liability against title contenders. This is hard to believe when you focus on her wins; she had a wonderful feel for complex openings and introduced many powerful novelties. Judit explained that her early training put less importance on openings, but preparation at the highest level is in a separate class. Even the belief that opponents are better prepared puts one at a practical disadvantage.



Judit's very love of beautiful moves and adventure may have limited her championship potential. Of the few World Champions who played all out to win every game, only Tal took as many risks, and even he mellowed with age. Fischer and Kasparov had the unparalleled ability to tightrope-walk the boundaries of correctness, while almost never stepping over into unsoundness. Judit's love of chess art and chaos was so great, she sometimes couldn't resist pushing the envelope in search of novel ideas and beautiful combinations. This approach served her very well against all but a few championship-caliber opponents... and this leads us to her greatest obstacle on the road to number one: Vladimir Kramnik.

The problem of the 'difficult opponent' is a universal phenomenon in sports; most tournament players can identify the one opponent who simply gives us fits. This bugaboo can and must be overcome to succeed – Fischer was 0-3 with 2 draws when he faced Spassky in 1972 (0-4 after losing Game 1). But Bobby was already the favorite in view of his incredible surge before the match. He put on the greatest display of dominance in chess history by beating the super-GM's Taimanov and Larsen 6-0(!) in Candidates matches, then clobbering ex-Champion Petrosian by 'only' 5-2.

JP's nightmare was much worse – no wins and fourteen losses to Vladimir in classical play (she finally beat him at the World Blitz Championship in 2009)! He seemed able to beat her every which way; positionally pounding her King's Indian Defense, outplaying her in endgames, once even shocking her on the black side of

a Sveshnikov Sicilian (as we will show, this was akin to sticking one's head in the lioness' jaws).

Such a spell could only be broken Fischer-style, by one final, decisive jump in strength. Judit seemed on her way in 2003, when she had her best results yet, leading her to crack the top 10 and soon rise to number 8 in the world. What happened next? More on that in a moment...

I first saw Judit at the 1987 New York Open when she was just age ten. Watching her in action was a unique experience! Even as a child, she radiated a remarkable energy and self-assurance. Adding to the mystique was a miniature lion talisman which she neatly placed by the board (being something of a trickster, next day I bought a miniature gumby figure to use in like fashion!). The next time I saw her was at the strong Biel Interzonal in 1993. By then she was a dashing and to my eyes quite beautiful figure, a 17-year old chess starlet briskly walking the stage alongside chess legends.

I decided to write this book while researching an article for my (former) tactics column in *New In Chess Magazine*. I'd used some of her brilliancies in my 2008 book *Forcing Chess Moves*, but never scoured her whole oeuvre, combing it for lesser-known gems. Any student of chess who examines her body of work will be dazzled: sparkling combinations, original attacks and shocking moves seem routine!

Above all, I was deeply impressed by JP's incredible courage and will to win. My

article noted that ‘most grandmasters make “the devil’s bargain”...’ Realizing they can beat lesser players with technique alone, they learn to play it safe and avoid undo risk. Every tournament player understands the devastating effect a loss can have on the psyche. Human nature seems to dictate that once we learn to minimize losing, strong players prefer the safer path, even at the cost of far fewer wins. Judit belonged to a very rare breed of elite players, including Fischer, Tal, Kasparov and, more recently, Nakamura, who played all out to win in virtually every game, with white or black.

My next *Forcing Moves* column highlighted the best tactics of an elite Olympic team. To my dismay, game after game was something like watching paint dry: ‘White gains a slight opening edge, wins a pawn, grinds opponent with careful technique...’ I could barely muster the six positions needed for an entertaining article. It dawned on me then that Judit played more beautiful tactics in a single month than many strong players produce in their whole careers!

My publisher was enthusiastic when I pitched the idea of a book on Judit’s tactical legacy. Those familiar with chess social media will recognize the reverence, and even love, shown by her many enduring fans around the world. This has little if anything to do with gender; Gaprindasvili and Chiburdanidze, the best women before Judit, never inspired such adoration. Judit’s everyman appeal is exactly like Tal’s. What do the vast majority of chess fans want to see? A battle to the finish, with beautiful combinations, sacrifices, and original ideas! Judit embodied all these

beloved traits and more – you’ll find in these pages that she also played crystal-clear endings, if that’s more your cup of tea.

So what happened to her quest for the world title? The records show that her peak rating of 2735 was achieved in July 2005, ranking her #8 on the FIDE rating list. But during her peak in 2003, you could make a good argument that she was becoming even stronger than that. Here are the July 2005 rankings:

1. Garry Kasparov	2812
2. Viswanathan Anand	2788
3. Veselin Topalov	2788
4. Peter Leko	2763
5. Vasily Ivanchuk	2752
6. Vladimir Kramnik	2744
7. Peter Svidler	2738
8. Judit Polgar	2735

In practice, Polgar was starting to equal, or even get the better of, Topalov, Ivanchuk and Svidler. As a young teenager she lost her first four games to the immensely powerful GM Ivanchuk; after that she outscored him 8-6, including four straight wins!

Remarkably, she never seemed too overmatched by the most successful champion of all time. In her first game with Kasparov, an infamous incident occurred in which he released a knight for an instant, put it back and moved it elsewhere!

Game 4

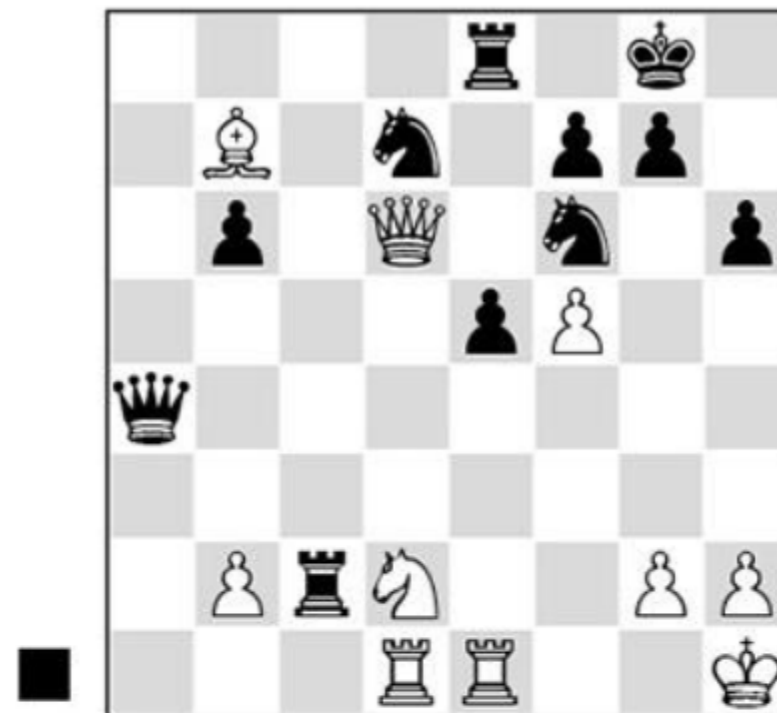
Judit Polgar

2630

Garry Kasparov

2805

Linares 1994 (5)



In her chess memoir Judit graciously gives him the benefit of the doubt, but video revealed that Garry indeed played the blunder 36... ♖c5?, losing the exchange. Just to hold, he would have been forced to find a difficult drawing line in serious time pressure: 37. ♙c6 ♚h4 38. ♙xe8 ♜g4 39. h3 ♜f2+ 40. ♚h2



analysis diagram

In blitz mode even the great Kasparov might miss 40...♔f4+ 41.g3? ♕xf5! with Black on top, so that White must take a draw instead with 41.♔g1 ♖xh3+ 42.gxh3 ♕g3+. We'll never know, because Garry grabbed that knight (again!) and surreptitiously tucked it back to f8, later prevailing over his flustered teenage opponent!

In their second meeting Judit again held her own, but was unable to hold a theoretically drawn ♜ vs ♜+♞ ending with unexpected pitfalls; such are the growing pains of facing the best. Still, one could reasonably argue that Judit wasn't tactically

overpowered by Kasparov! He beat her more by dint of experience and intimidation, until Judit finally broke through with a crushing rapid-play victory in 2002.

With Kasparov's highest ambitions already behind him, only Kramnik and Anand seemed to stand squarely between Judit and the world title. Her chess biography acknowledges that she was somewhat awed, justifiably, by the talent of her two strongest peers. Vladimir Kramnik became World Champion in 2000, shocking the chess world by ending Kasparov's ubiquitous 15-year reign. Viswanathan Anand would in turn snatch the crown from Kramnik in 2006. Anand's style was sharper than Kramnik's, but both were impeccably universal players who excelled at all aspects of the game.

During her best years, Judit regularly had strong tournament performances marred by losses to Kramnik, Anand or both. Still improving, she was able to score several fantastic wins against Anand, like this convincing 2003 rapid victory:

Game 5

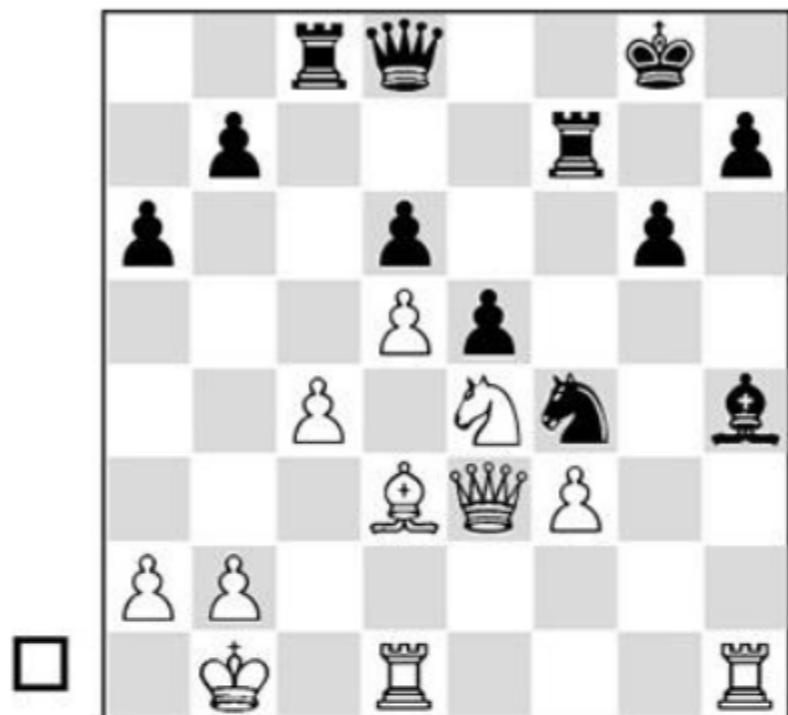
Judit Polgar

2718

Viswanathan Anand

2774

Mainz m rapid 2003 (1)



25. ♖xh4 ♙g2

Anand's intention, since the pawns are clearly overwhelming after 25... ♖xh4
26. ♙xd6.

26. ♖h6 ♙xh4

26... ♖xh4 27. ♖xh4 ♙xh4 28. ♙xd6 ♜cf8 29. ♙xf7 ♝xf7 (29... ♖xf7 30.d6 ♜d7
31. ♙e4) 30. ♖h1 g5 31.c5 ±

27. ♙g5



Black loses material after 27... ♖ any 28. ♖xh4 and risks getting mated after
27... ♙f5 28. ♙xf5 gxf5 29. ♙xf7 ♝xf7 30. ♖xh7+, so he played on down a piece for a
while with

27... ♙xf3 28. ♙xf7 ♖f6 29. ♖h3 ♜f8 30. ♙h6+

... and soon resigned.

When Tolnai's book came out in 2004, he noted that Judit had met her future hus-
band Gusztav and seemed to be playing with new inspiration. His conclusion: Pol-
gar still had decent chances to become World Champion...

But in 2004 JP's ambitions were felled by an opponent that no male GM has ever faced: motherhood! She became pregnant with her son, Oliver, and took 14 months off of competitive chess, at the height of her career. After his birth, she tried to regain her peak form and participated in the World Championship cycle in 2005. But chess is an unforgiving suitor; it's impossible to advance at the very highest level without absolute devotion. Judit's words in later interviews reflect those of mothers the world over: 'Your priorities change...' In 2006 her daughter Hanna was born. As it happened, Judit chose a happy, normal family life over single-minded- (some might say maniacal), Fischer-like devotion to winning the crown. Like most parents, she describes having children as the most fulfilling stage of her life, and shows no regret about her decisions.

I realize I tread on sensitive ground regarding motherhood and career. But Polgar's own words, and the trajectory of her chess career, beg this conclusion. By knocking at the door, Judit proved that a woman could become World Champion. Whether she could do it while being the primary parent to young children, is an open question. Men have always had the luxury of being able to father children and still immerse themselves completely in their careers. I consider myself a social progressive. Actively involved in co-parenting my daughter, I spend many more hours with her than anyone I knew in my father's generation. Still, I thank my lucky stars that my wife Rhonda is such a devoted mother. I've come to feel that there really are hormonal and temperamental differences which allow women to more deeply

immerse themselves in being fully available, for long periods of time, to young children. Without question, my wife and countless other women are able to do this, while still having remarkable, valid and even brilliant work careers. But becoming World Chess Champion is a task of a different order. I would be delighted to be proven wrong on this point, but time will tell.

It would be deeply misguided, however, to imply that having children ended JP's chess greatness. After her return to competitive chess in 2005, she continued to play at a very high level, scoring many beautiful victories. Her talent and love of chess were unabated, although she never recaptured her contender's form of 2003. Judit relates that invitations to elite tournaments declined, and regardless of talent one cannot viably compete for the crown without regularly battling the world's best. In 2007 she competed in the Candidates cycle for the World Championship, losing a close match to Bareev, a player she had previously dominated 7-2. Such results are demoralizing, and it must have dawned on Judit about this time that her championship hopes were fading. At the same time, being released from the grind of the championship circuit allowed JP to indulge more freely in her love of interesting chess. Flashes of her brilliance could still be seen until Judit Polgar finally announced her retirement from competitive chess in 2014.

By all accounts, Judit's personal qualities are as remarkable as her play. Tolnai comments on her humility and openness to others, in contrast to the huge egos and sour personalities of many top players. This winning attitude comes through in

her writing. As a player she was a ruthless fighter, but away from the board she was remarkably humble and generous toward her opponents.

Judit Polgar shattered the gender barrier, proving that a woman could compete and win at the very highest levels. For her, this was only an afterthought. Along with other all-time great chess artists like Bronstein and Kortchnoi, who fell just short winning it all, her ultimate contribution to chess is the timeless beauty of her games, so we turn our attention to this.

What ardent chess player wouldn't dream of writing a book about the legendary Ms. Polgar? Her games are a virtual playground of dazzling combinations and ideas. But the enviable task comes with a challenge: how to write something fresh and different, about such a well-known public figure? Having no interest in redundancy, I strove to avoid the examples covered in her excellent memoir *Judit Polgar Teaches Chess (Vols. 1-3)*. To do this I went back to the databases and pored through her whole tournament career, approaching 2000 games. Since even her lesser known gems have often appeared elsewhere, it was impossible to be completely original, and after the fact I found that many of the tactics I found also appeared in Tibor Tolnai's *Chess Princess (2004)*, or elsewhere. This induced me to strive even harder to explore as much new territory as possible, in both the analysis and presentation and of Judit's wonderful oeuvre. I hope I've succeeded in this regard, and in the overarching quest to write an interesting, entertaining and approachable

chess tribute.

I must express gratitude for the steady wisdom of New In Chess publisher Al-lard Hoogland. When I protested, 'How can one write a book about the Beatles, without covering 'Hey Jude'?', he agreed, and we added a final chapter covering JP's 'greatest hits'. They are wondrous feats of chess art, and if this is your first in-depth look at Judit's games you will not be left out in the cold.

Charles Hertan

Northampton, March 2018

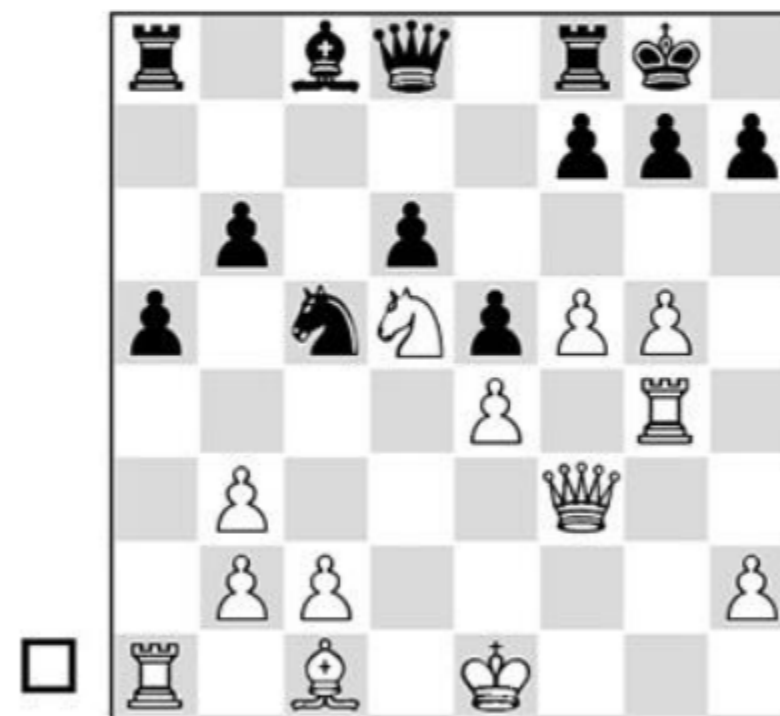
Even as an 8-year-old, Judit was applying Laszlo Polgar's excellent tactical curriculum to the task of attacking the enemy king. We can only imagine the disbelief of her master-strength opponents!

Game 6

Judit Polgar

L. Szendrei

Budapest 1984



19. ♖f6+! gxf6 20. gxf6+ ♔h8 21. ♕h3! 1-0



Black's resignation alone reflects Judit's gift! But indeed it's hopeless – 21... ♖g8 22. ♕xh7+! or 21... ♕xf6 22. ♖g5 ♕g7 23. ♖h6 lose quickly.

From early on JP approached tournament play in the right spirit, as an opportunity to develop tactical skills in the heat of battle... putting all those homework problems to good use!

Game 7

I. Balogh

Judit Polgar

Budapest 1984



25... ♖xh3

Technically 25...h5! is stronger, but all young students should make such 'mistakes'! Testing tactical solutions is the only way to learn the art of attacking.

26. ♖xh3 ♜xg3+!



27. ♖g2??

JP already finds that sharp play has its rewards – most players wither against dashing attacks!

27. ♜xg3 ♖e2+ 28. ♖g2 ♖xc3 29. bxc3 f5 is better for Black, but far from over.

27... ♜xe3 28. ♖f1

Now 28. fxe3 ♖e2+ 29. ♖h1 ♜h4+ is lights out.

28... ♜g4 0-1

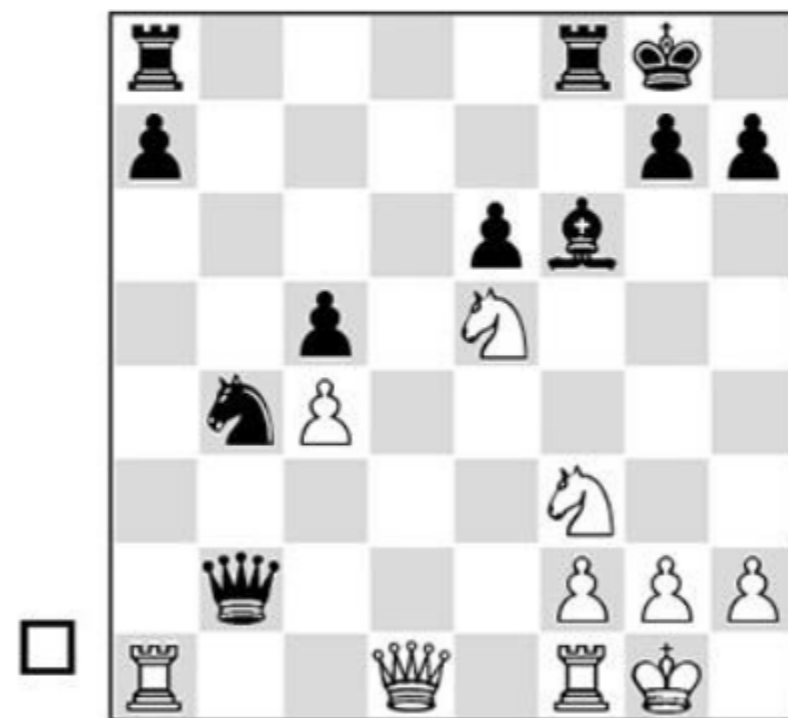
Anyone can puzzle out the geometry of the chessboard when it's sitting in front of them, but when you can do it six moves in advance at age 10, you've really got something:

Game 8

Judit Polgar

Ivan Nemet

San Bernardino 1987 (9)



18. ♔d6! ♖fe8 19. ♔xc5 ♜c2 20. ♖xa7 ♜xa7 21. ♔xa7 ♜xe5 22. ♜xe5 ♔xe5



23. ♔a4! with a good extra pawn, ... 1-0 (34)

Once she hit her teens Judit's tactical eye was superior to even powerful GM's.

Game 9

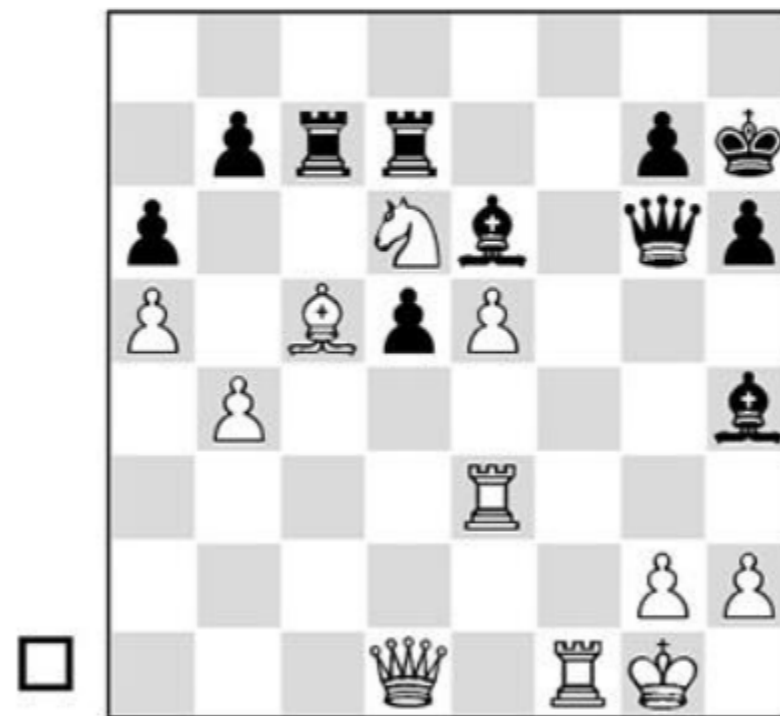
Judit Polgar

2595

Aleksander Wojtkiewicz

2580

Budapest zt 1993 (4)



The engine takes a moment to find **45. ♖f4!**, when the black queen is quarantined on an open board!

45... ♗g5 45... ♔g5 46. ♔d4 46. ♖g3



There's no playable answer to the simple threat **47.h4**. Black resigned after **46...d4 47. ♖xd4. 46... ♗xf4 47. ♖xg6 ♗xg6 48. ♔d3+ ♗g5** can't end well either.



analysis diagram

49.g3! ♗xe5 (49... ♗c1 50.♖c3) 50.♖e3+ ♔f6 51. ♖e8+ ♔f7 52.♖xe5 is crushing.

Game 10

Loek van Wely

2655

Judit Polgar

2670

Hoogeveen 1997 (5)



Black's killer forces should outweigh the pawn minus, as the geometry proves:

26...g5! 27. ♖f3 g4

With such a juicy attacking position, the stock combination after 28. ♖h4 is elementary homework for the likes of JP: 28...gxh3+ (or 28... ♖xh4 29.gxh4 ♖f3) 29. ♖xh3



analysis diagram

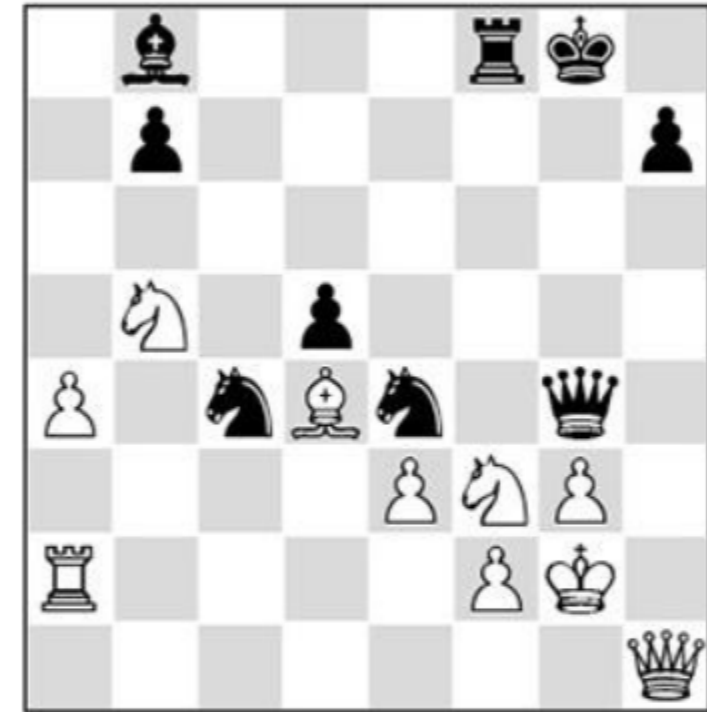
29... ♖xf2+! 30. ♖xf2 ♔xh3+!



analysis diagram

The beautiful, if well known, motif mops up. For good measure, if 31. ♔g1, 31... ♔h1+! is another stock resource.

So the strong and creative Dutchman tried 28. hxg4 ♖xh1 29. ♔xh1 ♔xg4



30. ♖h2 ♜xf2+! Mate in two, 0-1.

Game 11

Viswanathan Anand

2766

Judit Polgar

2722

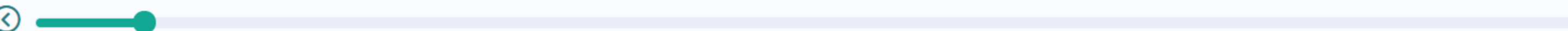
Cap d'Agde rapid 2003 (4)



Geometric wizardry is even more advantageous at faster time controls.

20... ♜xd4 21. ♜xd4 ♜xa2+!

An all-time great at any time control, Anand instantly saw 22. ♖xa2 b3+:



analysis diagram

- A) 23.cxb3 ♖a5+;
- B) 23.♔b1 ♖a5!, threatening mate in two;
- C) Or the quixotic sally 23.♔xb3 ♜ab8+ 24.♔a4,



analysis diagram

avoiding a check on a5, but the computer guffaws after 24...♖b7 25.♞c3 (25.♔a3

♜xc2) 25...♜xc3 26.bxc3 ♖c6+ 27.♔ any ♖xc3+ etc.

So Anand tried 22.♔c1 ♞b3



23.♔d1

23.♞d3 ♖a5

23...♞xc2+ And Black won easily.

Game 12

Miguel Illescas Cordoba

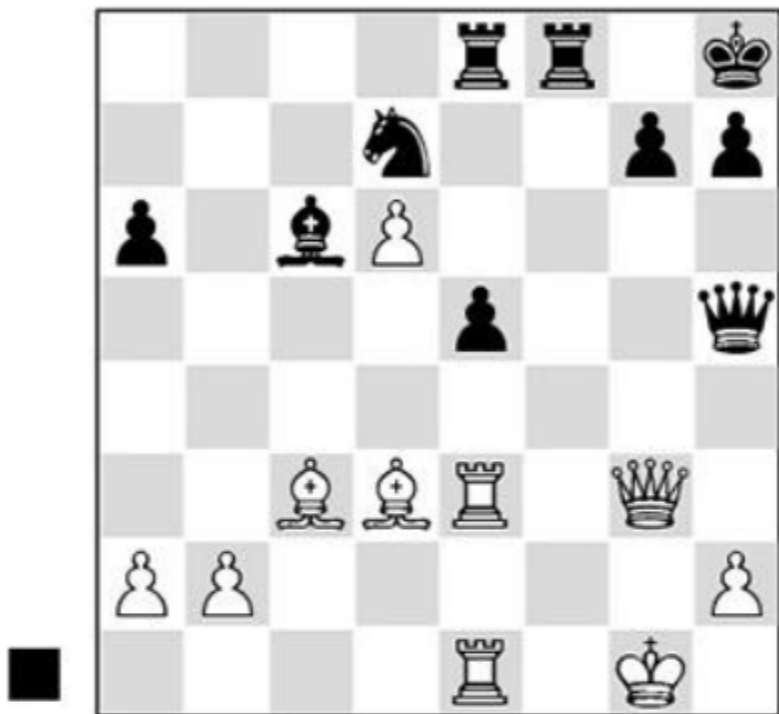


Judit Polgar

2635

Dos Hermanas 1997 (4)

2645



Defending difficult positions wasn't Judit's cup of tea, but her incredible craftiness bailed her out of many tight situations.

28... ♖f7!

Black's diabolical trick is couched as a natural defensive try; it also happens to be

best.

29. ♙xe5??

White likely focused on the threat 29... ♖d5, which is now met by mate on g7.

A) Simplest was 29.a3 ♖d5 30. ♙e4 ♖b5 (30... ♖xd6? 31. ♙b4) 31. ♙xc6 with wholesale exchanges and equality;

B) Also equal was 29. ♖h4 h6, but a more forcing try may have appealed to JP: 29...g5!? 30. ♖g3 (30. ♖xg5? ♜g8) 30... ♖d5 31. ♙e4 ♖xd6 32. ♙xc6 ♖xc6 33. ♜xe5 ♙xe5 34. ♜xe5 ♖b6+



analysis diagram

The engine decrees a repetition – the fair outcome: 35. ♔g2 ♚c6+ 36. ♔g1, but Black would be hard pressed to find the saving computer move after 35. ♜c5+! ♔g8 36. ♘d4:



analysis diagram

36... ♜f5!!=
Instead the unsuspecting super-GM was embarrassed by
29... ♖xe5 30. ♜xe5



30... ♔a7+! 31. ♖5e3

31. ♔e3 ♖xe5!

31... ♖f3



32. ♔h4 h6 0-1

Game 13

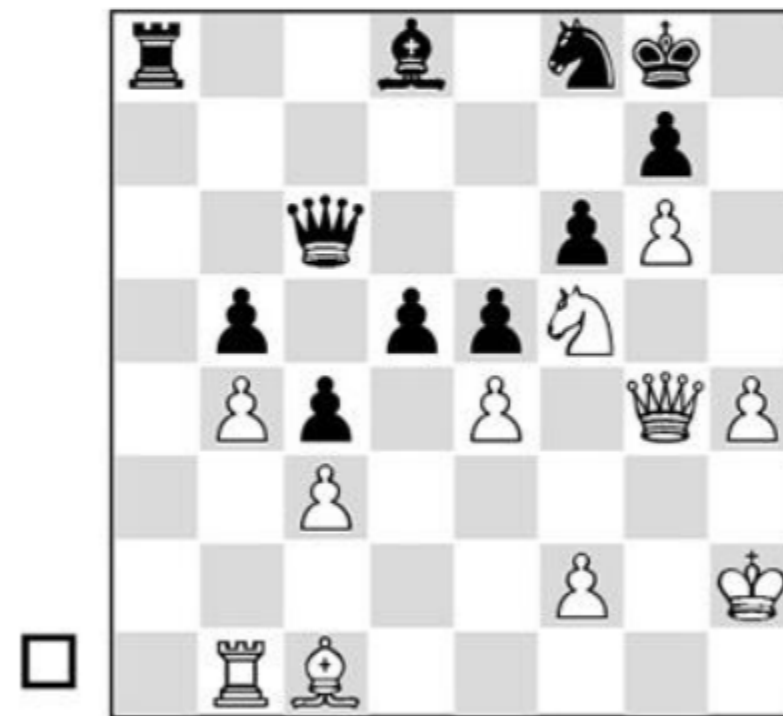
Judit Polgar

Veselin Topalov

Dos Hermanas rapid 2008 (1)

2709

2767

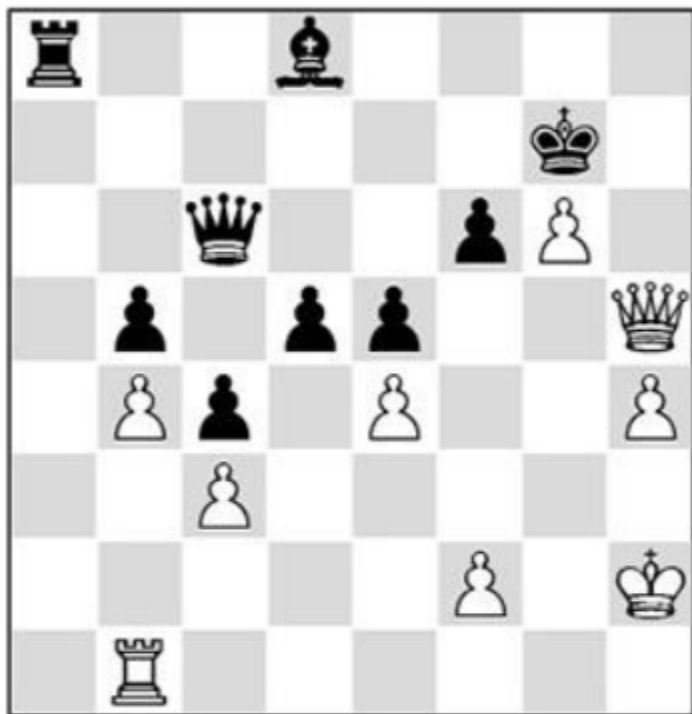


35. ♖h6! ♜a2

Incredibly, Black must abandon the g-pawn to its fate.

A) Hopeless is 35...gxf6 36.g7!;

B) Or 35...♗e6 36.♙xg7! ♗xg7 37.♗xg7 ♜xg7 38.♙h5



analysis diagram

38...♙c7 39.♙h7+ ♗f8 40.♙h8+ ♗e7 41.g7;

C) If instead 35...♜a7, 36.♙xg7 ♜xg7 37.♗xg7 ♜xg7 38.h5 is winning.



analysis diagram

For instance: 38... ♖d7 39.h6+ ♘xh6 40.g7! ♙xg7 41. ♖h4+ and 42. ♜g1+.
36.exd5?



A blitz error which might have gone unnoticed before computers. Black still implodes on g7 after the circumspect 36. ♖g1 ♙b6 37. ♜f1.

36... ♖e8?

With time quickly vanishing, Black misses the wonderfully unintuitive equalizer

36... ♜xf2+ 37. ♖g1 ♙a8!,



analysis diagram

when 38...♔a2 next gives Black enough counterplay.

Instead the natural order was restored, and JP won smoothly:

37. ♖e3 ♕xg6 38. ♕xg6 ♜xg6



39. ♜g1 ♜e7

Otherwise 40.h5 wins g7 anyway.

40. ♜xg7+ ♕f8 41. ♖c5 1-0

Game 14

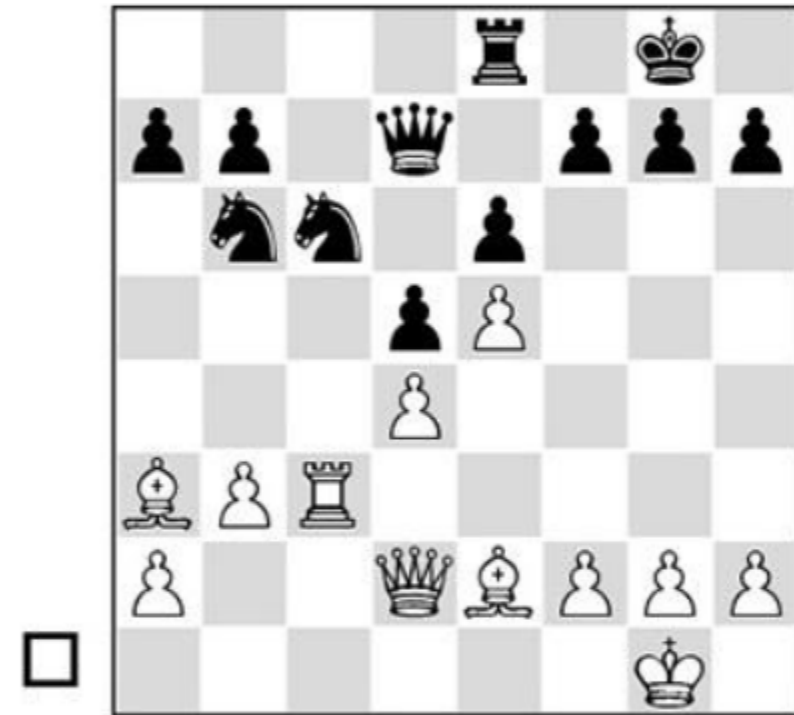
Judit Polgar

2699

Peter Prohaszka

2547

Greece tt 2011 (7)



Black's men are unimpressive, but it seems amazing that the geometry is already decisive.



23. ♖b5!

White rushes to exchange off her good bishop!

The salient idea is this: without the move ... ♖e7 Black's king proves indefensible.

Only pitching a pawn now with the dreary 23... ♖c8 24. ♖xc6 bxc6 25. ♖c2 ♖e7 26. ♖xe7 slows down the onslaught, but can't effect the outcome.

23... ♖c8

The slashing ♖a3, combined with a rook lift to g3, is the key to White's attack:

23...a6 24. ♖xc6 bxc6 25. ♖g3 ♖h8 26. ♖g5 ♖g8



analysis diagram

27. ♖f8! f6 28. exf6+-

24. ♖g3 a6

Black is hopelessly bollixed after 24... ♖h8 25. ♖g5 g6 (25... ♖g8 26. ♖f8) 26. ♖h3

♖d8 27. ♖f4 ♖c7 28. ♖xc6 bxc6 29. ♖d6 ♖d7 30. ♖h6 ♖g8



analysis diagram

31. ♖c3+-. But now Judit unleashes the haymaker:

25. ♗xc6 bxc6

Or 25... ♖xc6 26. ♖h6 g6 27. ♖h3.



26. ♖xg7+! ♖xg7 27. ♖g5+ ♖h8 28. ♗e7 1-0

Game 15

Judit Polgar

Ivan Sokolov

Hoogeveen 2003 (3)

2722

2695



We showed the finale of this famous gem in my earlier book *Forcing Chess Moves*, but it's worth revisiting how stellar calculation set the stage for a triumph of chess geometry. Judit's 'embarrassment of riches' precluded even this beautiful game from making her biography!

40. ♖e4 Indirectly protecting d5.

40... ♔f7 41. ♜f4+ ♔e8 42.d6 ♜d5 43. ♙c3



Sokolov's only hope was to surround and win the d-pawn, but JP demonstrates he is effectively in zugzwang; 43...g5 44. ♜f3 won't change anything.

43... ♙xd6 44. ♜f3 1-0



No cheap shot, but merely the culmination of fine technique.

Game 16

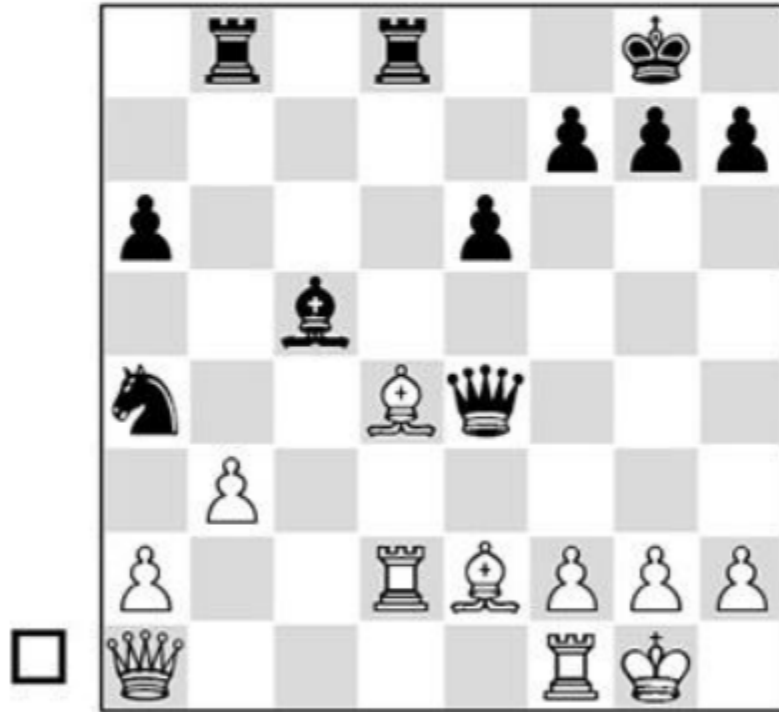
Judit Polgar

2700

Jan Timman

2594

Wijk aan Zee 2003 (3)



The tremendously strong title contender Jan Timman shared JP's love of complications and adventure, but at this later stage of his career, Judit's tactical eye gave him fits. Even this innocuous-looking position proved too dangerous:

24. ♖xc5 ♜xc5?

JP was a great purveyor of zwischenzugs, and the point of her play was 24... ♜xd2 25. ♖f3 ♚c2 26. ♖a7!



analysis diagram

Playing with a rook against two unfettered ♙'s seems foolish, but the engine insists he must. After 26... ♖c8 27.bxa4 ♗xa4 28.a3 ♖d3 Black eliminates the queen-side pawns, and ought to be able to hold.

25. ♗c3 ♖xd2

25... ♖dc8 26. ♖fd1 g6 27. ♗a5

26. ♗xd2



After a couple of routine moves, Black's position proves untenable! The threat of 27. ♗d6, along with the weakness of a6 and the back rank, are one geometric problem too many.

26...g6 Or 26... ♗e5 27. ♖e1 ♗e4 28. ♗e3.

27. ♖c1 ♗e5

The trap 27... ♗f5 28. ♗d6?? ♗xf2+ was worth a try, but 28. ♗d4! wins.



28.f4l ♔f5 29.♔d6 ♖c8 30.b4 ♕e4



31. ♕d2 1-0

JP scored well against an even bigger legend past his prime – ex-World Champ Anatoly Karpov. Travelling from the international tournament at Vienna, 1996, I analyzed on the train with Karpov and his second Ron Henley. Believe me, positional reputation aside, 10-move variations simply poured out of him like a water-

fall. It's quite a testament to JP's talent that already at 18, she could outcalculate him like this:

Game 17

Anatoly Karpov

2765

Judit Polgar

2630

Almaty m blitz 1995



21... ♖xe1+! 22. ♔xe1 ♘e5 23. ♕e3 ♖d7!



This quietus assures Black at least equality.

24. f4?? White misses the forced 24. ♕f1=, and the slaughter is on:

24... ♖h3 25. ♖e2 ♘f3+ 26. ♕f2 ♖xh2+ 27. ♕e3 ♖xg3 28. ♖f2 ♖h3



White is busted, and one more inaccuracy hastens the end:

29. ♘d3 ♘g5+ 30. ♕e2 ♘f3+ 31. ♕e1 ♘e4 32. ♖f1 ♖h4+ 33. ♘f2 ♖xf4 0-1

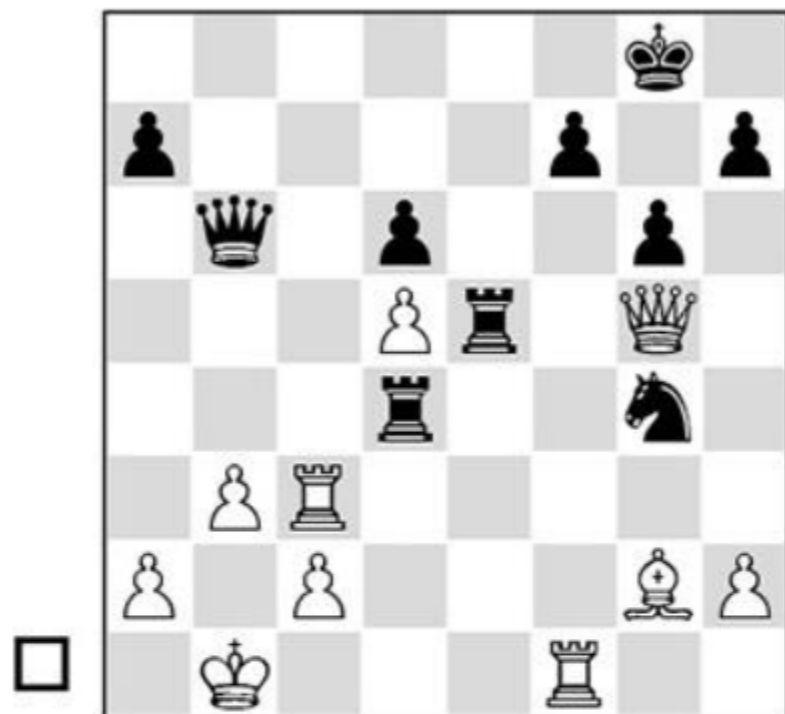
JP includes the following beautiful stock bombshell in her trilogy, but omits the far-sighted calculation leading up to it:

Game 18

Judit Polgar

José Luis Fernandez Garcia

2595



Discerning the strength of the awkward-looking retreat

33. ♖h4!

was a real calculative feat:

- A) The discovery 33... ♗e3 is refuted by 34. ♖f6! ♖b7 35. ♜xe3, winning a piece;
- B) 33... ♜h5 loses to 34. ♖e7; ♗e5;
- C) 33... f5 is met by 34. ♜c6 ♖b8 35. h3;

D) Which leaves only the passive try 33... ♖b8.



analysis diagram

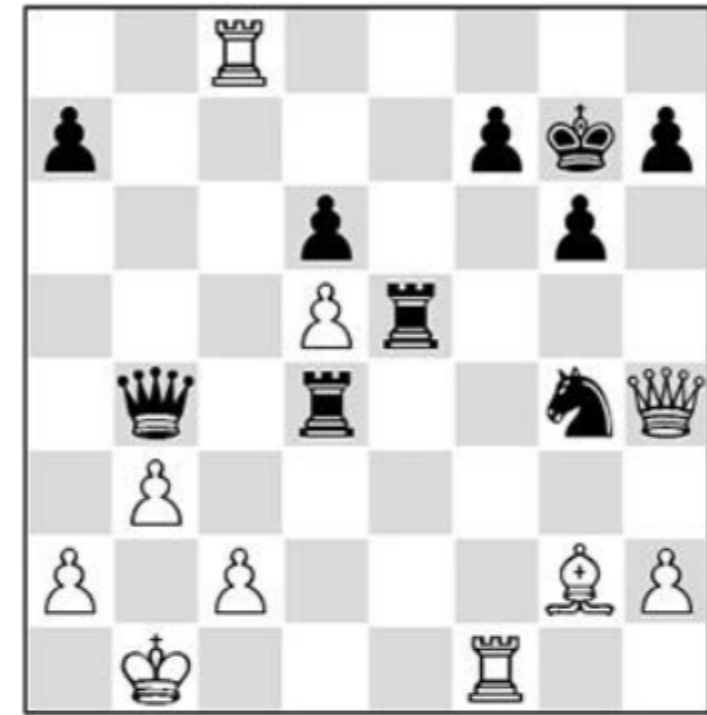
Black can cling on to slim chances after 34. h3 ♜h5 35. ♖e7 ♗e5, but stronger is the tactical stroke 34. ♜xf7! ♗xf7 35. ♜c7+! ♖xc7 36. ♖xh7+ ♗f6 37. ♖xc7.



analysis diagram

With too many pawns and a continuing attack. Thankfully Black took the natural active route, and we are treated to the deeper point of White's play, stock geometry extraordinaire:

33... ♔b4 34. ♖c8+ ♕g7



35. ♕xh7+!! ♔xh7 36. ♖xf7+ ♕h6 37. ♖h8+ 1-0

Why not take the 19th century gentleman's approach, executing 37... ♕g5 38.h4# on the board?

Game 19

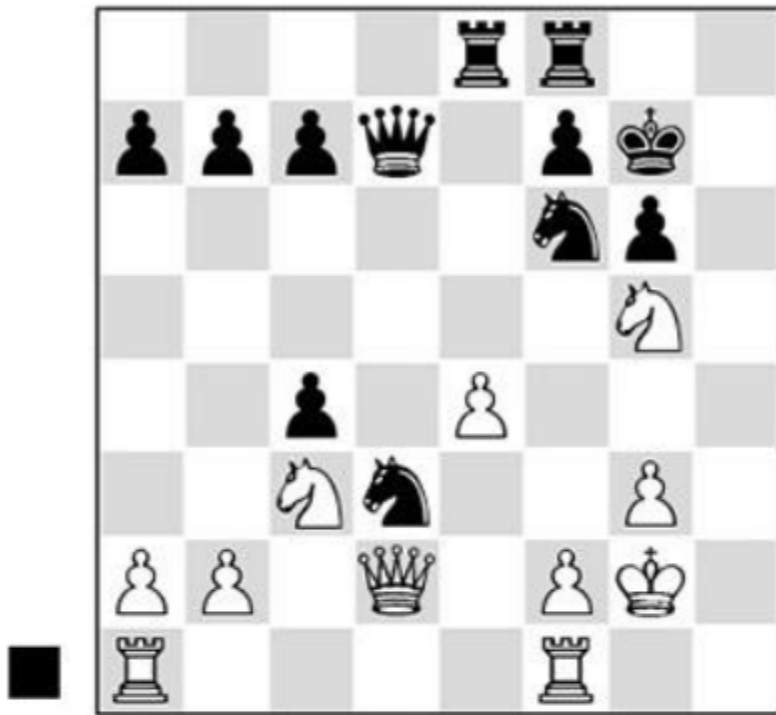
Vasily Ivanchuk

2740

Judit Polgar

2645





18... ♖h5!

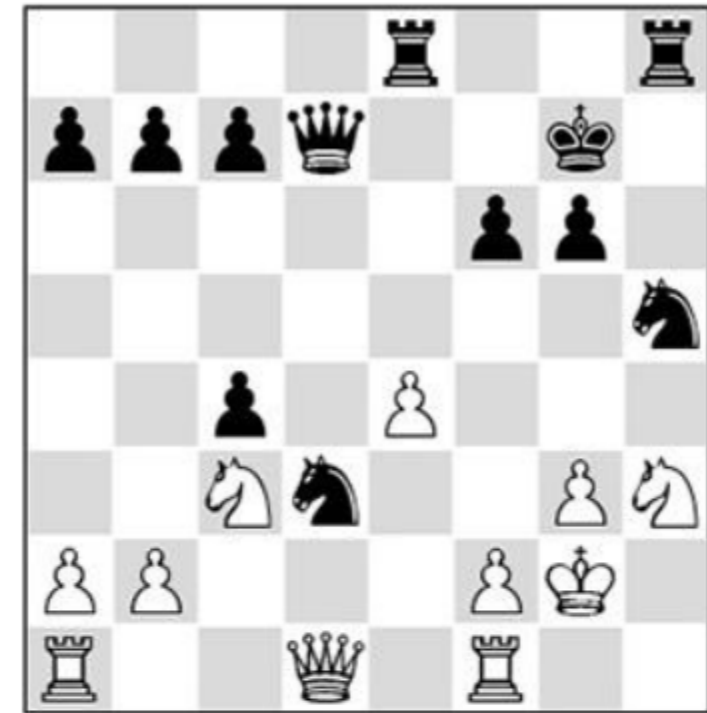
This looks like a cheap patzer move, until you realize it's the truth of the position!

The threat is 19... ♖df4+, discovering against the ♔d2.

19. ♔e3 ♖df4+

Black resigned in view of 20. gxf4 ♔g4+ 21. ♖h2 ♖h8.

A more interesting defense was 19. ♔d1 ♖f6 20. ♖h3 ♖h8:



analysis diagram

White sees what's coming but can't stop it! 21. ♖h1 ♖hf4+ 22. ♖xf4 (22. gxf4 ♖xh3) 22... ♖xh1 23. ♔xh1



analysis diagram

23... ♖xf4+ 24.gxf4 ♜h8, winning the queen or mating.

The ability to recognize geometric patterns quickly is the essence of boardsight. Judit's early training instilled tremendous tactical vision. Combinations which would be lifetime achievements for some masters came naturally... and, like the great woodpushers of yore, she played not only for victory, but also for beauty:

Game 20

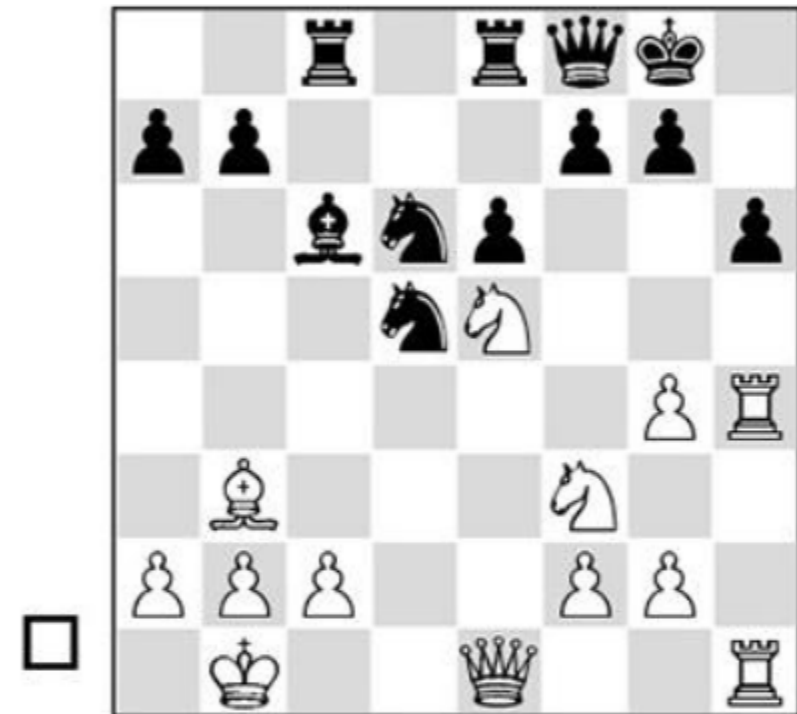
Judit Polgar

2665

Vladimir Epishin

2620

Geneva rapid 1996 (1)



24.g5 ♖f5

It's no great shock that White's attack is winning, but there's much to calculate in short order. Losing anyway is 24...f6, for instance: 25.gxh6 fxg5 26.♜g4 ♖f5



27. ♖xe5 ♖f6 28.hxg7 ♖xg7 29. ♜f4



analysis diagram

Threatening 30. ♖g4, and if 29... ♜e7 30. ♜h8+!

25.gxh6! ♖xh4 25... ♖xh6 26. ♖g4

26.h7+! A tremendous intermezzo.



26... ♜h8

26... ♜xh7 27. ♜e4+

27. ♖xh4 ♖f4



The stage is set for a monster deflection blow:

28. ♖b4!! g5

If 28... ♗xb4 the clearance sac 29. ♜hg6+ mates on f7!

29. ♖d4!



Threatening 30. ♜xf7#! In blitz there's no time to resign, so we get to enjoy a 19th century finish:

29... ♗g7 30. ♜f5+ exf5 31. h8 ♖+ ♗xh8 32. ♜xf7+ 1-0



Another aspect of boardsight is quickly grasping the viability of moves that seem psychologically ‘impossible’. This is a central focus of my book *Forcing Chess Moves*. A surprise forcing move turns the tide in this battle against another chess legend:

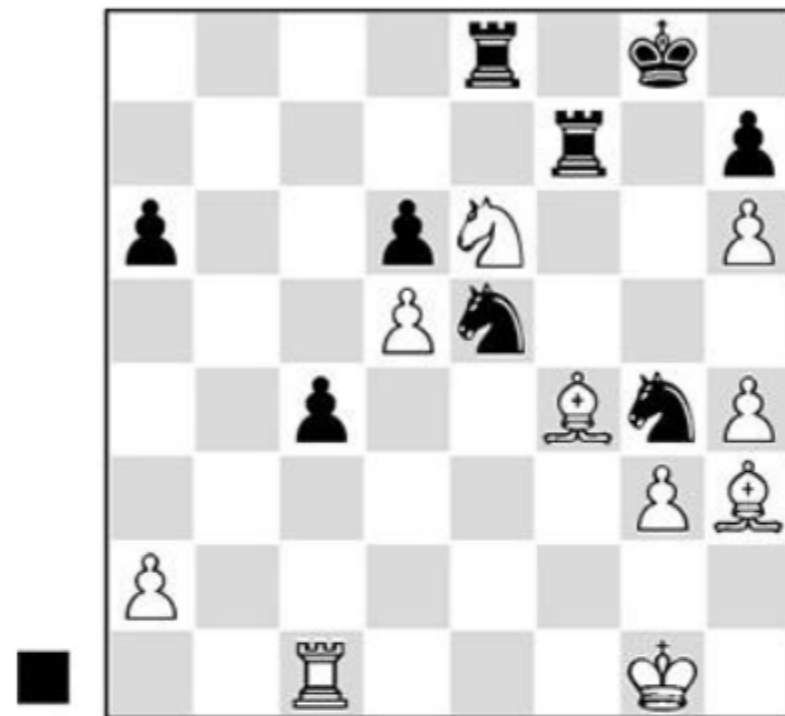
Game 21

Ljubomir Ljubojevic

Judit Polgar

2600

Monaco rapid 1996 (4)



White’s minor pieces amply compensate the small material deficit, but JP throws a monkey wrench in the works with

33... ♖f2!

The point is 34. ♘xf2 ♜d3+ 35. ♘e2 ♜xf4 ♜.

34. ♙f1 ♜fd3 35. ♙xd3 cxd3 36. ♜d1



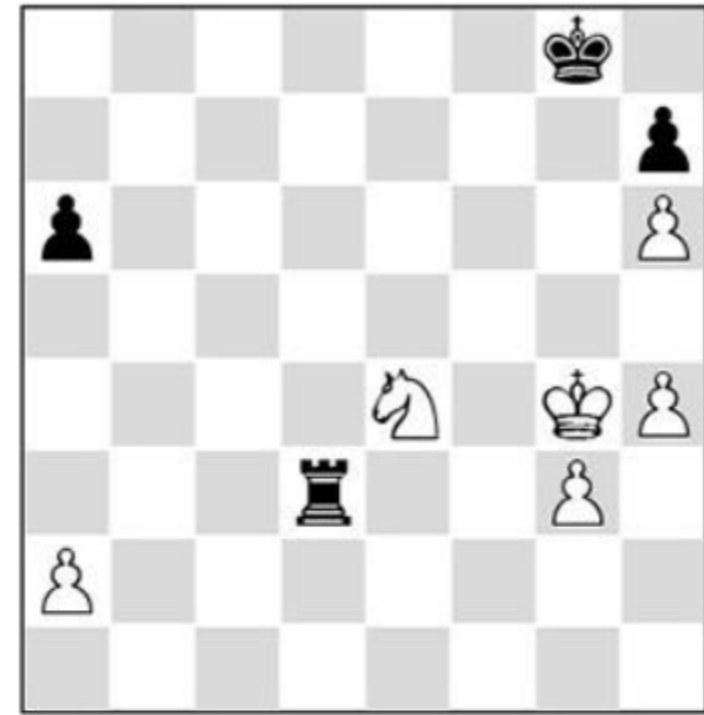
Judit should have counted her blessings here with 36... ♖g6 37. ♜xd3 (37. ♙xd6 ♜d7) 37... ♖xf4 38.gxf4 ♜f6 39. ♜a3=, but instead there occurred a comic exchange of blunders, which characterizes rapid chess at all levels, making even top GM's seem human after all...

36... ♜f5?? 37. ♘g2??

37. ♖g7! ♜xf4 38.gxf4 ♖f3+ 39. ♘f2+-

37... ♜c8 38. ♙xe5 dxe5 39. ♜xd3 e4 40. ♜e3 ♜e5 41. ♘h3 ♜e8 42. ♘g4 ♜xd5

43. ♖g5 ♜d3 44. ♜xe4 ♜xe4+ 45. ♖xe4



I suspect that both players calculated this quickly to the end, though at any rate the moves are automatic:

45... ♜a3 46. ♘f5 ♜xa2 47. ♖f6+ ♜h8 48.g4 a5 49.g5 a4 50.h5 ♜f2+ 51. ♘e6 a3 52.g6



Ljubo employs his last trick, but JP stays awake.

52... ♖xf6+ 53. ♘xf6 ♔g8 0-1

Emphatically not 53...a2?? 54. ♘f7!+-.

Game 22

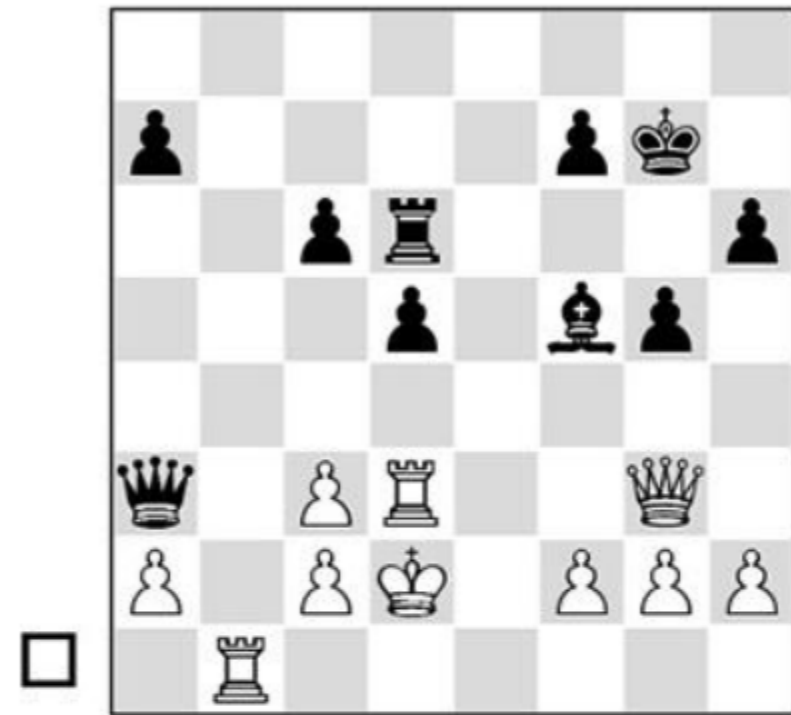
Judit Polgar

Jana Maskova

2540

2250

Novi Sad ol W 1990 (14)



23. ♔e5+ ♔g6 23... ♖f6 24. ♖f3 ♔g6 25.g4

24. ♖b8 ♗xd3 25. ♖g8+ ♔h5

Obviously forced.





26.f3!

The threat 27.g4+ and 28.♔g3# spoils the party.

26...f5 27.♔g3 1-0

Game 23

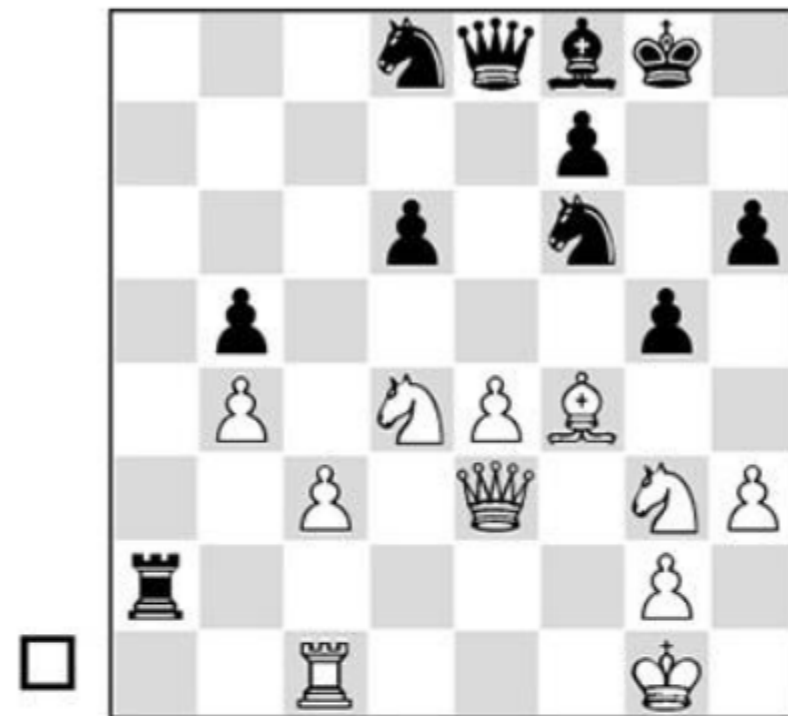
Judit Polgar

Nikola Mitkov

2630

2495

Moscow ol 1994 (9)



Black's 36...g5 was tantamount to throwing meat at a hungry wolf:

37.♙xg5 hxg5 38.♔xg5+ ♜g7 39.♞g5 ♔f8 40.♚f1





40... ♖e6

Black can't do much about the threat of ♗d4xb5xd6, among other things.

A) Bad is 40... ♗xe4 41. ♖e7+ ♜h7 (41... ♜h8 42. ♚h4+) 42. ♚f5+;

B) On 40... ♗h7 the computer offers the rather amusing sequence 41. ♖e7+ ♜h8 42. ♖g6+ ♜g8 43. ♚d5.



analysis diagram

Black can soldier on with 43... ♗xd4+ 44.cxd4 ♚g7 45. ♚xa2 ♚xg6, but it's ugly after 46. ♚a8 or 46. ♚f4.

41. ♖xe6 fxe6 42. ♖h6+ ♜h7 43. ♖g4



Now it's a catwalk, but JP adds one more nice geometric flourish:

43... ♖xe4 44. ♔h4+ ♕g6 45. ♚xf8 ♘xf8 46. ♗e5+ ♔f5



47. ♗d7! 1-0

The ♘ falls in light of 48. ♔g4#!

Sicilian Slayer

In her chess autobiography, Judit remarks that she was ‘born to play 1.e4’. More specifically, I would add that she was born to attack the Sicilian! Since the ascent of 1...c5 in the 1950’s to its modern status as the marquis master defense against the King’s Pawn Opening, combatting this many-headed monster is the key to success in chess. Anyone who has ever faced 1...c5 against strong opposition will nod in agreement. A well-known adage posits that ‘Sicilian endgames favor Black’. Like all aphorisms this may be exaggerated, but the basic concept is sound. White’s core Sicilian strategy is a kingside attack, and since Black usually castles kingside, this means attacking the king. Black’s natural plan is a queenside breakthrough using the open c-file along with the minority attack ...b5-b4. With reduced forces Black’s king is safer, but White’s queenside isn’t. Added to this challenge is the chameleon-like nature of Black’s numerous Sicilian formations, and the huge amount of theory and preparation required to combat them all! For these reasons generations of American juniors (Winston and Wilder being notable exceptions) declined to take the bull by the horns and master the open Sicilian, but against elite competition it’s hard to succeed this way.

Above all the reason for JP’s stellar anti-Sicilian play was this – her style coalesced perfectly with the right practical approach for White. This meant playing for

the initiative at all costs, calculating deep variations, a willingness to sacrifice, and taking calculated risks to pose Black maximal defensive challenges. Her games reveal some consistent threads JP used to augment this general approach. From early on she was enchanted with the thematic pawn break g4-g5 followed by f5-f6. On a less conventional note, she grasped, perhaps better than anyone, the potential of trading bishop for knight in the service of maximizing the kingside initiative. Another important Sicilian precept regards the dark-squared bishop as White’s ‘positional linchpin’. Examples where Black rode this factor to victory are legion. Indeed, this general rule is so salient, that exchanging the ‘Sicilian bishop’ against a GM without full justification is nearly tantamount to resigning! But Judit had an uncanny knack for knowing exactly when to invoke a higher principle – better bishops don’t help much when you’re checkmated!

Incredibly, even at age 11 she displayed the preparation and elan, not just to hold her own against 1...c5, but to push formidable masters beyond their defensive limits.

Game 24

Judit Polgar

2320

Peter Szekely

2420

1.e4 c5 2. ♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4. ♘xd4 ♘f6 5. ♘c3 a6 6. ♙c4 e6 7. ♙b3 ♙e7 8.f4 o-o
 9. ♚f3 ♘c6 10. ♙e3 ♚c7 11.f5 ♘xd4 12. ♙xd4 b5 13.a3 ♜b8 14.g4 b4



15.g5!?

White fights for every tempo and achieves her favorite f5-f6 break without delay. In Judit's realm, provoking a sea of complications is an added bonus!

14... ♘d7?!

Already an inaccuracy.

A) Not 15...bxc3?? 16.gxf6 ♙xf6 17. ♙xf6 gxf6 18. ♚g1+ ♜h8 19. ♚g4;

B) But 15... ♘e8! is at least equal: 16.axb4 (the difference is 16.f6?! bxc3! 17.fxe7 ♚xe7 ♜) 16... ♙xg5 (16... ♚xb4 17. ♙xg7 is unclear) 17. ♚a4!? ♙d7 18. ♚xa6 ♚xb4 19. ♚a7 ♚b7 ♜;

C) A more violent road to equality is 15... ♘g4!? 16. ♚xg4 bxc3 17. ♙xc3 (17.bxc3 e5) 17...exf5 18.exf5 ♚c5 19.g6 hxg6 20. ♚xg6



analysis diagram

20... ♖e3+ 21. ♔d1 ♜f3+ 22. ♔d2 ♜f4+.

16.f6! bxc3?

The position is a minefield, and Black immediately steps on a shell. Incredibly the last chance was 16... ♗d8! with fascinating complications:



analysis diagram

17.fxg7 ♜e8 18.axb4 (18. ♜f1 ♖e5 19. ♗xe5 dxе5 20.axb4 ♗xg5=)



analysis diagram

A) Great complications arise from 18... ♗xg5 19. ♜h5 ♜xb4 20. ♜f1! (20.0-0? ♖e5 21. ♗xe5 ♗e3+!)=) 20... ♗d2+:
 A1) 21. ♜xd2 ♜xd4+ 22. ♜e3 ♖e5!



analysis diagram

23. ♖xf7! (23. ♖xd4?? ♚c5#) 23... ♜xf7 24. ♖xd4 ♚a7+ 25. ♖d3 ♚f2 26. ♚e2 ♜e5+
 27. ♖d2 ♜f3+ 28. ♖c1 ♚xe2 29. ♜xe2 ♜xh2 30. ♜c4=(!);
 A2) 21. ♖d1



analysis diagram

21... ♜b8 (21... ♜f4 22. ♖xf4 ♜xd4+ 23. ♖e2 ♜e5 24. ♖h4 ♖xg7 25. ♚h6+ ♖g8
 26. ♖g1+ ♜g6 27. ♚xh7+ ♖f8 28. ♖xg6+-) 22. ♖a4 ♜xc3 (22... ♖xb3 23. ♖c4 ♚e7
 24. ♖xd2 ♖b7 25. ♖f3 e5 26. ♜d5+-) 23. ♜xc3 ♖xa4 24. ♜xa4 ♖d8



analysis diagram

25. ♖a5+—!

B) Back in the position after 18.axb4, Black needs to play 18... ♜xb4 19. ♝f1 (19. ♜f6 ±) 19... ♗e5 20. ♜xe5 dxe5 21. ♜a4.



analysis diagram

Finally, the computer grants Black a playable position with 21... ♜xa4! 22. ♝xa4 ♜xg5 23. ♝c4 ♜e7, avoiding the pitfall 21... ♝e7 22. ♜h3!! ♝xb2?



analysis diagram

23.g6! fxg6 24.o-o-o! ♖b8 25. ♖xd8+ ♔xd8 26. ♖f8++.

In practice Black missed the unlikely resource 16... ♙d8, and was already busted. As Judit remarks about sharp Sicilian and King's Indian lines, one mistake may be your last.

17.fxg7 ♗e5 18.gxf8 ♔+ ♗xf8 19. ♔xc3 ♔xc3+ 20. ♙xc3 ♙xg5



It's still a tricky matter of technique, and young Judit acquits herself beautifully. Like Tal, her calculative wizardry served very well into the ending, and the bugaboo of winning won positions wasn't a major issue.

21. ♖d1 ♔e7 22. ♙a5 ♖b7 23. ♔e2 ♗g6



24.h4!

This fine technical shot turns the slumbering h-pawn into a battering ram, opening lines for White's rooks. If Black takes, then 25. ♖b4 in conjunction with e4-e5 regains the h-pawn advantageously.

24... ♜f6 25.h5 ♗e5 26. ♖b4 ♜b6 27. ♜hg1 ♜b7 28. ♜a5 ♜xb3

28... ♜b5 29. ♜c7

29.cxb3 ♜xe4 30. ♜b4 ♜d5 31. ♜xd5! exd5 32. ♜c3 ♜e6 33.b4 d4 34. ♜xd4 ♜f3

35. ♜xf3 ♜xd4 36. ♜g2 h6 37.a4 ♜d5 38. ♜c2 1-0

What's worse than fending off a furious Sicilian king hunt by a 12-year-old attacking dynamo nicknamed 'Tal in a skirt'? How about doing it at rapid or blitz time controls! Here a strong IM known for slashing attacks seems to be the one who is outplayed 'like a child':

Game 25

Judit Polgar

Marcel Sisniega

Mazatlan rapid 1988

1.e4 c5 2. ♗f3 ♗c6 3.d4 cxd4 4. ♗xd4 ♗f6 5. ♗c3 d6 6. ♜c4 e6 7. ♜e3 ♜e7 8. ♚e2 ♗xd4 9. ♜xd4 ♚a5 10. ♜b3 o-o 11.o-o-o ♜d7 12. ♜hg1 ♜fc8 13.g4 e5





14.g5!

Again, the relentless striving for complications and initiative! Black anticipated the standard Sicilian counterpunch 14. ♖e3 ♜xc3! 15. ♖d2 (15.bxc3 ♖xe4) 15... ♖b5 16. ♚e1 ♜xc2+ 17. ♚xc2 ♚a6 with full compensation.

14... ♖e8?!

Active tries were more promising:

A) 14...exd4 15.gxf6 ♖xf6 16. ♖d5 ♚d8 17. ♚d2 ♜c5 18. ♖xf6+ (18. ♚h6 g6 ♞) 18... ♚xf6 19. ♚xd4 ±;

B) 14... ♖g4 15. ♜xg4 ♖xg4 16. ♚xg4 exd4 17. ♖d5 ♚d8 (17... ♖f8?? 18. ♚h5+-) 18.f4 ±



analysis diagram

White's ♖+♚ outweigh a rook, and her unopposed ♖ is a strong attacker. In general, Black's challenge in these lines is heightened by a realistic fear: the sharpest try may land him in prepared analysis, with fatal consequences. By keeping Black on the razor's edge 'a la Tal', Judit consistently exploits this psychological



advantage.

15. ♖d5 ♚d8 16. ♙e3 ♜e6 17. f4 exf4 18. ♙xf4 a5? 19. a4 ♞a6 20. e5



20... ♞ac6

Black is positionally worse and under siege – a dire situation. If 20...dxe5 21. ♙xe5! (not 21. ♖f6+? ♙xf6 22. ♞xd8 ♙xd8, dissipating the attack) 21... ♙xg5+ (21... ♙xd5 22. ♙xd5 ♙xg5+ 23. ♚b1 ♚e7 24. ♚b5! and White can switch to exploiting her two ♙'s) 22. ♚b1 g6 23. ♚g2,



analysis diagram

with ♖f4 looming, the engine proclaims Black's goose cooked.

21. c3

21. ♚b1

21... ♙f5?!

Essential now was 21...dxe5 22. ♚xe5 ♙d6 23. ♚e4 .

22. exd6 ♙f8

22... ♙xd6 23. ♙xd6 ♞xd6 24. ♖e7+





As the old wisecrack postulates, Black's miserable position compensates his pawn disadvantage.

23. ♖e7+ ♜xe7 24. ♚xe7 ♜g6 25. ♝ge1 ♚xe7 26. ♝xe7 ♚f8 27. ♝xb7 1-0

Game 26

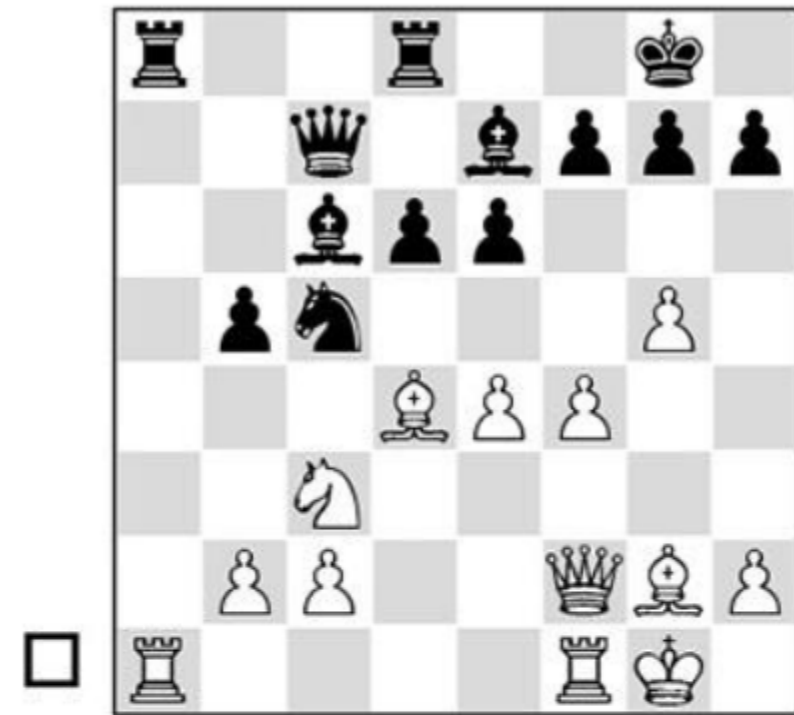
Judit Polgar

Diane Savereide

2320

2250

Thessaloniki ol W 1988 (13)



Like all great attackers, JP preferred what the Soviet School called 'concrete play', using forcing lines to provoke a crisis. Her creativity often led to original decisions:

21.b4! ♜d7

21... ♜a4! 22. ♜xa4 bxa4 23. ♜b6 ♚b7 24. ♜xd8 ♜xd8! was an interesting road to dynamic equality.





analysis diagram

Instead came

22. ♖xa8 ♜xa8 23.f5!



The former US Women's Champ avoids the trap 23... ♙xg5?? 24.fxe6 ♜e5 (24... fxe6 25. ♖f7+ ♜h8 26. ♙xg7#) 25. ♙xe5 dxе5 26.exf7+ ♜f8 27. ♖f5+—, but misses JP's novel idea.

23...exf5?!

Black could thread her way to equality with 23...e5! 24. ♙e3 (24.f6 exd4 25.fxe7 ♜e5 ♞) 24...f6 25.g6 hxg6 26.fxg6 ♜f8 27. ♙h3 and now the accurate 27... ♞a3, but not 27... ♜xg6?? 28. ♙e6+ ♜f8 29. ♜d5 ♙xd5 30. ♙xd5,



analysis diagram

when the maneuver ♖f2-f5-e6 is crushing.

24. ♖xf5!

An unusual double attack steals the initiative.



24... ♜f8 25. ♖xb5 ♜xb5 26. ♖xb5 ♖e5 27. c3 ♜xg5 28. ♖d5





The critical position. Black needs her knight on c4 to contain the b-pawn, so 28...h6, defending the ♕, is required: 29.b5 ♖c4 with reasonable defensive chances (if 29. ♕xe5 dxe5 White's connectors are vulnerable, e.g. 30.c4 ♗b6+).

28...g6? 29.b5! ♕d2 30. ♖h1!



Now the ♕ is loose after 30...♖c4 31.b6! (or 30... ♕xc3 31. ♗c1), so the passer rolls.

30... ♖c4 31. ♗xd6 1-0

Young stars of the Computer Era may overlook the profound influence Bobby Fischer cast over chess theory in the late 20th century. It certainly wasn't lost on Garry Kasparov, who in a sense was Fischer's star disciple. Both players were uncompromising warriors, playing to win virtually every game with either color. Among modern champions only Tal had done so to the same extent, but he was also a gambler

and a chess showman, willing to roll the dice and rely on his wits and ingenuity to outscore the field.

By contrast, Fischer and Kasparov were chess scientists, marrying Tal's relentless aggression to otherworldly scientific preparation and discipline. As we noted in the Introduction, both players showed unprecedented ability to surf on the wave's edge of correctness, while almost never spilling over into unsoundness. When asked about his philosophy Fischer famously quipped 'I believe in strong moves'; and it's no accident that Kasparov considered Bobby to be more ahead of his rivals than any other champion (though some students of chess history might bestow this laurel on the other American champion, Paul Morphy). While Judit played more in the spirit of Tal and Bronstein, Fischer, who later became a Polgar family friend, undeniably influenced her early play. You can detect it for instance in her incisiveness in sharp endgames, and her initial choice of Fischer's favorite Sozin Variation to play for mate against the Sicilian:

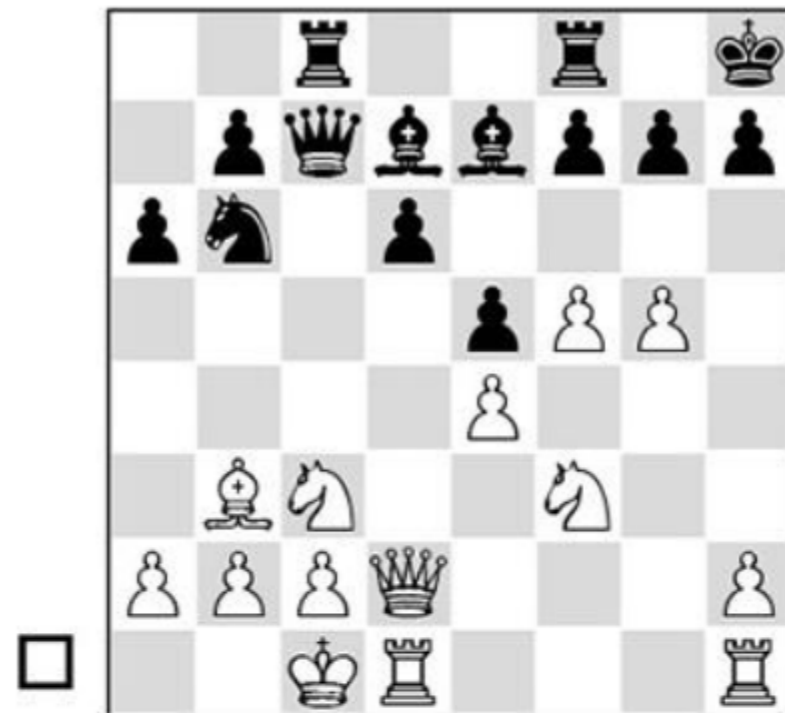
Game 27

Judit Polgar

Isabelle Kientzler-Guerlain

1915

Rio Gallegos Wch U16 W 1986 (10)



19.f6!

Her signature lever!

19...gxf6 20.gxf6 ♖xf6 21.♔xd6

Like Fischer, JP had no qualms about carrying the initiative into an ending or a queenless middlegame – an objective approach almost unheard of in a 10-year-old attacker!

21...♗g7

White has a small but pleasant advantage after 21...♔xd6 22.♞xd6 ♞c6 23.♞hd1



♙g4 24. ♖xc6 bxc6 25. ♖d6! (see analysis diagram overleaf).



analysis diagram

22. ♗g5



22... ♗c6?!

Forced was 22... ♗e8!, but White keeps a nice attack with the paradoxical 23. ♖d3 ♗h6 24. ♖e3!.

23. ♖hf1 ± ♖xd6

Now 23... ♗e8 24. ♗xf7+ ♗xf7 25. ♖xf7 ♖xf7 26. ♗xf7 ♖xf7 27. ♖xb6 is practically winning.

24. ♖xd6





f7 is indefensible, and the massacre is on.

24...h6 25. ♖xf7+ ♔h7 26. ♕e6 ♜c7 27. ♕f5+ ♔g8 28. ♖xh6+ ♔h8 29. ♖g4 ♖c4
 30. ♜d3 ♕e8 31. ♜h3+ ♔g8 32. ♖d5 ♜d7 33. ♕e6+ ♜df7 34. ♖e7#



In the intro to this chapter, we referenced JP's unparalleled ability to recognize when the dynamics of Sicilian play favored exchanging bishop for knight. Here's a straightforward example:

Game 28

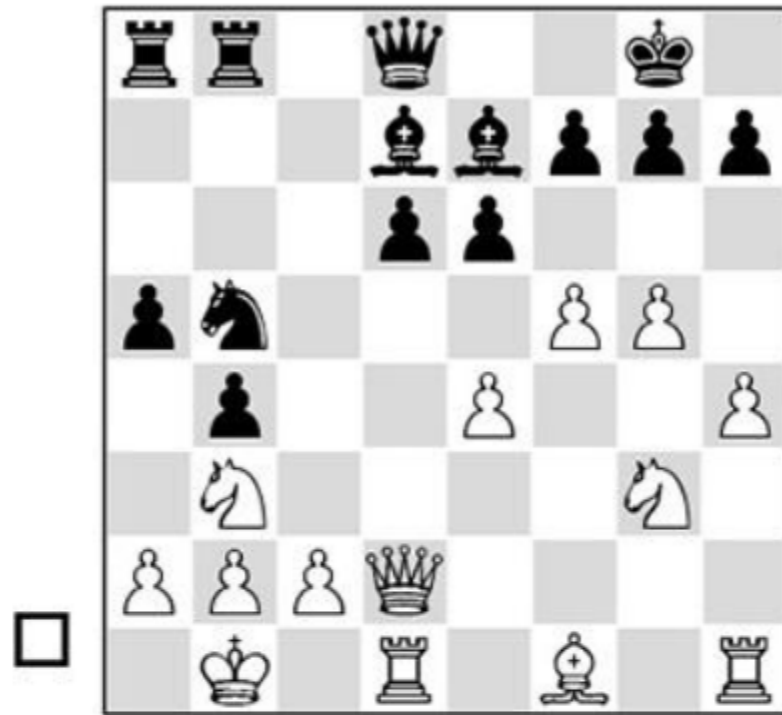
Judit Polgar

2665

Nikolaus Stanec

2505





21. ♖xb5! ♜xb5

Now White's knight joins the attack via d4. Also, Black must already guard against catastrophe, e.g. 21... ♜xb5 22.f6 gxf6 23.gxf6 ♜f8? (23... ♜xf6 24. ♜hg1 ♔h8 25. ♜xd6 ±) 24. ♜hg1 ♔h8 25. ♖f5! ♜xf6 (to stop ♜g5) 26.e5!!.



analysis diagram

A wonderfully disguised clearance sacrifice, when 27. ♜g2 next, forking g8 and a8, is annihilating.

22. ♖d4 a4

Black already resolves to ditch material, but letting the knight into e6 hardly stems the attack. 22... ♜c8 23.f6 gives White the strong initiative she lives for:



analysis diagram

A) Taking is refuted: 23...gxf6? 24.gxf6 ♘xf6 25.♖h5 ♘e5 26.♙h6



analysis diagram

Only 26...♙f8 stops 27.♙g1+-g7!, but this hangs a piece to 27.♙hg1+ ♘h8 28.♙xf8+ ♙xf8 29.♖xb5;

B) 23...♘f8 24.fxg7 ♘xg7 25.♖h5 ♘e5 26.♖f3 ± (26...♘c3 27.♙xd6 is a dummy bullet)

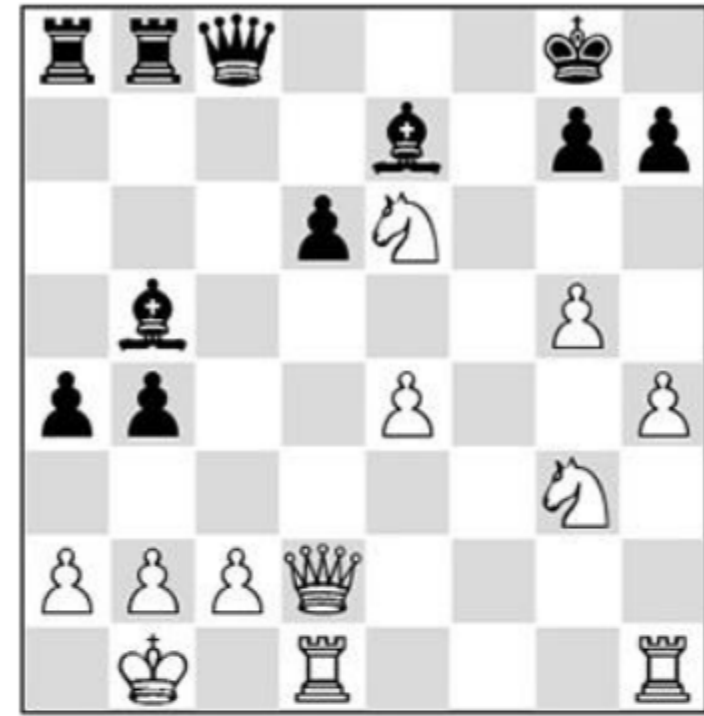




analysis diagram

Few Sicilian players have the sangfroid to defend like a computer; so most prefer to go down with guns blazing.

23. fxe6 fxe6 24. ♖xe6 ♔c8



25. ♖xg7!

With 25... ♖xg7 26. ♖f5+ ♖f8 27. ♖xe7 (or 27. ♔d4) 27... ♖xe7 28. ♔xd6+ too horrible to contemplate, the reaper has received his midnight text message.

25... ♖c4 26. ♖3f5 ♖f8 27. ♖h5 b3 28. cxb3 axb3





29. ♖h6+ ♜xh6 30.gxh6



Kudos to JP's artistry, for choosing such an aesthetic way to denude Black's king!

30... ♜e6 31. ♜d4 ♜e5 32. ♜xc4+ ♔h8 33. ♜d4 ♜xa2 34. ♜h3 1-0

In the next example, White's choice to part with the dark-squared 'Sicilian bishop' carries novel strategic significance, enacting a temporary queenside blockade to win tempi for her assault on the other wing.

Game 29

Judit Polgar

2630





19. ♖a4? ♗b6 20. ♗xb6! ♚xb6 21. ♜xh5 gxh5 22. ♗g3



22... ♜fc8?!

Too routine; Black should take the bull by the horns with 22...d5 23.e5 d4 24. ♗e4 ♜fd8 25. ♚d3 ♗xe4 26. ♚xe4 ♜bc8 27. ♚b1 ♜c7 28. ♚f3 (28. ♗xd4 ♜c4).



analysis diagram

White has compensation but no more.

23. ♖xh5! ♔c7 24. ♖d4?

Now Black traded minor pieces with

24... ♗xd4 25. ♘xd4 ♗c6=

Instead 24. ♔g2 keeps the edge.



analysis diagram

White's knights hop strongly into f6 and d4, e.g.:

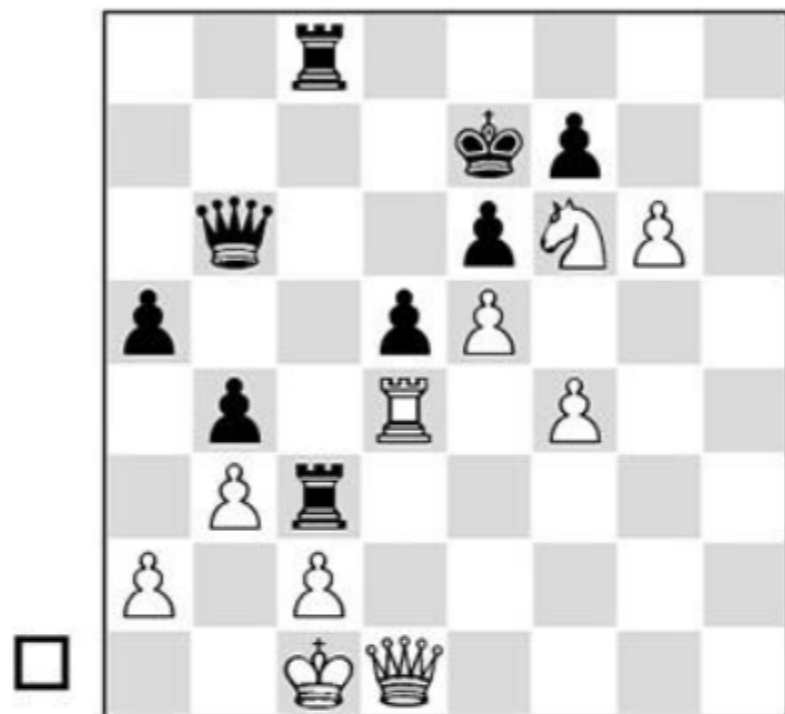
A) 24...d5? 25. ♖f6+ ♔f8 26. ♖d7+;

B) 24... ♗c6 25. ♖f6+ ♔f8 26. ♗xc6 ♔xc6 27. ♖d4, intending f4-f5, and White's attack is stronger.

Black navigated the position well enough, but the effort took its toll, and Judit landed a monstrous swindle just before time control.



The following position was reached, with Judit straining to play for a win in this important Interzonal game.



Objectively best is 35.g7 ♖xc2+ 36.♔xc2 ♖xc2+ 37.♔xc2 ♔xd4 38.g8♔ ♔c3+, drawing, but Judit sets a 'hellish' trap in Hellers' time pressure:

35. ♖d2!? ♖g3??

He bites! Black is a little better after 35...♔c5!? 36.g7 ♖g3, but now comes the hay-maker:



36. ♖xd5! ♖xg6

36...♔e3+ 37.♔b1 makes no difference.

37. ♖d7+ ♔f8





38. ♖xf7+! ♔xf7 39. ♚d7+ 1-0 The rook falls, and mate ensues.

Game 30

Judit Polgar

2676

Alexei Shirov

2718

Linares 2001 (4)



In a seemingly prepared line, White cedes the good ♖ for unusual concrete queen-side play. The ploy succeeds perfectly, against a foe known more for slashing attacks than plucky defense:

13. ♙xb6 ♜xb6 14. a5 ♚b7 15. ♙c4





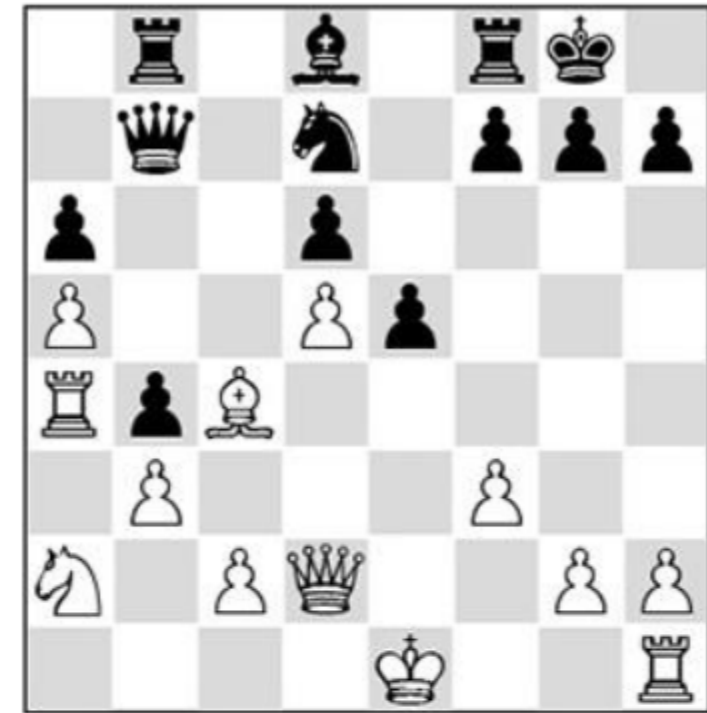
15...g6

A more testing, but well concealed response to White's strategy was 15...♙e7
16. ♖a4 ♜b8 17. ♗c1 ♘d8!:

A) White's pawn-gulping designs are thwarted by the nifty tactics 18. ♗a2 ♙xa5!

19. ♜xa5 ♞c7=;

B) Or 18.b3 o-o 19. ♗a2 ♗d7!.



analysis diagram

Despite appearances, no white captures lead to advantage; 20. ♜xb4? ♙xa5,
20. ♗xb4? ♗c5, or 20. ♞xb4 ♞xb4 21. ♗xb4 ♜xb4 22. ♜xb4 ♙xa5.

16. ♜a4 ♜b8 17. ♗c1 h5 18. ♗d3!

Better to centralize the knight than allow counterplay with 18. ♗a2 ♙h6 19. ♞xb4
♞a7 20. ♞c3 ♜c8, since in any event Shirov wouldn't abide the lifeless, inferior
position after 18... ♗xd5 19. ♙xd5 ♞xd5 20. ♗xb4 ♞b5 21.b3.





18... ♖h6 19. ♙xb4 ♜c7 20. ♙a3



Surprisingly, Black can still equalize with 20...0-0 21.0-0 e4! 22.fxex4 ♜xe4.





analysis diagram

The threat ... ♖d2 holds the balance: 23. ♖d1 ♖d2 24. ♔c3 ♖e4 25. ♔a3 ♖d2
 Black's a-pawn is indirectly protected by ... ♔a7+. JP went on to win the game.

Essaying sharp Sicilian lines against JP was somewhat like giving her a 5-star meal
 and a fine glass of wine on her birthday: a gift fit for a queen...

Game 31

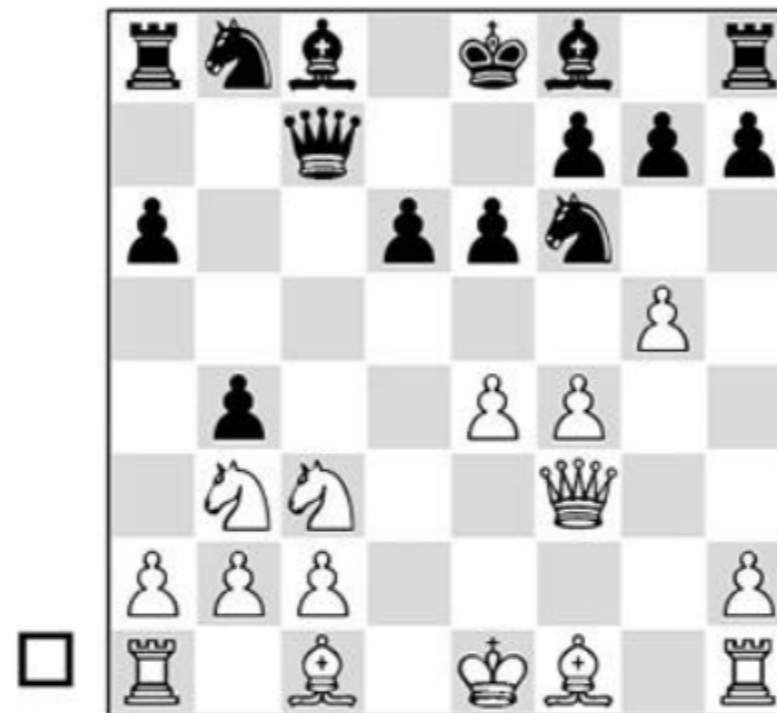
Judit Polgar

2635

Loek van Wely

2585

Amsterdam 1995 (9)



11. ♖b5 axb5 12. gxf6 ♖d7

Van Wely is an adventurous player too, but against Judit the better part of valor
 might be 12...gxf6 13.f5 e5 with equal chances, e.g. 14. ♖xb5+ ♖d7 15. ♖d3 ♖c6
 16. ♖e3 ♖d7 17. ♖d2 ♖c5 18. ♖c4 ♔b7 19. ♖xc5 dxc5 20.o-o-o ♖h6 21. ♔h5 ♖f4.





analysis diagram

The computer signals approval in this far-from-easy position.

13. ♖xb5 gxf6 14. f5 ♔e7 15. ♖xd7

Here the exchange is logical, depriving Black of the e5 outpost and targeting f6.



15... ♖xd7

To JP's delight, the position is a sea of tactics. The rather shocking capture 15... ♖xd7!? 16. fxe6+ fxe6 merits attention:





analysis diagram

A) The primary idea is 17. ♖xf6 ♜xc2! with a counterthreat against White's ♜ (18... ♜xe4+);

B) One remarkable line is 17. ♜d4 ♜c4 18. ♖xf6 ♜g8.



analysis diagram

Black is slightly better after 19. ♜f7+ ♜e7 20. ♜xg8 ♜h4+ 21. ♜d1 ♜xd4+ 22. ♜d2 ♜b7 23. ♜xh7+ ♜e7 24. ♜e1 ♜h8;





analysis diagram



analysis diagram

C) Going back three diagrams, the chances are even after 17. ♖g1 ♔xc2 18. ♖g2 ♔c6 19. ♗d4 ♔b7 20. ♙e3.

Of course only a maniac or a genius would hazard such lines.

16.fxe6 fxe6

Another natural recapture sends Loek right down the tubes. The last gasp was the computer resource 16... ♙xe6! 17.e5!? (17. ♙e3 ♔d7 18. ♗d4 ±) 17... ♖e8!!.





analysis diagram

A) Now on 18. exf6+ ♔d7 19. ♘e3, 19... ♘h6!! equalizes:



analysis diagram

20. 0-0-0! ♘xb3 21. ♖f5+ ♘e6 22. ♖b5+ ♖c6 23. ♖xc6+ ♔xc6 24. ♘xh6 ♜a8;

B) Or the main line 18. ♖xf6+ ♔d7, when 19. ♖xh8? ♖xc2 wins for Black.





analysis diagram

The main threat is ... ♖d5, and if 20.0-0, 20... ♜g6+ and 21... ♗g7.
 Instead of taking the rook after 18. ♜xf6+ ♔d7, White should sack hers with
 19. ♜f2!,



analysis diagram

hoping for 19... ♗d5? 20. ♗f4!! ♗xh1 21.0-0-0 ±.





analysis diagram

Now Black's king is on the hotseat with threats like exd6 , ♖a7+ and ♜c5+ in the air.

After Loek's $16... \text{fxe6}$ the end was near:

$17. \text{♞f1+}$



The flying Dutchman has played only sane moves, but finds his wings clipped! $17. \text{o-o??}$ would allow $17... \text{♞g8+-g6 ♞}$, but now Black probably overlooked the devastating shot $17... \text{♞g7}$ $18. \text{♞h6!}$. So he's forced to go for crazy counterplay after all, but that ship has already sailed.

$17... \text{♞b5}$ $18. \text{♞xf6+ ♜d7}$ $19. \text{♞xh8 ♞e7}$ $20. \text{♞xa8 ♞c4}$ $21. \text{♞b7+ ♜e8}$ $22. \text{♞f2 ♞h4}$ $23. \text{♞f7+ ♜d8}$





24. ♖g5+ 1-0

Ultimately, JP's approach to the Sicilian was more about setting the opponent insurmountable problems, with a refreshing plunge in the sea of complications, than Fischer's strict adherence to 'strong moves'. She delighted in preparing or daring new wrinkles in the most treacherous Sicilian fabric, and slugging it out, usually with a sizable time advantage. Here the strong American GM known affectionately as 'The Fed' catches JP on the crest of her historic rise to greatness, and can't meet her aggression with the required Kasparovian precision:

Game 32

Judit Polgar

2540

John Fedorowicz

2565

Amsterdam 1990 (7)

1.e4 c5 2. ♖f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4. ♖xd4 ♖f6 5. ♖c3 ♖c6 6. ♘c4 ♚b6 7. ♖b3 e6 8. ♘e3 ♚c7 9. ♚e2 a6 10. ♘d3 b5 11.f4 ♘e7 12.a4 b4 13. ♖b1 e5 14.f5 ♘b7 15. ♖1d2 ♖b8 16.g4 d5 17.g5





Fedorowicz, a well prepared chap himself, has gained the engine's nod, but Judit is just gearing up! From a practical standpoint 17... ♖xe4 18. ♗xe4 dxe4 19. ♙c4 ♗d7 with safer equality deserves mention.

17...dxe4 18. ♙c4 ♗d5 19.f6 gxf6 20.gxf6



21... ♙f8?!

Fedorowicz must have smelled a rat after 20... ♗xf6!, and talked himself out of the required capture. Indeed, crazy tactics are lurking after 21. ♖f1 ♗bd7?!





analysis diagram

22. ♖xf7+! ♔xf7 23. ♜h5+ ♕e6 24. ♜f5+ ♔f7=.

If Black had more ambitions, he could vary after 20... ♗xf6 21. ♞f1 with 21... ♞f8

22. ♗c5 (22. ♖h6 ♞g8 ♠) 22... ♖xc5 23. ♞xf6 ♗d7 24. ♞f5 ♠.



analysis diagram

Instead after one more natural move, he goes from equal to busted!

21.0-0-0





21... ♖d7??

It's hard but necessary to call this a blunder. Who wouldn't be terrified of the variation 21... ♖xe3 22. ♚xe3 ♖d7 23. ♖a5!! ♚xa5 24. ♙xf7+! ♚xf7 25. ♖c4 ♚d5 26. ♚g5 ♜g8 27. ♚h5+ ♚xf6 28. ♚xh7 (or 28. ♜hf1+=)?



analysis diagram

The cold-hearted engine calls it equal, but could you seriously evaluate and play this hot mess?

22. ♖xe4 ♖7b6

The game has spun out of control, e.g. 22... ♖7xf6 23. ♖xf6+ ♖xf6 24. ♜hf1 ♙g7 (24... ♙e7 25. ♙xf7+ ♚xf7 26. ♚h5+ ♚e6 27. ♖c5+ ♚xc5 28. ♚f5+--)





analysis diagram

25. ♘b6! ♜xb6 26. ♜xe5+ ♚f8 27. ♝d7!+-.

23. ♘xb6!

Again Judit has much bigger fish to fry than preserving the 'Sicilian bishop'.

23... ♗xb6



24. ♗a5!

Now it becomes painfully clear that Black is having his head handed to him.

24... ♗xc4 25. ♗xc4 ♘h6+ 26. ♚b1 ♚f8

26...0-0 27. ♜h5 jumps from the fire into the frying pan.

27. ♝hg1

27. ♗c5 ♜xc5 28. ♗xe5

27...b3 28.cxb3 1-0





In GM Henley's parlance, Black wisely 'utilized the resignation rule'. A sample finale would be 28... ♖g8 29. ♖xg8+ ♔xg8 30. ♗ed6 ♜d8 31. ♚g4+ ♔h8 (31... ♚f8 32. ♖g1) 32. ♗xe5 etc.



analysis diagram

Game 33

Judit Polgar

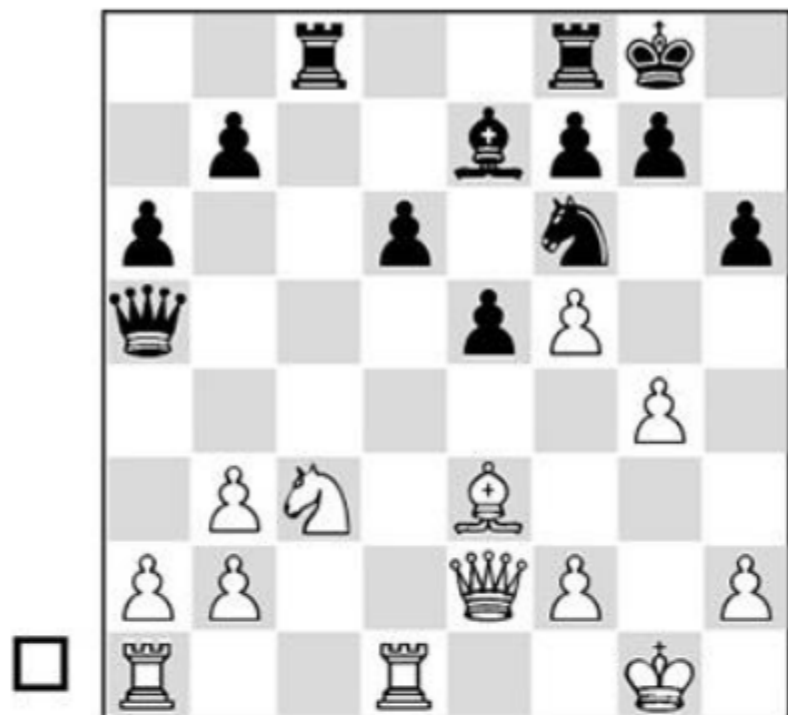
2550

Petar Popovic

2520

Novi Sad tt 1990 (2)





To paraphrase JP and others, computer evaluations are inconsequential when one player simply grasps the position better. The engine is happy to play Black here, but JP's very attractive, concrete plan leaves her seasoned GM opponent at a loss...

18.g5!

A lesser player might lament White's resulting pawn structure, which is a non-factor here. Playing for control of d5 is clearly the master's choice over 18.h4?! d5 19.g5 d4.

18...hxg5 19. ♖xg5 e4

Pitching a pawn doesn't solve Black's problems, but the engine doesn't object. White would play the same idea regardless.

20. ♜xf6 ♜xf6 21. ♞d5 ♚d8 22. ♚xe4 ♜e8 23. ♚g4! ±



White wants to parlay her space edge into an attack, employing a rook lift to the h-file. With the monster ♞d5 looming over everything, this plan seems daunting, though Rybka is still curiously oblivious.

23... ♜xb2 24. ♜ab1 ♜f6 25. ♜d3 ♜e5 26. ♜bd1 ♜c5 27.b4 ♜c2





28. ♖g3

Evidently 28. ♖h3! was even better: 28...g6 (28...♙g5 29. ♖h5! f6 30. ♗h3 ♙h6 31. ♖xh6 gxh6 32. ♗xh6+—) 29. ♖g3! ♙h4 30. fxg6 ♙xg3 31. gxf7+ ♗xf7 32. fxg3+—



analysis diagram

However, Judit's 28. ♖g3 was strong enough:

28... ♖ee2





One of JP's biggest strengths was her fearlessness. Where others (including yours truly) avoid complications while converting an advantage, she welcomes them, as an opportunity to outcalculate the opponent and end things more quickly.

29. ♔h5 ♜h4 30. ♝g4 ♜xf2+ 31. ♔h1



Black resigned after

31... ♝e5 32. ♔h6!

but even two marauding rooks can't save Black in any event.

A) If 31... ♜e3 32. ♝h4 ♜h6 33. ♝g1 ♜f8 34.f6;

B) Or 31... ♜e1 32.f6!.





analysis diagram

After taking the queen with check, Black can safely stop the clock.

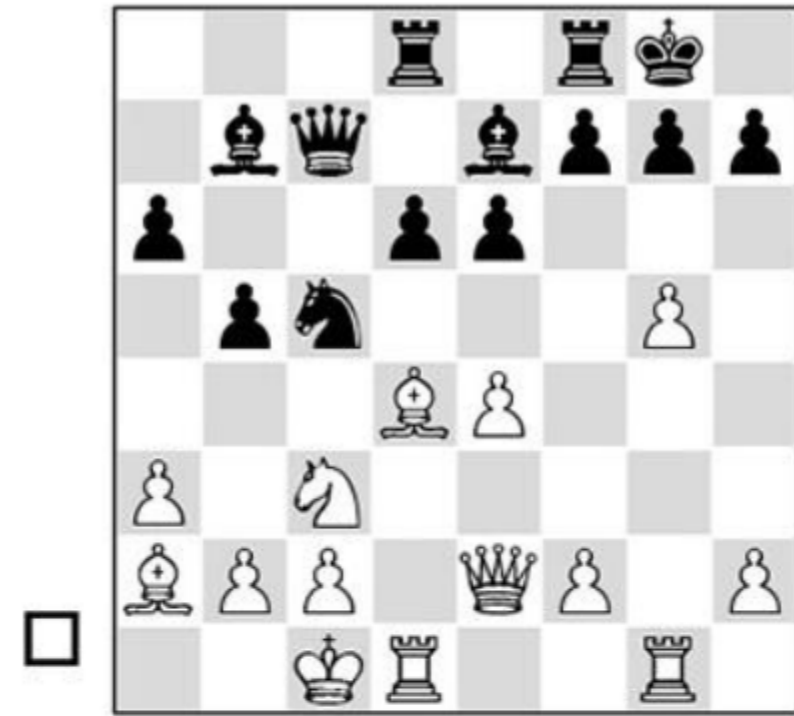
Game 34

Judit Polgar

2540

Andrea Dominguez

Novi Sad ol W 1990 (2)



The conventional 17.f4 e5 doesn't promise much, but Judit uncorks some sharp preparation (or inspiration). If Black is unfamiliar with these waters, the shark will quickly pick her bones:

17. ♙h5!? ♜xe4 18.g6!





analysis diagram

A thematic Sozin shot induces a sudden storm, and Black capsizes quickly. The natural response would already lose, showing how difficult Black's task is over the board:

A) 18...hxg6?? 19. ♖xg6 and now:

A1) On 19...fxg6, 20. ♙xe6+ ♜f7 21. ♚xg6,

with g7 and f7 hanging, White will capture on e4 with material and attack;

A2) If instead 19... ♙f6,





analysis diagram

20. ♖xg7+! ♜xg7 (20... ♘xg7 21. ♖g1+ ♘g5 22. ♖xg5#) 21. ♜xg7 ♘xg7 (21... f5
 22. ♖g1 ♘xg7 23. ♜xe6+ ♖f7 24. ♘xf7+) 22. ♖g1+ ♘f6 23. ♘h4+ ♘e5



analysis diagram

24. ♖g5+ mates soon.

B) Correct is the less intuitive capture 18...fxg6!:





analysis diagram

19. ♖xe6+ ♔h8 20. ♜xg6 ♜f6 21. ♞d5 ♜xd5 22. ♜xd5 ♜xd4



analysis diagram

23. ♜xe4 (not 23. ♜xd4 ♞f6) 23...d5 24. ♜d3 ♜xf2 25. ♜d6!





analysis diagram

Looks like a winning shot, which JP would play with glee. But wait: 25...g6
 26. ♖xd8+ ♚xd8 27. ♙xg6



analysis diagram

27... ♙xb2+! 28. ♚b1 (28. ♚xb2 ♚f6+) 28... ♚g8 29. ♙xh7 ♚xh7 30. ♚xh7+ ♚xh7
 31. ♚xb2

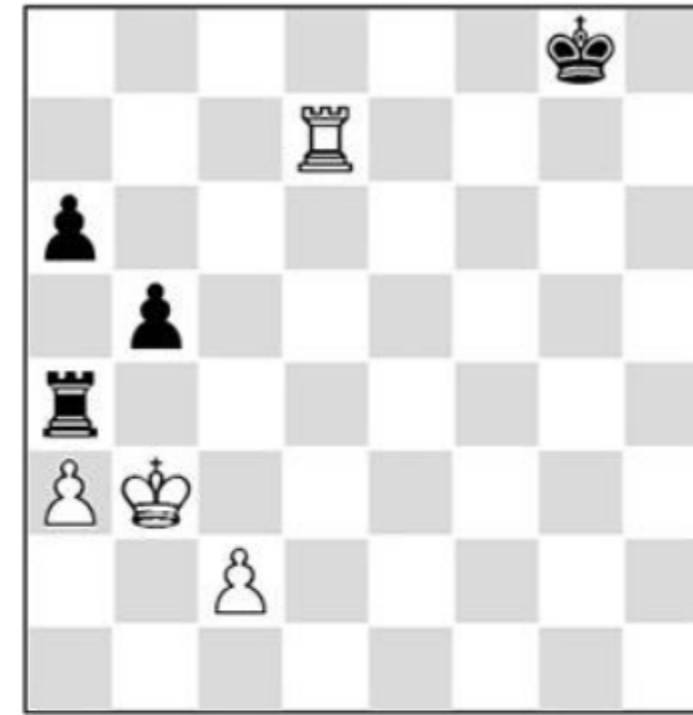




analysis diagram

The engine posits a persistent white edge, but we clever humans can use our theoretical knowledge to feign superiority, for a change:

31... ♖xh2 32. ♖xd5 ♖h4! 33. ♖d7+ ♔g8 34. ♔b3 ♖a4



analysis diagram

Engine schmengine, there's no win. White has one last trick though:
 35. ♖a7 ♔f8 36. c4 ♖xc4 37. ♖xa6 ♔e7 38. ♖a5 ♖c1 and though Aquarium doth protest, the human master ceases hostilities.

Black, alas, was out of her league, and missed this haystack needle:

18... ♔g5? 19. ♖xg5 ♖xg5 20. ♔xg5+-

Also 20.gxh7+ ♖xh7 21. ♖g1 f6 22. ♔xe6+ ♔h8 23. ♔f5 g5 24. ♖xg5+-.





20...h6

All is lost, e.g. 20...hxg6 21. ♖d3 d5 22. ♜h3 f6 23. ♙xg6 ♜f4+ 24. ♘e3 ♙f5



analysis diagram

25. ♙xf5 exf5 26. ♘b6 ♜d7 27. ♜d3+— White easily demonstrates the superiority of two ferocious minor pieces over Black's docile rook.

21. ♙g3 ♙e7 22. gxf7+ ♜xf7 23. f4 d5 24. ♘e2 a5 25. ♘e5 b4 26. a4 ♘c6 27. ♘b3 ♙d7 28. ♜g1 ♜c8 29. ♘d4





Kasparov a credible fight for the title after besting an elite field to qualify, but could never figure out JP, who beat him 12-3 with 5 draws (6-3 at classical time controls). Even on an off-day, she mustered enough Sicilian tactics to defeat him brilliantly in this encounter:

Game 35

Judit Polgar

2670

Nigel Short

2660

Dortmund 1997 (3)

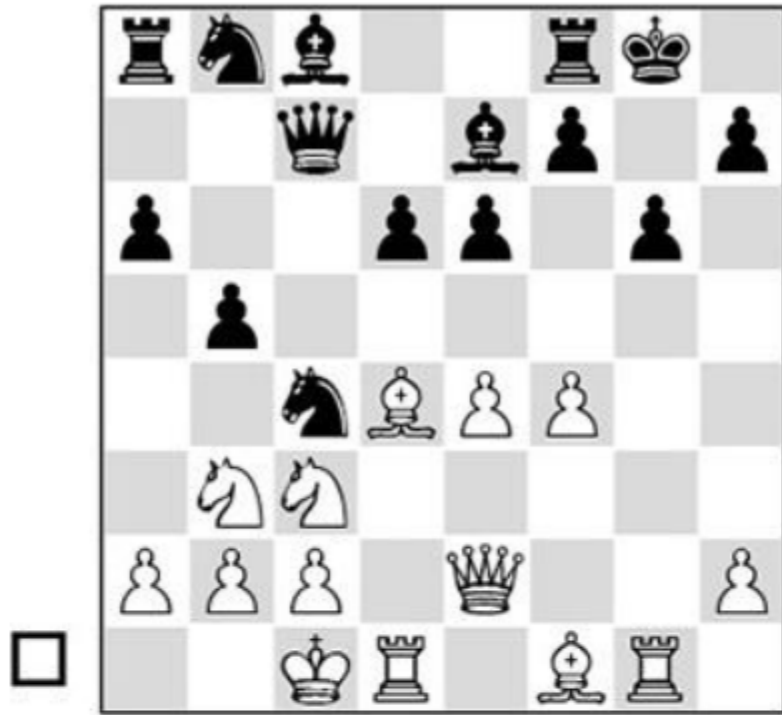
Black's on her last legs, one strong threat being 30. ♖g6.

29... ♗xa4 30. ♗xa4 ♖xa4 31. ♗xg7 ♖d7 32. ♗f6+ 1-0

The conclusion is clear – once she hit her teens, only strong GM's had any business playing sharp Sicilians against JP – and even they better come prepared to the teeth, and ready to sweat!

One GM who felt the wrong end of Judit's sword was former World Championship Challenger Nigel Short. The formidable Englishman had an original positional sensibility with a classical bent, and world-class tactical skills. He gave





16. ♖h5

White has sacked a pawn for a lasting initiative. The computer calls it even, but this is the sort of equality JP lived for! One false step turns that evaluation in a heartbeat.

16... ♗d7 17. ♖h6 ♘f6

The ever chipper engine suggests the much less natural 17... ♗f6 18. ♘xc4 bxc4 19. e5 ♜d8 20. exf6 ♘f8 21. ♖h4 cxb3 22. axb3 with a slight white edge:



analysis diagram

But White has regained her ♘, with a much easier position to play.

18. ♜d3 ♘xd4 19. ♗xd4

Now Short prevents 20. ♗xe6! by following Larsen's dictum, 'one can never get mated with a ♗ on f8!'. But Rybka begs to differ...

19... ♜e8 20. ♜h3 ♗f8



21.e5

A thematic clearance sac intending ♖c3-e4, but the obvious break 21.f5! was simpler: 21...♔e7 22.♙xc4 bxc4 22.♞f3!



analysis diagram

Black is doomed, e.g. 22...f6 23.fxg6 ♖xg6 24.♞xg6+ hxg6+ 25.♔xg6+ ♔g7 26.♔xe8 or 22...♖d7 23.♖c6 ♔f6 24.fxg6.

21...d5 22.♙d3?

JP must be miffed at missing a brilliant win she normally plays in her sleep: 22.♖f5!





analysis diagram

22...f6 (the ♖ is taboo due to 23. ♖c3xd5-f6+) 23. ♙xc4! (23...exf6?? exf5 24. ♖xd5 ♜e1#) 23...bxc4 24. ♖d6 ♜d8 25.f5!+-



analysis diagram

The attack is way too strong after 25...fxe5 26.fxg6 or 25...♜g7 26.♜h4 with targets galore.

Back to the game position after 22. ♙d3:





Surely aware that he has dodged some bullets, Short tries to bail out by sacrificing a piece. Instead he should have bolstered d5 with ... ♖b7 when White's moment had passed, e.g. 22... ♖b7 23.f5? exf5 24. ♖xf5 ♜xe5.
22... ♖xe5? 23.fxe5 ♜xe5 24. ♜h4 ♖b7 25. ♜f3 ♜ac8



Now Judit reorganizes effectively for the final assault. The deeper the computer looks, the more it prefers White's attack over the formidable black phalanx.
26. ♖ce2 ♜c7 27. ♜f6 ♜ee7 28. ♜d2
 The machine isn't in love with this, but it seems adequate.
28... ♜ed7 29.a3 ♜g7





30. ♖f4

The ♜f6 and ♘d4 are held by 31. ♘h5+.

30... ♜c8 31. ♜g5 ♚c7



Clearly the piece sack failed to generate enough play, and a brilliant finish is coming after all:

32. ♘fxe6+! ♘xe6 33. ♜xe6 ♚a5+ 34. b4 ♚xa3 35. ♘f5+ ♚g8



36. ♖e7+ ♜xe7 37. ♜xe7 ♚c3+ 38. ♚e2 d4 39. ♜f4 1-0

JP assailed the king on the opposite wing less often, but this was a function of limited opportunity. During the Fischer era queenside castling was normal for Black in topical Najdorfs; much less so subsequently.

Game 36

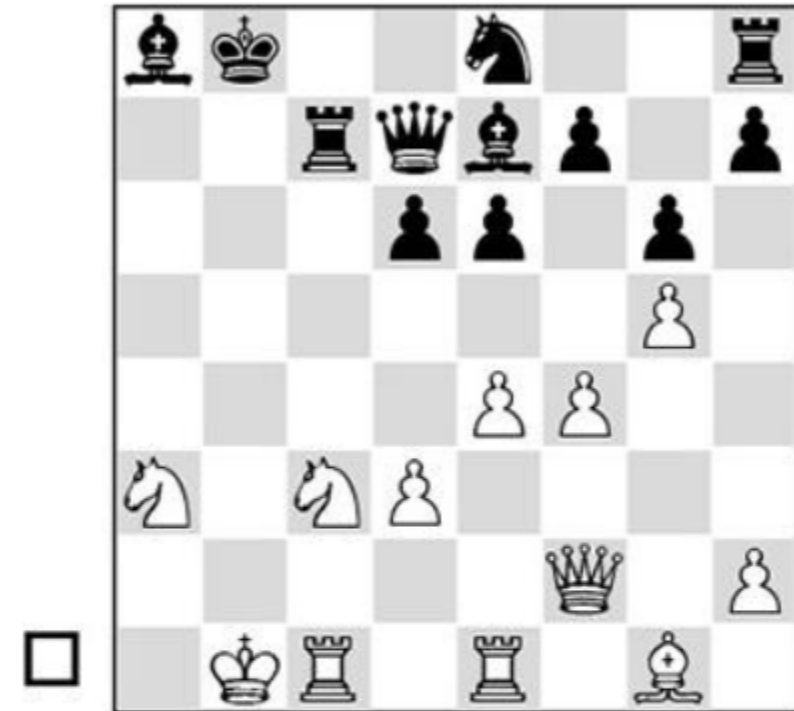
Judit Polgar

2595

Lubomir Ftacnik

2535

Budapest zt 1993 (10)



25. ♜b2+l ♜b7 26. ♖cb5

Walking into a double-pin like this is quite exceptional, and was likely unanticipated by Black.

26... ♜f8

A critical try was 26...d5 27. ♜e5+ ♙d6 28. ♙a7+ ♜xa7 29. ♖xd6 ♜xd6 30. ♜xh8.



analysis diagram



27. ♙a7+! ♜xa7 28. ♖xa7+ ♚xa7 29. ♖b5+

Despite scary appearances, Black has nothing better than 30... ♜xa3 (30... ♚b4+ 31. ♚b2) 31. ♚xe8+ ♚a7 32. ♚b5 ♙b7 33. e5, winning without difficulty. Instead after 26... ♜f8 White shows the point of self-pinning the ♖b5:





Black's king is caught in the crossfire, and 29... ♖a6 crosses the line: 30. ♔a2+ and on 30... ♕xb5, 31. ♖e2 (or 30... ♕b6 31. ♖d4).

29... ♕b8 30. ♖d4+ ♗b7

Or 30... ♔b7 31. ♖c6+ ♕c7 32. ♖a5+.



The geometry couldn't be better, as decisive wood is falling:

31. ♖c6+ ♕c8 32. ♖e5+ ♔c7 33. ♖xc7+ ♖xc7 34. ♖c4 ♗a6 35. ♖b6+ ♕d8 36. ♖c1 d5 37. ♔c2 ♗d6

37... ♖b5 38. ♔c8+

38. ♔c6 ♗xd3+ 39. ♔a1 1-0

When I first saw the next game I couldn't believe my eyes! Down a piece, JP leaves Black's ♗ hanging for 5 whole moves, calmly maneuvering her forces into attack mode. Though deeply flawed, this game perfectly embodies the spirit of Tal, not to

mention Adolf Anderssen and his ilk.

Game 37

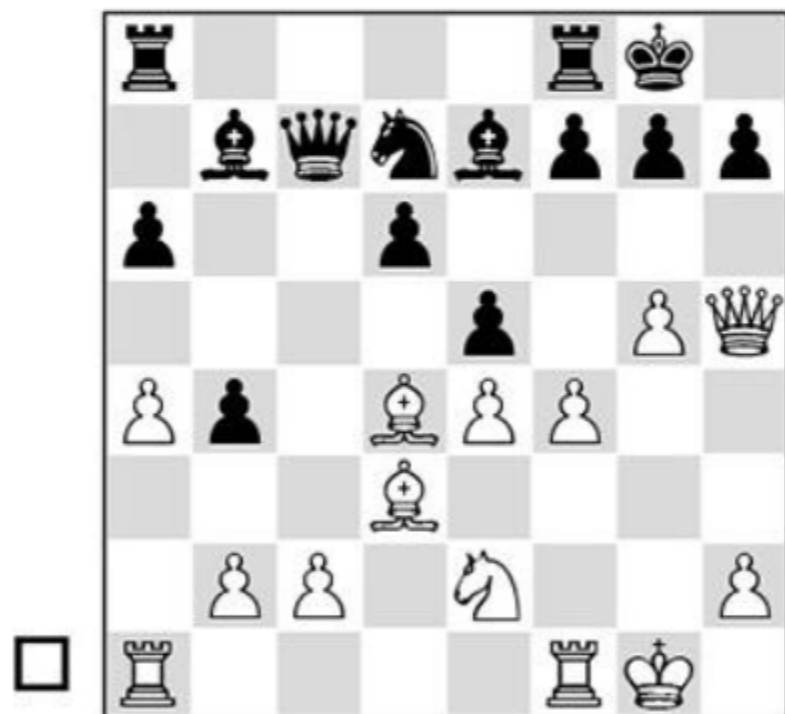
Judit Polgar

2550

Branko Damljanovic

2535

Wijk aan Zee 1990 (2)



The strong and seasoned warrior Branko Damljanovic locked horns with all the greats of the latter 20th century, and covered to none. With his customarily suave preparation he has achieved robust Sicilian equality, and the only 'serious' move is 20. ♖e3, since 20. fxe5? dxe5 21. ♖e3 ♖c5 is a well-known defanging maneuver, with few prospects for White.

The normal strategic course would be 20. ♖e3 exf4 (the unusual riposte 20...f5!, forcing 21. ♗g3! (21. exf5 e4) 21...g6 22. ♔h3 ♖xg5 23. fxg5 f4, also equalizes) 21. ♗xf4 ♗e5, when the computer confirms that 22. ♗h4 h6 23. ♗d4 is equal; White's attack is not so dangerous.

Instead of business as usual, Branko receives a dose of Judit-mania!

20. f5??!

Objectively wrong, but we must give at least one exclamation for sheer courage and artistic merit!

20...exd4 21. f6 ♗e5!

Nobody's fool, Black quickly bolts the door against the sucker punch 21...gxf6?? 22. e5.





analysis diagram

He would have been primed to refute White's premature display after 22.fxe7 ♔xe7
23. ♖xd4 d5!:

With ... ♗xd3 and ... ♖c5/e3 coming, Black is quite winning. But JP had a distinctly different approach:

22. ♖f4! ♜fe8 23. ♜h4 h6 24. ♗g3 ♔d8 25. ♜fi

A remarkable sequence!



Any capture would consume the fuel of White's attack (e.g. 25.gxh6 g6! or 25.fxg7 ♗xg5 26. ♖f5 ♗xh4 27. ♖xh6+ ♔xg7 28. ♖f5+ ♔g8 29. ♔h1 ♚f6), so White simply plays on, as if the missing piece is a minor inconvenience!

25... ♗f8 26. ♖f5 ♚e6 27. ♚f2 d5 28. ♚g2



28... ♖g6??

Poor Damljanovic has done everything right, but the unflappable 13-year-old keeps coming at him. Finally, with time probably short, he makes the proverbial one blunder he can't afford. The processor box reveals both active and passive winning lines:

A) 28...dxe4 29.fxg7 ♗xg7 30. ♖xg7 exd3 31. ♖xe6 ♚d5 32. ♖f4





analysis diagram

32...dxc2 33.gxh6+ ♔xg2+ and Black comes first;
 B) Or 28...♔h8.



analysis diagram

Only a two-toed sloth has the equanimity to play such a move calmly, but the variation-factory finds no kinks in Black's armor.

29.fxg7 ♜xg7 30.♔xg7



Now Black's edifice crumbles first, e.g. 30... ♖b6 31. ♗f5 ♗xh4 32. ♗xh4 hxg5
 33. ♖xg5+ ♜f8 34. a5 ♖e6 (34... ♖d6 35. e5) 35. exd5 ♖d6



analysis diagram

36. ♗h7!+-.
 30... ♜xg7 31. ♖xh6+ ♜g8



32.e5!

White achieves the stock 'Fischer-Benko' blow after all, and Black is sunk due to

32... ♖xh4 33. ♕h7+ with a standard mate in 3 on f7.

32...f5 33.gxf6 1-0

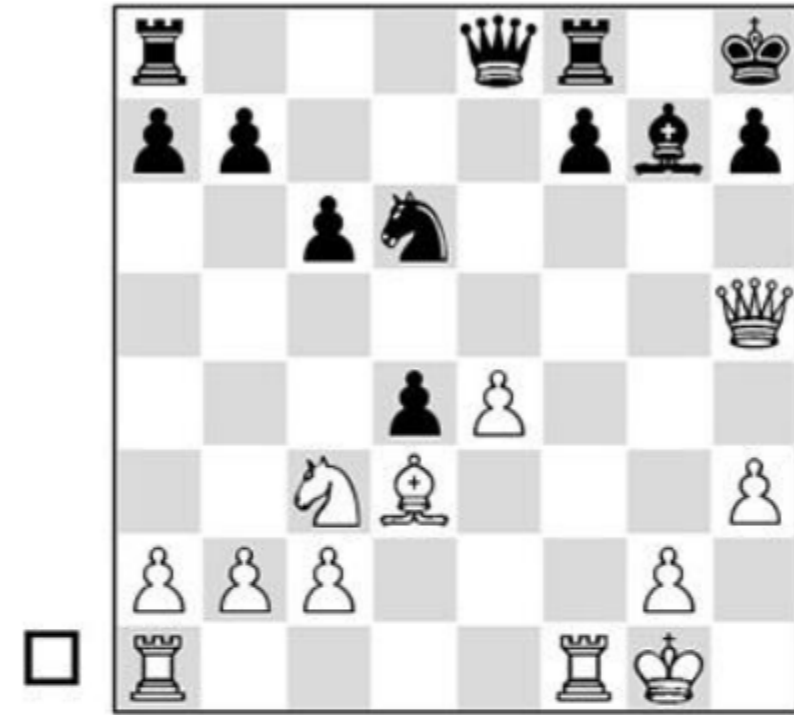
Here is the 'Fischer-Benko' ploy referred to:

Game 38

Robert James Fischer

Pal Benko

New York ch-USA 1963/64 (10)



Benko prepared the defense 19.e5? f5! but had to resign after the fabulous interference sac 19. ♖f6!!, when e4-e5 next mates.

The art of calculation

It seems laughable now, but for most of chess history there was a serious debate about what was more important – tactical skill or ‘grandmaster intuition’. Not to downplay the role of positional sense or technique, computer hegemony pretty much proves that in retrospect all World Champions were elite tacticians. Capablanca, Petrosian and Karpov could not have won the title if they weren’t among the top few calculators in the world; they simply harnessed their tactics to different styles of play. It’s easy to forget now that Karpov was a sharp positional player en route to the championship, with a white repertoire featuring the dashing Keres Attack, one of the most aggressive anti-Sicilian weapons. Capa and Petrosian both produced stellar feats of calculation as part of their preparation, or when the position required it.

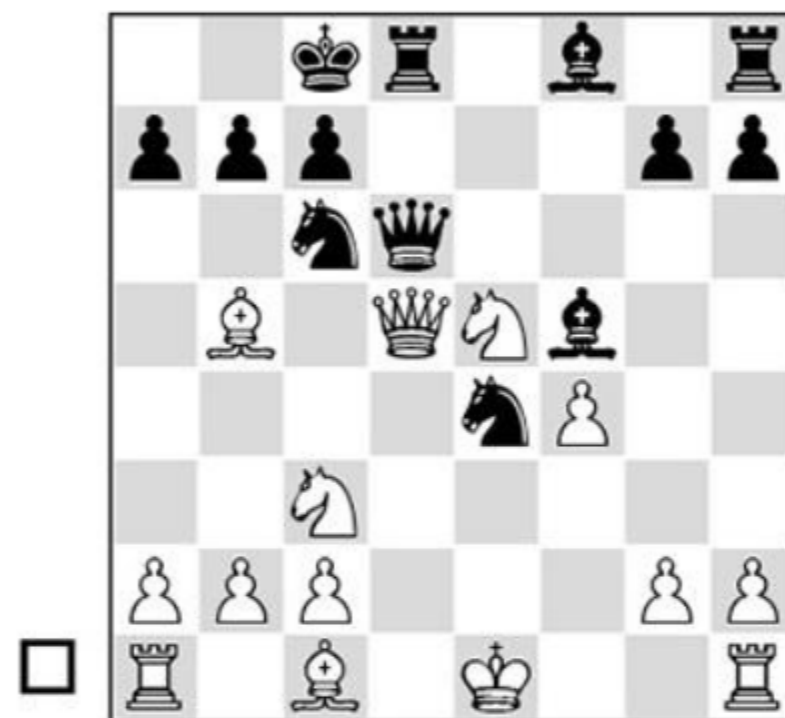
Judit Polgar was a master of the long and complex variation. From the time she emerged as a true prodigy, the chess world was in awe of her calculative abilities. This is why Mikhail Tal predicted that she would someday conquer all. Certainly some of her contemporaries were more well-rounded players, but when it came to raw tactical talent she was in the same class as her greatest rivals, World Champions Kasparov, Anand and Kramnik.

Game 39

Judit Polgar

David Garcia Ilundain

Timisoara Wch U18 1988



Young players are prone to adventure, but playing speculative gambits was not a black player’s best policy against JP:

12. ♖xc6 bxc6

Or 12... ♗xc3 13. ♖xb7+ ♘b8 14. ♗c6+ ♘xb7 15. ♗xd8+.



analysis diagram

Everything hangs but the double check is decisive: 15... ♖c8 16. ♗xf5+, or 15... ♗b6 16. ♗b7+.

13. ♗a5 ♘xc3 14. ♗a6+ ♙b8



15. ♙e3!

More decisive and more fun than 15. ♘xc6+. Now 15... ♗d1+ 16. ♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 17. ♗f2 ♘e4+ 18. ♗f3,





analysis diagram

with mate imminent.

15... ♖b5 16. ♖xc6+ ♔a8 17. ♕xb5 ♜e8



18.0-0 g6 19. ♕a6 1-0

Game 40

Judit Polgar

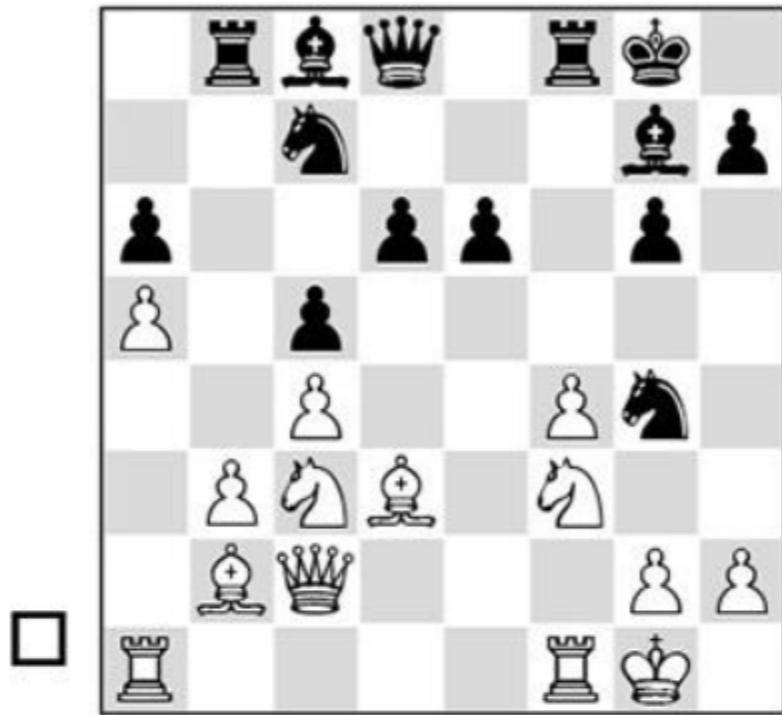
2355

Philippe Kerkhof

2250

Brussels 1987 (8)





19. ♖ae1 ♜xf4 20.h3 ♗e5

If 20... ♗f6 21. ♗e2 wins the exchange. The computer would rather sacrifice it with 20... ♗h6 21. ♙c1 ♜xf3 22. ♜xf3 ♗f5=. Worst of all would be 20... ♗h6 21. ♙c1 ♜f8?: 22. ♙xg6 hxg6 23. ♙xh6 ♙xh6 24. ♚xg6+ ♙g7 25. ♗g5, kaput.

21. ♗xe5 ♙xe5

Rybka wants Black to play 21...dx5, equalizing.



analysis diagram

Really, vulgar machine? What human could play this way, and still look at himself in the mirror next morning?





22. ♖xf4

22. ♙xg6 first was also good, so that on 22... ♚h4 23. ♜e2 ♖xf1+ 24. ♖xf1 ♙xb2

25. ♙f7+ is clearly better.

22... ♙xf4 23. ♙xg6 ♚h4 24. ♖f1 ♙e3+

Black can't resist the temptation to threaten mate; 24...e5 25. ♜e2 ♜e6 26. ♙f5 was mandatory, but still tough for Black.

25. ♚h1 ♙b7



Black gets to sniff 26... ♚xh3# before resigning!

26. ♙f7+ ♚g7

Clearly hopeless is 26... ♚f8 27. ♙xe6+ and 28. ♙d5.

27. ♜d5+ e5 28. ♚f5 ♜xd5 29. cxd5 ♙c8





30. ♖xe5+ dxе5 31. ♔xe5+ 1-0

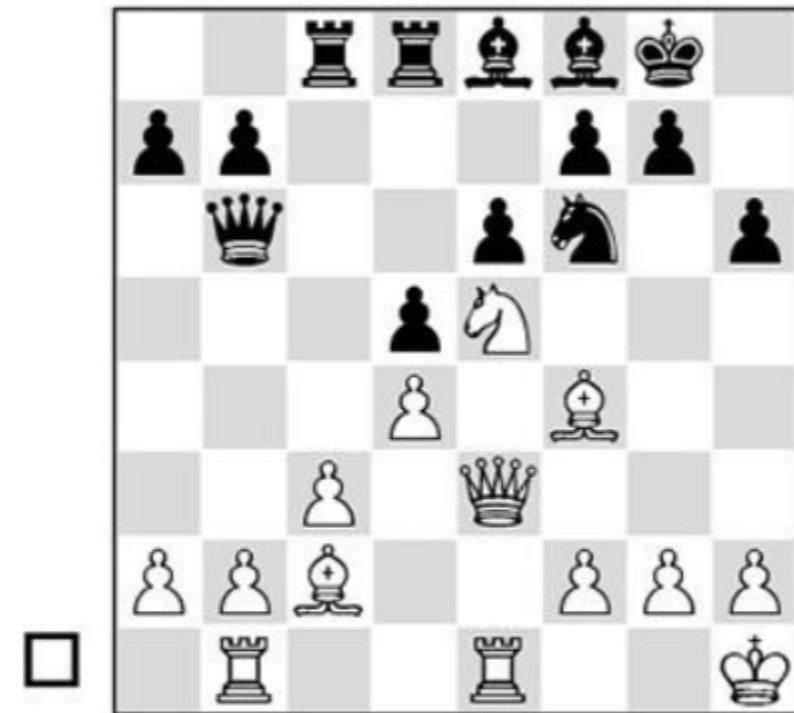
Fischer's favorite Exchange Variation is the natural choice for young attackers facing the Caro-Kann. The strategy is clear and attractive – attack the king! Later Judit switched to the edgier Panov Variation. As a Caro player myself, I endorse the conventional wisdom: the Panov sets Black the most difficult problems (though JP later disavowed it as overanalyzed!).

In the following diagram, Black has played too casually and handed White the initiative, but his solid fortress is tough to crack.

Game 41
Judit Polgar

2560

Daniel Hausrath
Timisoara Wch U18 1988



20.g4 ♖d6?!

The bishop is needed on f8 for defense. Black should probably have taken the bull by the horns and tried the offbeat defensive shot 20...g5!? 21. ♖g3 ♖e4!:



analysis diagram

White can't take twice due to ...f7-f6 and ...♘c6, so Black exchanges minor pieces and boots White's knight with ...f7-f6, achieving comfortable play.

21. ♖g1 ♘xe5 22. ♘xe5 ♖d7 23. ♘f4 f6?

On principle one should put off such committal defensive pawn moves, which try to bolster kingside squares but usually end up weakening them. Flexible defense with 23... ♖f8 was indicated: 24.h4! (the engine also likes 24.g5 h5! 25. ♘d1 g6, but why lock the kingside?) 24... ♖a6 25.h5 and only now 25...f6, with a small white

edge.



24. ♘xh6!

Judith needs no pretense to pounce on such an opening, but the idea is also positionally correct, focusing all the play on the sector where White has a huge advantage. 24.g5!? hxg5 25. ♘xg5 ± was also promising.

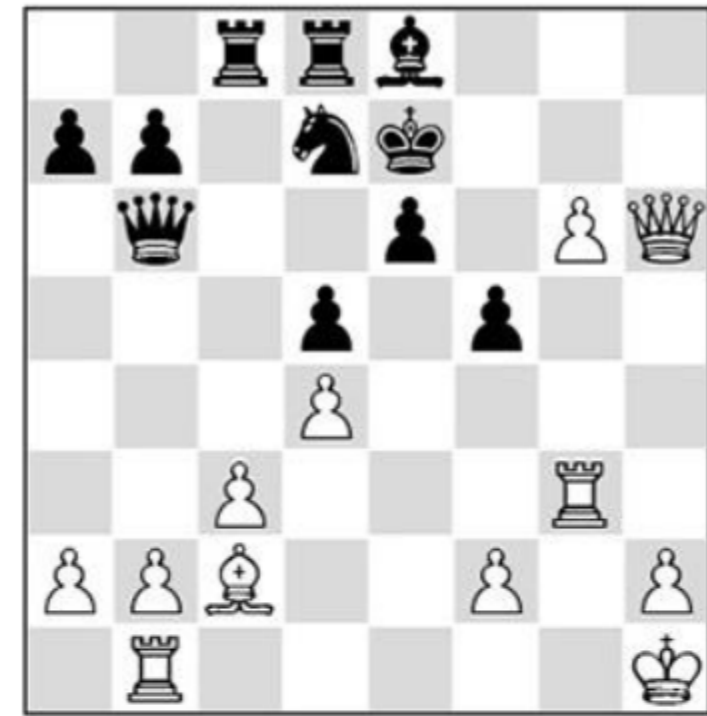
24...e5

Or 24...gxh6 25. ♖xh6 ♖f7 26.g5 ♖e7





analysis diagram



analysis diagram

27. ♖g3! – a hard quiet move to foresee.

- A) It pays to leave the ♔ on h6 for now, so that if 27...fxg5, 28. ♕g5+ ♖d6 29. ♕f4+ ♖c6? 30. ♗a4+;
- B) White has a winning attack after 27... ♖d6 28.gxf6 ♖c7 29. ♖g7+-;
- C) Or 27...f5 28.g6.

Black is hogtied! As good as anything is 28... ♖c6 29. ♗xf5! exf5 30. ♖e1+ ♖e6 31. ♖xe6+ ♕e6 32. ♖e3,





analysis diagram

but even in the ending Black's hopeless tangle of wood offers no resistance.

25.g5



25...g6

Black isn't up to the monumental defensive task. The far from obvious 25...f5! was the only fighting chance, so that 26. ♖xf5 ♜g6! stops the bleeding on the kingside. No doubt Judit would have pressed the attack instead: 26.g6! gxh6 27. ♚xh6 ♜f8 28.dxe5 ♝c7 29. ♞g5





analysis diagram

29... ♖g7 (29... ♗xg6 30. ♖bg1 ♖g7 31. ♖xf5 ends up transposing) 30. ♖xf5! ♗xg6
 (the ♔ and ♖ can't take due to ♖xf8+, and on 30... ♗xg6 31. ♖f6; but now if
 30. ♖f6? ♗xc2! threatens mate: 31... ♗e4+xf3!) 31. ♖g1 ♔e6 32. ♖f3 ♖dd7



analysis diagram

Remarkably these moves were more or less forced, and White now continues with
 33. ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 34. ♖xg6 ♔xe5 35. ♖e6! ♔g5 (otherwise the attack is still too
 strong).





analysis diagram

It seems for all the world that threatening mate saves Black, but one marvelous arrow remains in White's quiver: 36. ♖g6!!, forcing instant resignation!

26. gxf6 ♔xf6 27. ♖g5



27...exd4 28. ♖xf6 dxe3 29. ♖xd8 exf2 30. ♖g2 ♖xd8 31. ♖xg6 ♖xg6 32. ♖xg6+ ♔h7 33. ♖g2 1-0

It's hard to exaggerate 12-year-old JP's achievement in the following game. First she outprepares a seasoned IM in a hard-to-meet positional variation. When he mixes it up, she flatly outcalculates him:

Game 42

Robert Rowley



Judit Polgar

2400

2320

Hastings 1988/89

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘c6 5.♘c3 ♚c7 6.g3 ♘f6 7.♙g2 d6 8.o-o
♙d7 9.♖e1 ♙e7 10.♘db5

This approach holds little promise, and the engine suggests 10.♘cb5!?, intending
c2-c4.

10...♚b8 11.a4 o-o 12.♙f4 ♘e5 13.♙g5 a6 14.♙xf6 ♙xf6 15.♘xd6 ♖d8 16.f4
♙c6! 17.♘d5



IM Rowley tries to justify his unwarranted activity. Instead he unknowingly boots
up the 'engine in pigtails'!

17...♖xd6 18.fxe5 ♙xe5 19.♘e7+ ♚f8 20.♘xc6 bxc6 21.♚h5





Seeking complications in a dubious position is the right approach, after all...

21... ♖xb2 22. ♖xh7 ♖b6+ 23. ♔h1 ♜xa1



24.e5

A necessary intermezzo, attacking c6, so White's queen can escape after a future ... ♜d8.

24... ♜xe5 25. ♖h8+ ♔e7 26. ♖xa8





26... ♖xg3!?

This excellent shot was foreseen long ago, and we applaud JP's vision. Still, as sophisticated denizens of the 21st century, we must kowtow to the computer preference 26...f5 ♣.

27.hxg3 ♜d8 28.a5 ♚f2 29.♚b7+ ♔f6 30.♚b2+ ♔g6



31. ♖e4+?

Forced was the far from obvious 31. ♜e4! ♚xg3 (31... ♜h8+ 32. ♜h4) 32. ♚b1!. But White has been under siege since the opening, and Judit made a living outplaying exhausted, time-depleted opponents in such situations.

31...f5 32. ♖xf5+ exf5 33. ♜e6+ ♔h7 34. ♚c1 ♜d2 0-1

JP's success against the attacking genius Alexei Shirov is another testament to her tactical mettle. He seems to be equalizing here, but she has seen much deeper...

Game 43

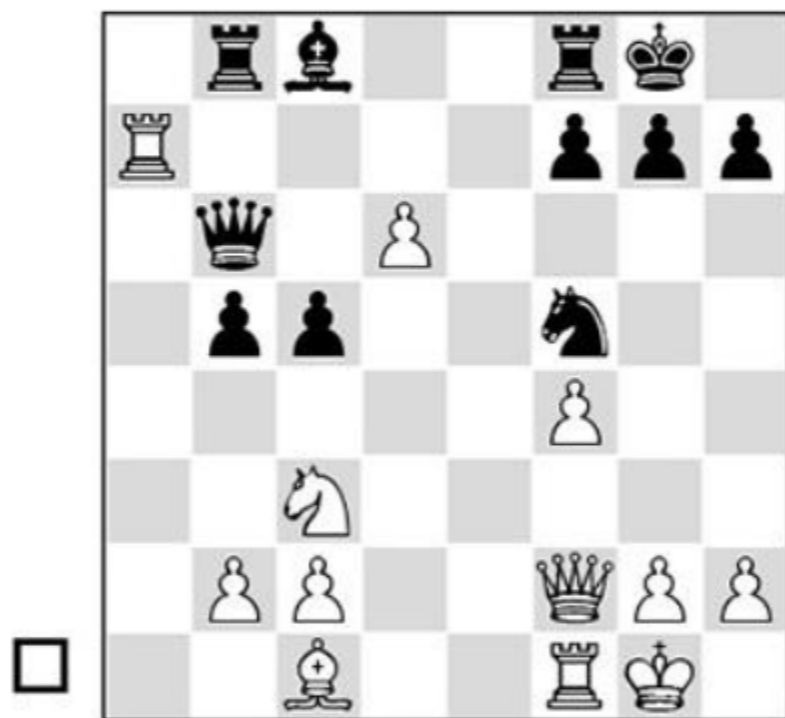
Judit Polgar

2670

Alexei Shirov

2700

Tilburg 1997 (9)



The marooned d-pawn is rescued by a remarkable sequence:

21. ♖c7 ♗d4 22. f5!



A star idea of surprising power. Black can take a pawn three different ways, and lose in every case:

A) 22... ♙xf5 23. ♙f4 (the threat is ♗c3-d5-e7+ as in the following line; and if 23... ♙e6, 24. ♗e4) 23... ♙xc2 24. ♗d5 ♚a5 25. ♙e5!





analysis diagram

With White's concentration of kingside power and the ♖c2 loose, it's no surprise Black is busted; White threatens the stock mate 26. ♖e7+ ♘h8 27. ♙xg7+ ♘xg7 28. ♚f6#. If 25... ♙g6, White wins prosaically with 26.b4, or spectacularly with 26. ♖e7+ ♘h8 27. ♙xg7+ ♘xg7 28. ♚f6+ ♘h6



analysis diagram

29. ♖g8+! ♜xg8 30. ♚f4+ ♘g7 (30... ♘h5 31.g4+ ♘h4 32. ♚h6+ ♘xg4 33. ♜f4#) 31. ♜f7+ ♙xf7 32. ♚f6+ ♘f8 33. ♚xf7#;
 B) 22... ♖xf5 23. ♚xc5 ♚xc5+ 24. ♜xc5 ♖xd6 25. ♙f4 is crushing:





analysis diagram

25... ♖d8 (25... ♖b6 26. ♗d5) 26. ♖d1 ♖b6 27. ♗e4+-;

C) Or finally 22... ♔xd6 23. ♗f4,



analysis diagram

when 24. ♖xc5 will win the ♗d4 or the ♖b8, since 23... ♔b6/f6 is smushed by 24. ♗d5.

So Shirov pinned his hopes on

22...b4





23.f6l

The monster button rolls on!

23...g6

- A) 23...bxc3 24.fxg7 ♔xg7 25. ♖xf7+ is mate;
- B) 23...♖xd6 still loses to 24. ♔f4 and 25. ♖xc5;
- C) And other moves like 23... ♗e6 24.fxg7 ♗xg7 25. ♖g3 are hopeless.

So Black lets JP demonstrate the main line.

24. ♗d5 ♖xd6 25. ♗e7+ ♔h8



26. ♔h6

Black resigned in view of 26... ♖xc7 27. ♔g7# or 26... ♖g8 27. ♔g7+ ♖xg7 28.fxg7+ ♔xg7 29. ♖xf7+.

Game 44

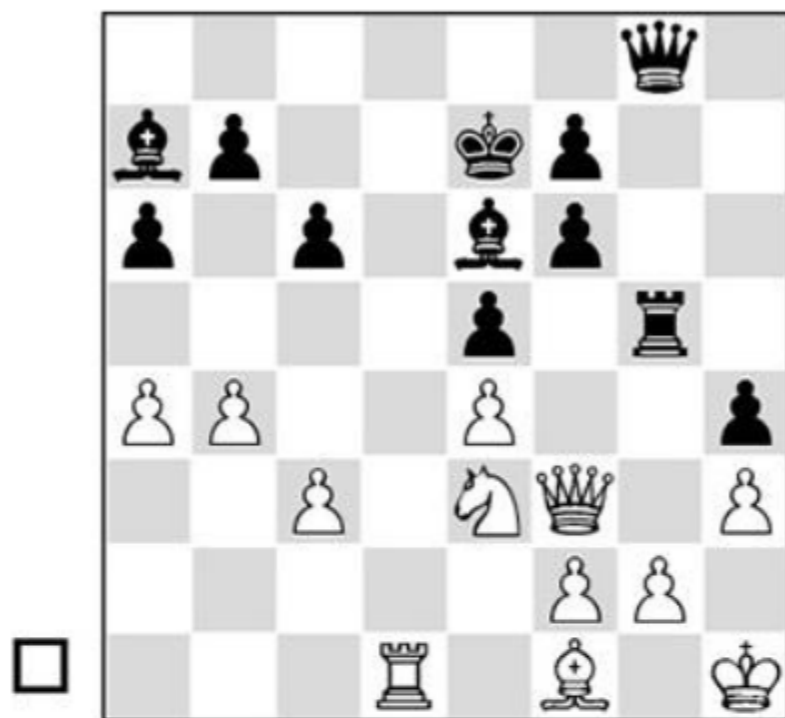
Judit Polgar

2656

Normunds Miezis

2518





Here's a marvelous display of rapid calculation and geometry; computer embellishments somehow only increase the merriment:

24. ♖d5+!

A visionary sacrifice. The computer intrudes only to show a miracle defense for Black, which he had almost zero chance of finding in rapid. The less pretty but impressive improvement was 24. ♘c4! ♘xe3 (if 24... ♘xc4 25. ♖xc4, the ♖ reaches f5 with crushing effect, via d6 or e3) 25. ♗xe3!



analysis diagram

A) Now 25... ♘xc4 26. ♗c5+ ♖e8 27. ♗d6! decides;

B) While White's ♖ safety advantage is too much after 25... ♗c8 26. ♘xe6 fxe6 27. f4 ±, or in this line 26... ♗xe6 27. ♗b6 ♗c8 28. ♗c5+ ♖e8 29. ♗d6 ♖g6 30. a5.



analysis diagram

Black is in 'semi-zugzwang'; he must meekly shuttle the ♖ from h6 to g6. In this sort of position, the famous 'Capablanca technique' dances circles around computer byte-crunching. Stick your king on a7, ♔ on b8, deduce how to sidestep a few obstacles to getting there; and you can rest your engine.

24...cxd5 25.exd5



25...♔c8

Now it's all fire and brimstone:

- A) Neither 25...♗c8 26.d6+ ♔e8 27.♔xf6+-;
- B) Nor 25...♗f5 26.d6+ ♔f8 27.d7 ± improve;
- C) Leave it to the machine to uncork the kind of monster resource which makes attackers have to think twice these days: 25...e4!! 26.♔xe4 ♔d8 27.c4 ♔f8! 28.♔xh4 ♗d7 29.a5 ±



analysis diagram

Granted, Judit would still have enjoyed herself here, but objectively Black is still in the ballgame.

26.dxe6 fxe6 27.♔e4!



Now Black's king dances on hot coals.

27...f5 28.♔xh4 ♔g8 29.b5 axb5 30.♙xb5 ♔f6 31.♖d7 e4 32.♖xb7 ♙c5 33.♖c7 ♙f8





34.f4!

A signature JP dagger crowns a beautiful attack.

34...exf3 35. ♖d4+ ♔g6

35...e5 36. ♖d8+ ♔g6 37. ♙e8+ ♔h6 38. ♖f6+

36. ♙e8+ 1-0



Last chapter showed the folly of challenging JP in razor-sharp Sicilians, like the Svesnikov. JP had a telling pearl of advice for those who dare such variations – avoid time pressure, since there is no margin of error!

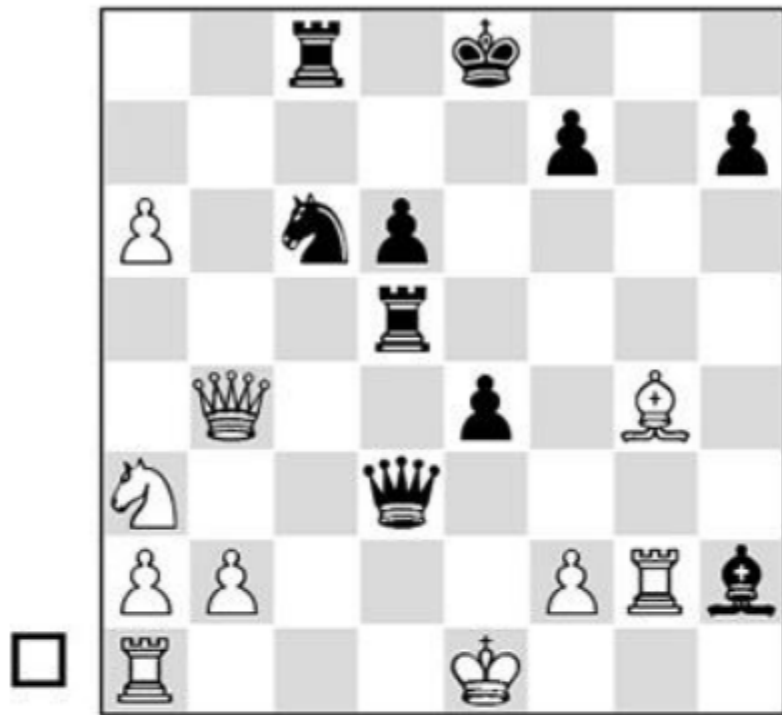
Game 45

Judit Polgar

2715

Joel Lautier

2666



The strong positional GM Joel Lautier seems a fish out of water in this *tabiya*. The attempt to surprise Judit backfired after

31. ♖b7

31. ♖c4 is also strong, but JP approaches the pitched battle like a mathematical proof.

31... ♗d2+ 32. ♔f1 ♗d3+ 33. ♘e2 ♗h3 34. ♖c1 ♖g5



35. ♘g4!

A forced, but winning, interference shot.

35... ♗d3+ 36. ♔e1 e3



37. ♔ d7+!

There are other ways, but hats off to a crisp piece of human calculation.

37... ♕ e7 38. ♔ f5+ 1-0

If instead 37... ♕ f8 38. ♖xc8+ ♕ e7 (38... ♕ g7 39. ♗xg5+) 39. ♖e8+ ♕ f6 40. ♗d1,



analysis diagram

the jig is up: 40...exf2+ 41. ♗xf2+ with check.

Here the master of the long variation strikes again, with a sharp counterpunching line:

Game 46

Joris Brenninkmeijer



21... ♔d5 22. ♗g5 ♜c6 23. ♜d1 ♕xe5 24. ♜xc4



In long forcing variations each capture alters the character of the position. Judit relished the creative opportunities presented by such dynamic flux.

24... ♗xg5 25. ♗xg5

25. ♜xc6? ♗xe3 26. ♜xe6 ♗xf2+



25...h5!

This antipositional poke is the only way to upset the apple cart.

26. ♖e4 ♜xb2



27.f4??

White is focused on his kingside play, and forgets the bishop defends d2.

A) The position is quite tricky, and 27.f3 doesn't quite equalize either, e.g. 27... ♖c5 28. ♜g6 e5!, meeting 29. ♜xh5 with 29... ♖d3!



analysis diagram

Philidor's mate after 30. ♖xc6 (or 30. ♖h4 ♔b6+) 30... ♕d4+! 31. ♔h1 ♕f2+ 32. ♕g1 ♕h3+, etc., spells the loss of the ♖c4;

B) Due to these perils there was only one equalizer: 27. ♖f1!



analysis diagram

This is a more subtle kind of 'computer move': tactically correct, even if its apparent passivity offends our sensibilities. If 27... ♕c5 28. ♕g6 and White's play against the loose kingside holds the balance: 28... ♕e2 29. ♔h6 ♕e5 (29... ♖f7 30. ♖f4 ♖cc7 31. ♖xf7 ♖xf7 32. ♔e3 ♖d7 33.g4=) 30. ♔xg7 ♕xg7 31. ♕xh5 ♖f5





analysis diagram

32. ♔e8+ ♖f8 33. ♔h5=

Instead White was just lost after

27... ♗d2



28. ♖xd2 ♔xd2 29. ♖xc6 ♔d1+ 30. ♗f2 bxc6 31. ♔xe6+ ♔h8 32. h3 ♖b8 33. ♔xc6
 ♔d3



White has no compensation, so 34.a4 ♖b2+ 35.♔g1 ♜e2 only prolongs his suffering.

34.♞f3 ♜b2+ 35.♚g3 ♜b3 36.♞xd3 ♜xd3+ 37.♚h4 ♜xa3 o-1

Game 47

Judit Polgar

Manuel Rayo Gutierrez

San Sebastian 1991 (7)

2540

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♘d7 5.♘f3 ♘gf6 6.♙g5 ♙e7 7.♘xf6+ ♘xf6
8.♙d3 o-o 9.♞e2 c5 10.dxc5 ♞a5+ 11.c3 ♞xc5 12.o-o-o ♜d8?!

White's nice dynamic opening position induces Black to fall for a standard tactical motif. He must tread more carefully in such positions due to similar themes against h7 – 12...b6?? 13.♙xf6 ♙xf6 14.♞e4+-.



13.♙xf6 She could have won a pawn cleanly with 13.♙xh7+ ♘xh7 14.♞xd8+ ♙xd8
15.♙xd8 ♙d7 16.♙h4 ♙c6 ±, but the post-materialist, modern computer prefers



Judit's choice.

13... ♖xf6 Black should probably have mixed it up with 13...gxf6!? when 14. ♙xh7+ ♚xh7 15. ♜xd8 ♙xd8 16. ♚d3+ ♜g7 17. ♚xd8 ♜xf2 only equalizes. Instead the engine trots out a move very much in JP's style: 14.g4!



analysis diagram

Black's chance to make a coherent structure with ...f6-f5 is foreclosed, while attacking chances with ♜e4 or a timely g4-g5 give White a rosey outlook. Now her

domination is more straightforward:

14. ♙xh7+ ♚xh7 15. ♜xd8 ♙xd8 16. ♚d3+



16... ♜f5

Forced. Black perishes quickly after 16...g6 17. ♚xd8 ♜xf2 18. ♜f8 ♜e3+ 19. ♚b1 ♜f4





analysis diagram

20.h4! f6 21. ♖g5+!

17. ♖xd8 b5 18. ♖e7

Technically sound, but Judit must have regretted avoiding a difficult but beautiful attacking line: 18. ♖g5+ ♖g6 19.h4 ♙b7 20. ♖e7 ♙xg2 21.h5+ ♖h6 22. ♖xf7+ ♖h7 23. ♜h4! ♖xf2 24. ♖g5+ ♖h8 (24... ♖h6 25. ♖xe6+ ♖xg5 26. ♜g4+) 25.h6!



analysis diagram

25... ♖e3+ 26. ♖c2 ♖e2+ 27. ♖b3 ♙d5+ 28. ♖a3 b4+ 29. ♜xb4 ♖a6+ 30. ♜a4+-

18... ♖f4+

The engine recommends 18...f6 ± , but from a human standpoint White simply consolidates her extra pawn. Computers often evaluate pawn-down positions as slightly worse, when a practical player may still correctly feel that his odds of holding against a better player are close to nil.





19. ♖d2 a5 20.g3 ♘f5

Pawn grabbing is too dangerous: 20... ♙xf2 21. ♖f1 ♘xh2 22. ♙xf7



analysis diagram

Threats such as ♙f3 or ♖e4 must be winning.

21. ♖d1 b4 22. ♙h4+ ♙g8 23. ♙e4 ♙xe4 24. ♖xe4 ♙b7





Reaching this ending is little solace, and JP converts smoothly.

25. ♖d6 ♜d5 26. c4 ♝a6 27. cxd5 ♞xd6 28. dxe6 ♞xe6 29. ♞d5 ♞e1+ 30. ♚d2 ♞f1
 31. ♚e2 ♞b1 32. b3 ♞b2+ 33. ♞d2 ♞b1 34. ♚d3 ♞e1 35. ♚c4 ♞e5 36. f4 ♞e4+
 37. ♚b5 1-0

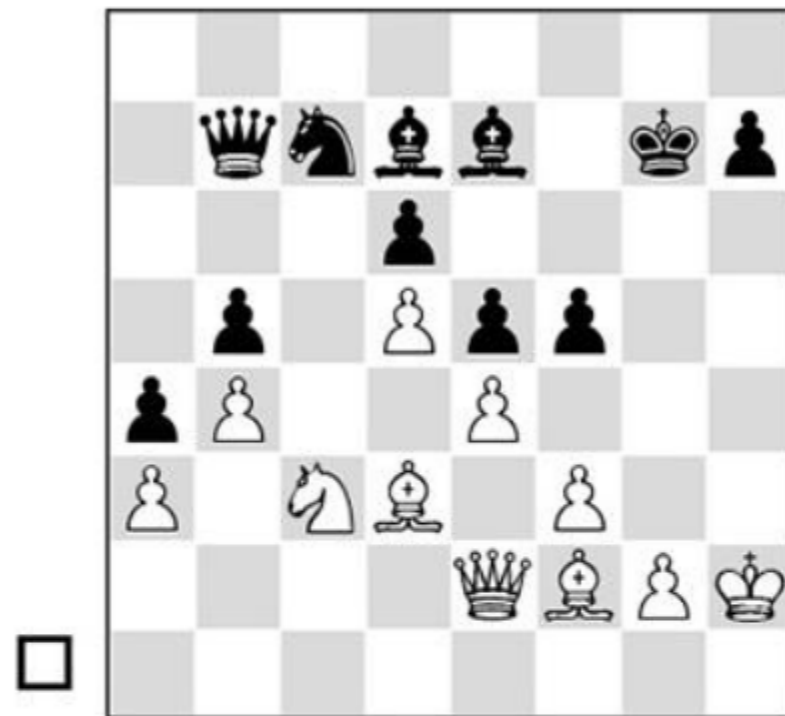
Game 48

Judit Polgar

Jaan Eslon

2540

San Sebastian 1991 (8)



A long variation refutes Black's urgent bid for play:

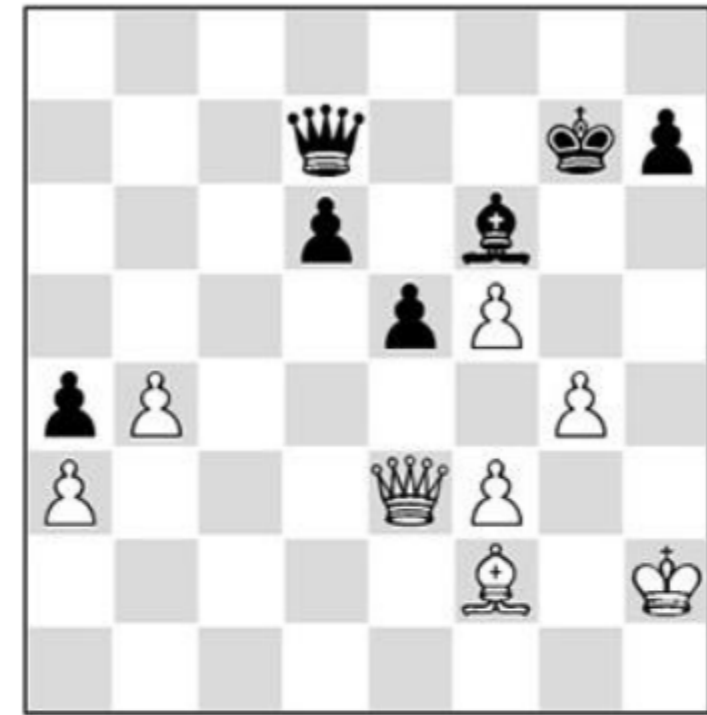
43. exf5! ♜xd5 44. ♚e4 ♜c6



45. ♖xb5! ♗xc3 46. ♕xc6 ♕xb5 47. ♕xc3 ♕d7

If 47... ♕e2, 48. ♕c7 is strong – 48... ♖f7 49.f6!

48.g4 ♖f6 49. ♕e3



Passers on both wings assure victory.

49...h6 50. ♕a7 ♕xa7 51. ♖xa7 d5

Pushing the panic button with 51...e4 52.b5 was justified but useless.

52.b5 ♖e7 53. ♖b8 ♕f6 54.b6 ♖c5 55.b7 ♖d4 56. ♖c7 e4 1-0

Here JP employs her preferred mode of defense, spirited tactical counterplay:

Game 49

Stefan Kindermann



28... ♖4e3 29. ♖xh7

White is all in on the kingside; he can't turn back. If 29. ♖f3, 29... ♖xd5 30. ♖e4 (30. ♖xh7 ♙xf6) 30... ♗e6+.

29... ♙xf6 30. ♖e4 ♗xd5



In American parlance, White is 'a day late and a dollar short'. Still, steely calculation is required to stem White's last-ditch offensive.

31. ♖xf6 ♖xe4 32. ♖h8+ ♗g7



Now White resigned after

33. ♖xf7+ ♔xf7 34. ♖h7+ ♔f6

He might have hoped for salvation in the amusing line 34. ♖f3+ (34. ♖h7+ ♔f6)

34... ♔g7 35. ♖xc8.



analysis diagram

But all is for naught: 35... ♖f4! 36. ♖xd5 ♖f1#

33... ♔xf6 0-1

The French Defense has confounded many 1.e4 players (even Fischer!), but JP handled it with a flair. Attacking closed positions requires a gradual buildup, and though preferring open lines, she could also maneuver quite skillfully:

Game 50



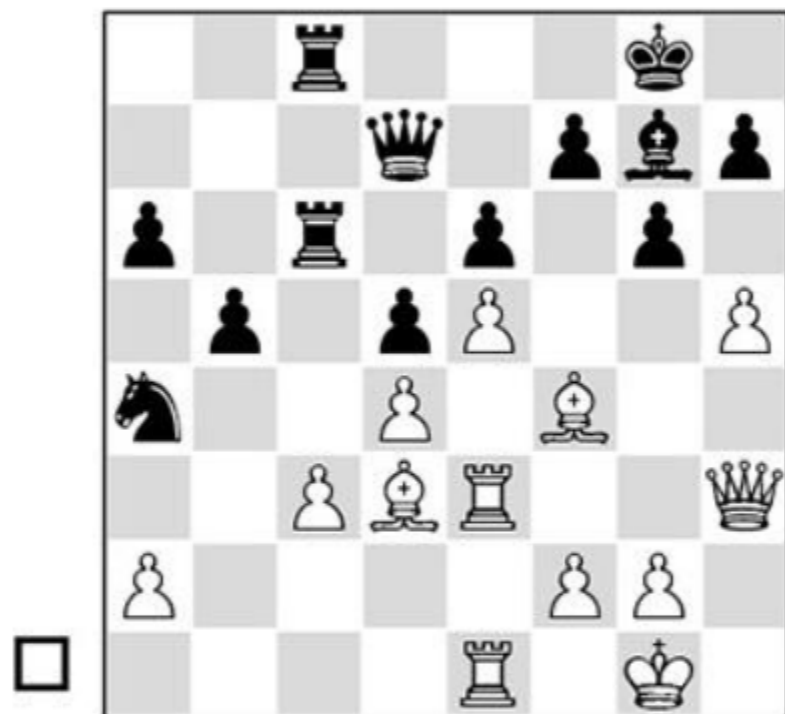
Judit Polgar

2555

Andrew Muir

2210

Haifa Ech tt 1989 (9)



27. ♖h4 ♜xc3 28. ♜h3 ♝f8

A strong GM would sack the exchange in a flash: 28... ♜xd3! with reasonable chances. The ♝d3 is more strategically important than Black's rook, as soon

becomes evident.

29. ♜ee3! ♜8c7 30. hxg6 fxg6 31. ♝xg6

Landing the first volley.



31... ♜xe3 32. ♝xe3 ♜c3 33. ♖f6





Black succumbed here with

33... ♖g7? 34. ♜xh7+ ♔h8 35. ♜f5+ 1-0

If 33... ♜c8, simplest is 34. ♜h4 ♜b7 (34...hxg6 35. ♜h8+ ♔f7 36. ♞f3+) 35. ♜d3 (threatening 36. ♞g3+ ♞g7 37. ♜xh7+ or 36. ♜g4+xe6) 35... ♞g7 36. ♗g5 ♗e4 37. ♜f6 ♞g6 38.f3.

Early in her career, Judit championed a novel and risky approach to the black side of the Benko Gambit. The Benko is the rarest of birds – a black gambit which is positionally based. Black’s compensation resides in the open a- and b-files, in

conjunction with a strong ♜g7; but equally vital is the wonderfully self-contained pawn phalanx h7-g6-f7-e7-d6-c5, which sets Black up for great endgames if he can maintain the queenside pressure.

Pal Benko recognized the pawn break ...e7-e6 (or, more thematically, ...f7-f5) as a secondary theme to undermine White’s center. But since this forfeits Black’s pristine structure, it must be used judiciously.

Judit followed a different course, turning the Benko into a tactical slugfest, with hand-to-hand central combat! This worked alright for awhile; these positions were uncharted territory, full of early complications. Once she achieved the status of a world-class GM, JP needed a more reliable weapon to meet the formidable challenge of playing to win against 1.d4. She then switched to the time-tested favorite of attacking players from Bronstein, to Fischer and later Nakamura – the King’s Indian Defense. Here’s a successful example of her early forays with the Benko:

Game 51

Spyridon Skembris

2470

Judit Polgar

2550

Dortmund 1990 (7)

1.d4 ♗f6 2. ♗f3 g6 3.c4 c5 4.d5 b5 5. ♜c2 ♜g7 6.e4 d6 7.h3 o-o 8.cxb5 e6 9.dxe6

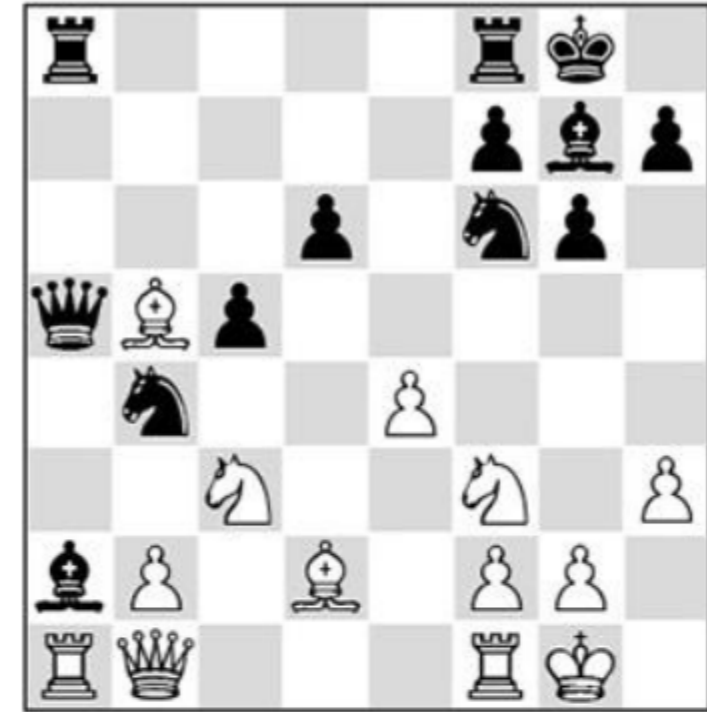


♙xe6 10. ♘g5 a6 11. ♖c3 ♚a5 12. ♜d2 axb5 13. ♜xb5 ♖a6



The engine suggests 14.a4 with a slight edge.

14. ♖a4 ♗b4 15. ♚b1 ♜xa2



A seldom-seen snip!

16. ♚d1?

GMs are accustomed to controlling the action. Time and again, Judit's chaotic play induced inaccuracies, if not outright blunders.

A) Evidently White could preserve equality with 16. ♖xa2 ♚xb5 17. ♖xb4 ♜xa1 18. ♚xa1 cxb4 19. ♜e1 ♜e8 20. ♚b1 ♚b7





analysis diagram

21. e5=;

B) More imbalanced but also OK was 16. ♖e1 ♘c2 17. ♖e2 ♘xa1 18. ♜xa1 ♚b6
19. ♜xa2 ♜xa2 20. ♘xa2 ♘xe4



analysis diagram

21. ♘c3 ♘xd2 22. ♘xd2 ♜a8 with rough equality.

Now came 16... ♘xe4!





White is flailing now, since 17. ♖xe4 ♜xb5 18. ♖xd6? ♜c6 hits d6 and b2.

17. ♖c4 ♖xc3 18. ♖xc3

If 18.bxc3, simply 18...♜b6, breaking the pin, is good.

18...♜d8



Typical JP sorcery – the smoke has cleared with Black simply a pawn up.

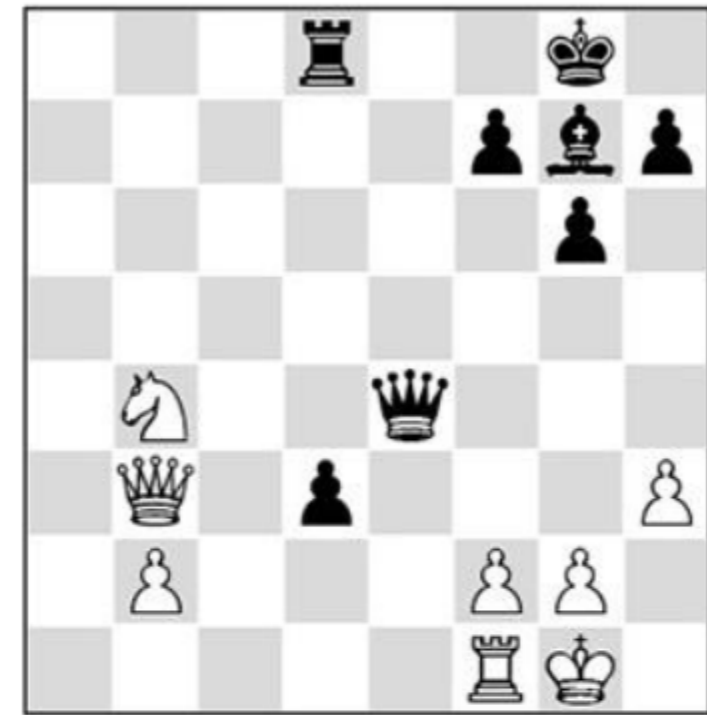
19. ♖d2 ♖xc4 20. ♜xa8 ♜xa8 21. ♖xc4 d5 22. ♖e3 ♜d8 23. ♖xb4 cxb4 24. ♜b3





24...d4 25. ♖c4

Or 25. ♖c2 d3! 26. ♖xb4 ♕e4!,



analysis diagram

threatening 27... ♖b8, and Black's passer is too strong after 27. ♖a2 d2. Thus the extra pawn lives, and JP's technique is fine, despite one small slip.

25... ♕b7 26. ♖e1 ♗f6

26...d3! 27. ♖d1 ♕e7 28. ♖xd3 ♕e1+ 29. ♖h2 ♖xd3 30. ♕xd3 ♗e5+ was quicker.

27. ♕d3 h5 28. ♖e2 ♕b5 29. b3 ♖g7 30. ♖a2 ♖e8 31. ♕d2 ♖e6 32. ♖a5 ♕e8

33. ♕xb4 ♖e1+ 34. ♖h2 ♕e4 35. ♕d6 h4 36. ♖a7 ♗g5 0-1



We mentioned in the Introduction that in her struggle to return to championship form, Polgar lost a hard-fought Candidates match to Evgeny Bareev, an elite GM who she had previously dominated. The score was 2-1 with several draws, but the win shows her fighting spirit undiminished.

Game 52

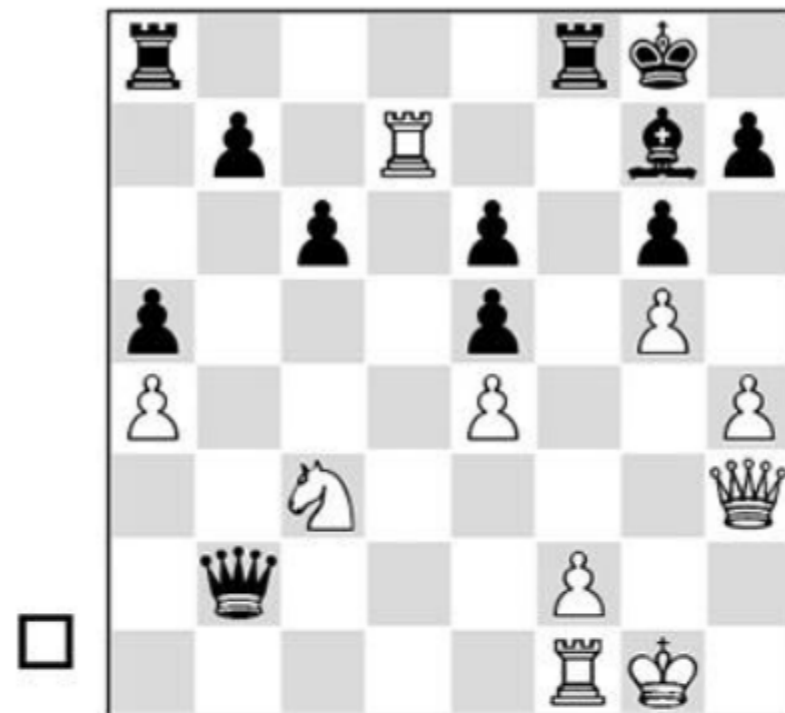
Judit Polgar

2727

Evgeny Bareev

2643

Elista ct m 2007 (5)

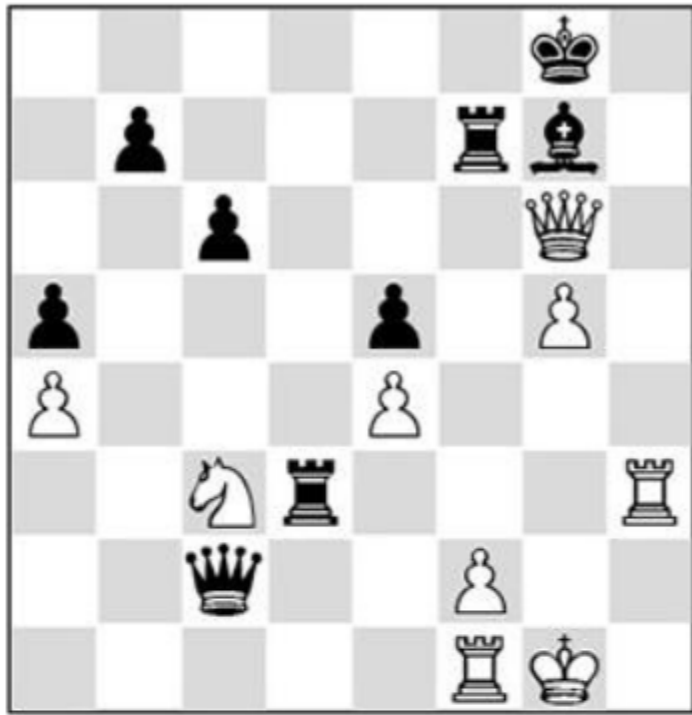


23.h5!

Maximizing the pressure. Now the remarkably resilient 23... ♖f7! was best:

A) Then 24. ♕xe6 ♜af8 25.hxg6 hxg6 26. ♜d3 ♕c2 27. ♜h3 ♜d8 28. ♕xg6 ♜d3 is equal;





analysis diagram

B) But White can improve with 24. ♖xf7! ♜xf7 25. ♖b1 ♚d2 26. ♖xb7+ ♜f8.



analysis diagram

A stunning computer defense – White has numerous sallies like h5-h6, ♚xe6 and ♚f3+ but Black parries all!

B1) Easiest is 27. ♚xe6 ♚xg5+ and ... ♚f6 with equality;

B2) The ominous 27.h6!? probably soured Black on the whole line! After 27... ♚xg5+ 28. ♚f1,





analysis diagram

taking on h6 by either the queen or the bishop loses beautifully to 29. ♖xe6 ♜c1+ 30. ♘d1!, but Black holds instead with 28... ♜c1+ 29. ♚e2 (the king can't run to the h-file, when... ♜xh6 trades queens) 29... ♜c2+ 30. ♚e1 ♞f6.



analysis diagram

White must take the perpetual with 31. ♜xe6 ♜xc3+ 32. ♚e2 ♜c2+ 33. ♚f1 ♜c1+ 34. ♚e2.

There's no time for 31. ♞xh7? ♜c1+ 32. ♚e2 (32. ♘d1 ♞d8) 32... ♞b8 when Black is faster;

B3) Going back to the diagram position on the previous page after 26... ♚f8, White must perform some nimble endgame gymnastics to claim an edge: 27. ♜f3+ ♜f4 28. ♜xf4+ exf4 29. ♘e2 ♞e5 30. ♚g2! gxh5 31. ♞xh7 ♞b8 32. ♞xh5 (32.g6?



♖b3 33. ♗xf4 ♜xf4 34. ♜f7+ ♚g8 35. ♜xf4 ♚g7)



analysis diagram

The water is still murky but White has the better paddle; 32... ♜b4 33. ♜f3 or 32... ♜b3 33. ♗g1!



analysis diagram

White is clearly better since 33... ♜b4?! 34.g6! ♜xe4 35. ♜f3 ♜e1 36. ♗e2 wins the a-pawn with advantage.





analysis diagram

(36... ♖c7 37. ♜h8+)

On human time Bareev's mistake is certainly understandable:

23... gxh5? 24. ♜xe6+ ♔h8



Now the hoped-for combination comes up aces:

25. ♜xg7! ♔xg7 26. ♜h6+ ♔g8 27. g6 hxg6 28. ♜xg6+ ♔h8





29. ♔h1 ♖f4

In the Computer Era there are no more guarantees that a runaway king gets mated, but poetic justice is served here: 29... ♖xf2 30. ♗xh5+ ♔g7 31. ♖g1+ ♔f8 32. ♗h8+ ♔e7 33. ♗xe5+



analysis diagram

33... ♔f8 34. ♗c5+ ♔f7 35. ♗c4+ ♔f6 (35... ♔e7 36. ♖g7+ ♔f6 37. ♗d4+) 36. e5+! ♔xe5 37. ♖e1+ ♔d6 38. ♗d4+ ♔c7





analysis diagram

39. ♖e7+ ♔b8 40. ♕d8+ ♔a7 41. ♕xa5+ ♔b8 42. ♖e8#.

Instead Bareev's 29... ♖f4 was a stopgap for resigning:

30. ♕xh5+ ♔g8 31. ♖g1+ ♔f8 32. ♕h8+ ♔f7 33. ♕g7+ 1-0



Game 53

Dmitry Gurevich

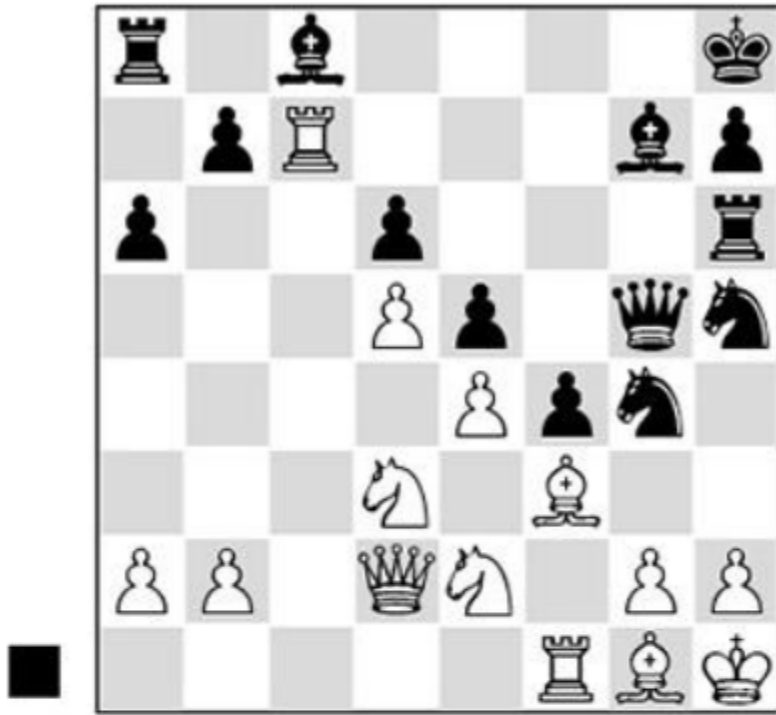
2507

Judit Polgar

2710

Rishon Le Ziyon Wch blitz 2006 (6)





American GM Dmitry Gurevich plays a pet line against the KID, championed by Kortchnoi, in which White puts his queen's bishop on the g1-a7 diagonal, holding defensive squares while also attacking the queenside. Gurevich described White's king position as a 'bunker' – Black either blows it up, or loses on the other wing. JP needs no prompting on the right strategy:

25... ♖g3+ 26. ♗xg3 ♗xh2! 27. ♙xh2 ♚xg3 28. ♚g1 ♚xh2+ 29. ♚f2 ♙g4



30. ♗e1

Black's attack is undiminished in the major piece ending arising from 30. ♙xg4 ♚g3+ 31. ♚g1 ♚xg4 32. ♚xb7 ♚h4 33. ♗e1 ♙f6 34. ♗f3 ♚h1+ 35. ♚f2 ♙h4+ 36. ♗xh4 ♚xh4+ 37. ♚e2 ♚g8 38. ♚f2 ♚hg6.





analysis diagram

On 39. ♔d1, 39... ♖xg2!

30... ♕g3+ 31. ♔e2 ♖h2 32. ♔d3 ♜f6



33. ♔c2

A tough position in blitz or otherwise. If 33. ♖xb7 ♜xf3 34. ♖xf3 ♕g6 35. ♖f1 ♖g8
36. ♖a7 ♜h4,





analysis diagram

White's chances dissolve along with the g2 ♖.

33... ♗xf3 34. ♖xf3 ♔g6 35. ♕e2 ♘h4 36. ♖h3



Falling for a pretty shot, but White has already been sunk for a while.

36...f3! 0-1

Game 54

Judit Polgar

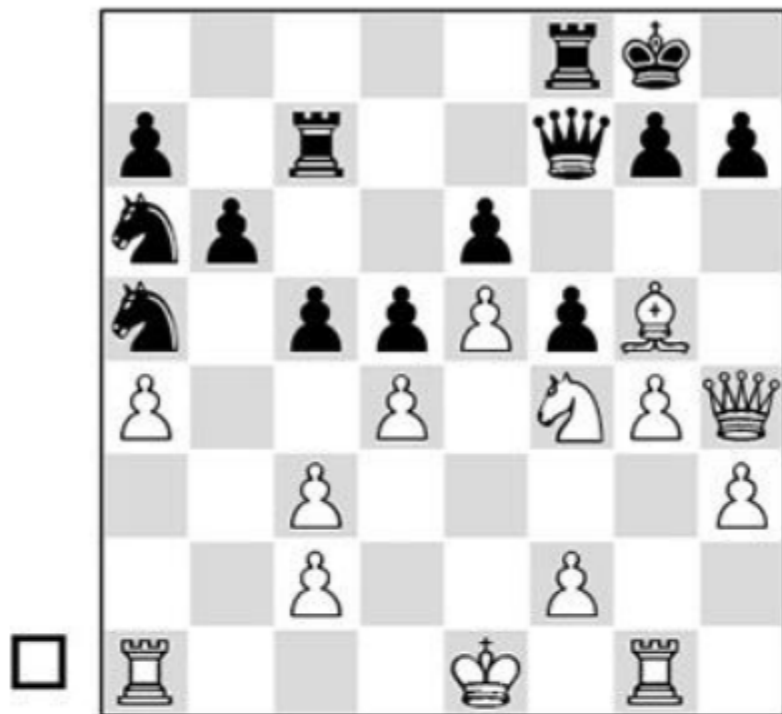
2728

Marc Olivier Andrez

2173

Neuilly sim 2004





Another pretty French build-up albeit against a weaker foe – as evidenced by those silly knights:

18. ♖f6!

A) 18...gxf6 19.gxf5+ ♜h8 20.fxe6! and 21. ♗g6+ is an outright win;

B) 18...fxg4 19. ♖xg4 ♜e8 20. ♜e2



analysis diagram

White can train all his forces on g7 while Black's ♗'s inhabit another planet, and ...g7-g6 invites a crushing sac.

Instead Black jettisoned a pawn with

18... ♜e8 19.gxf5 exf5 20. ♗xd5 ♜ff7 21. ♖xg7 ♜xg7 22. ♗f6+ ♜f8 23. ♖xg7 ♜xg7 24. ♗xe8 ♜g1+ 25. ♜e2 ♜xa1 26. ♗f6 ♜g1 27. ♜xh7 1-0

There are precious few Sicilian lines where Black attacks the kingside, but, not



surprisingly, Judit adopted one that was developed by Garry Kasparov. In this blitz encounter she got to pull off every tactic in Black's playbook – achieving the line-opening pawn push to f5 not once, but twice!

Game 55

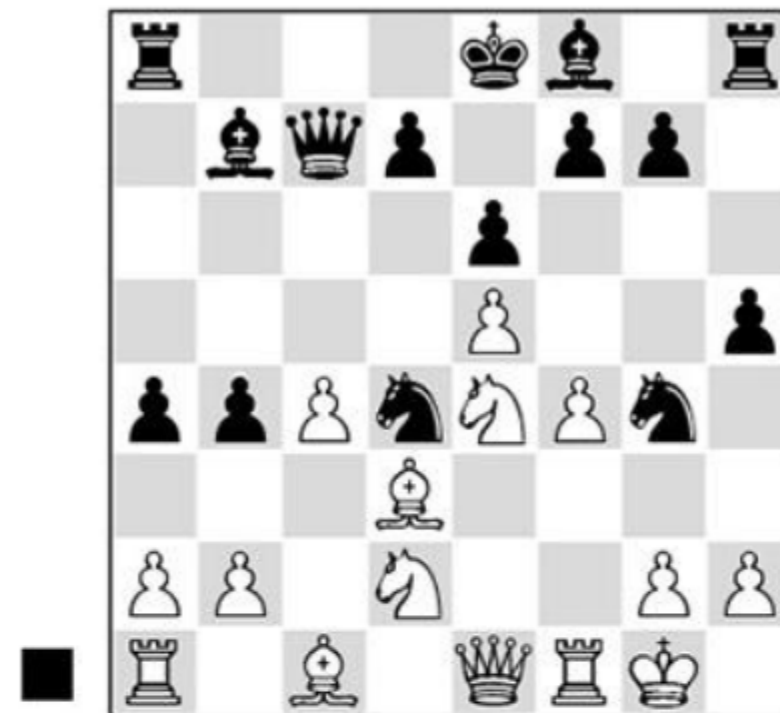
Ye Jiangchuan

2676

Judit Polgar

2677

Prague m blitz 2002 (1)



17...f5! 18.exf6

Unappetizing, but Black dominates the whole board after 18. ♖g5 ♗c5 19. ♚h1 ♜b6 20. h3 b3!.





analysis diagram

For instance: 21. axb3 ♖xb3 22. ♖xb3 ♖f2+ 23. ♖xf2 ♖xf2 24. c5 ♖xe1 25. cxb6
 axb3+
 18...gxf6 19. ♖f3 ♖xf3+ 20. gxf3 f5!



It worked great the first time – why not play it again?

21. fxg4?

He should keep lines closed, but the situation is bleak. 21. ♖g5 a3! and now:

A) 22. fxg4 loses convincingly:





analysis diagram

22... ♖c5+ 23. ♗e3 axb2 24. ♜b1 ♛c6 25. ♝f3 hxg4—;

B) 22. ♜b1 b3! 23. axb3 (23. bxa3 bxa2 24. ♜a1 ♛c5+ 25. ♚h1 ♛d4) 23...a2 24. ♜a1 ♗e7



analysis diagram

The thorny knight wreaks havoc on g4. If 25. fxg4 hxg4 (threatening 26... ♗xg5 with mate on h2) 26. ♛g3 ♛c6 (now 27... ♗c5+ and mate on h1 is menaced) 27. ♚f2,





analysis diagram

27... ♗xg5 and 28... ♜h3 regains the ♗d3, with a crushing advantage.

21... fxe4 22. ♗xe4 ♗c5+ 23. ♔g2 hxg4



White is doomed by his airy ♔ position and some debilitating blow is bound to fall.

24. a3 b3 25. ♗d2 ♜h3 26. ♔e2 o-o-o 27. ♜ae1 ♜dh8 28. ♜h1





28... ♖e3! 0-1

There it is – a scorching interference move.

The following game is one of Judit's many fine victories over the ever-dangerous Muscovite Peter Svidler. The starting position looks very unclear, and Judit's demonstration that Black's play is stronger makes a brilliant impression:

Game 56

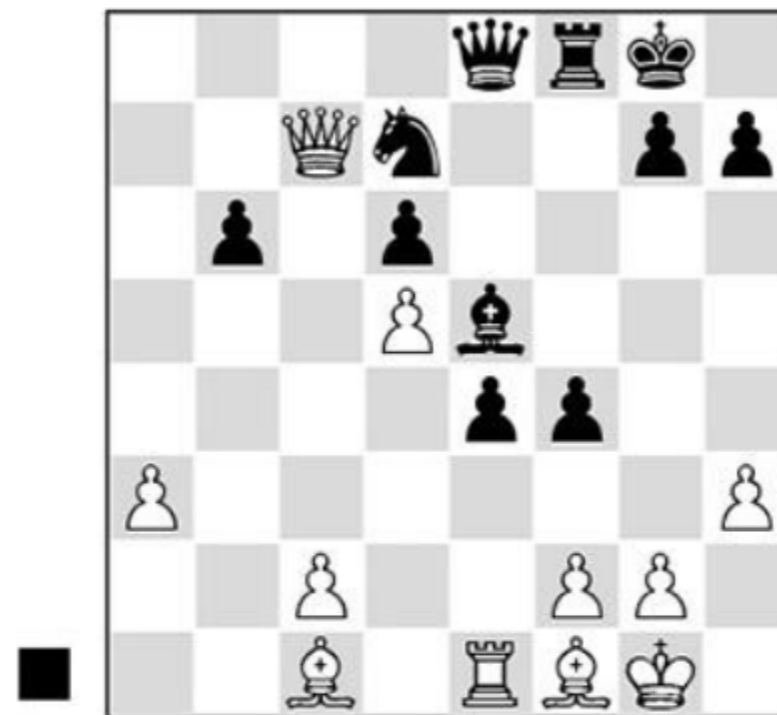
Peter Svidler

2713

Judit Polgar

2677

Dos Hermanas 1999 (9)



31...e3!

A remarkably strong idea. The immediate threat is 32...exf2 33. ♔xf2 ♖d4+.

32. ♖b5

Freeing f1 for the king. Black's first point was 32.fxe3 fxe3 (perhaps even 32...f3! is



strong) 33. ♖xe3 ♗g3, winning material. If (after 32.fxe3 fxe3) 33. ♗b5 ♜g6!, intending 34... ♜g3-h2#, then 34. ♝xe3 meets the surprising 34... ♜h5!. All these creeping 'quiet forcing moves' are the mark of attacking genius.



analysis diagram

Mate on d1 is threatened, and on 35. ♝e1, 35. ♗e2 or 35.g4, the answer 35... ♜h4! is too strong, e.g.:

A) 35. ♝e1 ♜h4 36. ♝f1 ♜d4+ 37. ♚h1 ♝xf1+ 38. ♗xf1 ♜d1;



analysis diagram

B) From the prior diagram White's last try is 35. ♝e2,





analysis diagram

but simply 35... ♖f5 leaves White speechless against the mate threat, e.g. 36. ♜e3

♜f2+ 37. ♚h1 ♜f1+ or 36. ♜d2 ♜f4!

Instead, after 32. ♙b5 came

32...exf2+ 33. ♚xf2



33...f3! 0-1

White called it quits, due to the devastating threats 34... ♙g3+! or 34...fxg2+.

In 1993 Judit won a well-publicized match against former World Champ Boris Spassky, 3-2. By then the good-natured Boris had long since won his laurels, and become a sporting foil to others' greatness. He still played good fighting chess, and the match didn't disappoint. Post-match, JP retained her grip on the faded hero...



Game 57

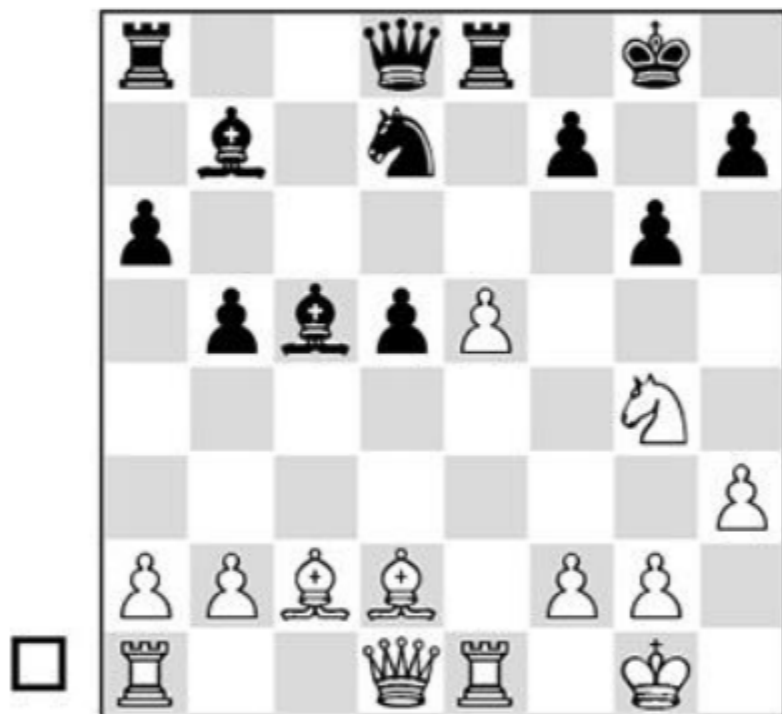
Judit Polgar

2665

Boris Spassky

2545

Hoogeveen 1998 (3)



21. ♖h6+ ♜g7 22. ♚f3 f6

22... ♖xe5 23. ♜xe5 ♜xe5 24. ♚xf7+ and 25. ♚xb7 is bad, as is 22...f5 23. ♚g3, so

Spassky needs this move to work.

23.e6!?

Or 23.b4 first.

23... ♖f8 24.b4 ♜b6

Black could give up the ♚ instead with 24... ♜d4 25.e7! ♜xe7 26. ♜xe7 ♚xe7 27. ♚g4! ♜xa1 28. ♖f5+ ♜f7 29. ♖xe7 ♜xe7 30. ♜e3, but this is joyless.



25.e7!

A very attractive, Morphy-esque pawn sac, opening lines to facilitate the kingside



initiative.

25... ♖xe7 26. ♜xe7+ ♚xe7 27. ♜e1



The black queen wants for a good home.

A) 27... ♚d7 28. ♗g4 facilitates White's plan;

B) While 27... ♚d6 28. ♚g4 invites fork tricks like 28... ♚c7 29. ♜e7+!

27... ♚d8 28. ♗g4 ♗d7 29. ♚f4 ♚f7 30. ♚h6



White's surgical probing prevents consolidation!

Black's response is ugly but forced; the natural 30... ♗f8 is refuted by 31. ♗xg6!! hxg6 32. ♚h8!





analysis diagram

This beautiful quiet forcing move threatens 31. ♖h6#, forcing 31...g5 32. ♗xg5 fxg5 33. ♖e5+ ♔e8, when either winning the ♖ with 34. ♖c6+ or attacking with 34. ♖h5+ soon decides matters.

30... ♖g8

I imagine the great Spassky giving an approving, if wistful nod to JP's attacking prowess. If 30... ♖h8 31. ♗f5! is nice and if 31...gxf5, 32. ♖h5+. Black's fortress has been softened up, so White maneuvers the ♖ back to h6:

31. ♖h4! ♖h8 32. ♖h6+ ♔f8 33. ♖g4



33...f5

33... ♖g7 34. ♖f4! would make no difference.

34. ♖xf5! ♖f6 35. ♗g5 ♖c3 36. ♖e2 ♗c7 37. ♖g3 ♖e5 38. ♖e6 ♖f7 39. ♗e7+ ♔g8



40. ♖h5! g×h5 41. ♙f6 1-0

41... ♜c6 (to stop 42. ♜e8+) 42. ♙xh7+ is the end.

Game 58

Judit Polgar

Veselin Topalov

Dortmund 1996 (4)

2665

2750



23. ♖e7+ ♜h8

The key to equality was the risky-looking 23... ♜f8 24. ♜d7 ♜b5 25. ♜c7 a4 26. ♙c5+ ♜e8.





analysis diagram

In the game, the defense of f7 becomes a major problem.

24. ♖d7 ♜b5 25. ♛d2 ♙d5

25... ♜e8 26. a4 ♜b3 27. ♙d4 ±

26. ♜c7 ♙e4



Perhaps the great Bulgarian missed the unusual point of White's plan:

27. ♗c8! ± ♛d5 28. ♗d6! ♜g8 29. ♗xc4 ♜b8 30. ♛xd5 exd5



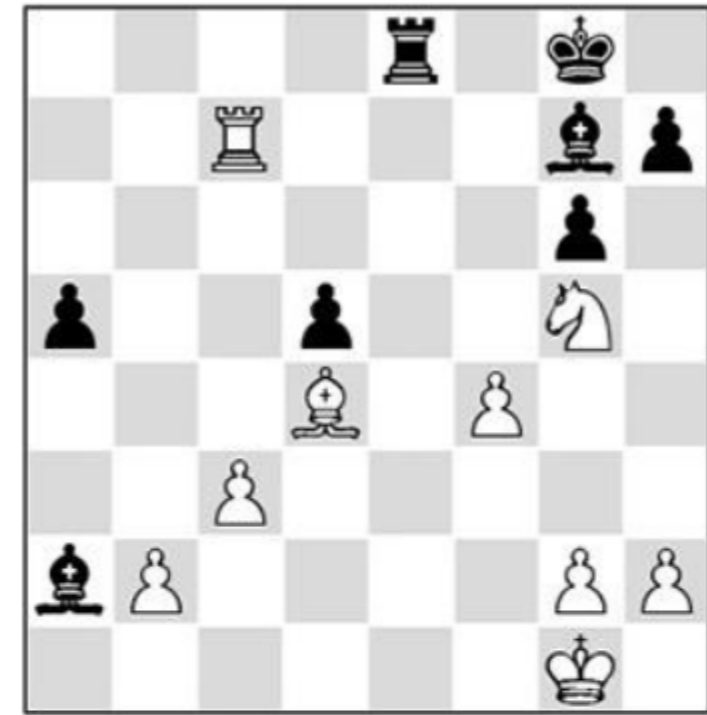


Topalov is trying to bail out, but White's following zwischenzug squashes all counterplay:

31. ♖a7! ♜a8

If 31... ♜b5 White forces a win with 32. ♗d6-xe4 and ♜c8+.

32. ♗d6 ♜b1 33. ♗xf7 ♜xa2 34. ♗g5 ♜e8 35. ♜d4



Superstars can't waste time on 35... ♜xd4 when Black is materially and positionally busted, so Black more or less throws in the towel.

35... ♜h6 36. ♗xh7 1-0

Harry Bird, the 'great explorer' of the 19th century, was not an elite master, yet he produced many beautiful wins and losses. The whimsical Englishman couldn't resist trying a novel idea, and reveled in wild complications, sound or not.

In this regard JP, though much stronger, had some of Bird's adventurous spirit, and also lost some wonderful chess games (by the way, aside from the eccentric

openings that bear his name, the Dragon Sicilian could just as easily be called Bird's Variation, since he was the first to create a coherent *tabiya* with it, while most peers including Tarrasch considered the whole Sicilian complex dubious).

Here is Bird's Dragon *tabiya*, which doesn't look that dubious today:

Berthold Englisch

Henry Bird

London 1883 (18)



'irregular opening' after 10... ♖c8

And here is a beautiful loss by JP at the hands of then future World Champion Vishy Anand.

Game 59

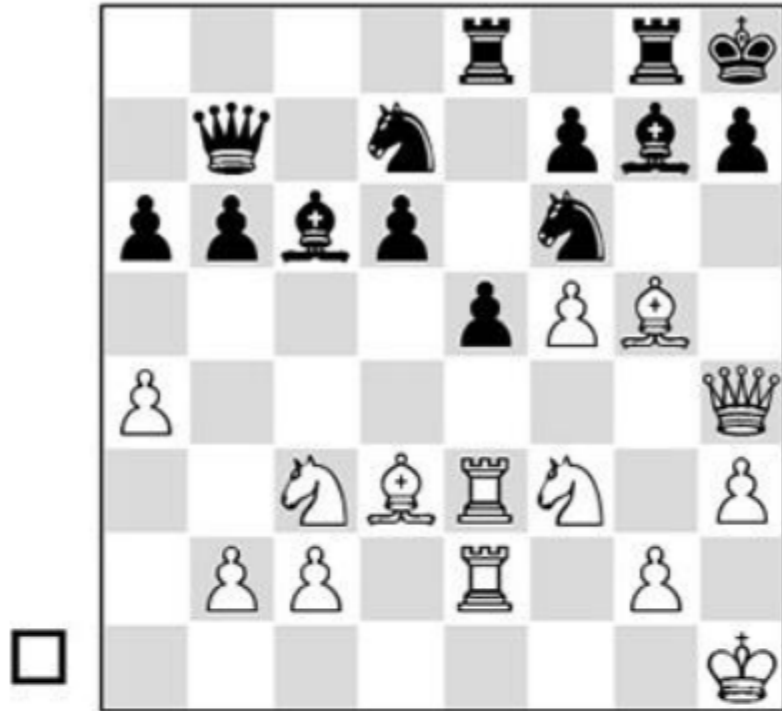
Viswanathan Anand

2720

Judit Polgar

2630

Buenos Aires 1994 (13)



26. ♖h2! d5

Judit correctly puts her faith in the thematic central advance. There was another long forcing try, but White's attack endures into the ending:

26...e4 27. ♖xe4 ♖xe4 28. ♙xe4 ♙xe4 29. ♚xe4 ♚xe4 30. ♚xe4 ♙xb2 31. ♚e7 ♙d5



analysis diagram

32. ♖g4! ♚xf5 33. ♖h6 (a key point of White's maneuvering) 33...♚f1+ 34. ♚h2 ♙e5+ 35. ♚xe5 dxe5 36. ♖xg8 ♙xg8 37. ♙g4





analysis diagram

37...f5 (not 37... ♖f8?? 38. ♙h6+ ♜g6 39. ♚c8+) 38. ♚g3 ♜g7 (38... ♜f7 39. ♚b3+ ±) 39. ♚h4 ±



analysis diagram

Black has somehow emerged a pawn up. It's a Pyrrhic victory, however; the exposed king leaves her scant survival chances.

27. ♜g4 ♜xg4 28. hxg4



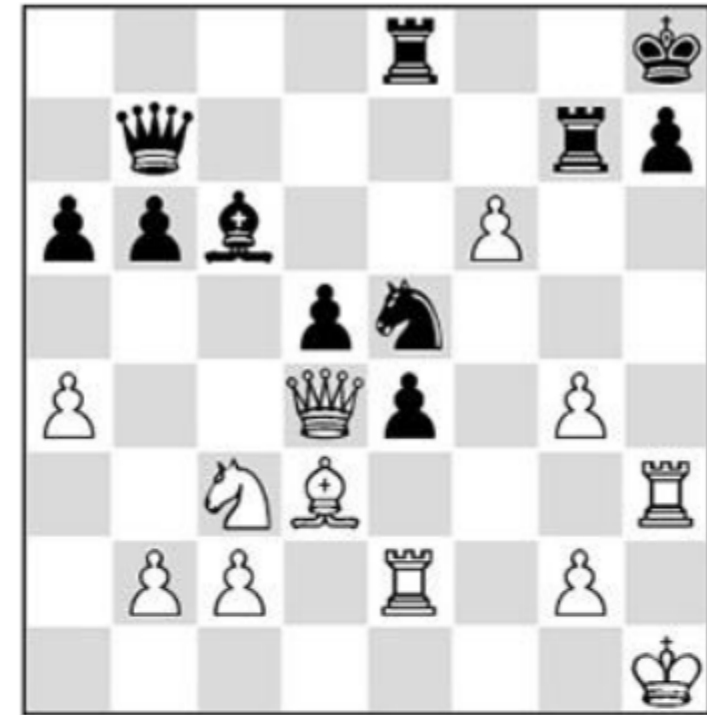
28...f6

Black must prevent 29. ♖h3 ♜f8 30.f6.

29. ♖h3 ♜f8 30. ♙xf6 e4 31. ♙xg7+ ♚xg7?

For once JP's lack of materialism costs her the game. Black is OK after 31... ♖xg7!

32. ♚f6 ♜d7 33. ♚d4 ♜e5 34.f6.



analysis diagram

Judit might prefer White here, but the computer shows the worst is over: 34... ♖f7 (34... ♖xg4 35. ♙xa6! ♚xa6 36.f7) 35.g5 ♜g6 36. ♖e1 exd3 37. ♖xe8+ ♙xe8 38. ♖xd3 ♚c7=



The bishop holds its own against three static pawns.

Instead came

32. ♖xa6 d4 33. ♖c4



JP must have overlooked the power of this crusher.

33...dxc3 34.f6 ♔g6 35.f7 ♖g7 36.fxe8 ♔ ♖xe8 37. ♖xc3 ♖xa4 38. ♖d5 ♖d7
39. ♖xe4 ♔d6 40. ♖d3 ♔f4 41. ♖f2 1-0

Game 60

Jeroen Piket

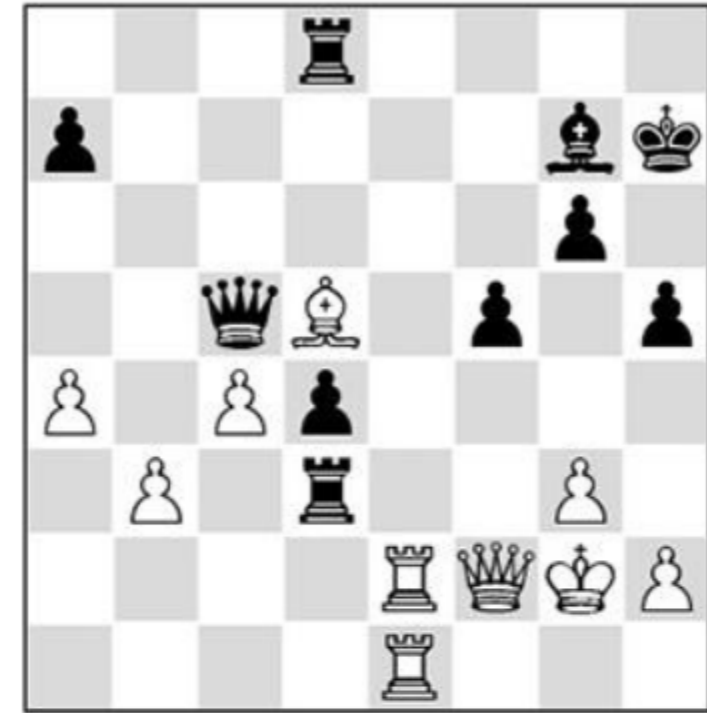
2590

Judit Polgar

2595



27...b3 28.cxb3 Rxd3 29. Rae1



29... Rxd5!

Remarkably, 29... Rxb3? 30. R e7 squanders Black's edge. If then 30... Rxd5 31.cxd5 Rxd5+, 32. Qh3! and compared to the game, White's queen stays mobile and Black's bishop is contained.

30.cxd5 Rxd5+ 31. Qg1 Rf3 32. Qg2





Now Black's d-pawn and initiative are too good.

32...d3 33. ♖e7 33. ♜d2 ♙c3 34. ♜e7+ ♚h6 35. ♜d1 ♙b4 36. ♜e8 d2→
 33...d2 34. ♜d1 ♚d4+ 35. ♚h1 ♜f2 36. ♚b7



36... ♚h6 37. h3 ♚d3 0-1 38. ♜xg7 ♜f1+ is catastrophic.

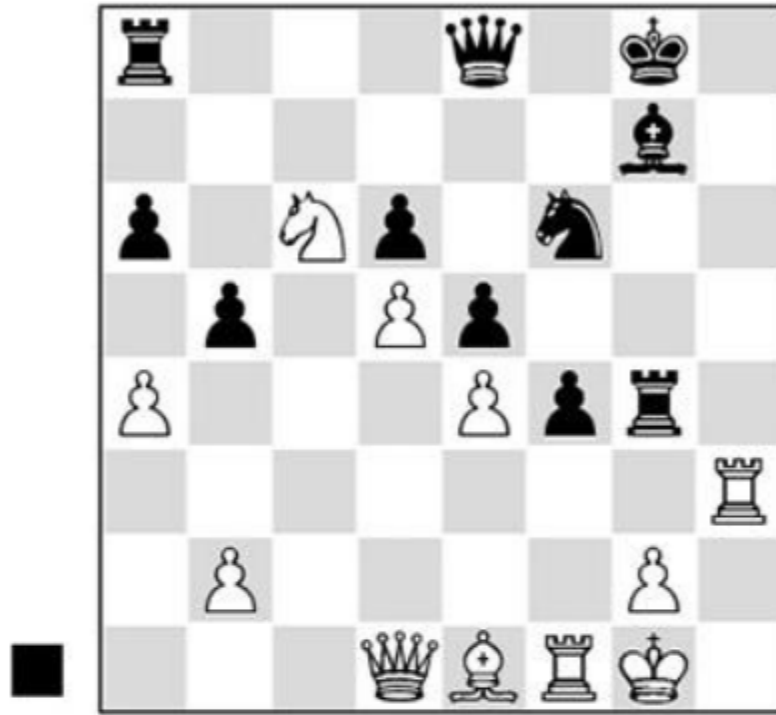
From the same event, JP gives the following position passing mention in her biography, but we wish to add some detailed tactical analysis:

Game 61

Jeroen Piket

Judit Polgar

2605



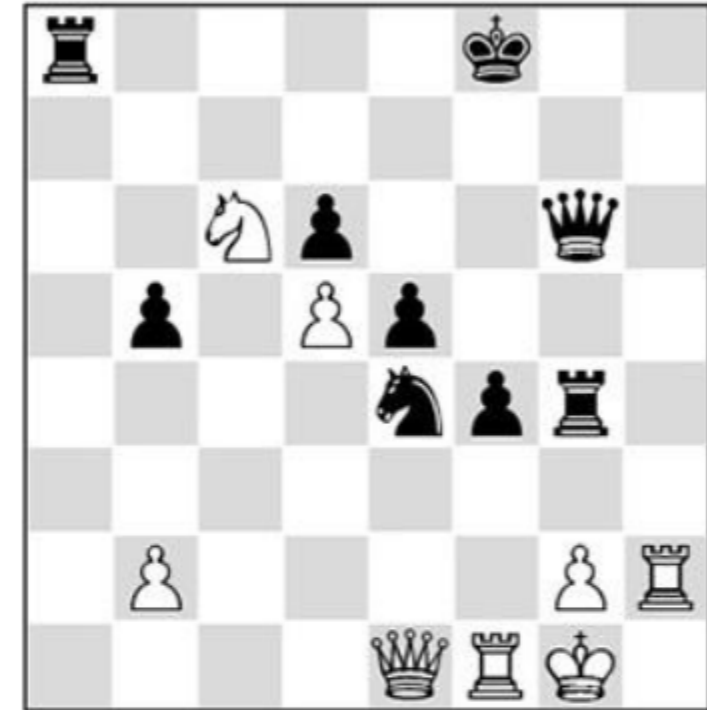
30... ♖f8!

True, this is a natural KID bolstering of d6, clearing the g-file for rooks, and here defending e7 to allow ... ♖g6.

But the game shows that the tactical underpinnings of this move are profound, not to mention that it's the only move that gives Black an advantage!

31. ♙h4

This was Piket's plan, which looks great at first sight. A critical line (beyond the scope of JP's note) is 31. axb5 axb5 32. ♙h4 ♖h5 33. ♖e1 ♖h7 34. ♜h2 ♘xe4!! 35. ♙e7 ♖g6 36. ♙xf8 ♘xf8.

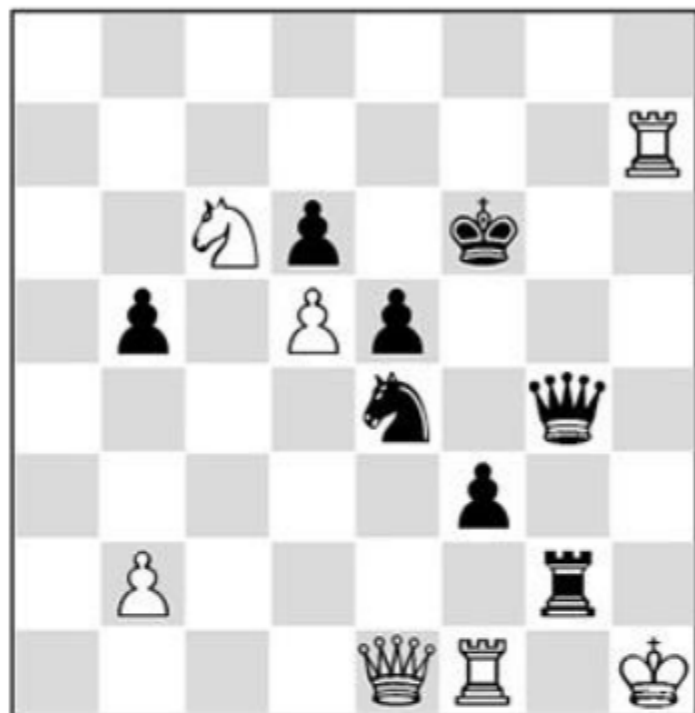


analysis diagram

Now White has two good tries, and it is almost miraculous that both turn out to fail:

A) 37. ♜h8+ ♘g7 38. ♜xa8 ♜xg2+ 39. ♚h1 ♖g4 40. ♜a7+ (40. ♜a3 ♜e2!)

40... ♖f6 (40... ♖h6??) 41. ♜h7+! ♘xh7 42. ♚xe4+ 41. ♜h7 f3



analysis diagram

White must resign, since he's mated after 42. ♚h4+ ♜xh4 43. ♜xh4 ♘g3# or

42. ♜xf3+ ♚xf3 43. ♚h4+ ♜g5+;

B) 37. ♚b4 ♘f7 38. ♚xb5 ♜e8 39. ♚b7+ ♘f6



analysis diagram

It's quite shocking that the black king can just hang out on f6 in such a volatile position, but the engine insists that Black is doing very well after 40. ♚d7 ♜g3 41. ♘h1 ♜b3.

31... ♚h5!

Black's plan rests on this counterintuitive pin of the ♘h4, and the follow-up it allows.

32. ♚e1





32... ♔h7!

Black's unusual geometry exploits the weak e4 ♙. White should have reverted to the prior diagrams with 33. ♖h2, but in rapid he was simply outcalculated by a stronger foe.

33. ♖ff3 ♔xe4 o-o



CHAPTER 4

Endgame Empress

Probably the most surprising aspect of Judit Polgar's strength was her endgame prowess. There is much truth to the stereotype that all-out attackers lose interest when playing for checkmate is off the table. In American football there's a coach's imperative about playing for 'the full sixty minutes'. The first official World Champion Wilhelm Steinitz rose above talented rivals like Zukertort and Chigorin, because he elevated winning above beauty, and was willing to grind his overzealous opponents down with defensive and endgame technique.

Yasser Seirawan once quipped that 'good technique is good tactics', and of course this was a strong aspect of JP's endgame success. Her prodigious calculative skills were put to use solving the most complicated ending problems. But her skill goes even beyond this. On many occasions she was able to defeat elite grandmasters from positions that seemed unwinnable. This may be the hardest chess achievement, since at the super-grandmaster level ending technique is so refined. If I asked you to list non-World Champions who could beat 2600 players from drawn-looking positions, you'd be hard-pressed to count beyond Kortchnoi and Rubinstein. As one JP fan remarked, 'this is what great players do'.

In Judit's case I think the key to her endgame exploits was her love of the initiative, along with the relentless will to win. No matter if the play was almost

imperceptible; simplified positions still appealed to her, if there was still a chance to outcalculate and impose her will on any opponent. In these moments there was a crystalline clarity to her play, reminiscent of Fischer. Biographers like Tolnai also marveled at this surprising aspect of Judit's greatness, which greatly bolstered her prospects of someday winning the championship.

Game 62

Lubomir Ftacnik

2535

Judit Polgar

2595

Budapest zt playoff 1993 (4)

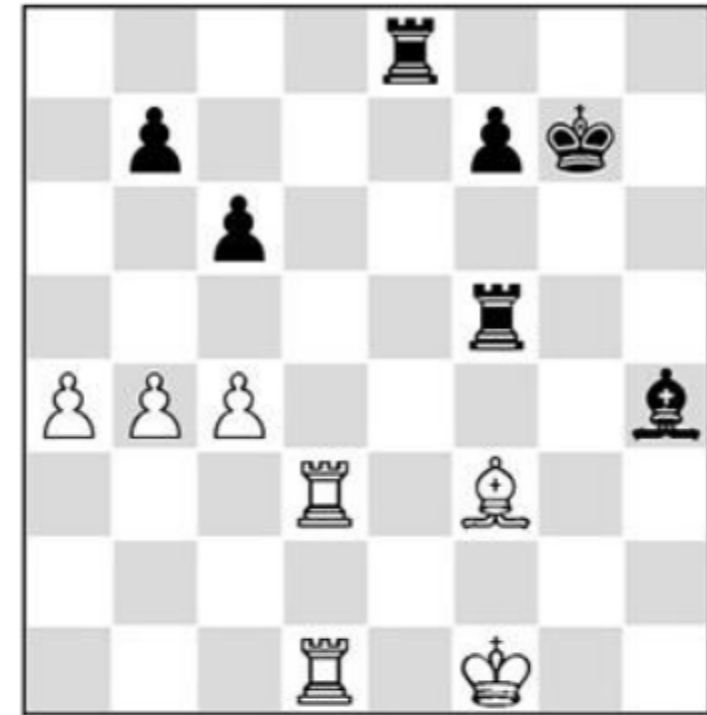




When I first saw this position, I could scarcely believe a strong GM could lose. Lubosh Ftacnik must still be shaking his head!

30...h4 31.gxh4 ♗xh4+ 32.♔f1 ♜f5 33.a4?!

This natural expansion unexpectedly loosens White's queenside, leading to problems. 33.a3 or 33.c5 should draw.



33... ♜e4 ♝34. ♜c1 ♗e7! 35.b5

Now the black ♗ becomes stronger, but the alternatives were worse:

A) 35. ♜b3 ♜h4 36. ♔g1

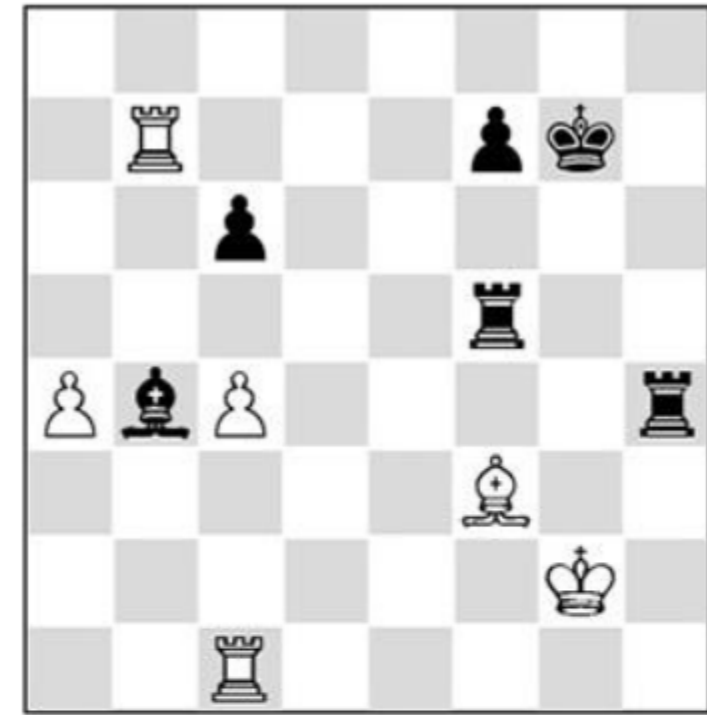




36... ♖xb4 37. ♗xb4 ♜xf3 38. ♗xb7 ♜g4+ 39. ♘h2 ♜f5 40. ♗b3 ♜h5+ 41. ♗h3

♜a5 42. ♗a3 ♘g6 ♠;

B) 35. ♘g2 ♜h4 36. ♗d7 ♖xb4 37. ♗xb7?



analysis diagram

37... ♜g5+ 38. ♘f1 ♖c5

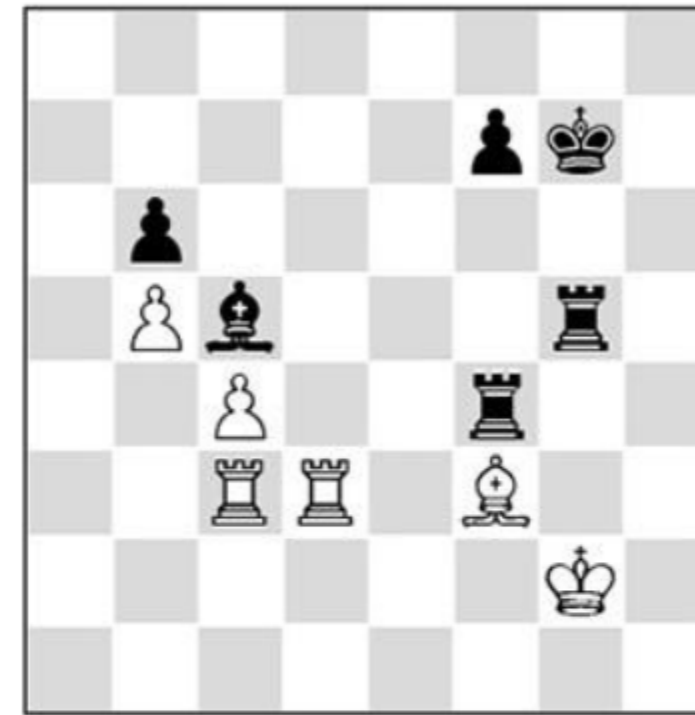
35... ♖c5 36. ♗c2 ♜ef4 37. ♘e2 cxb5 38. axb5 b6 39. ♗cc3





39... ♖e5+ 40. ♔d1?

JP exploits a favorite theme, the power of opposite colored ♗'s with active major pieces. This move already loses material, but White is walking a tightrope just to stay in the game! For example: 40. ♕f1 ♖h5 41. ♕g2 ♖g5+,



analysis diagram

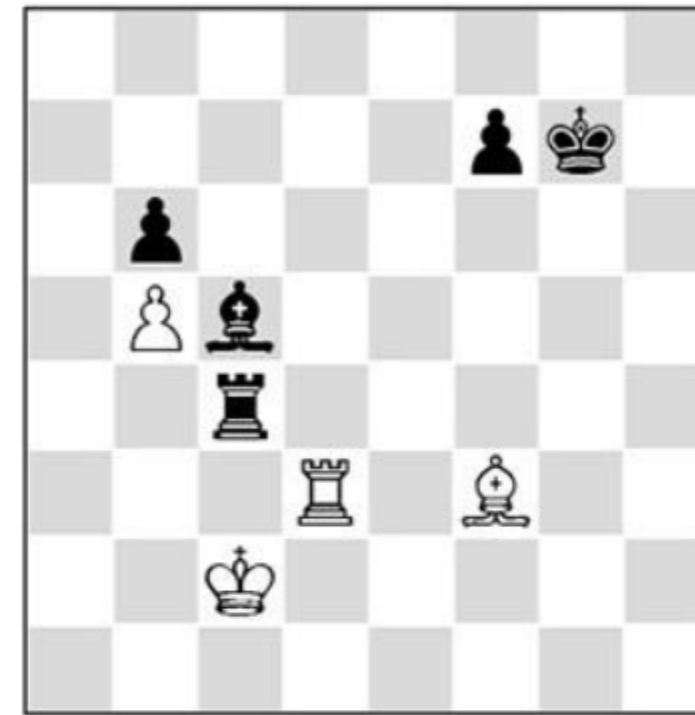
and now 42. ♔h3? ♗f2! with a sudden mating net or 42. ♕f1 ♖g3! with a bind.



analysis diagram

Amazingly, White has to pitch the c-pawn with 43. ♖b3, since 43. ♕e2? ♜h4!
44. ♕d1 ♜h2 weaves another mating net!

Instead of 40. ♕d1?, Ftacnik should jettison the c-pawn earlier with 40. ♕f1 ♜h5
41. ♜c2!; so that after 41... ♜h1+ 42. ♕e2 ♜h2+ 43. ♕d1 ♜xc2 44. ♕xc2 ♜xc4+,



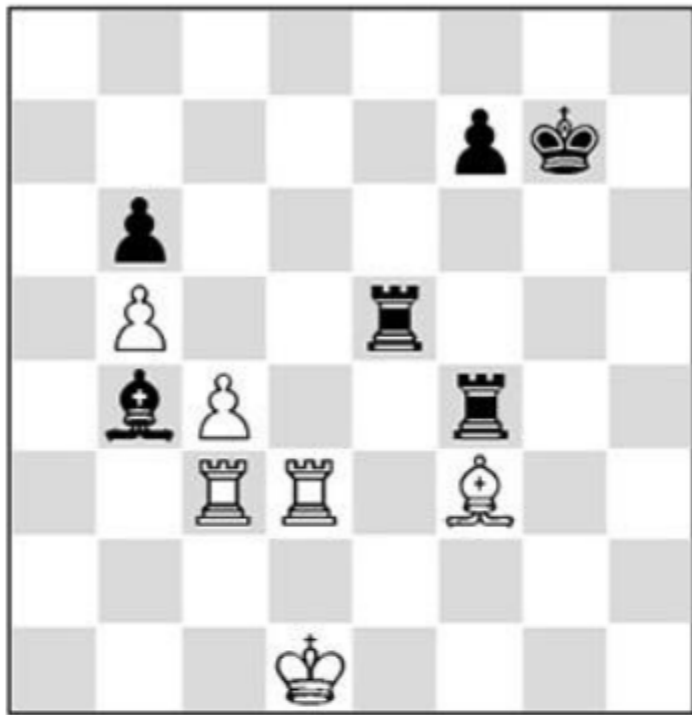
analysis diagram

the attack is finally spent, and it's unclear if Black's extra ♙ is convertible with such limited material.

In fairness to White, the odds of finding such a thankless defense over the board are minuscule.

40... ♙b4





Now the c-pawn falls anyway (41. ♖c1?? ♜e1+), and without a rook trade White loses interest in the arduous, probably futile defense.

41. ♖b3 ♜e1+ 42. ♔c2 ♜xc4+ 0-1

Likewise, it seems unthinkable that a formidable GM could lose the next position. His pawns are on the right-colored squares, and the queenside is a long-term asset. Somehow Judit unlocks every ounce of potential in Black's position.

Game 63

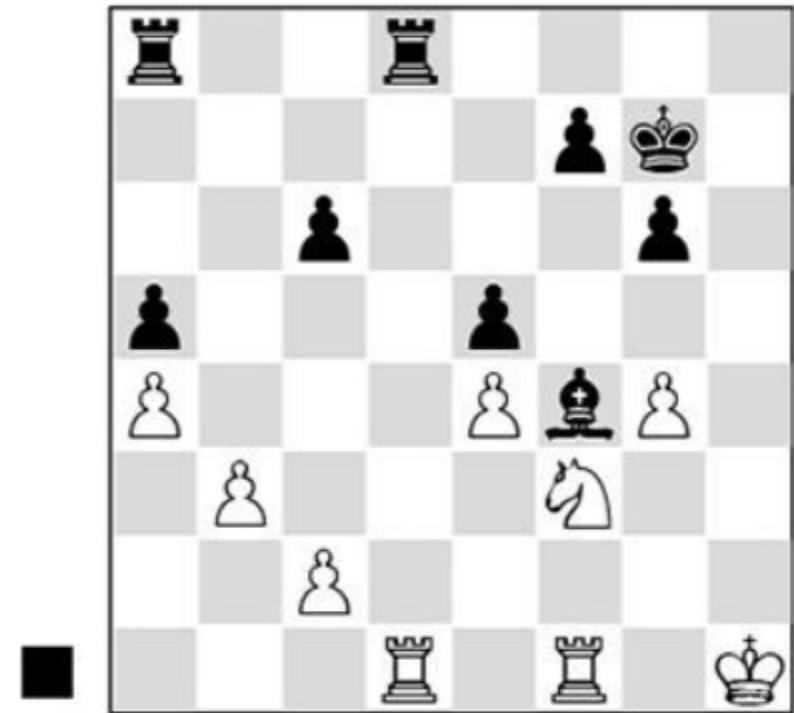
Victor Bologan

2600

Judit Polgar

2665

Yerevan ol 1996 (2)

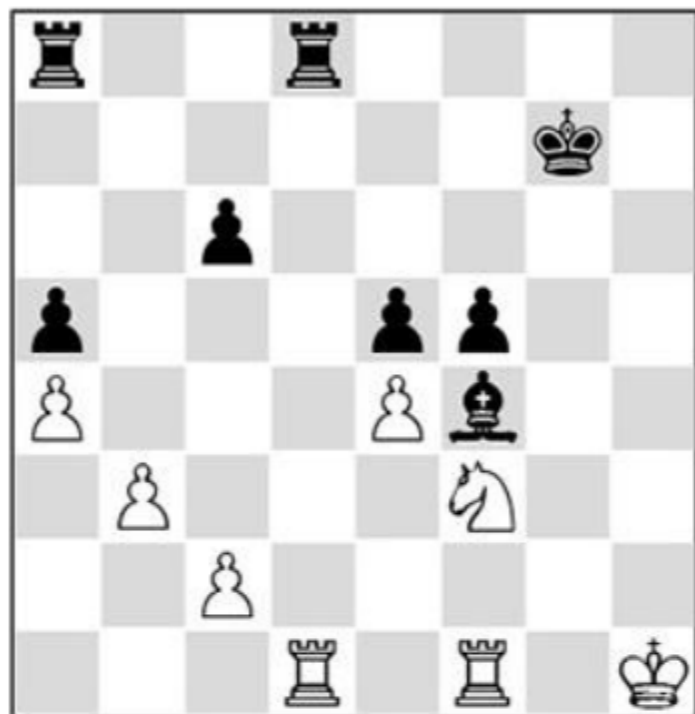


36...f5!

A star move! Every black piece is improved at one stroke. The engine is less impressed, but believe me, Bologan had to reevaluate everything now.



37.gxf5 gxf5

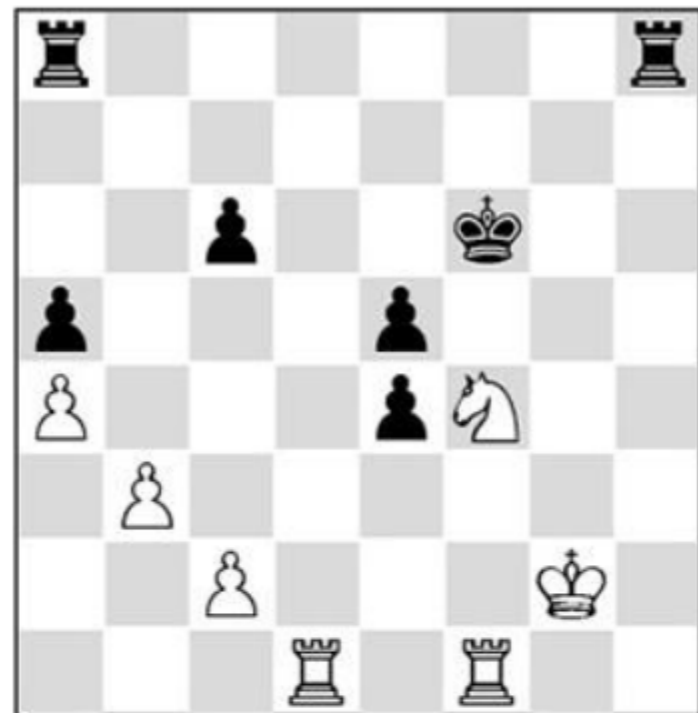


38. ♖d4!

White chooses a tactical defense, not satisfied with the slight disadvantage after

38.exf5 ♜f6.

38... ♜h8+ 39. ♚g2 fxe4 40. ♖e6+ ♜f6 41. ♖xf4



41... ♜ag8+ 42. ♖g6+ ♚e6 43. ♚f2 ♜xg6 44. ♚e2 ♜g3 ♠





Black has all the chances now, and managed to win despite mutual inaccuracies.

The following major-piece ending is an absolute bear, with numerous hidden mines for both sides. Judit outplays a formidable foe in what may be analytically the most interesting ending I've ever seen!

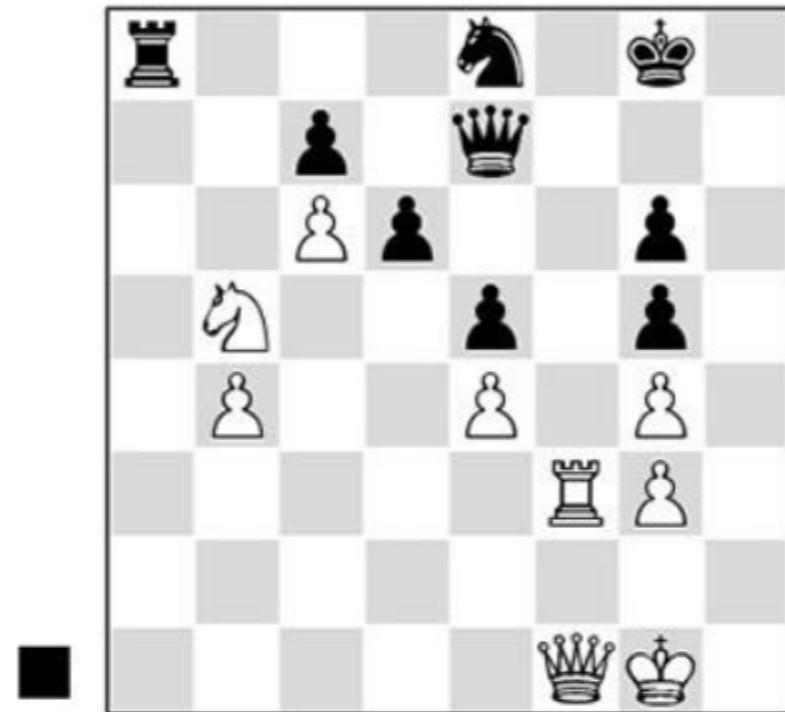
Game 64
Vladimir Epishin

2615

Judit Polgar

2550

Vienna 1991 (8)



34...d5! 35.exd5

An important option was 35. ♖c3 ♙xb4 36. ♖xd5 (36.exd5 ♖d6! is much better for Black)





analysis diagram

36... ♔d4+ 37. ♖h2 ♘d6 38. ♗xc7 ♜a2+ 39. ♗h3 ♔d2 40. ♔g1.



analysis diagram

After this sharp forcing sequence the dangerous c-pawn balances Black's attack, in spectacular fashion: 40... ♗xe4 41. ♗e6 ♗f2+ 42. ♜xf2 ♔xf2 43. c7! ♔c2 44. ♗c5



analysis diagram

44... ♖a8 45. ♔a1!! ♜xa1 46. c8♚+ ♕f7 47. ♚d7+ ♖g8=

Of course this fantastic line lives mostly in the evil brain of the computer, and White's choice 35.exd5 was more practical:

35... ♚xb4



36.d6

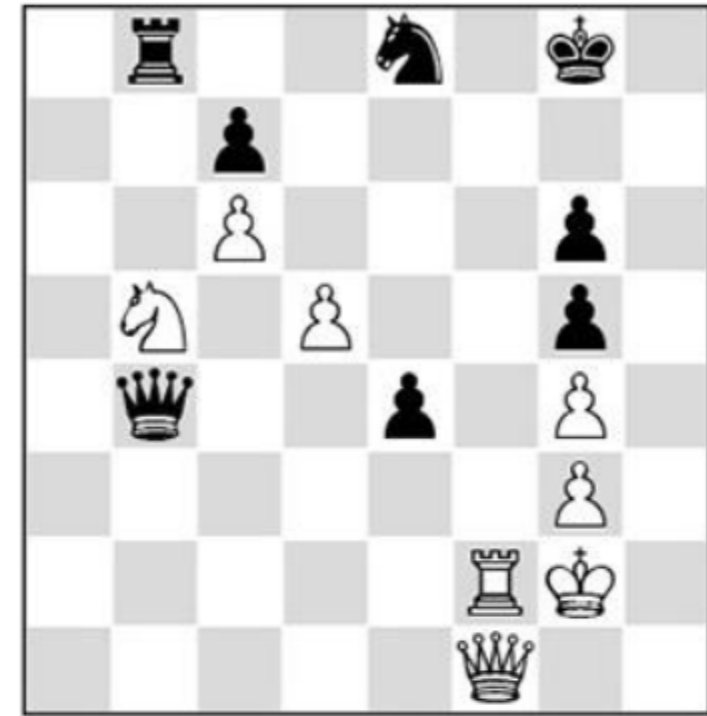
White plays with purpose, to worm his ♜ into f8 or f6.

Another devilish computer idea is to sit tight with 36. ♜f2 ♜b8 37. ♚g2.





analysis diagram



analysis diagram

- A) With Black's queen glued to f8, the ♖ is protected as 37... ♜xb5?? runs into the interference crusher 38.d6!;
- B) Black can play safe with 37... ♞e7=;
- C) Or walk the tightrope, as JP habitually would, with 37...e4!?

- C1) White can go hogwild with 38. ♖xc7!?:
- C1a) 38... ♖xc7 39. ♜f6! is equal. One ridiculous example is 39... ♞b2+ 40. ♘h1 (if 40. ♘h3, 40... ♖xd5! since after 41. ♜xg6+ ♘h8 White is deprived of ♞h3#) 40... ♘g7 41. ♜f7+ ♘g8 42. ♜xc7 ♞h8+!

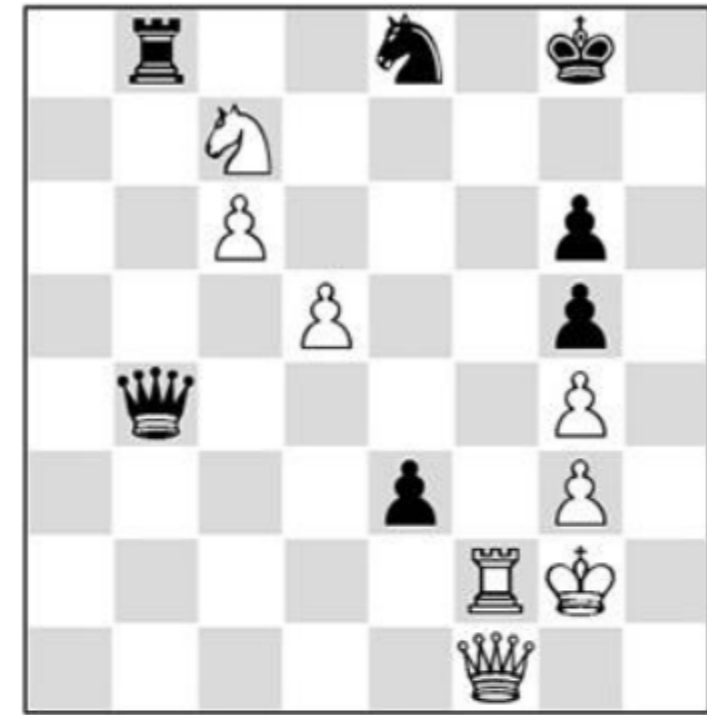




analysis diagram

A perpetual you may never see again: 43. ♔g1 ♚d4+ 44. ♔h1 (44. ♚f2?? ♜b1+ 45. ♔g2 ♜b2) 44... ♚h8+;

C1b) Believe it or not, after 38. ♖xc7 Black can play for more with 38...e3!.



analysis diagram

C1b1) If 39. ♜f7 e2!;

C1b2) Or 39. ♖a6 ♚e4+ 40. ♔h3 exf2 41. ♖xb8.



analysis diagram

Does Black beg for a draw, since 41...♔e1? 42.♚g2 is bad? No, the engine finds one of the greatest endgame moves I've seen in 44 years at the board:

41... ♖f6!!!



analysis diagram

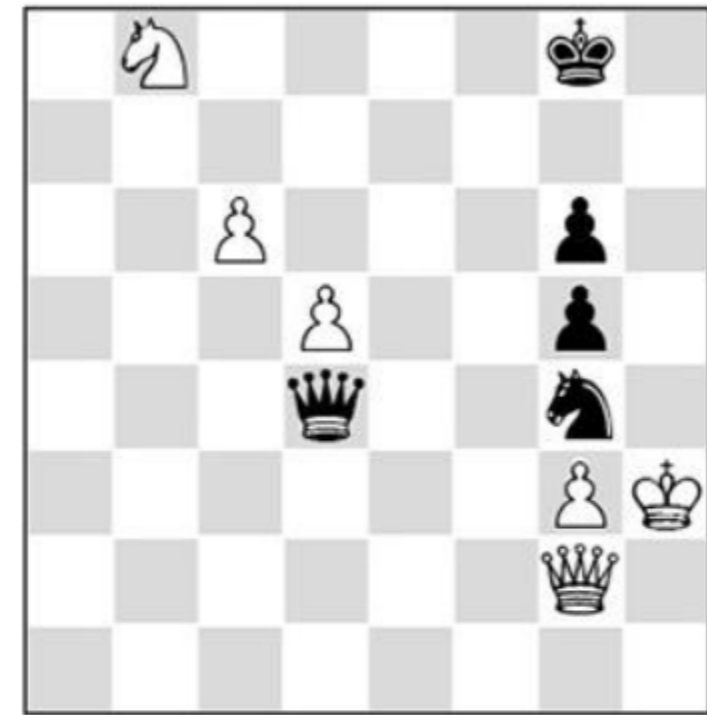
The use of three exclaims is considered crass since its overuse by GM Fine in *Basic Chess Endings*. Caissa forgive me, but I can't get over the strength of this simple mobilizing move! The sheer genius of the digital bag of bolts must be seen to be believed.

Okay, it's true that White can bail out with 42.c7 ♜xg4+ 43.♚g2 ♖xd5 44.♜xf2 ♜e4+ 45.♚g1 ♖xc7, and it's doubtful that Black's extra g-pawn matters, but who could possibly resist trying 42.♜xf2?? ♖xg4!!.





analysis diagram



analysis diagram

C1b21) White must avoid the fantastic pattern 43. ♖d2 ♗h1+! 44. ♘xg4 ♖h5#;
So his options are limited to ♖g2/f1/g1:

C1b22) On 43. ♖g1, 43... ♗e3! weaves a killer mating net with the threat 44... ♖g4-h5#, and after 44. ♘h2 ♖f3! the gig is up;

C1b23) 43. ♖f1 ♗e3 is no better, e.g. 44. ♖e2 ♖h1+ 44. ♖h2 ♖f1+ and mate;

C1b24) That leaves only 43. ♖g2 ♖d4!!.

A move so sexy, the poor human might want to hang up his cleats. Mate with 44... ♖h8-h5# is again in the offing. Most queen moves on the second rank allow ... ♖d4-h8-h2+, so apparently White's only tries are 44. ♖f3 or 44. ♖e2 (not 44. ♖f1 ♗e3 again). Ready for the ride?

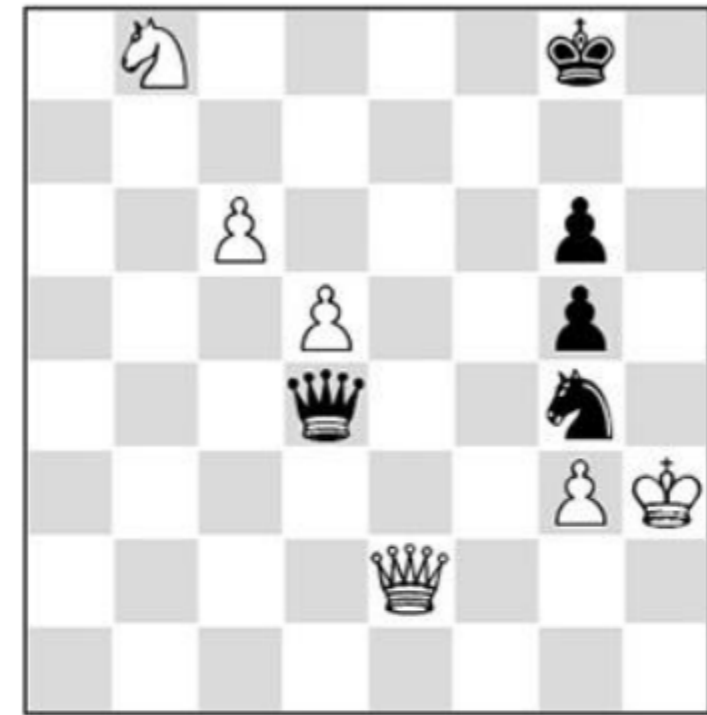
C1b24a) On 44. ♖f3 ♗e3 45. ♘h2 ♖d2+ 46. ♘g1 ♖e1+ 47. ♘h2 g4,



analysis diagram

mate hangs on g2 (48. ♖f4 ♕e2+), but 48. ♕e4 ♘f1+ or 48. c7 ♖d2+ 49. ♘g1 ♕c1+ win the ♕;

C1b24b) That leaves only 44. ♕e2,



analysis diagram

which 'obviously' (lol) loses to the brute force line 44... ♕h8+ 45. ♘g2 ♖h2+ 46. ♘f3 (46. ♘f1 ♖h1#) 46... ♕h1+.

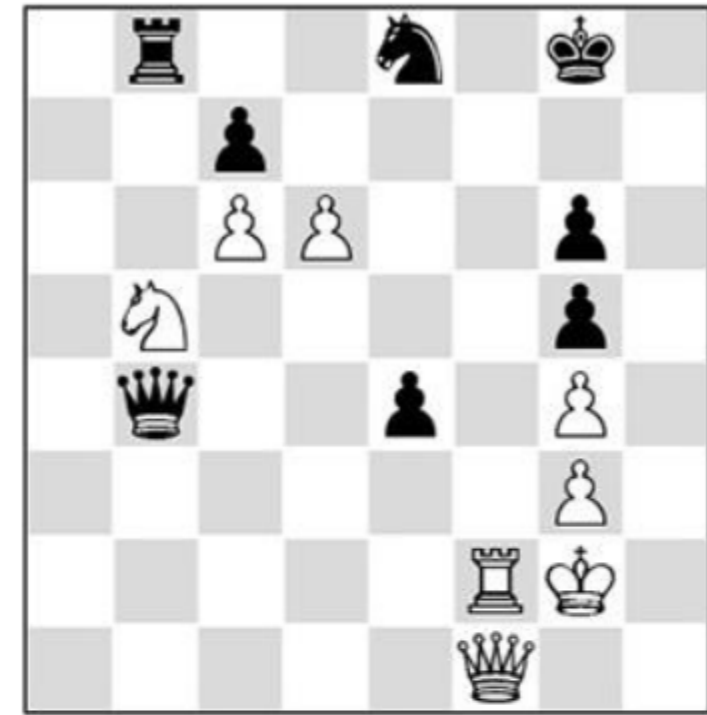
The geometry is so good, it begs one more diagram:





analysis diagram

47. ♖g2 ♜e5+ 48. ♜f2 ♜d3+, winning the queen after 49. ♜f3 ♜e1+!
 White had a wonderful equalizer, which sidesteps these treacherous lines:
 C2) Instead of 38. ♜xc7, he ought to play 38. d6!



analysis diagram

Now it's a forced draw after 38... ♜xd6 39. ♜xd6 ♜xd6 (on 39...cxd6? 40. ♜f6 only
 White has chances) 40. ♜f6 ♜b2+ 41. ♜h3! ♜e7 42. ♜xg6+ ♜h8! (42... ♜h7??
 43. ♜f5)

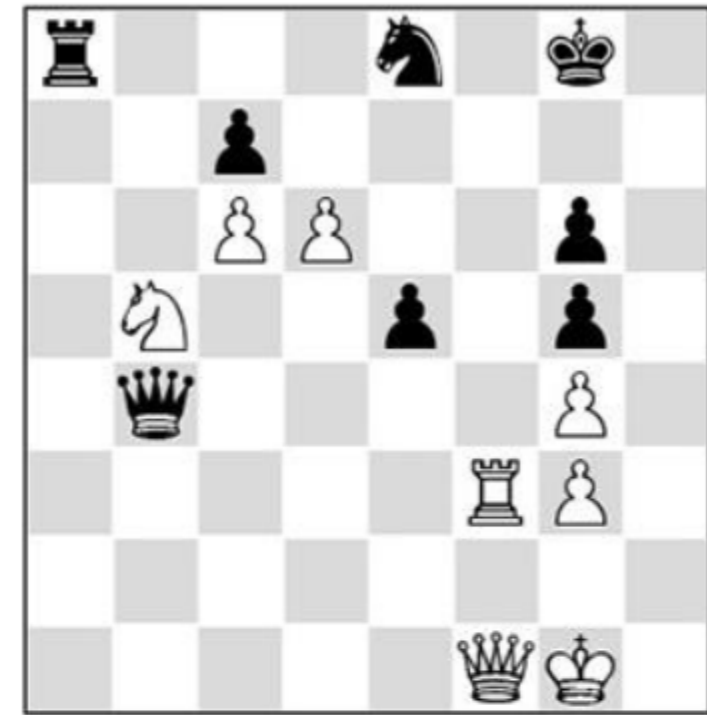




analysis diagram

43. ♖g8+! ♜g8 44. ♚f8+ and stalemate!

After all this fantasy chess comes the ironic verdict: Epishin's 36.d6 was a fine move...



36... ♜xd6 37. ♜xd6 cxd6

In typical Judit fashion, she pushes complications to the limit. After 37... ♜xd6 38. ♚c4+! Black's extra pawn is meaningless.

38. ♖f6 ♚b3



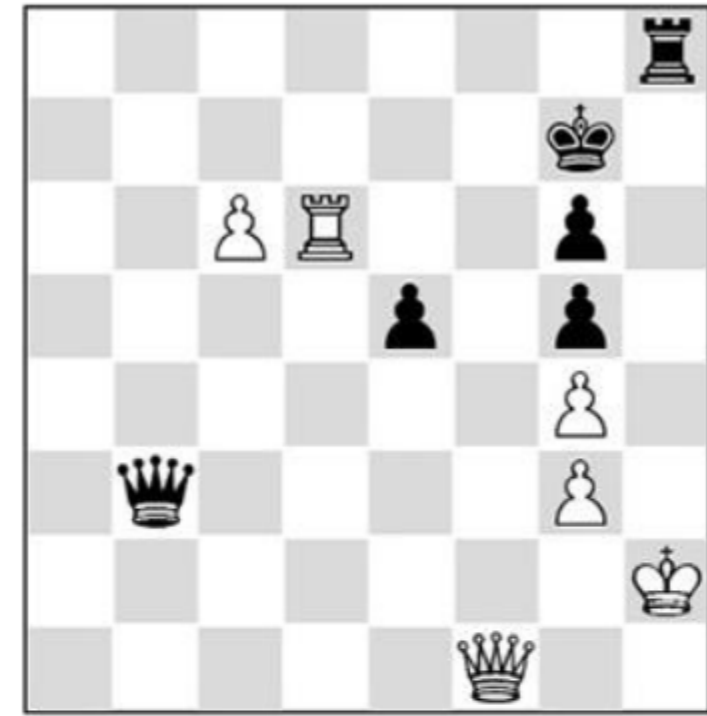


39. ♖h2??

JP forced Epishin to negotiate a maze right up to the time control, and it pays off.

Black must concede a draw after 39. ♜xg6+ ♕h7 40. ♜xd6 ♖xg3+ 41. ♖h1 ♗h4+ 42. ♖g1 ♗xg4+ 43. ♖h1 ♗h4+ 44. ♖g1.

39... ♖g7! 40. ♜xd6 ♜h8+ 0-1



The stock deflection blow 41. ♖g2 ♗c2+ 42. ♗f2 ♜h2+ is the end.

Michael Rohde was one of the best American GM's of his generation, with a blend of strong positional understanding and a nasty tactical sting. Like most of our leading lights he declined the permanent leap across the Atlantic to pursue his full chess potential, but unlike many others, including Tarjan, Rogoff and Wilder, he remained active and had considerable success. Here the crisis again falls just before the time control, and the narrow path to equality eludes White:

Game 65



Michael Rohde

2585

Judit Polgar

2575

New York 1992 (7)



38...f5 39. ♖xd8?

With more time I'm sure Rohde would have mustered the nimble tactics which save the game: 39. ♖d7! ♗xd7 40.exd7 ♘g5 41.bxc6

A) And now if 41... ♗xc6 42.exf5 gxf5,



analysis diagram

43. ♗xf5! with Black in trouble;

B) Forced instead is 41...bxc6 42. ♖g1+ ♗f6 (again, 42... ♗f4 43.exf5 gxf5 44. ♖g7 ♗d5 45. ♗xf5! ♗xf5 46. ♖f7+)





analysis diagram

43. ♖d1 ♜d8 44. ♖d6+ ♘g5 45. ♚c2.



analysis diagram

White's counterplay curiously holds the balance. After 45...fxe4 (45...♚f4 46.♚d3) 46.♚d2 ♜f5 47.♙xf5 gxf5 48.♚e3,





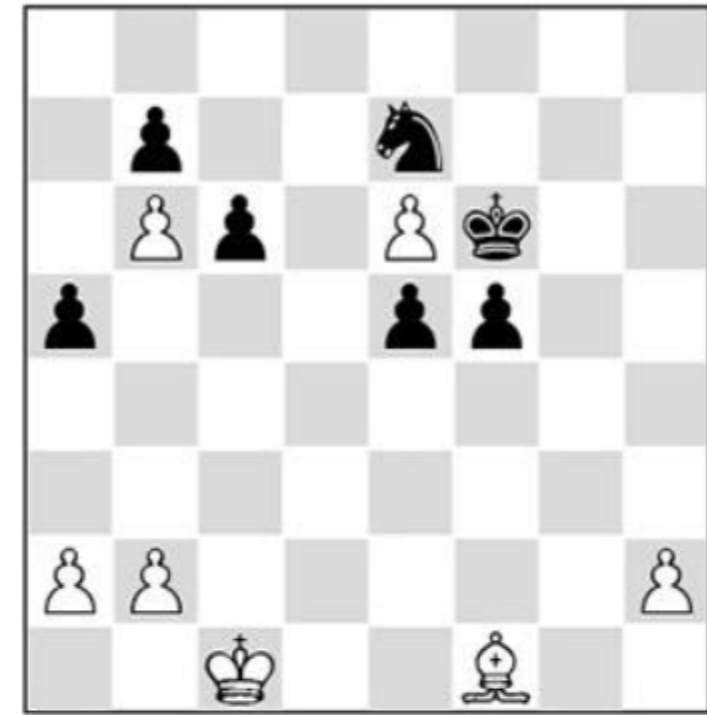
analysis diagram

it's an unusual positional draw, with Black's forces strangely neutralized.

Instead there followed

39... ♖xd8 40.b6 ♔g5 41. ♖c5 ♖d1+ 42. ♖c1 ♖xc1+ 43. ♔xc1 ♔f6 44.exf5 gxf5
45. ♔f1

The shallow threat 46. ♔a6 is the only slim reed remaining.



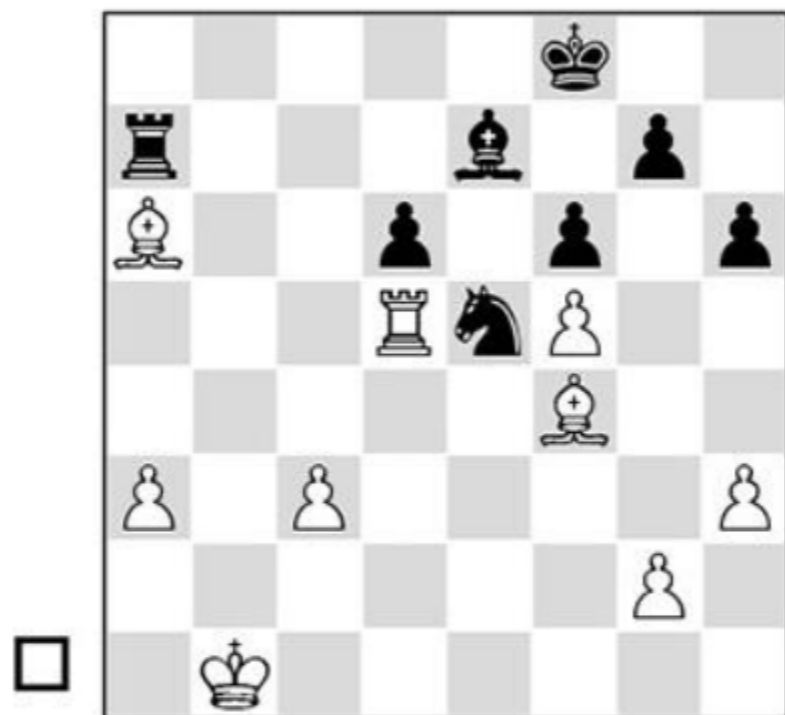
45... ♖c8 46. ♔a6 ♖d6 47. ♔f1 ♔xe6 48. ♔d2 e4 49.h4 f4 50. ♔c3 c5 51.a3 ♔e5
52.h5 ♔f5 53.b4 cxb4+ 54.axb4 a4 0-1

We've seen how JP's tactical endgame precision forced the opponent to find every last resource to split the point. She was also quite good at finding the narrow road to victory, as in this example:

Game 66

Judit Polgar





If 39. ♖xe5? ♜xa6 is tenable, but JP threads the needle with
 39. ♜a5! ♗c4 40. ♜a4



Fortunately 40... ♗b6 doesn't quite draw. A dogged defender might have tried this line, forcing an opposite-colored ♖ ending with practical chances, but the plucky American GM prefers to go down fighting. A sample line shows how Black's many targets impede the desired blockade: 40... ♗b6 41. ♖e3 ♖d8 42. ♜a2 ♜a8 43. ♖xb6 ♖xb6 44. ♜b3 ♖c5 45. ♖b5 ♜xa4 46. ♖xa4 ♜e7 47. ♖c6 ♜d8 48. a4 ♜c7 49. ♖e4 ♜b6 50. ♜c4 ♜c7 51. a5 ♖f2 52. a6 ♖c5 53. ♖b7 ♖e3 54. ♜d5 ♜d7 55. c4 h5 56. h4 ♜c7 57. ♜e6 ♖f2 58. ♜f7 ♖xh4 59. ♜xg7 ♖g5 60. ♜f7 h4 61. ♜e7



analysis diagram

Black has fought like the dickens, but still succumbs to zugzwang.

40...d5 41. ♔a2



Black flirts with holding, but this isn't horseshoes after all, and White's two bishops are fierce.

41... ♖xa3

41... ♗xa3 42. ♔b3 ±

42. ♔b3 ♖b1 43. ♗e3 ♗a8

Or 43... ♗c7 44.c4! dxc4+ 45. ♗xc4 ♗xc4 46. ♗xc4 ♖a3 47. ♗d3 and White wins.





44. ♖c1 ♗d6 45. ♔c2 ♜b8 46. ♜a2 ♜b6



All Black's squirming comes to naught:

47. ♗b2 ♜a3+ 48. ♜xa3 ♗xa3 49. ♗xa3+ ♔e8 50. ♗e2 1-0

Game 67

Eric Lobron

2585

Judit Polgar

2665

Dortmund 1996 (6)



No one was better at executing an endgame attack than Judit Polgar, and here another solid GM fails to meet the challenge:

48... ♖h2! 49.a5!

White relies on this resource, meeting 49... ♖xh6 with 50.a6 ♘e3 51. ♘e4!. Passive defense with 49. ♖g4 ♖g2 50. ♖f2 ♘e3 would be futile.

49... ♘e3 50. ♘e4 ♖a2



51. ♘xg6??

White seizes on 51... ♖xg6 52. ♖b8+ ♔e7 53. ♖f5+, but gets outcalculated. The only road to salvation was 51. ♖f7! ♖f2+ 52. ♔e1 ♖e2+=.





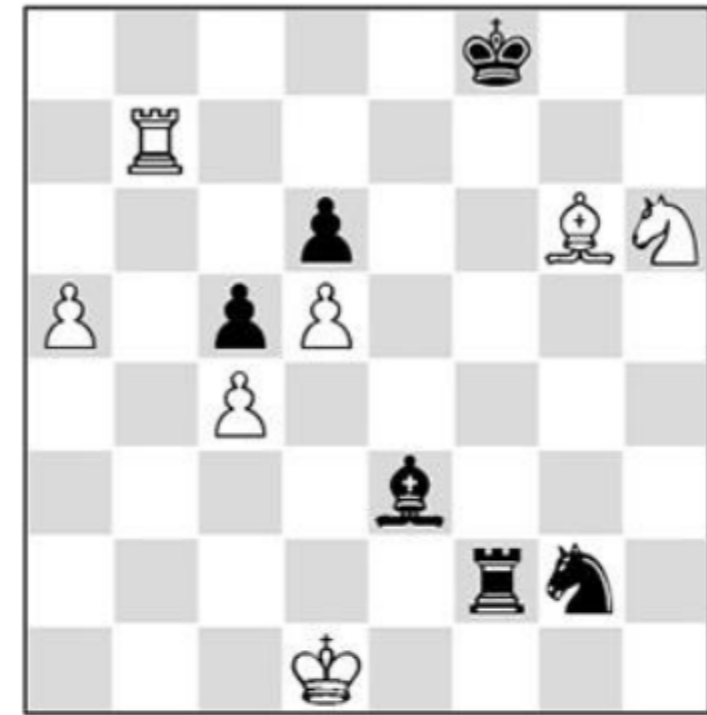
analysis diagram

Remarkably there's no mate, and Black must take the perpetual.

51... ♖f2+ 52. ♔e1

Not 52. ♕g1 ♖f3+ 53. ♕h2 ♖h3#.

52... ♗g2+ 53. ♕d1



53... ♗xh6 o-o

Now it's child's play: 54.a6 (54. ♖f7+ ♖xf7 55. ♗xf7 ♕xf7 56.a6 ♗e3+) 54... ♖d2+ 55. ♕c1 ♖a2+

Ruslan Ponomarev was the newly crowned FIDE World Champion when the next game was contested. JP had already beaten him brilliantly in the main blitz event, and now destroyed him again in a playoff for the title!

Game 68



Ruslan Ponomariov

2743

Judit Polgar

2685

Benidorm blitz 2002 (2)



Black is two pawns down, but watch those bishops! The gates are stormed with another ♗ sac:

33...f3+! 34. ♔g3

There's nowhere to hide! 34. ♕xf3 ♜bf8+ 35. ♕e2 ♜h2+ 34... ♜e5+ 35. ♕xf3 ♜h3+ 36. ♕e2 ♜h2+ 37. ♕e3 ♜xb2



Black's fine pseudo-sacrifice has netted a piece, and the attack continues. JP rarely blinked in such situations.

38. ♖a4

38. ♖e2 holds out longer but White's will is broken.

38... ♜xa2 39. ♜h1 ♜d4+ 40. ♕f3 ♜xb3+ 41. ♕f4





41...e5# 0-1

Game 69

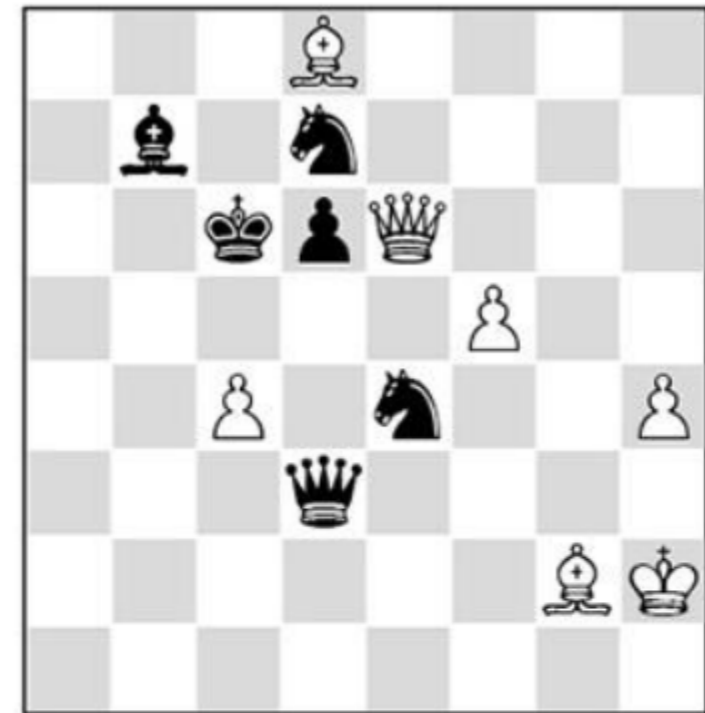
Ljubomir Ljubojevic

Judit Polgar

Monaco rapid 1995 (4)

2580

2630



48... ♖e5 49. ♕e8+?

In rapid one has to rely on instinct to navigate such wild positions, and Ljubo's guess was to keep pieces on the board. In a slow game he might have found the miracle draw: 49. ♖xe4+! ♕xe4 50. ♕e8+ ♔c5 51. ♕b5+ ♔d4 52. ♖b6+ ♔d3 53. ♕b3+ ♔d2 54. ♖a5+ ♔e2 55. ♕b2+





analysis diagram

Shockingly the ♔ can't hide, as is shown by the quirky dance 55... ♖d3 56. ♗b3+ ♖e2 (56... ♖d4?? 57. ♕b6#) 57. ♗b2+ ♖e3 58. ♗d2+ ♖f3 59. ♗g2+ ♖f4



analysis diagram

60. ♗g5+.
Now the ♔ zigzags to glory:
49... ♖c5





There's no transposing, because 50. ♖xe4 ♜g4+ leads to mate.

50. ♜b5+ ♔d4 51. ♘b6+ ♔c3 52. ♘a5+ ♔c2 53. ♜a4+ ♔b2 54. ♜b4+ ♔c1



55. ♜e1+

55. ♜xb7 ♜g4+ 56. ♔g1 ♜e3+ 57. ♔h1 ♜g3#

55... ♔c2 56. ♜f1 ♜g4+ 57. ♔g1 ♜e3+ 0-1

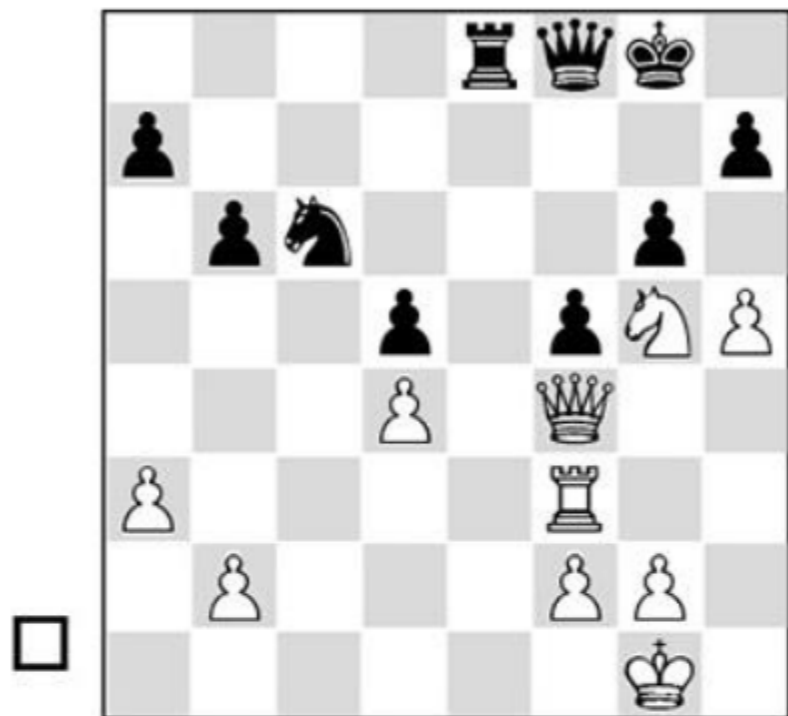
The following tactical endgame was the culmination of White's attack:

Game 70

Judit Polgar

Allan Rasmussen

2689



30. ♖g3 h6

Black grows impatient with the full-bore defense 30... ♜e7 31. ♜c3 ♞f6 32. h6 ± , and lashes out.

31. ♜f3 g5 32. ♜xg5 hxg5 33. ♜xg5+ ♔h7 34. ♜xf5 ♜e1+ 35. ♚h2 ♞b8



Black wants to stagger on, but JP avoids a ♚ trade on principle. In such positions this would needlessly forfeit her huge advantage in king position, so it's worth calculating the tactical basis for continuing the attack.

36. ♜f7+ ♔g8 37. ♜c7 ♜e7 38. h6 ♜e6 39. ♚g3+ ♜g6



The proverbial camel-breaking straw, envisioned long ago:

40.h7+l 1-0

And here we see the opposite: a fairly quiet middlegame position evolves into a ferociously sharp ending.

Game 71

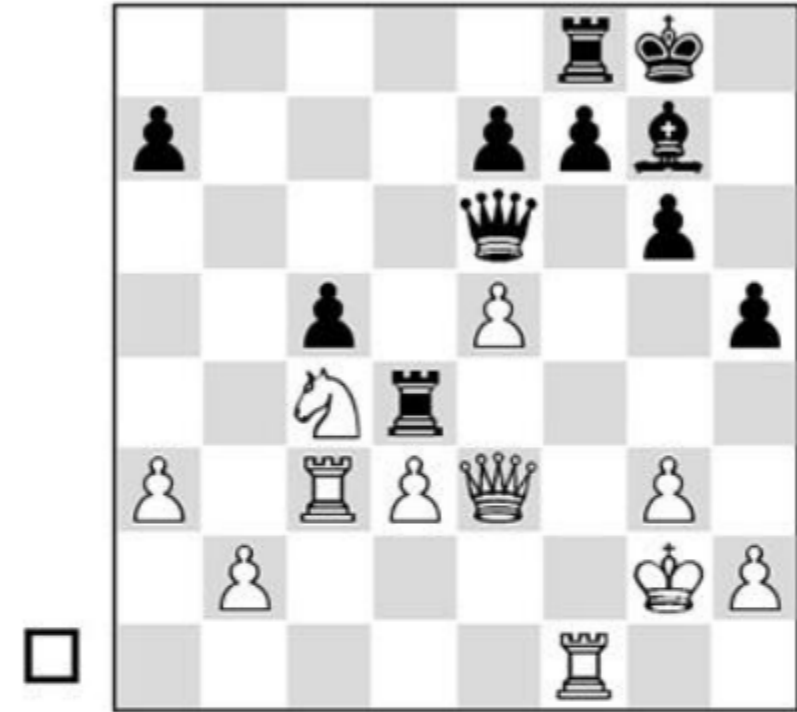
Valery Salov

2685

Judit Polgar

2635

Amsterdam 1995 (10)



Black has an obvious positional pull with sounder structure, safer king and better minor piece. A super-GM in all-out draw mode is a savage beast to subdue, and such minor plusses often dissipate. Judit opts for the sharpest approach, sacking a pawn for attack!

25.b4 cxb4 26. ♖xd4 bxc3 27. ♗xc3 ♕d5+ 28. ♜f3 g5 29. ♔f2 g4 30. ♜f5 e6 31. ♜xh5





White correctly jumped at the chance to liquidate his structural problems. Unfortunately, surviving the attack is now a herculean analytical exercise, which White is destined to fail before the time control.

32. ♖e2

32. ♗g1 ♜f3 ♠

32...fxe5 33. ♜d2 ♜g2+ 34. ♗d1 e4



35. ♜c4?

35. ♜g5! saves the day: 35... ♜g1+ 36. ♗c2 exd3+ 37. ♗xd3 ♜d8+ 38. ♗c2 ♜d4
39. ♜c8+ ♗h7 40. ♜xe6 ♜xd2+ 41. ♗xd2 ♜d4+=

35... ♜h1+ 36. ♗c2 exd3+ 37. ♜xd3

37. ♗xd3 ♜f3+ 38. ♜xf3 ♜f1+

37... ♜c8+ 38. ♜c4 ♜c6 39. ♗b3



39... ♖b8+ 40. ♔c2 ♜b2+ 0-1

Game 72

Vladimir Akopian

Judit Polgar

Enghien-les-Bains 2003 (2)

2703

2715



30...f3! 31. ♜xa5 ♜fe7!

31... ♜a7 is the computer favorite, but Black's move promises much more. After
 32. ♜xa7 ♜xa7 33. ♜a1 ♔f6 34. ♔f1 ♔e5 35. ♔e1 ♔xd5 36. a5 ♔c5 37. ♔d2 ♔b5
 38. ♜b1+ ♔xa5 39. ♔e3

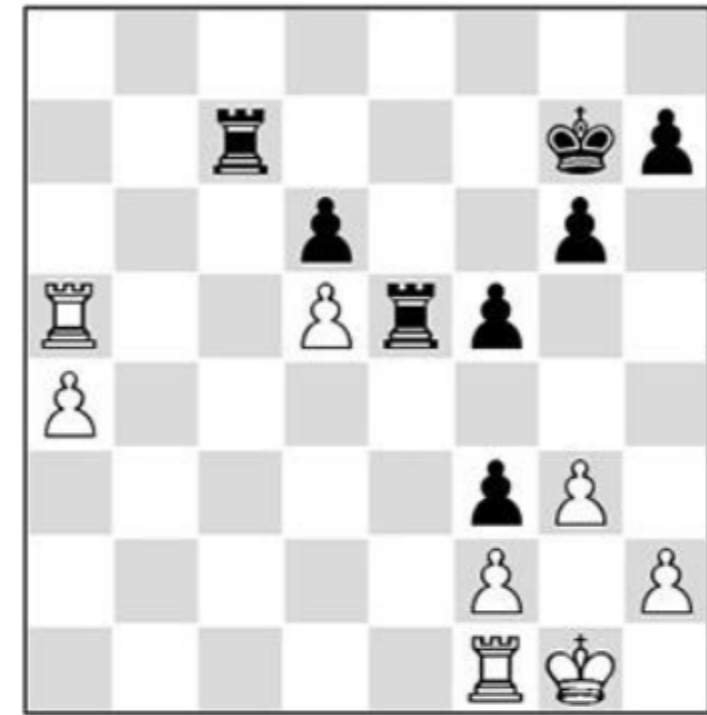




analysis diagram

White should hold. In the database of human experience, meaningful activity is almost always worth a pawn in inferior rook endings. JP's lack of materialism was quite correct here.

32. ♖f1 ♜e5



33. ♜b5

The engine impugns this move, granting Black a clear edge. But random evaluations are irrelevant if White can't improve his position, while Black surely will.

33... ♜c4 34.a5 ♜a4 35.h4 ♜a2 36. ♔h2 ♔f6





37.g4

The human need for activity is born of experience, and distrust of passive play. Indeed after 37. ♖b7 h5 38. ♖b5 ♜5e2 39. ♔g1, White wants for meaningful moves. The beauty of Judit's technique is her vigor in knowing when to allow, and tactically refute, the inevitable bid for counterplay.

37...fxg4 38. ♔g3 h5 39. ♖c1 g5 40. ♖c6 ♜e1 41. ♖xd6+ ♔f5 42. ♖f6+ ♔xf6 43.hxg5+ ♔g6 0-1

Game 73

Murtas Kazhgaleyev

2579

Judit Polgar

2727

Calatrava rapid 2007 (4)



In view of White's activity and the limited material, it's rather shocking that Black's counterplay against the king is worth more than the exchange here:

38... ♜c3! 39. ♜xg5



A) If 39. ♖c1 ♘d4+ 40. ♕h2 ♜b1! 41. ♞xc4 ♙e5,



analysis diagram

White is curiously powerless against the threat 42... ♖e2++. On 42. ♞c2 ♖e2++ 43. ♕h1 ♜a1 (43... ♞xc1+ 44. ♞xc1 ♖xc1 45. ♞a3; 43... ♖xc1 44. ♞f1) 44. ♞e3 ♖xc1 45. ♞e1 ♖d3, the two pieces eventually win out;

B) A picturesque 'duo' occurs if White holds the g1-a7 diagonal to avoid his fate in the game: 39. ♙a7 ♜b1+ 40. ♕f2



analysis diagram

40... ♞f1+ 41. ♕e3 ♜e1+ 42. ♕f2 ♖e4/h1#!

39... ♞b1+ 40. ♕f2 ♙d4+ 0-1





It's mate after the 'self-blocking' 41. Ke3 Rf1.

Game 74

Pedrag Nikolic

Judit Polgar

Kallithea tt 2002 (6)

2653

2681



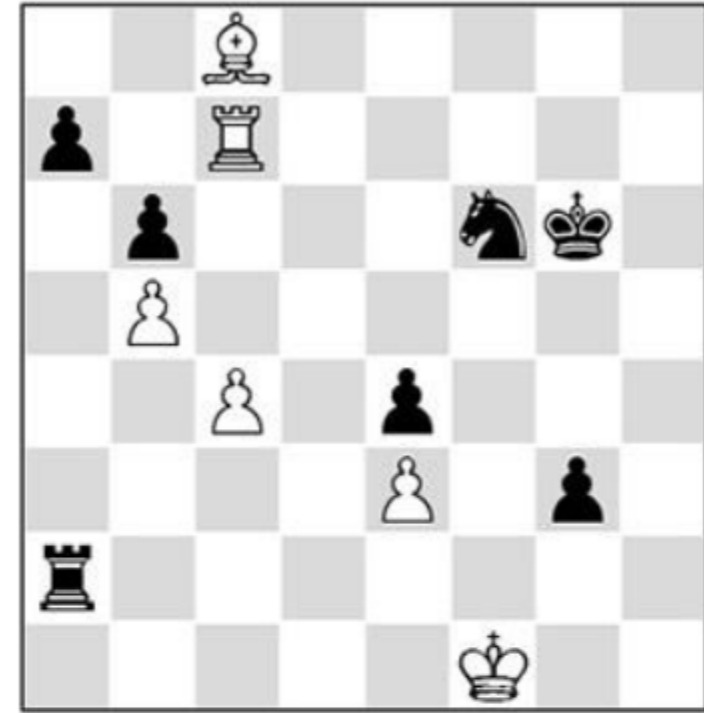
White is counting on the active defense 46...g2? 47. Rg7!, and White is even better after 47... h4? 48. Qxe4+ or 47... Rd7?? 48. Qc8. Instead, the forcing retreat **46... Qg6!** creates the nasty threat 47... Rd2+!. **47. Qc8** Bailing out with 47. Qd5 hxd5 48. cxd5 Rxd5 49. Qf1 (49. Rxa7 Rd1!) 49... Qf5 50. Qg2 (50. Rxa7 Qg4 51. Rf7 Rd1+ 52. Qg2 Rd2+ 53. Qg1 Rxa2+) 50... Rd2+ 51. Qxg3 Rxa2+ is not much better.





analysis diagram

47... ♖d2+! 48. ♔f1 ♖xa2 49. b5



49... ♞h7! o-o

A textbook example of a forcing retreat I categorized in *Forcing Chess Moves*: the repositioning maneuver. The ♞ goes backward to find the path to g5, when twin threats of ...g3-g2+ or ... ♞f3 with ... ♖f2# defy response.

Game 75

Miguel Illescas Cordoba

Judit Polgar

Las Palmas 1994 (1)



White's furious counterplay barely compensates the ominous passers, but when the Spaniard misses his arcane opportunity, JP navigates the chaos perfectly:

53... ♖a6! 54. ♙xa6

If White were a 3500 rated computer he would draw: 54. ♙xb6!! a1♚ 55. ♖xa6 ♚d1+ 56.g4 ♚c2 57. ♖a8+ ♚g7 58. ♖a7+ ♚h8



analysis diagram

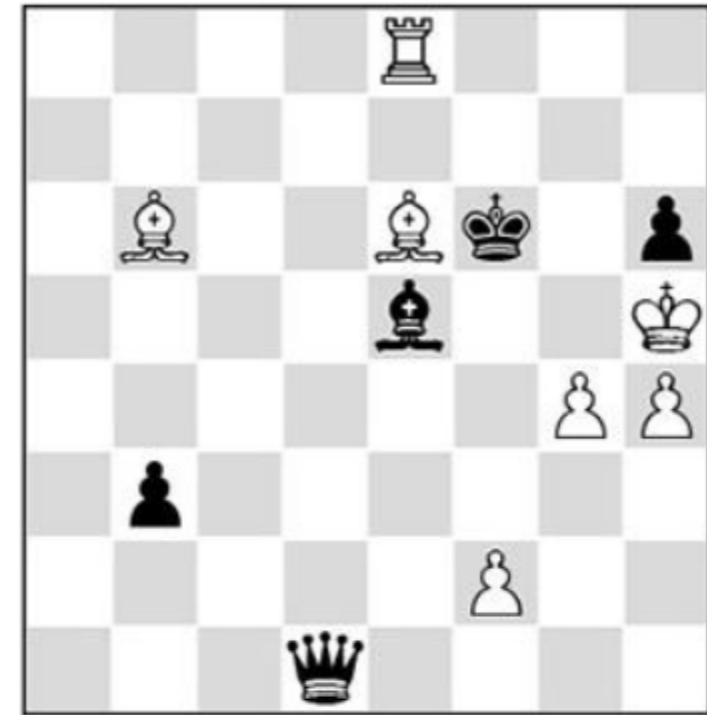
Now there's a lovely draw which any human GM could probably find, with only 20 hours of research and a few helpers: 59. ♖c7!! ♙e5 60. ♙e6!!





analysis diagram

- A) Now 60... ♖xc7 61. ♙d4+ ♔h7 62. ♙f5+ solves all White's problems;
 B) So 60... ♚d1 61. ♜c8+ ♔g7 62. ♜g8+ and now:
 B1) 62... ♗f6 63. ♜e8!



analysis diagram

- Suddenly White's trumps are stronger: 63...b2 64. ♔xh6! or 63... ♚g7 64. ♙e3!;
 B2) Forced instead was 62... ♔h7,





analysis diagram

when after 63. ♖d8 or 63. ♖e8, White's play is good enough to draw, at least in the silicon realm.

You must concede that human frailty, not GM Illescas, is to blame for his faith in the venomous-looking game continuation.

54... a1 ♔

54... ♙a3! is also good.

55. ♙c5+



55... ♔e8 56. ♖a8+

Not 56. ♙xb6 ♔d1+ 57.g4 ♔d5+.



Now it seems a bishop discovery regains the queen, but...

56... ♖b8! 57. ♖xb8+ ♔d7 58. ♗e2



58... ♗d4!

White is toast; he can't eliminate the infernal b-pawn due to a queen fork.

59. ♗g4+ ♔c7 60. ♗xd4 ♕a5+ 61. ♔xh6 ♖xb8 62. ♔g6 ♕b5 63. ♗f5 b2 64. f4
 ♕xf5+ 65. ♔xf5 b1 ♕+

and ... ♚-1 shortly.

Here is one more exciting endgame in which JP's attacking instincts carry the day. The engine punctuates her brilliance with dazzling variations:

Game 76

Pavel Tregubov

2583

Judit Polgar

2735

Bastia m rapid 2005 (2)



32...e3!

Black's extra pawn is tough to exploit with the fat weakness on d6. This positional

sacrifice, disrupting White's structure and king position, yields surprising attacking chances.

33.fxe3 ♖c7 34.♔f2 h5 35.♕d3 ♜e7

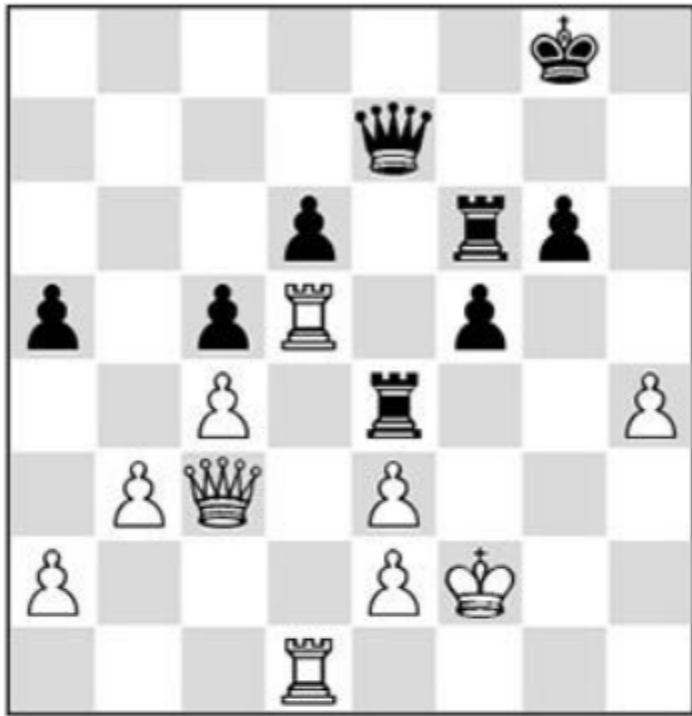


36.♕c3

Or 36.♜h1 ♜f8 37.♜d1 ♜e8.

36...h4! 37.gxh4 ♜e4

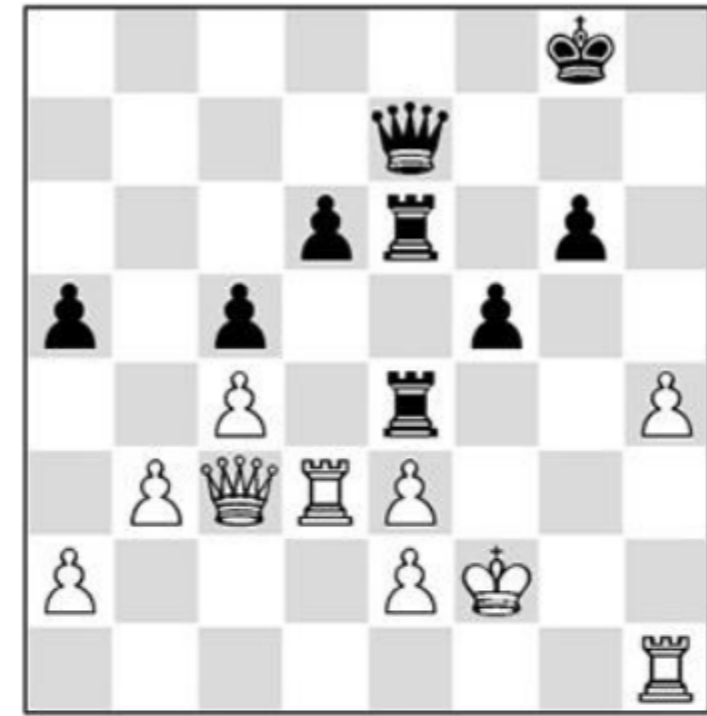
37...f4! might be better, but Judit's plan of attack is simple and strong.



38. ♖g1?

Black can scarcely defend perfectly in rapid, so the marvelous tactics stay hidden in

the notes: 38. ♖5d3 ♖fe6 39. ♖h1



analysis diagram

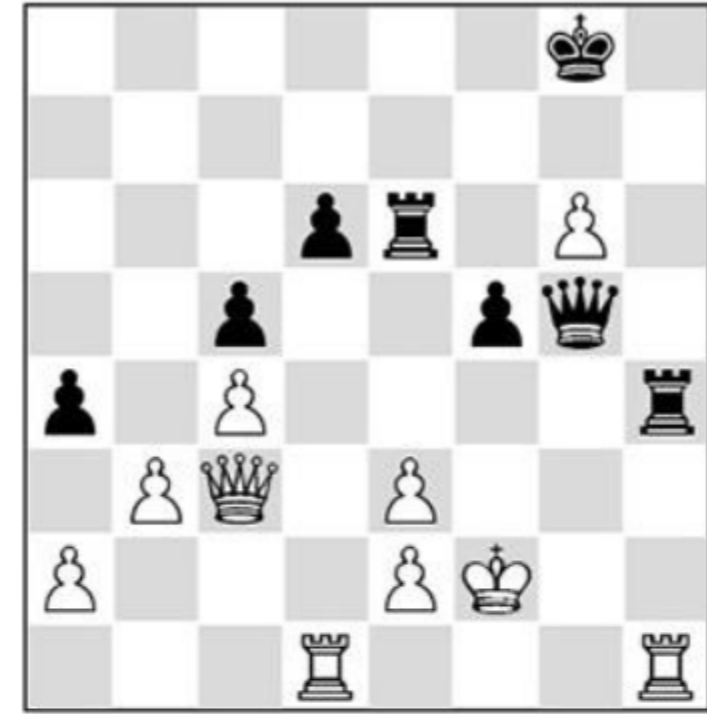
A) White plans the spectacular defense 39... ♖xh4 40. ♖xa5! ♖ee4! (40... ♖xh1 41. ♖a8+ regaining the ♖!) 41. ♖f1 ♖h2+ 42. ♖e1 ♖xe3 43. ♖xe3 ♖xe3 44. ♖d2, holding the fort;





analysis diagram

B) Black can improve in the prior diagram: 39...a4! 40.h5 ♖h4!, and now:
 B1) 41. ♖dd1 ♔g5! 42.hxg6



analysis diagram

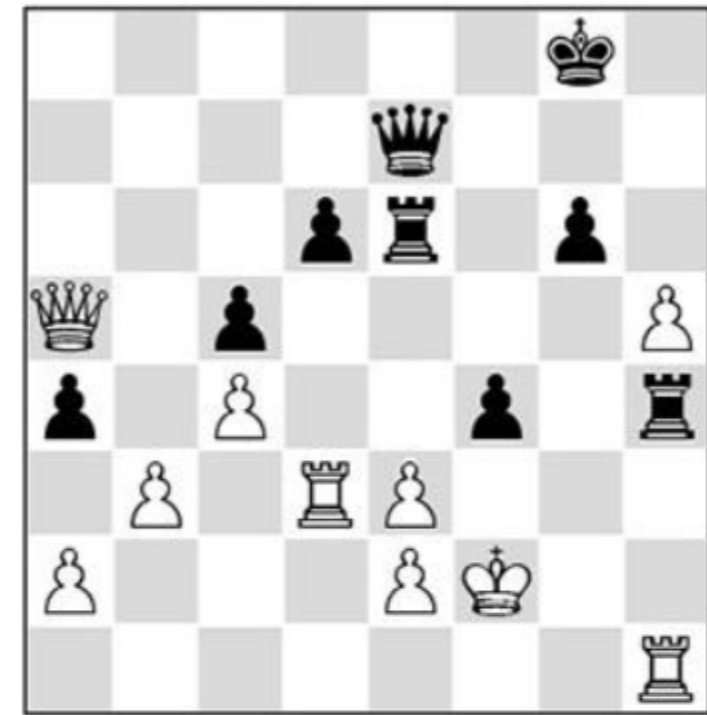
42... ♔h6!!-+ 43. ♔c1 f4 44.e4 ♖h2+ 45. ♖xh2 ♔xh2+ 46. ♔e1 ♖xe4 47. ♔c2
 ♔g1+ 48. ♔d2



analysis diagram

The prosaic 48...♔e3+ and 48...f3 wins, but much prettier is the study-like 48...♖xe2+!! 49.♔xe2 ♕g2+ 50.♔d3 ♕f3+ 51.♔d2 ♕e3#;

B2) Another try is 41.♕a5 f4!,



analysis diagram

but Black's attack is still decisive, e.g. 42.♕a8+ ♔g7 43.hxg6 ♖xe3 44.♖d2.

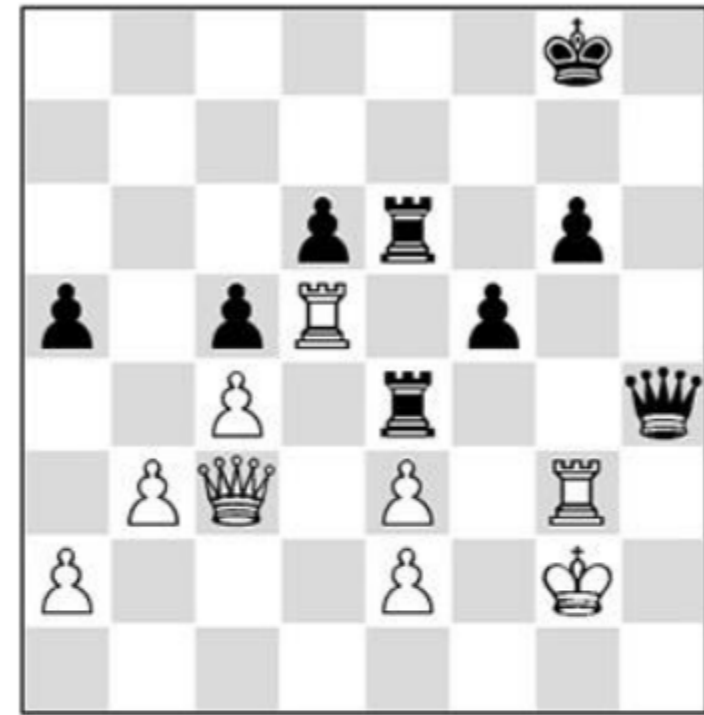


analysis diagram

44... ♖c3 45. ♔e1 f3, with king safety the deciding factor.

Instead after 38. ♖g1 White expires quietly:

38... ♖fe6 39. ♖g3 ♔xh4 40. ♔g2



40...f4 41. ♖f3 ♖xe3 o-o

Shots!

Since I was a young hopeful competing during the ‘Fischer boom’ of the 1970’s, a crushing, surprise tactical blow was usually described by a single word – shot (though I’m the first to agree, Americans are way too fond of guns! IM Vitaly Zaltsman suggested that if we just resolved our disputes over the chessboard, there’d be no more wars)!

One of the great joys of playing at all levels is the chance to execute a devastating move, and watch the opponent’s hopes implode in a single stroke. Spectators have always thrilled at to the sight of tactical bombshells dropped in high level play, where technical conversions have long been far more common. In Marshall’s chess memoir he relates that his famous ‘shower of gold’ game vs Levitsky (1912) was not a myth – the spectators really did throw gold pieces on the board after 23... ♔g3!!:



Some dispute this account, but the myth itself shows how much we venerate beautiful moves. There are no ‘shower of gold’ anecdotes (that I know of) around accurate technique in dull endings (call me romantic, but I’m still inclined to believe the American champion).

The love of exciting play explains why Tal and Polgar are everyman’s favorites, while great technical champions like Botvinnik and Karpov rarely inspire such raptures. Judit had the pleasure of destroying masters’ hopes with a well-timed blow, from an amazingly early age. Indeed, she admits that outcalculating strong players

and landing the killer shot always remained her greatest joy as a chess player.

To play a 'haymaker', you must first lay an ambush; the element of surprise is what elevates a strong tactic to the status of a shot. The ambush can come about in many ways; as the hidden culmination of a strong attack, or out of seemingly 'normal' defensive or positional moves concealing a tactical minefield. Once the trap is set, razor-sharp calculation is required, ensuring all is in order for the final assault. JP was phenomenally good at both these aspects: setting the stage, and executing the blow; which is why she landed more and better shots in one good year, than many GM's play in their whole careers!

Many shots are engendered by peering deeply into a critical forcing line...

Game 77

Judit Polgar

2550

Gerhard Schroll

2370

Vienna 1991 (7)



White has more space and pressures the isolated d-pawn, but Black's worries vanish if the ...d6-d5 break succeeds. Opening the center carries risk, though. Black's ♖a5 is loose, so a stronger warrior would be ultra-cautious: a shot could be lurking...

22. exd5 ♜xe1+ 23. ♚xe1 ♜xd5?

Missing the point, but Judit was poised for all kinds of fun against the better tries:

A) 23... ♚h7 24. ♜e6! fxe6 25. dxe6 ♚b6 26. ♜xf6 ♜xf6 27. ♜d7+ ♚h8 28. ♚e4 ♜g8 29. e7 ♚b8 30. ♜h5!





analysis diagram

It's mate after 30...gxh5 31.e8♔ ♔xe8 32.♔h7# or just disaster after 30...♔e5 31.♔xe5 ♕xe5 32.♖d8;

B) If instead 23...♔b6, Judit's plan was undoubtedly...



analysis diagram

24. ♖df5!? (24. ♔d2 ±) 24...gxf5 25. ♖xf5 ♖e8 26. ♖e7+ ♔h7 27.d6 ♖b7 28. ♕xf6 ♕xf6 29. ♔e4+ ♔g7 30. ♔g4+ ♔h8 31. ♔h5 (hitting h6 and f7) 31... ♕xe7 32. ♔xh6+ ♔g8





analysis diagram

33.d7! ♔xh6 34.dxe8 ♔+ ♕f8 35. ♔e4, when White should prevail.
The game continuation 23... ♖xd5? was much more naïve:

The shot!



24. ♖e6!

24... ♔e7

Black is utterly busted. 24...fxe6 25. ♔xe6+ ♕h7 26. ♖xd5 is devastating.

25. ♖xg7 ♔xe1+ 26. ♖xe1 ♖b4 27. ♖d1



The ♖g7 will soon be extricated by f4-f5, so Black belatedly seeks activity.

27... ♖c2 28. ♜d8+ ♔h7 29. ♙f6 ♘ac6 30. ♜f8 ♘d5 31. ♘e8l



One last trick is all she wrote:

31... ♘xf6 32. ♜xf7+ 1-0

Game 78

Alonso Zapata

2490

Judit Polgar

2555

New York 1989 (6)





It seems implausible that White could be lost in three moves, but Black has surprising attacking resources, including a hidden shot.

33... ♖b5!

Setting the ambush.

34.b3?!

The main line is 34. ♖d4 ♜e2 35.b3 ♜g5 36. ♖xd6 (36. ♜c7 ♜d5) 36... ♜c8! (threatening 37... ♜xg2!; also good is 36... ♜d2 37. ♖a3 ♜d5) 37.h3 ♜d2.

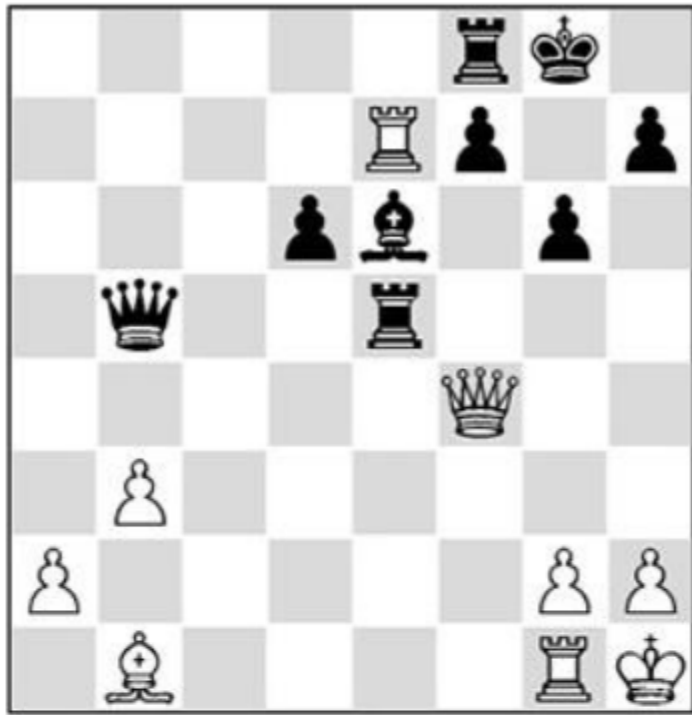


analysis diagram

Now holding the rook with 38. ♖b4 fails to 38... ♜xh3! 39.gxh3 ♜xg1+!, so White must try 38. ♜xe6! ♜xd6 39. ♜xd6 to retain any hope. Instead after 34.b3 White had little to play for after...

The shot!





34... ♖xb3! 35. ♔f6

Clearly lost is 35. ♖xe5 dxex5.

35... ♗e6+ ... 0-1 (71)

It may be no exaggeration to call Judit one of the best players ever against the Berlin Defense. Smashing wins over Kasparov, Anand, Smyslov and Karjakin lend credence to this claim. With her direct approach she seemed to shrug and say, 'thanks for the free pawn majority'. In this encounter Black had excellent holding chances – but of course no more – before blundering with 35... ♗e8-f7??:

Game 79

Judit Polgar

2555

Erling Mortensen

2475

Vejstrup 1989

The shot!



36.f6l ♖xf6 37. ♖xf6 ♜xf6 38. ♜f1+ ♜g6 38... ♜g7 39. ♖f5+
39. ♜xf8 ♜e3 40. ♜f3 1-0

Here's a shot fest that occurred mostly in the notes, but is so glorious that we can't resist including it. It involves JP's unique early Benko Gambit adventures:

Game 80

Alon Greenfeld

2535

Judit Polgar

2555

Haifa Ech tt 1989 (2)

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 b5 4. ♖f3 g6 5.cxb5 a6 6. ♖c3 axb5 7.d6 ♜g7 8.e4 o-o 9.e5
♖g4 10. ♜g5



10... ♖xe5!??

Objectively better is 10... ♖c6 11. ♜xb5 f6, but I can't recall an analogous position where Black allows the apparently annihilating 11.dxe7. Judit's boundless creativity has unearthed not one, but two bonecrushing shots which are like twin variations of a composed study: 11.dxe7 ♜e8!! 12.exd8♜??

The shot #1





analysis diagram

12... ♖xf3#!

But why not 11. ♗xe7, you ask? Greenfeld played this, but after 11... ♜e8! he had to avoid a second stunning mate: 12. ♖xe5?! (he played the better 12. ♗xb5) 12... ♗xe5!



analysis diagram

Now Black equalizes after 13. ♖xb5 ♗xd6!, but 13. ♗xd8?? is refuted by...

The shot #2!



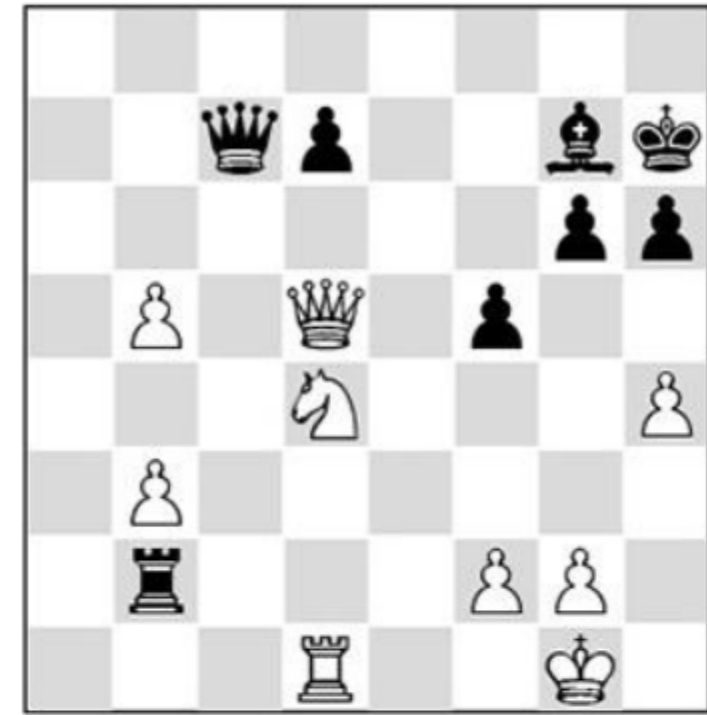


analysis diagram

13... ♙xc3#!

Greenfeld dodged these grenades admirably and amassed a big edge. In *Judit Polgar Teaches Chess (Vol. 1)*, JP relates that he landed in time pressure (who wouldn't against this insane variation?) and her last move 28... ♖b6-c7 seemed innocent. Instead of 29. ♖c4 with a big edge, White fell for a monster swindle with 29. h3-h4??

The shot #3!



29... ♜d2!

White can now resign since 30. ♜xd2 ♖c1+ 31. ♚h2 ♖xd2 wins a piece and the game. Instead he pitched the knight with 30. ♜e1 ♜xd4 and gave up after the time control.

Black's thematic shot in the following fragment isn't even on the computer's 'radar' – it barks out = until...

Game 81



Spyridon Skembris

2455

Judit Polgar

2550

Corfu 1990 (3)

The shot!



19...g3!

This line-clearing sac unleashes winning tactics:

20. ♖xg3

20.hxg3 is worse: 20... ♜g4 21. ♚e1 ♘b4 22. ♚b1 a4 23. ♘c1 (23.a3 axb3 24.axb4 ♜xa1 25. ♚xa1 ♚d2)



analysis diagram

23... ♚d2 and 24... ♜xf2. White is so bollixed that even the computer joke 23... ♚e3! wins.





21. ♖f3

Giving up the exchange is forced, though Black's demolition of 21. ♖c2 is a little different here: 21... ♗b4 22. ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 23. ♖b1 ♖e3+ 24. ♗h1 ♗d3



analysis diagram

The interference shot 25... ♗c1! looms and if 25. ♖g1, 25... ♗xb2 26. ♖xe3 ♗xe3 27. ♗xa5 ♗d2—+.

21... ♗xf3 22. ♗xf3 ♗b4 23. a4?!

23. ♖d1

23... ♖e3+ 24. ♖xe3 ♗xe3+ 25. ♗g2 ♗d3 26. ♖b1 ♗b6



Protecting c7 while keeping the long diagonal denies compensation, and JP eventually prevailed.

Game 82

Judit Polgar

2540

Yge Visser

2340

Amsterdam 1990 (4)



36... ♙xb4??

Judit has pressed White in a complicated ending. Like so many others, Black fails the final test before time control.

He holds with 36... ♜e1+ 37. ♚g2 ♛e6 38. ♜xb7 ♙xb4 39. ♜a7 ♜a1.





analysis diagram

Now White must bail for equality with 40. ♖xa6 ♜xa5 41. ♖c6 since getting too fancy spells trouble: 40. ♙c7? ♙xc5 41. ♙b6 ♙d6! (not 41... ♙xb6 42. axb6 ♙d6 43. ♖e7) 42. ♖xa6 ♙d5 ♠

The shot!



37.c6! bxc6

Black is bamboozled after 37... ♙xd6 38. ♖xd6+ ♙g7 39. cxb7 ♖e8 40. ♖xa6 ♖b8 41. ♖b6. But now White took the bishop and won ten moves later.

Game 83

Judit Polgar

Aurelien Mathe

2550

2050



Would you like to achieve this Sicilian-bashing attack at age 13, and round it off with brilliant mate? Come on, be honest...

25... ♖xg2+ 26. ♔g1 g6

The shot!



27. ♕xf7+!

The haymaker JP had envisioned: 27... ♕xf7 28. ♖xf7 ♕xf7 29. ♘c4+ and mate!

Blitz is blitz, and JP gave poor Ljubo fits in the following game.

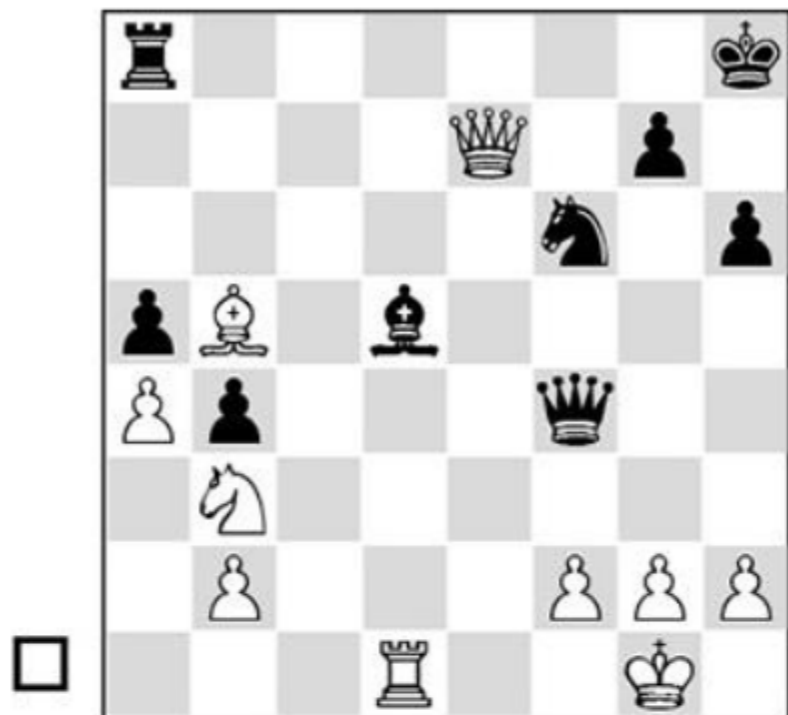
Game 84

Judit Polgar

Ljubomir Ljubojevic

Roquebrune blitz 1992





It seems he's landing a double-threat with b3 loose, as well as 34... ♖xg2 with 35... ♗g4+, but White's innocent reply concealed her own ambush:

34. ♖d4 ♗xg2?

34... ♖g4! gives equalizing play: 35. ♗h4 ♜f8 36. f3 (or 36. ♗c6 ♖xf2 37. ♗xf4 ♜xf4

38. ♜d2 ♖e4 39. ♜d1 ♖f2=) 36... ♗e3+ 37. ♗f1 ♗f4

Instead came...

The shot!



35. ♗xg7+! ♖xg7 36. ♖e6+ ♗f7 37. ♖xf4 ♗f3

Black's woes transcend the pawn minus, especially after his next move.

38. ♗c4+ ♖e7? 39. ♜e1+ ♖d7 40. ♗b5+ ♖c7 41. ♜e7+ ♖d8 42. ♜f7 ♜c8 43. ♖e6# 1-0

At Hastings 1992, JP had just recently adopted the KID. Clearly there was a learning curve, and she was getting destroyed in the opening by IM Colin Crouch. After a furious tactical defense Judit somehow reached this position:



Game 85

Colin Crouch

2425

Judit Polgar

2575

Hastings 1992/93 (1)

The shot!



White needs to liberate the rook with 35. ♖a5, but a terrifying blow adds insult to injury:

34...h5!

A crushing breakthrough follows on g2.

35. ♖h3 ♜g4! 36. ♗a5 ♗g5+ 37. ♕h2 h4 0-1

Game 86

Atanas Kolev

2510

Judit Polgar

2595

Budapest zt 1993 (11)

The shot! (part 1)





21... ♖xa3!

This tempting blow is completely justified: 22. ♙xa3 ♚xa3+

A) 23. ♘b1 e4!



analysis diagram

24. ♗dxe4 (24. ♚c4 b5!) and the pin 24... ♙f5 is too strong, e.g. 25. ♚a2 ♚b4;

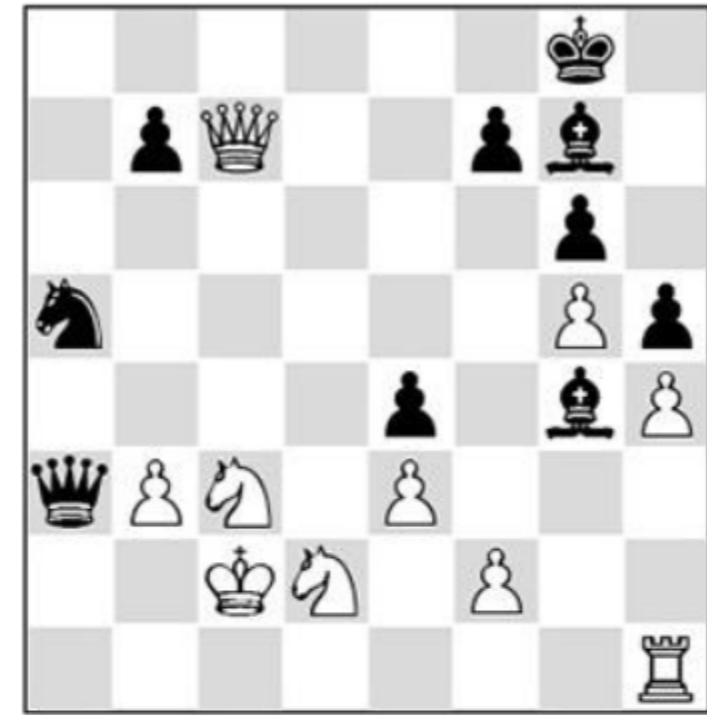
B) 23. ♘d1 e4 24. ♚c4 (24. ♗db1 ♚a1)





analysis diagram

24... ♖a5! 25. ♙xc7 ♜g4+ 26. ♙c2



analysis diagram

26... ♖c6!, and 27... ♖b4+, a repositioning crusher.
White declined the sac but didn't fare much better:

22. ♜d1 e4 23. ♖cxe4??

Leads to mate, but the chances of withstanding JP's attack after 23. ♖d5 ♙c5+ (23... ♜a1+ 24. ♖b1) 24. ♙c4 ♙a5 were next to nil.

The shotl (part 2)



23... ♖a1+! 24. ♙xa1 24. ♚c2 ♜b4# 24... ♛a3+ 0-1

Game 87

Judit Polgar

Veselin Topalov

Dos Hermanas 1994 (7)

2630

2640



32. ♙xf6

Black's defense rested on 32. ♛xe6+?? ♛xe6 33. ♖xe6 ♖aa2 34. ♙xf6 gxf6 35. ♖ee2 ♙c5! – turning the tables.

32...gxf6

The shot!

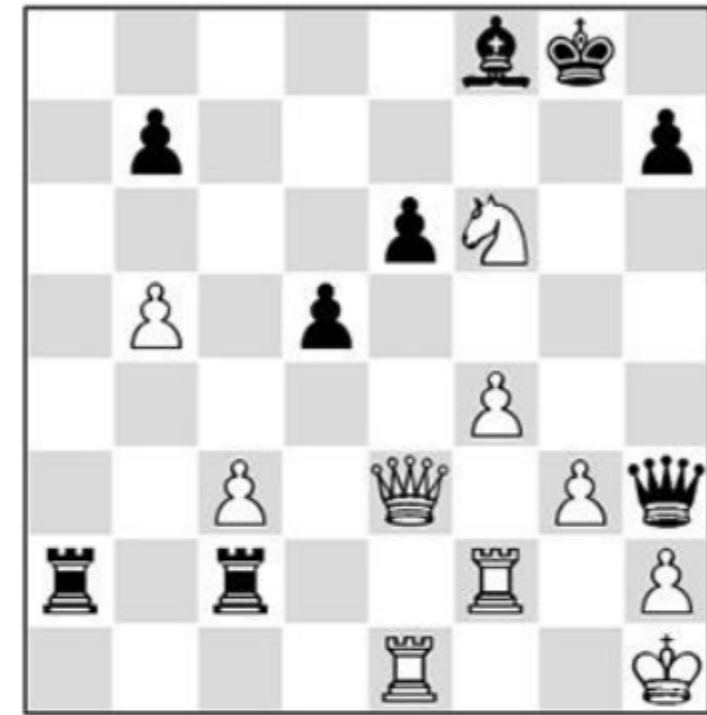




33. ♖e4! ♜aa2

The great maestro is forced to go the active route, since 33... ♜xf2 34. ♖xf2 ♜f5 35. ♜xe6+ ♜xe6 36. ♜xe6 ♞c5 37. ♖g4 ♜a3 38. ♖xf6+ ♜f7 39. f5 ♜xc3 40. ♖xd5 is a dead bust. Of course JP is happier playing for mate!

34. ♖xf6+



34... ♜h8

A) On 34... ♜f7 comes the beautiful 35. f5!;

A1) If then 35...exf5, 36. ♜e6+

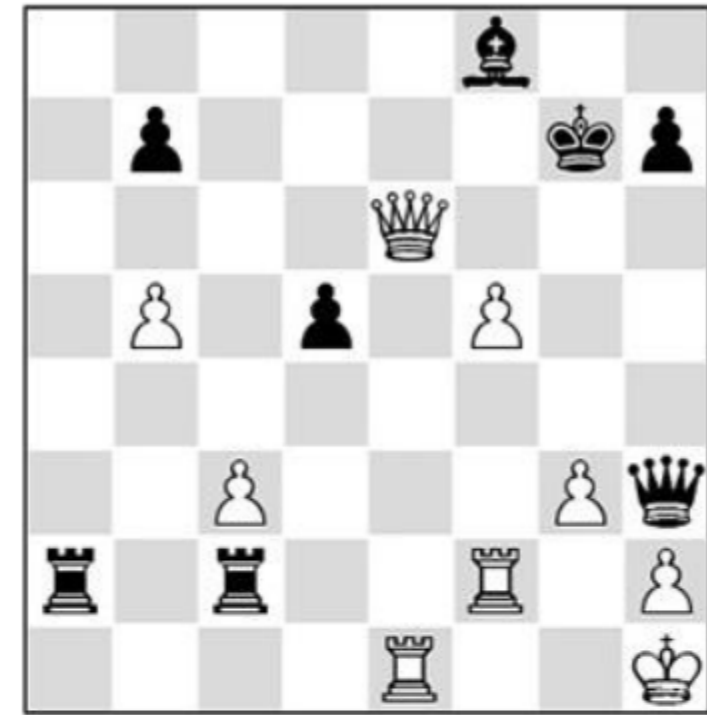




analysis diagram

36... ♖g7 37. ♔g8+ ♜xf6 38. ♚e6# or 36... ♖g6 37. ♜d7+;

A2) If instead 35... ♜xf6, 36. ♔xe6+ ♜g7 (36... ♜g5 37. ♔g8+),



analysis diagram

the discovery 37. ♚xc2 ♚xc2 38. f6+ wins the queen.

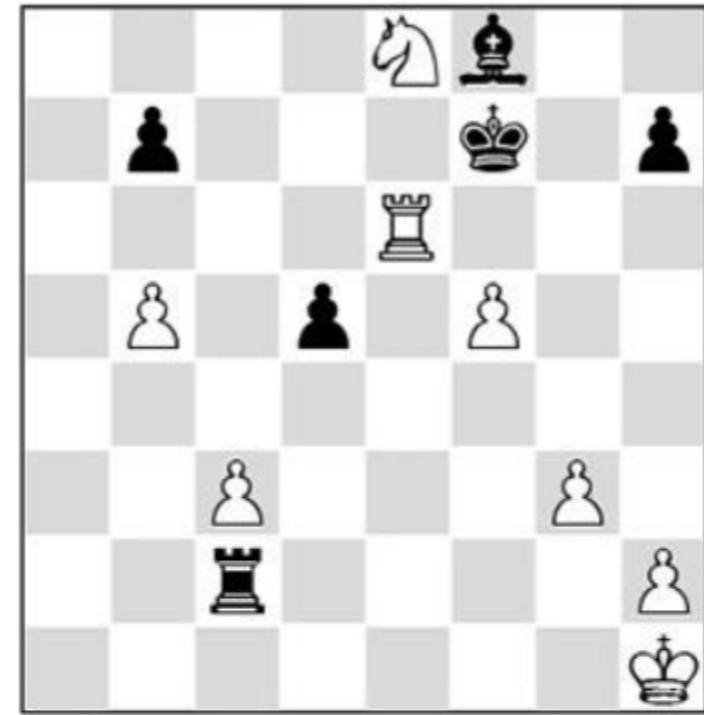
B) Finally, on 34... ♜g7,





analysis diagram

one way is 35. ♖e8+ ♘g8 (35... ♘f7 36.f5!) 36. ♖xc2 ♖xc2 37. ♙xe6+ ♙xe6
 38. ♖xe6 ♘f7 39.f5 with a winning ending.



analysis diagram

After the game line
 34... ♘h8





play concluded

35. ♔e5 ♖xf2 36. ♗g4+! ♔g8 37. ♕xe6+

and Topalov threw in the towel, in view of 37... ♖h8 38. ♕e5+ ♔g8 (38... ♗g7 39. ♕b8+)



39. ♕xd5+ ♖h8 40. ♗xf2 ♖xf2 41. ♕d4+ etc.

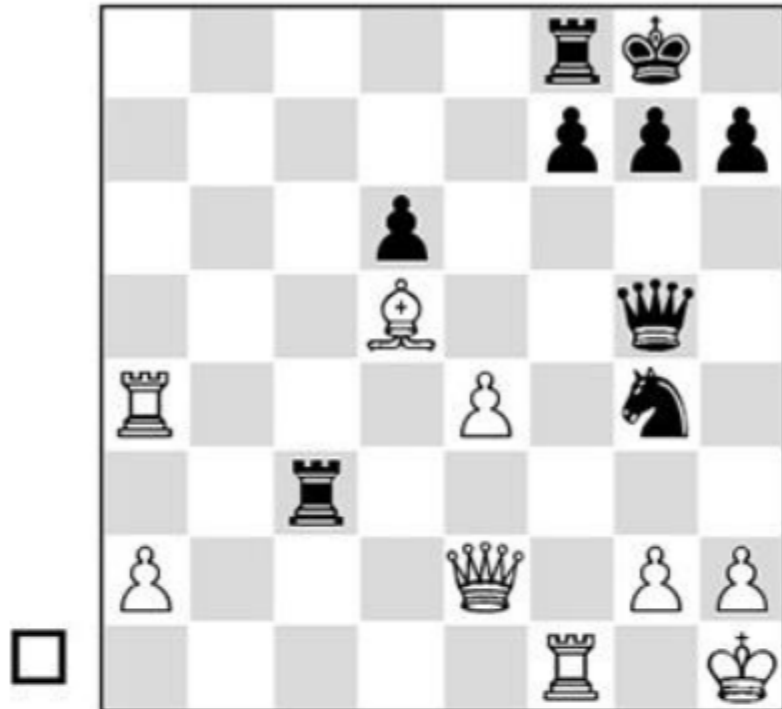
The Bulgarian wonder got his revenge, with an incredible shot reminiscent of 14 year-old Bobby Fischer's famous 'impossible' queen move:

Game 88

Robert James Fischer

James Sherwin

New York ch-USA 1957 (7)



A strong master who became a GM and Rybka developer later in life, James Sherwin's defense rested on the pin after 30. ♖xf7 ♜c1+ 31. ♖f1+ ♔h8, but young Fischer uncorked one of the greatest shots in chess history:

30. ♖xf7 ♜c1+



31. ♔f1

No matter how many times you see it, the strength and sheer creativity of this move never diminishes. Now 31... ♖xf7 33. ♖a8 mates, while if 31... ♖xf1+ 32. ♖xf1+ ♔xd5 33. ♖xf8+ forces resignation. White threatens double check and mate on f8, so Sherwin was left with 32...h5 33. ♔xc1!, winning immediately due to 33... ♔xc1+ 34. ♖f1+.

I wonder if Topalov thought of this, while playing the following idea:

Game 89

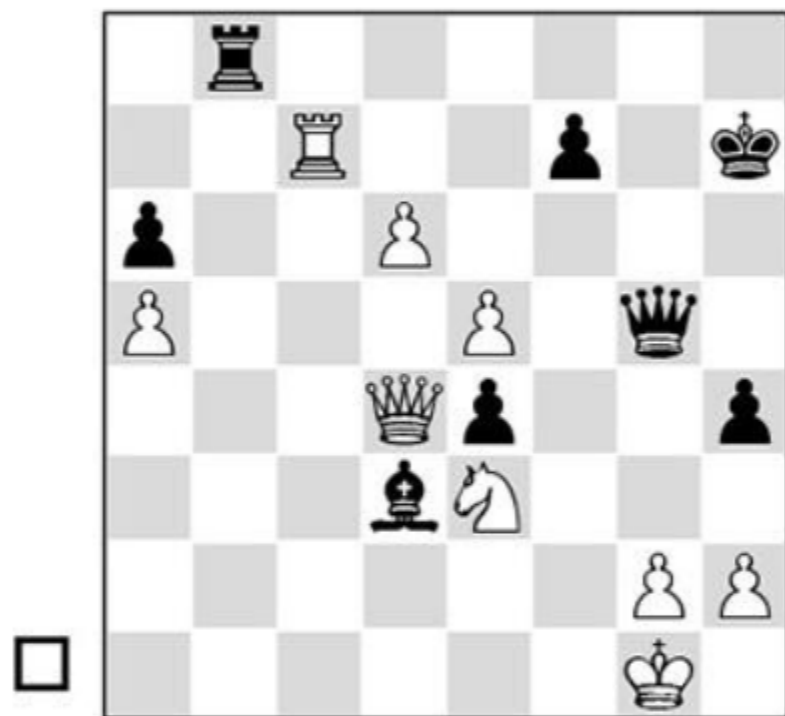
Veselin Topalov

2750

Judit Polgar

2665

Novgorod 1996 (7)



44. ♖xf7+!!

Obviously the exclaims are not for the move per se, but for the monster concept behind it...

44... ♔g8 45. e6! ♚xe3+l

The point of Black's defense, which unfortunately has a big hole.

46. ♚xe3 ♜b1+

The shot!



Foreseeing the whole line was the actual 'shot', since most would now avoid the mate after 47. ♚f2 ♜f1#.

47. ♚c1! ♜xc1+ 48. ♚f2 ♜c6



If Black plays to trade rooks with 48... ♖f1+ 49. ♔e3 ♖xf7, White doesn't recapture but instead plays 50.d7, queening.

49. ♖d7 ♙b5 50. ♔e3 ♖c2 51. ♖c7 ♖e2+ 52. ♔f4 ♖f2+ 53. ♔xe4 ♖e2+ 54. ♔f5 ♖f2+ 55. ♔e5 ♖e2+ 56. ♔f6 ♖f2+ 57. ♔e7 ♖e2 58.d7 ♙xd7 59. ♔xd7 ♖d2+ 60. ♔e8 1-0

60... ♖xg2 61. ♔d8

Game 90

Judit Polgar

2715

José Luis Fernandez Garcia

2452

Santurtzi rapid 2003 (6)

The shot!



24. ♔a7 wins, but much more picturesque was

24. ♖d7! 1-0 Mating in short order.

Shots which don't win outright still have the power to disrupt the opponent's equilibrium, and change the course of the game, as Tal and JP so often showed. That was the case here:

Game 91

Judit Polgar



Gilberto Milos

2656

Buenos Aires 2000 (7)

2633

The shot!



30. ♖f5! ♔d8

Black is forced to retreat!

A) Not 30...gxf5 31. ♖xf5 ♔h5 32. ♖e7+ ♔f8 33. ♖xc8 ♜xc8



analysis diagram

34. ♔c3!+-;

B) Or 30... ♜xf4 31. ♔e2 ♔d8 32. ♖f1 ♜d6





analysis diagram

33. ♖e6! ♜e5 34. ♖xc8 ♜xc8 35. ♜xb5! ± .

31. ♚e3!

JP only wants to attack, but more prudent might have been 31. ♜xd7 ♚xd7 32. ♜xb5



analysis diagram

32... ♜f8! (32...axb5 33. ♚d4 f6 34. ♚xf6 ♜g7 35. ♚xg7+ ♚xg7 36. ♜xg7 ±) with equality.

31... ♜b8??

Another master wilts under JP's onslaught.

The correct calculation was 31... ♜g7 32. ♜e6 fxe6 (32...d4!? 33. ♜xd8 dxe3 34. ♜xb7 ♜xb2 35. ♜xd7 ♜c7 36. ♜xb5 axb5 37. ♜d6=) 33. ♚xe6+ ♜h8 34. ♜xg7+ ♜xg7 35. ♚d6 ♜c6! ♚ , but my word, it's asking a lot to foresee that White's check on e7



is harmless.



analysis diagram

36. ♔xd7+ (36. ♖e7+ ♔f8!→) 36... ♕xd7 37. ♙xd7 ♖c7 38. ♙g4 d4 ♞.

The punishment was swift after Black's blunder, misplacing the rook:

32. ♙xd7 ♕xd7 33. ♕e5

And Black resigned.



On rook moves, 34. ♖f5 turns out the lights.

Here's another surprise blow which destroyed the opponent's equilibrium more than his position:

Game 92

Judit Polgar

Nigel Short

2656



The shot!



36.f6! ♖xe5

36... ♜xf6 37. ♖f1

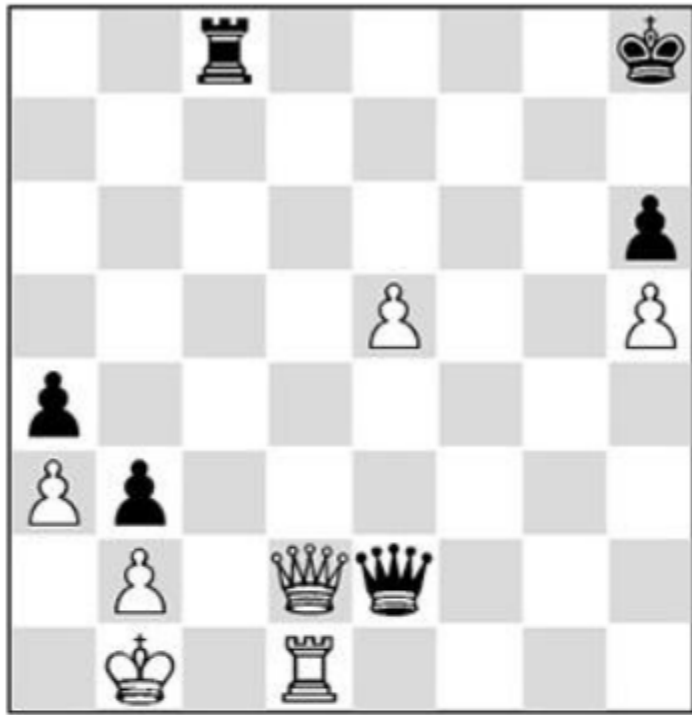
37.fxg7+ ♜xg7 38.dxe5 ♜e4+ 39. ♜a1



The position has taken a chaotic turn – you guessed it – just before the time control. These situations are excruciating for the defender; you realize a deep rethinking is required, but instead you can only make a snap judgment, with the game hanging in the balance...

39... ♖f7?

Black should have plucked that knight off in a heartbeat. White is only slightly better in the line 39... ♜xe3 40. ♜xb7+ ♜h8! 41. ♜xd5 ♖c8 42. ♜b1 ♜e2 43. ♜d2.



analysis diagram

After 43...♙xh5 or 43...♙xd2 44.♖xd2 ♔g7, White's back-rank problems make winning seem unlikely.

Instead, after

40.♖g1+ ♔h7 41.♗g4,

the knight becomes a nightmare, and Black's intended remedy is only quack medicine.



41...♗c6 42.♙xc6 ♙xg4 43.♙g6+! 1-0

When it comes to JP shots that turn the game on its head, the next may be my favorite.

Game 93

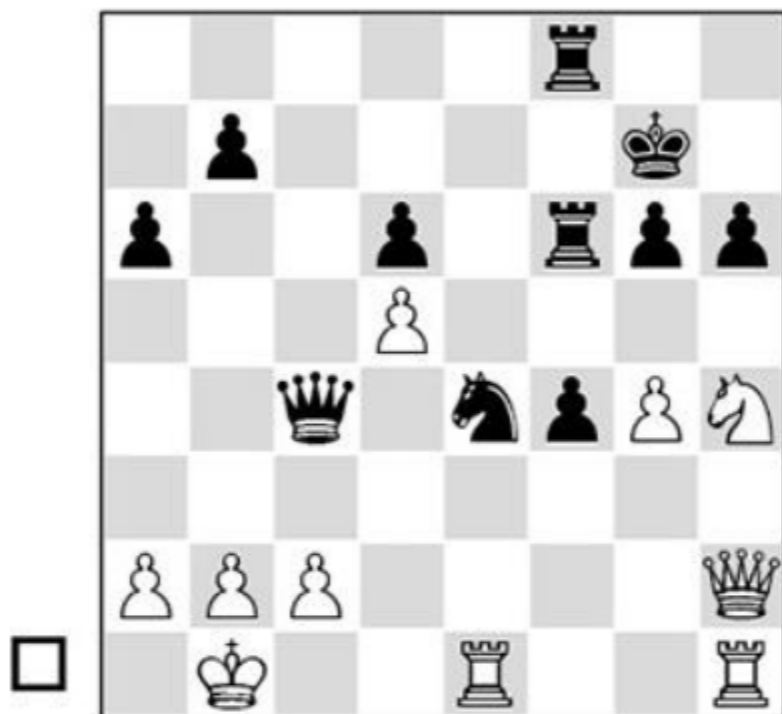
Judit Polgar

Sergei Karjakin

2722



The shot #1



The young future challenger seems to have everything covered, until...

37.g5!

Half-measures clearly won't do, but it's amazing how much muck this push stirs up.

37... ♖xg5

37...hxg5 looks too dangerous, and is: 38. ♖f3 ♜6f7 (not 38... ♜f5? 39. ♚h7+ ♜f6 40. ♜h6+-)



analysis diagram

White forces a draw with 39. ♜xe4! ♚xe4 40. ♚h6+ ♜f6 41. ♚xg5+ ♜g7 42. ♚h6+.

Instead came

38. ♖f3! ♖f7

Forced but good, not 38... ♖xf3?? 39. ♜xh6+ ♘f7 40. ♜h7#.

The shot #2!



Surely White is out of bullets now...

39. ♖g5!

After this wonderful and unique knight maneuver, Black needs his own shot to cement the win.

39...h5?

The right way was 39... ♜xd5! 40. ♖xf7 h5!-+.



analysis diagram

Instead, after Black's 'blitz reflex' JP is alive and kicking!

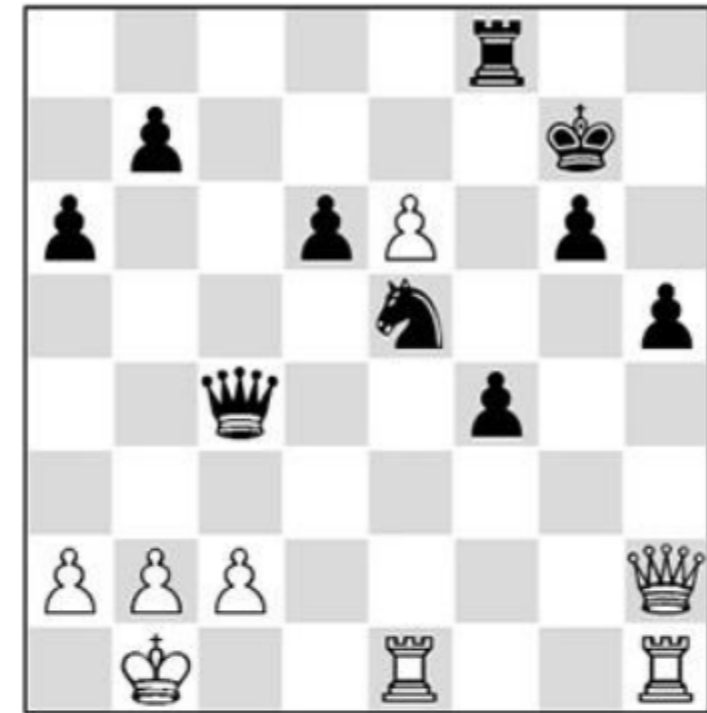
40. ♖e6+



40... ♔g8?

In the calm of the study, it's easy to see that Black should sack the exchange with

40... ♖xe6 41.dxe6 (41. ♖xe6 ♜g5 42. ♖e7+ ♖f7) 41... ♜e5.



analysis diagram

If 42.e7 ♖e8 43.b3 ♜f7 and Black should win, whereas now White had serious play after

41. ♖eg1





41... ♖c8

41... ♙xd5 42. ♗xf4!

42. ♚h4 ♙xc2+ 43. ♔a1 ♙f5



44.a3?

Judit has fought like a Banshee, and would have earned full equality with 44. ♗d4! ♙e5 45. ♗f3 ♙f5 (but not 44. ♙xh5? ♖c1+). With flags hanging she throws caution to the winds!

44... ♖c2??

Fortune favors the brave! Black is winning after 44...f3 45. ♗d4 ♙e5 46. ♙h3 ♖c4 47. ♗xf3 ♙xd5 48. ♗h4 ♗e5.

45. ♗d4 1-0



Whoops! White wins a whole rook.

Game 94

Viswanathan Anand

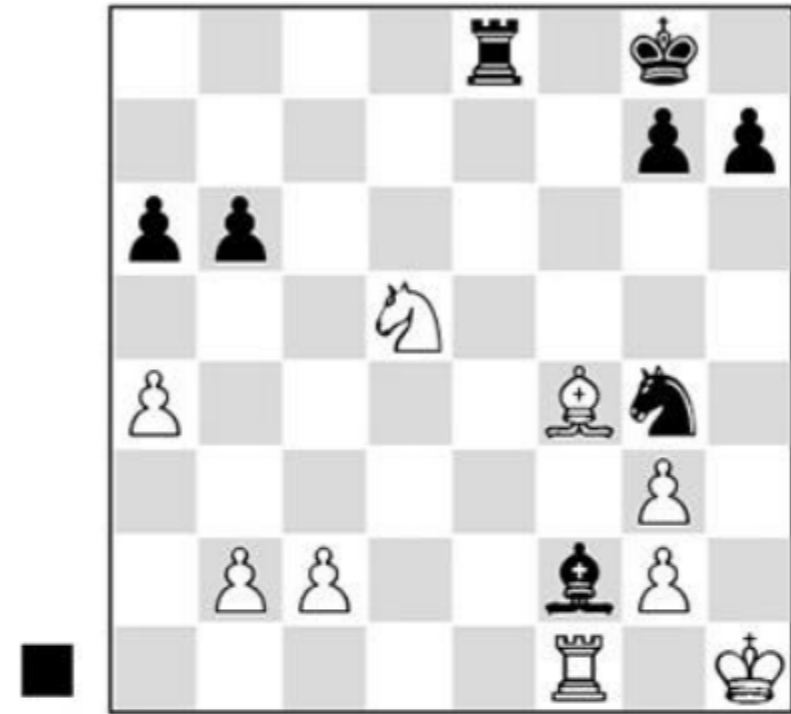
2779

Judit Polgar

2710

Rishon Le Ziyon Wch blitz 2006 (4)

The shot!



In a lovely game, beyond the scope of this chapter, Black navigated her way to an unclear ending via a pawn sack, inducing the blunder 27. ♖f4?. An embarrassed Vishy had to stop the clocks after the shot

27...g5!

28. ♗xg5 loses to 28... ♜e5 29. ♖f6+ ♘xf6 30. ♗xf6 ♜h5+ 31. ♗h4 ♗xg3, while other bishop moves allow 28... ♜e6!, threatening mate on the h-file.



Game 95

Judit Polgar

2355

Lev Gutman

2475

Brussels 1987 (3)

analysis diagram

Judit's first GM scalp is analyzed brilliantly in *Judit Polgar Teaches Chess Vol. 1*, but here's a charming sideline I found.

Black has no time to slip out with ... ♖g7 after 30. ♘b3!, stopping queen checks and threatening 31. ♖f7.

Black is done after:

- A) 30... ♖f8 31. ♖xf8 ♗f8 32. ♘f6#;
- B) Or 30...h5 31. ♖f7 ♖f8 32. ♘f6+.

The shot!



CHAPTER 6

The Classics

Selecting a handful of Judit Polgar's best games is no easy task! In addition to skill, beauty and creativity, we considered fame and importance as additional criteria for inclusion.

Game 96

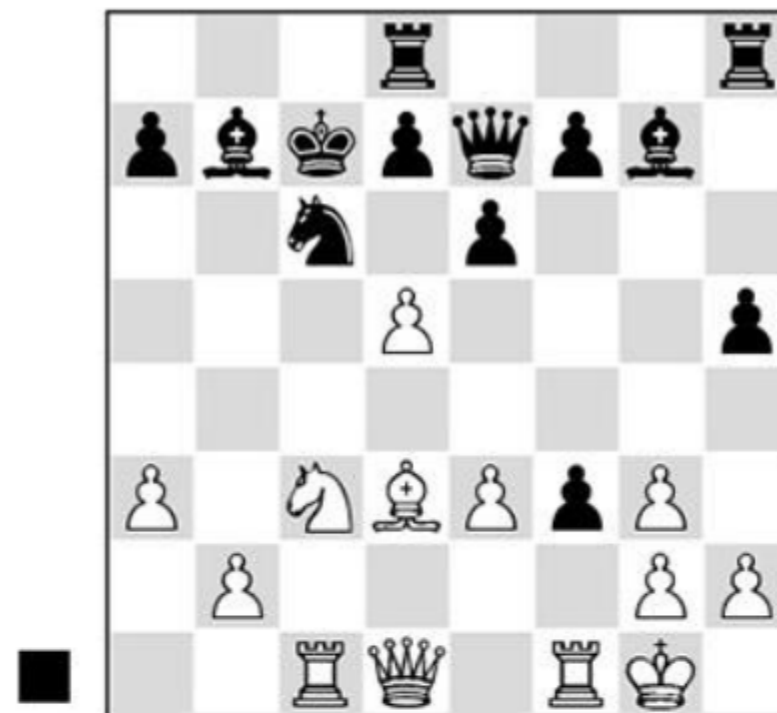
Viktor Kortchnoi

2632

Judit Polgar

2715

Budapest 2003 (1)



White has sacrificed a piece, but seems to regain it since 17... ♖e5?? falls for 18.d6+!. Black responds with a stellar bit of calculation.

17... ♜g5! 18.dxc6 ♜xe3+





19. ♔h1

Interestingly, if 19. ♖f2 the other capture 19...dxc6! wins, since ♖xf3 is not available.

19...fxg2+ 20. ♔xg2 ♙xc6+ 21. ♙e4

The only try.

21. ♙e4 f5 or 21. ♔h3 h4+.



21... ♙xc3!

Only so!

22. ♙xc6 ♔d2+l



Game 97

Judit Polgar

2677

Viswanathan Anand

2781

Dos Hermanas 1999 (1)

1.e4 c5 2. ♖ f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4. ♖ xd4 ♖ f6 5. ♖ c3 a6 6. ♙ e3 e6 7.g4 e5 8. ♖ f5 g6 9.g5 gxf5 10.exf5 d5 11. ♚ f3 d4 12.o-o-o ♖ bd7

Magically solving everything; after the queen trade, discoveries are met by taking the ♖ c1, while otherwise 23...dxc6 defends the ♙ d2.

23. ♚ h3

Now Black's final motif comes into play, but she wins prosaically after 23. ♚ h1 dxc6 24.bxc3 (24. ♖ xf7+ ♚ c8→) 24... ♚ xd1 25. ♖ cxd1 ♖ xd1 26. ♖ xd1 ♖ b8.

23...h4! 24. ♖ xc3 hxc3+ 25. ♚ g4 ♖ hg8+ 26. ♚ f3 dxc6 27. ♚ xd2 ♖ xd2 28.hxc3 ♖ xb2

White resigned.





Even the great World Champion Anand was really pushing the envelope by daring this line against the Queen of Chaos, but to his credit, Vishy rarely shies away from a battle.

13. ♖d2

Judit later won a swashbuckling game against Kasimdzhanov with the novelty

13. ♖xd4!?

13...dxc3 14. ♖xc3 ♖g7

A vestige of computer materialism is its attraction to 14... ♖g8?! 15.f6 ♖c7, which

we would consider beginner's folly.

15. ♜g1 o-o 16.gxf6 ♜xf6 17. ♚e3



JP is right at home in this 19th century-like playground, where White can attack cheerfully with no regard for the missing piece. The queen is great here and Black can't play ... ♖h6 next due to ♜xd7 and ♖xe5.

17... ♚h8 18.f4 ♜b6 19. ♚g3 ♜h6





20. ♖d6!

The beauty of this transparent deflection shot is its positional purpose. After Black's forced reply his pieces are disconnected and running out of squares.

20...f6 21. ♗d2! e4 22. ♗c4 ±



22...b5 23. ♗e6

More accurate was 23. ♗d5 ♖b8 24. ♗e3.

23... ♖a7

Black had to try 23... ♗c5 24. ♗d5 ♖a7 but the bid for freedom still fails: 25. ♖c6 ♗a4 26. ♗f2 ♖d7 27. ♗e6 and 28.b3.

24. ♖c6! a5 25. ♗e3 ♖b7 26. ♗d5!





Black is tied in knots, and the noose is closing with the threat 27. ♖xc8.

26.. ♖b8 27. ♖c7 b4 28.b3 ♖b5 29. ♙c6 ♖xf5



White finally regains the piece and keeps her stifling positional dominance:

30. ♖xc8 ♖xc8 31. ♙xd7 ♖cc5 32. ♙xf5 ♖xf5 33. ♖d1 ♙g8 34. ♙g2 1-0

Game 98

Judit Polgar

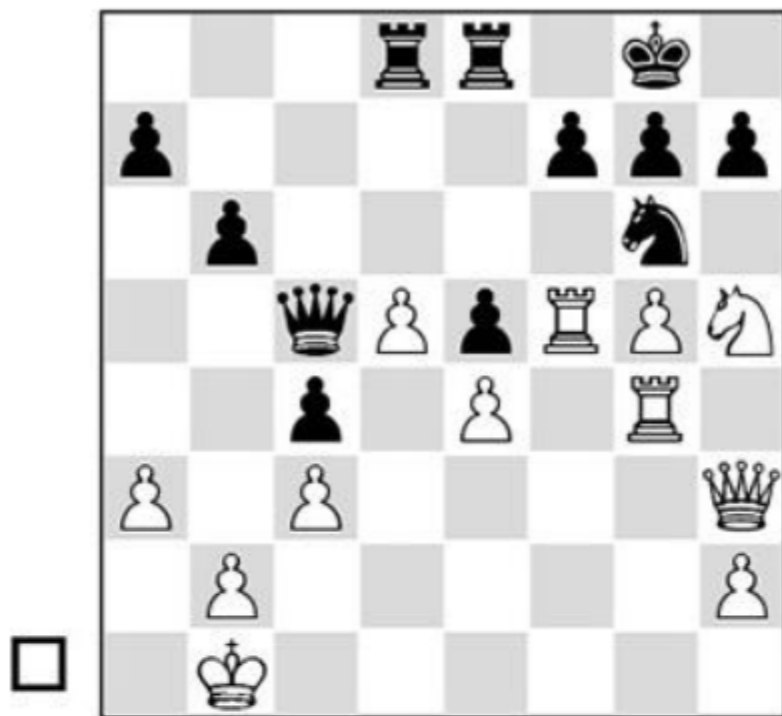
2678

Karen Asrian

2582

Ohrid Ech 2001 (8)





In her trilogy JP starts this brilliancy a move later, but we wish to show the cunningness of her maneuvering in semi-closed attacking positions.

32. ♖g3 ♔d6??

Poor Black plays a most innocent-looking retreat, not noticing the bombshell White's little rook move concealed. He's only slightly worse after 32... ♜e7 33. ♔g4 ♕h8 34. ♜gf3 ♔c7 35. ♔g3 b5. With the ♜e7 indirectly defending h7, the game combination would fail.

33. ♜xg7!! ♜f4

Vintage Polgar is the main line 33... ♜xg7 34. ♔h6+ (34. ♜xf7+?? ♜xf7 35. ♔xh7+ ♜f8 36. ♜f3+ ♜f4) 34... ♜g8 35. ♜h3 ♜f8



analysis diagram

36.g6!! – the awesome threat is 37.gxh7+ ♕h8 38. ♔g7+! – 36...fxg6 (36... ♔xg6 37. ♜g3) 37. ♜xf8++-. This wonderful idea is not new, but the particular execution and tactical foresight are timeless.

34. ♜xe8 ♜xe8 35. ♔h6 ♔d7 36. ♜g1 ♜xd5





Pitching the exchange only defers the blow...

37.g6! ♖xc3+

The stock motif 37...fxg6 38. ♖xg6+ hxg6 39. ♕xg6+ ♖g7 40. ♕xe8+ decides. As if its other merits weren't enough, White's push allows the queen to cover d2 and snuff any perpetuals.

38.bxc3 ♕d3+ 39. ♔b2 1-0

Earlier, we ventured the opinion that JP may have been the greatest white protagonist ever against the Berlin Defense of the Ruy Lopez. Here's further proof that

she wasn't just a 'rock-thrower', but also an endgame aficionado, destroying all comers in a line considered Black's ultimate drawing weapon!

Game 99

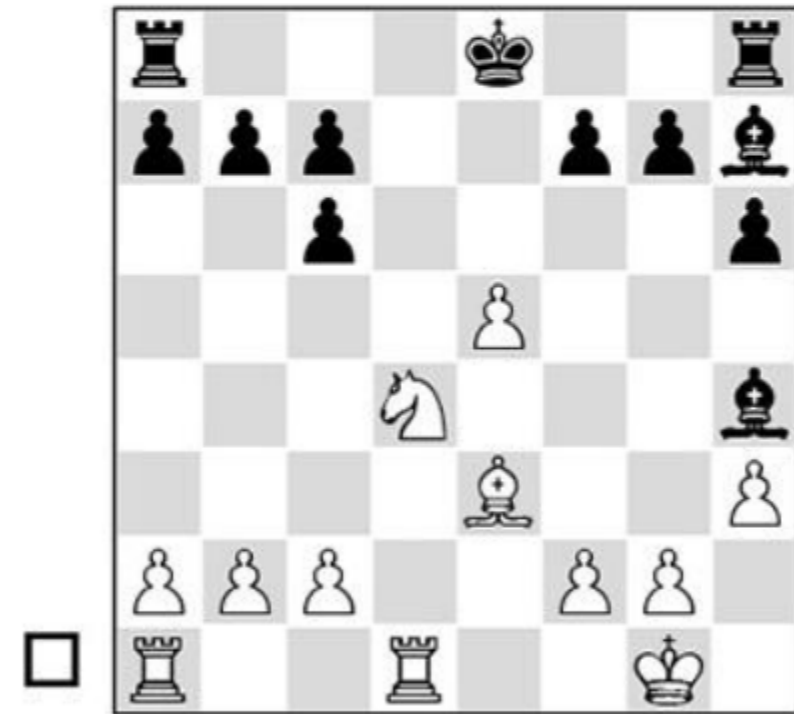
Judit Polgar

2681

Garry Kasparov

2838

Moscow rapid tt 2002 (5)



16.g4! ♖e7 17.♔g2

JP points out that 17.♕f5 first was more accurate.

17...h5

Simplifying now with 17...♗c5 should hold.

18.♕f5



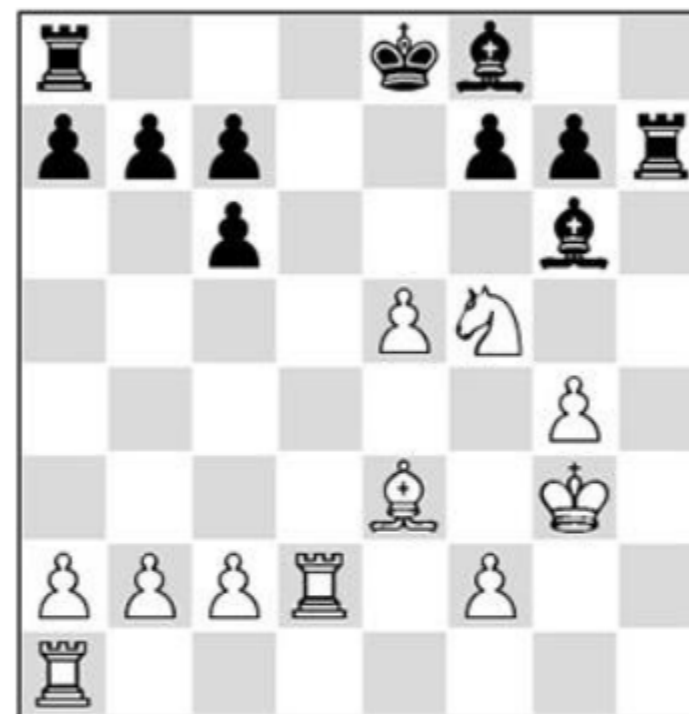
An appealing approach against 'The Boss'. White has a nagging edge, and now can't really lose. There's no time for 18...hxg4 19.hxg4 ♗xf5 20.gxf5 ♜h5 21.♜h1 ♜xf5? 22.♜h8+ and 23.♗c5, so Garry is reduced to stepping and shuffling, not

exactly his cup of tea...

18...♗f8 19.♔f3 ♗g6 20.♜d2 hxg4+ 21.hxg4 ♜h3+ 22.♔g2

22.♔e4 ♜h4 23.♜g1 ± was also good.

22...♜h7 23.♔g3 ±



It's already too late to try 23...♜d8 24.♜xd8+ ♔xd8 25.♜d1+ when 25...♔c8 26.♗g5 or 25...♔e8 26.♗xa7 b6 27.♗b8 are plenty convincing. Kasparov isn't used to marshalling lifeless positions with no active play, but JP points out that 23...♗xf5 24.gxf5 ♗e7 was better, and White could have avoided this with 23.♕g3,



intending f4-f5.

23...f6 24. ♖f4 ♙xf5 25.gxf5 fxe5 26. ♜e1 ♘d6 27. ♙xe5 ♚d7



28.c4!+- c5 29. ♙xd6 cxd6 30. ♜e6 ♜ah8 31. ♜exd6+ ♚c8 32. ♜2d5 ♜h3+ 33. ♚g2
♜h2+ 34. ♚f3 ♜2h3+ 35. ♚e4 b6 36. ♜c6+ ♚b8
36... ♚b7 37. ♜g6
37. ♜d7 ♜h2 38. ♚e3 ♜f8 39. ♜cc7 ♜xf5 40. ♜b7+ ♚c8 41. ♜dc7+ ♚d8 42. ♜xg7
♚c8 1-0



A sample line is 43. ♜xa7 ♚b8 44. ♜af7 ♜hxf2? 45. ♜g8#.

In the following classic, Black seems to have plenty of trumps; an extra ♘, queen-side play, a defensive knight on e5, and a central phalanx to shield the ♚. But JP shows again that it's all about initiative, and the tactical particulars of double-edged positions:

Game 100

Judit Polgar

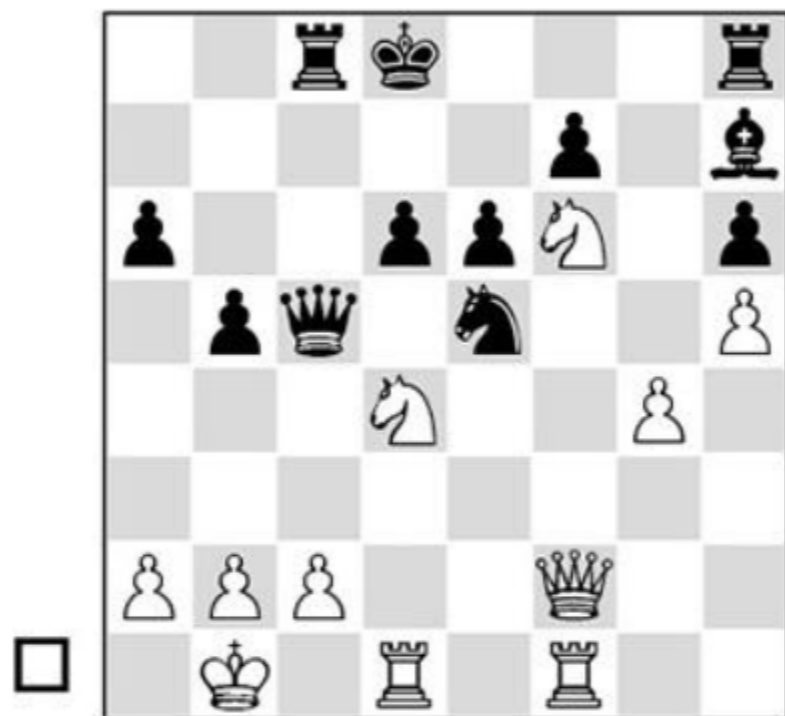


Veselin Topalov

2710

2813

Hoogeveen 2006 (2)



28. ♔h4! ♚xc2+

White's battery gets its charge from the forking motif 28...♚c7 29. ♖xh7 ♜xh7 30. ♜xf7+! and 31. ♖xe6+.

29. ♖xc2

The computer likes 29. ♚a1! ♚c7 (29...d5 30. ♖xd5+ ♚e8 31. ♖f6+ ♚f8 32. ♖xe6+ fxe6 33. ♖e4+; 29...♚e7 30. ♖e4+) 30. ♖xc2, but JP rightly protests that one win is good enough!

29... ♚xc2+ 30. ♚a1



Now a beautiful side line is 30...♚e7 31. ♖g8++! ♚f8 32. ♖e7.





analysis diagram

A most unusual winning maneuver! The threat is 33. ♖f6 with 34. ♗g6+. Now on 32... ♗c4 (JP gives only 32... ♜e8 33. ♗g6+! ♗xg6 34. ♖f6) follows 33. ♜b1 ♗d2 34. ♗xc8



analysis diagram

34... ♖xc8 (34... ♗xf1 35. ♖f6) 35. ♜bc1 ♖d7 36. ♖f6 ♜h7 37. ♜fd1+.
Topalov instead played
30... ♜c4





31. ♖e4+ ♜c7 32. ♖xd6 ♝f4 33. ♚e7+ ♞b6 34. ♚b7+ ♞a5



The ♚+♖ attacking duo has wreaked maximal havoc. Now Judit concludes with a gorgeous 'quiet forcing move', preparing one more deadly knight check:

35. ♚a7! b4

Or 35... ♝xf1 36. ♖b7+ ♞b4 37. ♚d4+ and now:



analysis diagram

A) 37... ♖c4 38. ♕c5+ ♔a4 39. b3+;

B) 37... ♕c4 38. ♕d6+ ♔a4 39. ♕a3#

36. ♖fe1 ♜f3 37. ♖c1 ♜xe1 38. ♖xc2 ♜xc2+ 39. ♔b1 1-0



What better measure of Judit's greatness: the following stellar brilliancy doesn't even appear in her trilogy! A Sicilian Defense thematic match against Russian-American star Gregory Kaidanov provided a great forum for imaginative play: White won all four games in this no-holds-barred affair!

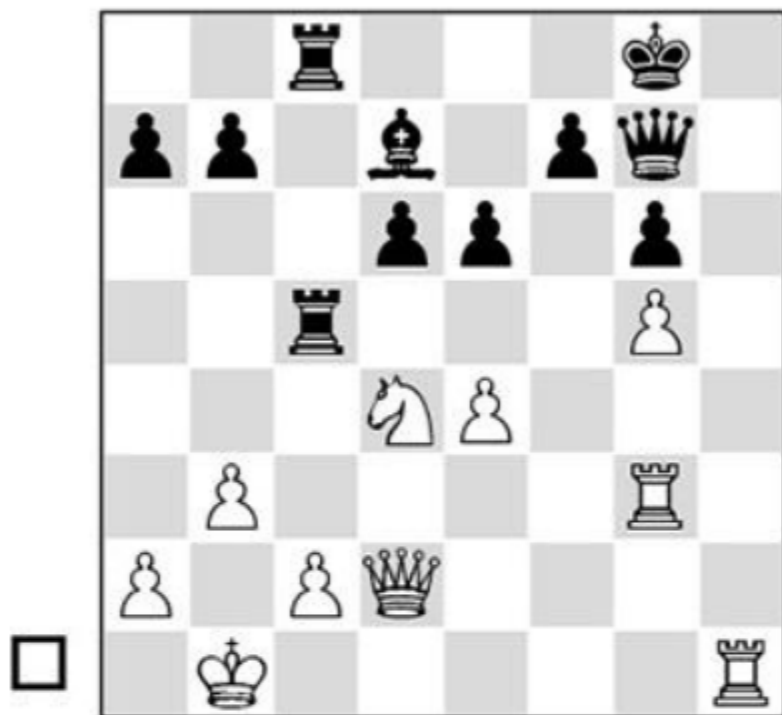
Game 101

Judit Polgar

Gregory Kaidanov

2687



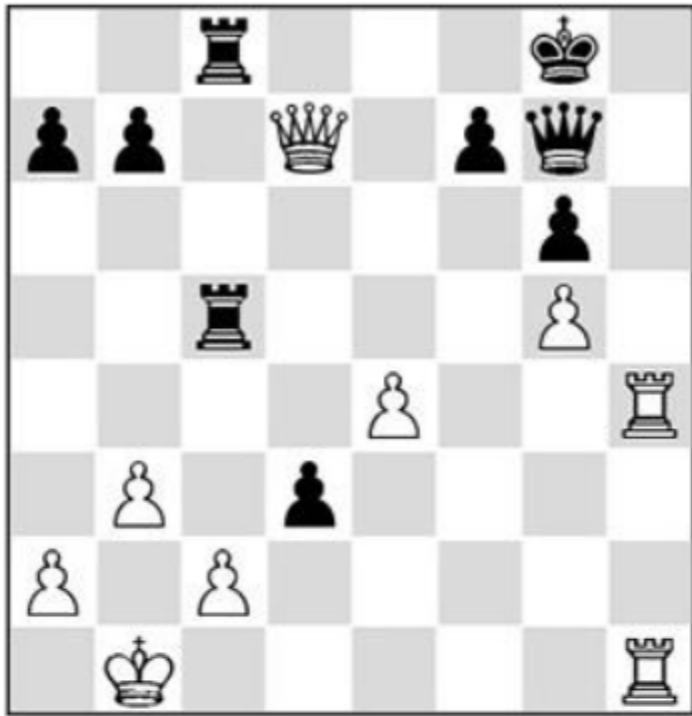


27. ♖gh3! e5 28. ♖h4! exd4 29. ♔h2



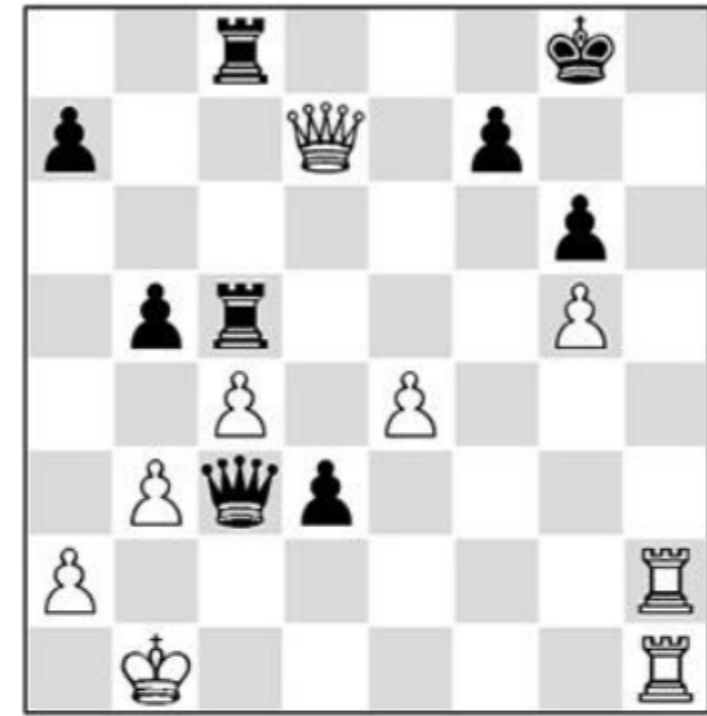
Although the position clearly demands it, sacrificing a piece to advance White's initiative makes a strong impression with such limited material – and there are many nuances involved.

29... ♔f8 30. ♔xd6+ ♔g8 31. ♔xd7 d3



It's by no means obvious who's coming first yet, but 31... ♖xc2 instead would lose material to 32. ♕h3!, threatening to skewer the ♖c8.

32.c4 ♕c3 33. ♖4h2 b5



Black has a proper sense of urgency, since Polgar's ideas include grabbing pawns or putting her ♕ on f6.

But our heroine has calculated everything out to a tee, replete with brilliant strokes: first an interference sac...

34.e5!! ♕xe5 35. ♖h7 ♖5c7





A rook is lost after 35... ♖f8 36. ♔h3 ♕xg5 37. ♖h8+ ♗g7 38. ♔h7+ ♗f6 39. ♖xf8.

36. ♔d6! 1-0

A quintessential deflection shot forces a double-rook mate after 36... ♕xd6 37. ♖h8+ or 36... ♗c3 37. ♔f6.

Here's an unusual fish story about the whale-sized brilliancy that got away – only to slip back on the hook! Though the execution is flawed, Black's conception is so beautiful it begs to be admired:

Game 102

Julio Granda Zuniga

2615

Judit Polgar

2550

Aruba 1992 (6)



21... ♗e4!

The start of a splendid tactical operation. To the cold machine, equally good are



21... ♖f7 or 21...c5.

22. ♗xc7?

Incredibly, a losing move. Required was 22. ♗c3 ♜f5 23. ♗d5, when Black can always try the engine's picks from the first diagram.



22... ♗f3?

JP may have nightmares to this day about touching the wrong piece! We all know she would have been even happier sacrificing more material, and her idea would have worked to perfection after 22... ♖f3!!.



analysis diagram

The initial marvelous threat is 23... ♖h3 24. ♚f4 ♖f8 (or 24...g3).

A) If 23. ♗xe8, 23... g3!!.

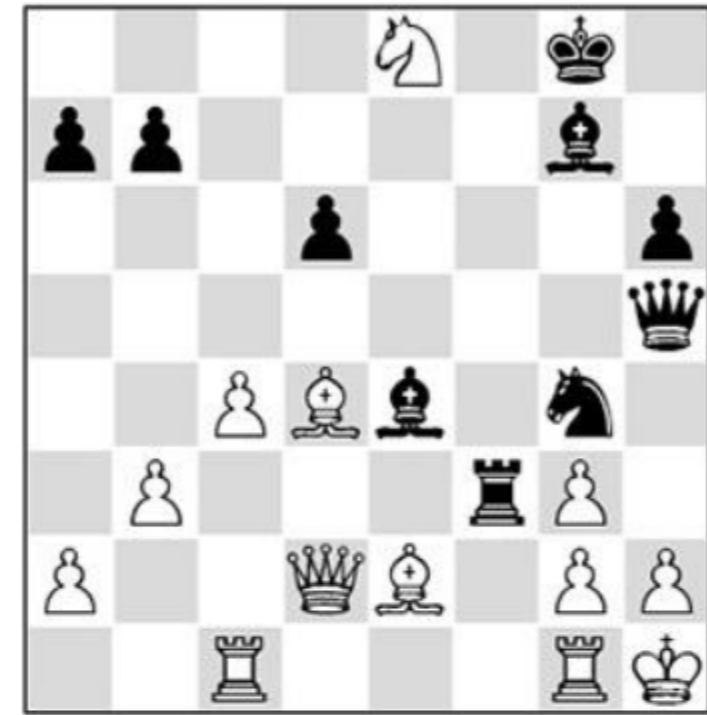




analysis diagram

The mate threat on h2 decides immediately:

A1) 24.fxg3 ♖g4



analysis diagram

A1a) Now 25.h4 ♙xh4+! 26.gxh4 ♜h3 is mate;

A1b) Likewise, 25.h3 ♜xg3!.



analysis diagram

A mating blow on h3 can't be stopped!

A2) Or on 24.h3, 24... ♔xh3+!! 25.gxh3 ♖xf2+ 26. ♖g2 ♖xg2.



analysis diagram

To stop 28... ♖h2+h1# White must play into the long forcing line 27. ♙f3 ♖xd2 28. ♙xe4 ♖h2+ 29. ♔g1 ♗f3+! 30. ♙xf3 ♙xd4+ 31. ♔f1 ♖f2+ 32. ♔e1 ♖xf3,

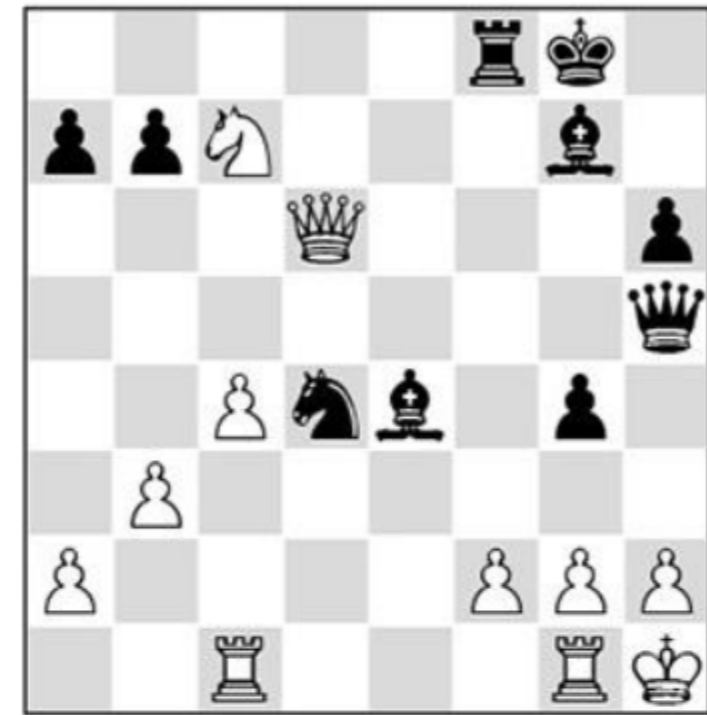




analysis diagram

when White succumbs to the dual threat $33...g2$ or $33...h3+$.

B) $23. gxf3 hxf3 24. Qf4$ ($24.gxf3$ transposes to the game continuation)
 $24... f8!$ $25. Qxd6 hxd4$



analysis diagram

Material is basically even but Black's attack is too much; she threatens $26... e5$, and if $26. e6$, $26... g6+$;

C) $23.gxf3 hxf3 24. gxf3 hxf3+$ would force White into the game continuation.
 $23.gxf3 hxf3 24. g2 h3$





25. ♖c1?

White could spoil the combination now with 25. ♙f1! ♜d3 (25... ♜e5 26. ♙xe5 ♙xe5 27. ♚g1 ♜f5 28. ♜e1 ♜h5 29. f4+-) 26. ♚f4.



analysis diagram

The melee no longer bears fruit: 26... ♜xd4 27. ♙xe8 ♙xg2+ 28. ♙xg2 ♜xf4 29. ♙xh3 gxh3 30. ♜g1 ♜f7 31. ♙xg7 ♜xg7 32. ♜g3 ± 25... ♜e5!

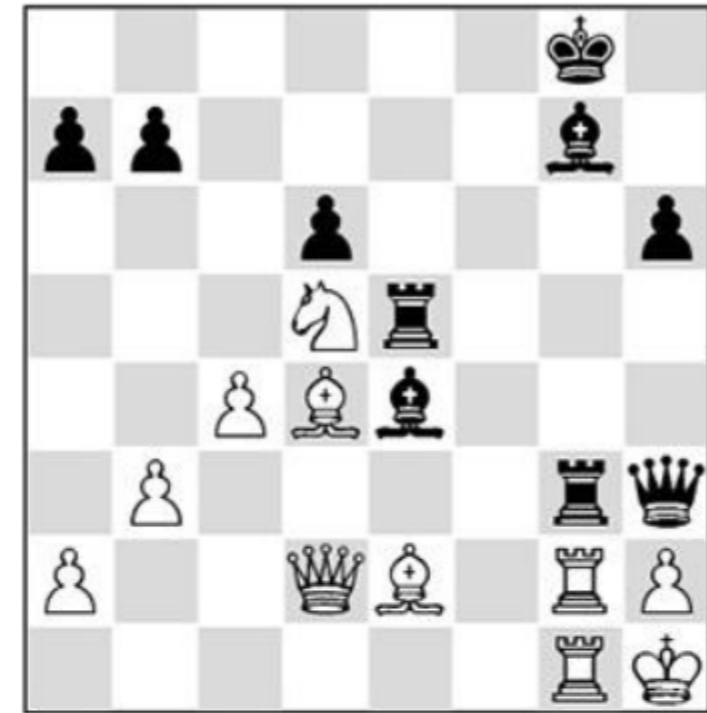




26. ♖xf3??

Judit gets to play her coup de grace after all! White had to play 26. ♖d5 g3 27. fxg3

♜xg3



analysis diagram

28. ♖f4 ♙xg2+ 29. ♜xg2 ♜xg2 30. ♖xg2 (30. ♖xh3 ♜exe2) 30... ♜g5 31. ♙f1 ♙xd4
32. ♜xd4 ♜f3 33. ♜d3 ♜f2.



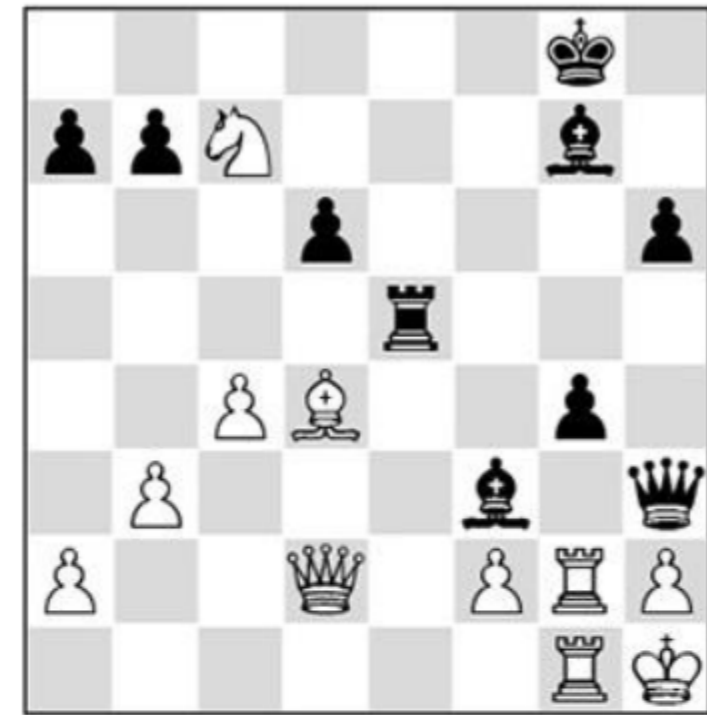


analysis diagram

JP calls it a probable draw, but I would hate to play Black here against such a strong GM.

26... ♖xf3

We're back to the dream position that could have been forced by 22... ♜f3!!.



Granda Zuniga must have missed one of two shots:

A) 27. ♜f4 ♜xg2+!

B) Or the more diabolical 27. ♖b5 g3!! 28.fxg3 ♜xh2+!.

After his move the threat 27... ♜xh2# is a juggernaut.

27. ♖xe5 ♖xe5 28. ♜d5+ ♔h8! 0-1

The power of the pin writ large!

There are shots, and then there are moves so astounding, they are more like revelations. In another classic battle against attacking genius Shirov, JP's prepared idea



...g7-g5! and ...♖e5 improved on the earlier game Shirov-Kasparov, Novgorod 1994, resulting in this position:

Game 103

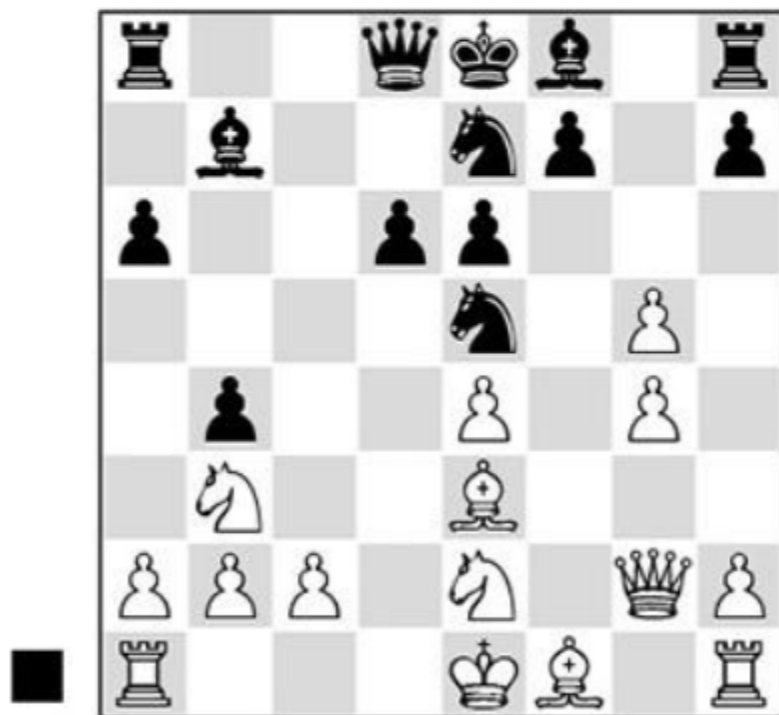
Alexei Shirov

2740

Judit Polgar

2630

Buenos Aires 1994 (8)



13...h5! 14.gxh5

The tiny h-pawn's heroic advance also leaves a big footprint after 14.gxh5 ♜f5! 15.gxf5 ♜xf5, when Black's activity far outweighs the material (see analysis diagram overleaf).



analysis diagram

Returning to the game:

14... ♜f5 15. ♞f2



He defends h4 to stop 15. ♖f4 ♘h4 16. ♚g3 ♙xe4 ♜.



15... ♚xg5!

The fork trick 16. ♚xg5 ♘f3+, leaving White's structure in shambles, is a lovely key to Black's offensive, but wait! – it's still not the unforgettable move we alluded to.

16. ♘a5

Shirov always has tricks up his sleeve in a tactical battle, but here his pop gun is silenced by a cannon.



16... ♘e3!!





Now **that's** a shot – on 17. ♖xg5 ♜f3#!. Shirov gamely limped on:
 17. ♖g3 ♖xg3 18. ♜xg3 ♜xc2+ 19. ♚d1 ♜xa1 20. ♜xb7 b3



but with the knight escaping White had scant hope, and JP soon garnered the point
 ... 0-1

Who other than Tal would even conceive of JP's treatment of this classic?

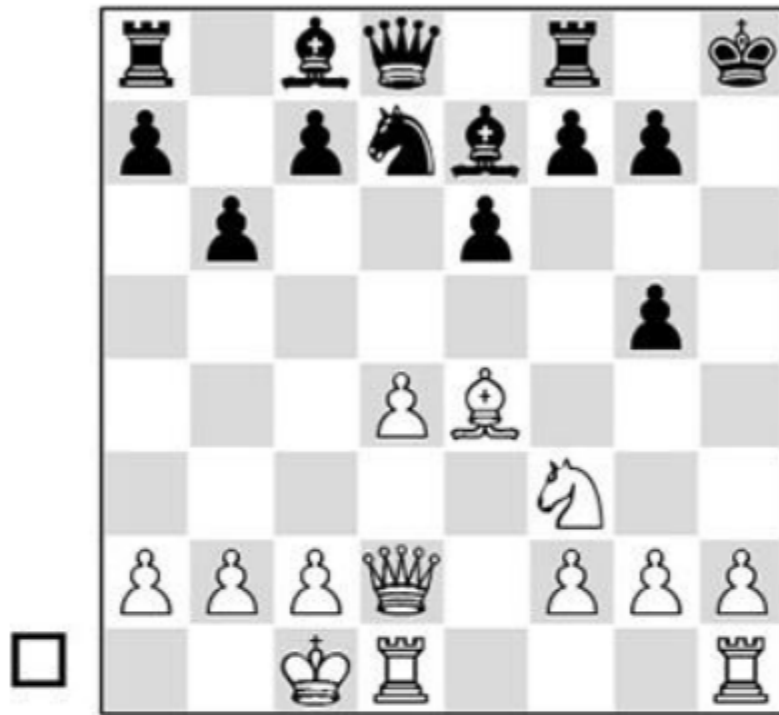
Game 104

Judit Polgar

Ferenc Berkes

2715





14.g4!!

A bit of pawn-structure chess guarantees the opening of the h-file – rook be damned!

14... ♖b8 15.h4

Now on 15...gxf4, 16.g5



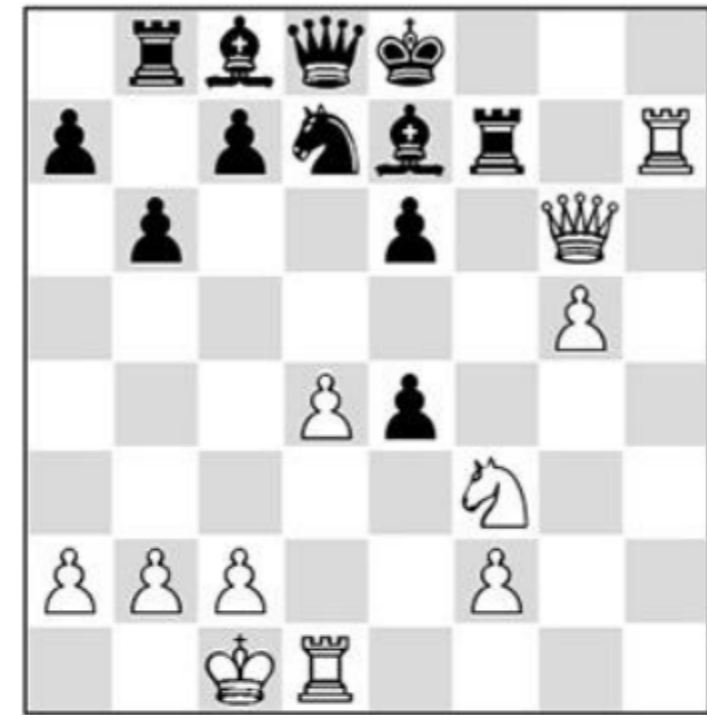
analysis diagram

16... ♔g8 (here 16...g6 17. ♖xh4+ and ♖dh1+-) 17. ♕f4 f5



analysis diagram

18. ♖xh4! fxe4 (if 18... ♗d6 19.d5!!) 19. ♖h7+ ♜f7 20. ♖h5+ g6 21. ♖h7+ ♜e8
 22. ♖xg6+ ♜f7 23. ♜h7.



analysis diagram

Incredibly Black can soldier on with 23... ♗xg5+ 24. ♜xg5 ♖xg5+ 25. ♖xg5 ♜xh7
 26. ♖g6+ ♜f7 27. ♖xe6+ ♜e7 28. ♖g6+ ♜f7 29. ♖e4+,





analysis diagram

but this just prolongs the suffering; Black's lame forces can't ward off the attack.

A remarkable measure of Judit's combination is this – the computer always initially favors Black, but the deeper it looks the more the pendulum swings!

15...g6 16.hxg5+ ♔g7 17.♕f4



A) Here I believe most masters would smell a rat, and rush to play 17... ♔d6 18. ♖e5 ♕xe5 19.dxe5 ♜h8. But after 20. ♜h6!





analysis diagram

remarkably, White's attack marches on:

A1) If 20... ♖xh6, 21.gxh6+ ♔g8 22.h7+! ♔g7 23.h8♖+! ♖xh8 24. ♖h1 wins the queen or mates;

A2) Otherwise Black is practically in zugzwang. If 20... ♖e7, 21. ♖xh8 and 22. ♖h2+;

A3) 20... ♔b7 21. ♖xd7!;

A4) And on other moves 21. ♔c6 tightens the noose.

JP gives one more beautiful line from the prior diagram:

B) 17... ♖h8 18. ♖xh8 ♖xh8 19. ♔e5 ♖g8 20. ♖h1 ♔d6



analysis diagram

21. ♖h7+!! – mating or winning the ♖ after 21... ♔xh7 22. ♖h2+, 21... ♖xh7 22. ♖xf7+ or 21... ♔f8 22. ♖h8!.

Instead Berkes ripped the band aid off quickly with

17... ♔b7



18. ♖h7+! ♔xh7 19. ♚h2+ ♔g8 20. ♖h1 ♘xg5+ 21. ♗xg5 ♚xg5+

A spite check; mate is already inevitable.

22.f4



22... ♚xf4+ 23. ♚xf4 ♘xe4 24. ♚xe4 1-0

Game 105

Judit Polgar

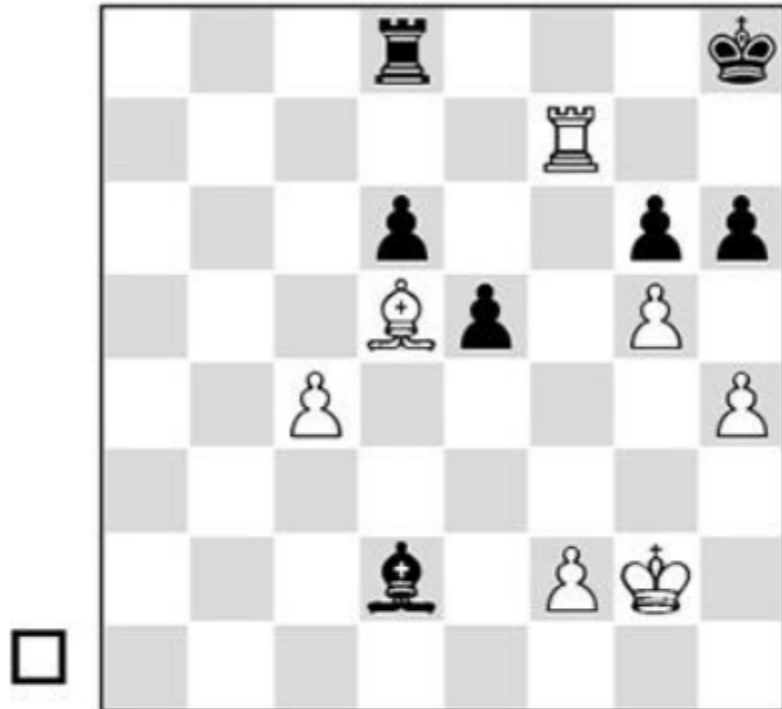
2686

Romain Edouard

2600

Enghien-les-Bains Ech 2011 (4)



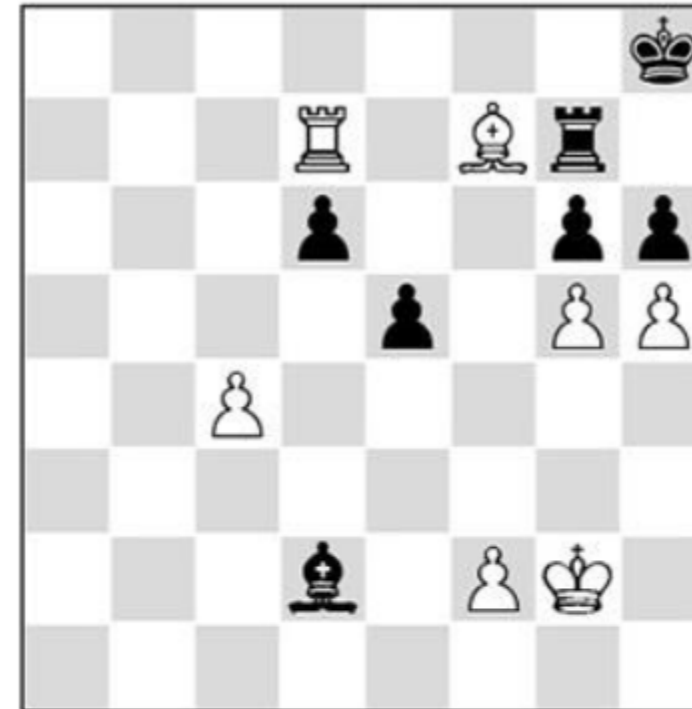


Anyone naïve enough to think all opposite-colored bishop endings are drawn, has already absorbed JP's crash course in their potential attacking power. Here's the most elegant demonstration yet – White foresaw a beautiful win despite the paucity of material.

36. h5! ♖g8

Suddenly mate appears after 36...gxh5 37. g6 h4 38. ♖h7#.

37. ♖d7 ♖g7 38. ♙f7! 1-0



The elegant mating net after 38...gxh5 39.g6 wins decisive material.

Game 106

Judit Polgar

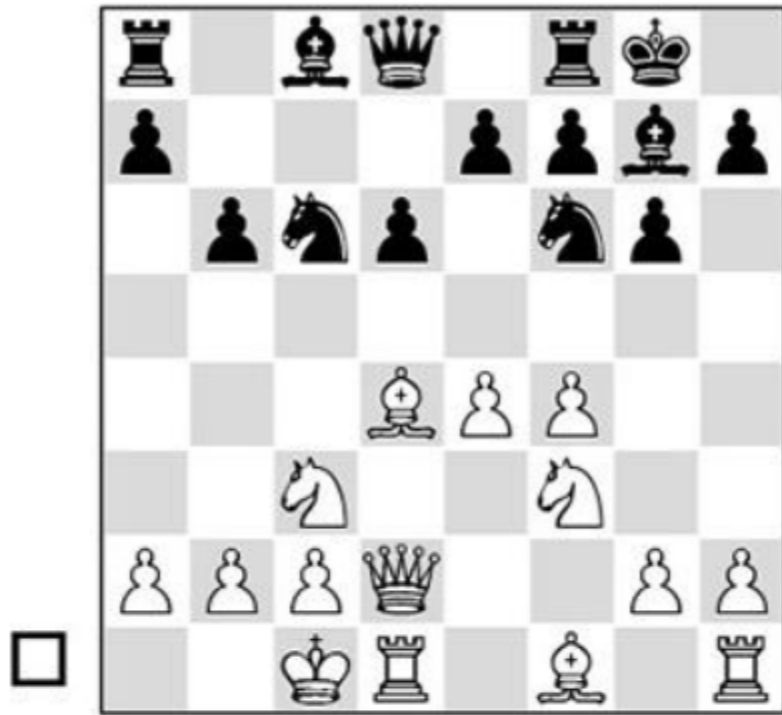
2656

Ilia Smirin

2677

Istanbul ol 2000 (8)





A Modern Defense has morphed into a Sicilian Dragon structure. White's next move was a shocker, and I believe JP downplays its importance by not calling it a theoretical novelty (TN). White voluntarily gives up her 'Sicilian bishop', leaving the Dragon ♖ unopposed. She has discerned once again that the tempo saved, and the removal of Black's defensive knight, justify this radical action. White's initiative develops quickly, while Black's clunky b6 ♗ slows down his queenside play by hindering ... ♖a5.

10. ♖xf6! ♖xf6 11.h4 ±

JP notes that 10. ♖xf6 had been tried in Gomez Jurado-Efimov, Andorra 1993. But since White's idea in that game was the flawed tactic 11.e5, the TN designation still seems justified. Here the defense 11...h5!?, a la Soltis Variation of the Dragon, leaves holes on the black kingside after 12.f5!, but was probably the lesser evil since it slows White's attack.

11... ♖g4 12.h5! ♖xh5



13. ♗xh5!

White's strategy would be bankrupt without this natural exchange sac. Since her



play takes time to develop, we can only marvel at JP's creativity and feel for the attack.

13...gxh5 14. ♖d5 ♜c8

Judit gives the long line 14... ♙xc3 15.bxc3 ♖c8 16. ♖g5+ ♔h8 17. ♖xh5 ♖e6 18. ♙b5 ♗a5 19. ♙d3 ♖g6 20. ♖h4 ♖f6 21. ♖h2 ♖g7 22. ♜h1 h6 23.e5 ♜ad8 24.g4.



analysis diagram

'With a massive attack' – JP. It's remarkable how the dynamics of the position render the missing exchange secondary.

15. ♖xh5 ♙g7 16.e5 ♖e8 17. ♖h3l h6

17...f5 was slightly better.

18. ♙d3 ♗b4 19. ♙e4 e6



20.f5l ♜xc3 21.f6ll





A colossal in-between move is Polgar's ace-in-the-hole.

21... ♔b5

Also futile was 21... ♔a4 22.bxc3 ♖xa2+ 23.♔b2 ♔xe4 (23... ♖xc3 24.♖d4)



analysis diagram

24.fxg7 ♔xg7 25.♖d4+-.

22. ♔g3 1-0

Game 107

Judit Polgar

Krunoslav Hulak

2555

Amsterdam 1989

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘c6 5.♘c3 ♚c7 6.♙e2 a6 7.o-o ♘f6 8.♙e3
 ♙e7 9.f4 d6 10.♚e1 ♙d7 11.♚g3 o-o 12.♜ae1 b5 13.a3 ♘xd4 14.♙xd4 ♙c6
 15.♙d3 ♜ab8



16.e5 ♘e8 17.f5! exf5 18.♜xf5 dxе5 19.♚h3 h6 20.♙xe5 ♚a7+

Hulak had to play 20...♙d6 with rough equality. What better proof of JP's

admonition that in such lines one subtle misstep can cost the point! Black has played all 'normal moves' and suddenly finds himself the butt of a brilliancy.

21.♚h1 ♙d6



22.♜g5! ♚f2

The threat 23.♚xh6 does major damage. Losing outright are:

- A) 22...♙xe5 23.♚xh6 f5 24.♚e6+ ♚f7 25.♚xe5;
- B) Or 22...f5 23.♚xh6 ♚e7 24.♚g6 ♙xe5 25.♙xf5.



analysis diagram

Now the threat of 26. ♘e6+ does Black in: 26... ♖f6 27. ♘e6+! (anyway) or 26... ♜f6 27. ♜h7+ ♚f8 28. ♜h8+ ♚f7 29. ♜h5+ ♚g8 30. ♘h7+ ♚f8 31. ♘g6!.



analysis diagram

To avert the mate, Black must pitch decisive material.
 23. ♜f1 ♚xf1+ 24. ♘xf1 hxg5



25. ♖d3!

Tolnai also gives this shot an exclamation, since otherwise Black is better! Now he's compelled to play a horrid move, which drops a pawn and fatally exposes the ♔, since 25...g6 allows mate.

25...f5 26. ♗xf5 ♘xe5 27. ♚h7+ ♔f7 28. ♚g6+



28... ♔e7

Of course not 29... ♔g8 30. ♗e6+ and mate!

29. ♚e6+ ♔d8 30. ♚xe5 ♖b7 31. ♔g1 ♗bf7 32.g4





Black is OK materially, but the attack still rages. Inevitably, he tries for counterplay and dies with his boots on:

32...g6 33. ♖b8+ ♔e7 34. ♘d5+ ♙xd5 35. ♕e5+ ♔d8 36. ♕xd5+ ♔c7 37. ♕c5+ ♔b8 38. ♕b6+ ♚b7 39. ♕d8+ ♔a7 40. ♙xg6 1-0



Game 108

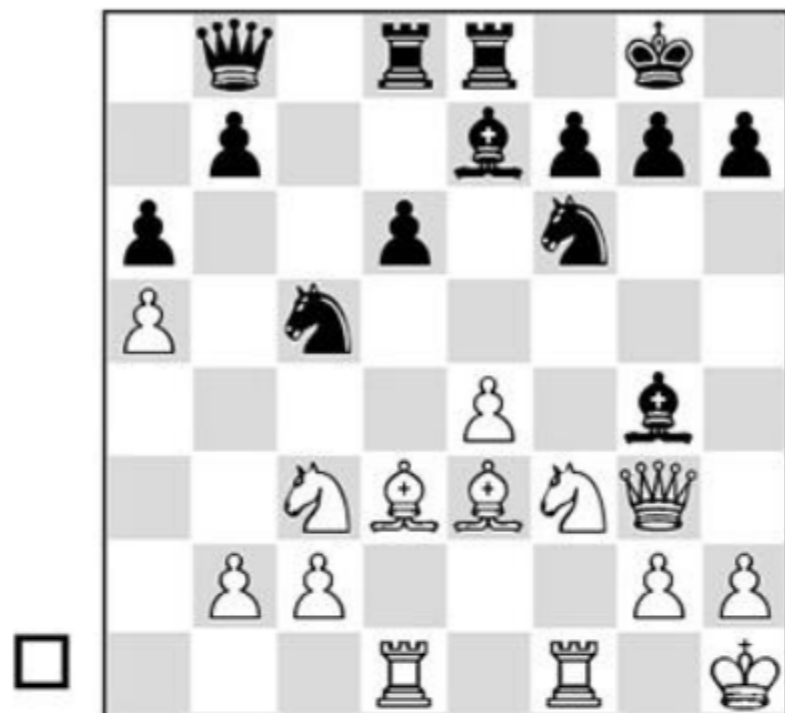
Judit Polgar

2630

Vasily Ivanchuk

2700

Monaco rapid 1995 (7)



Another golden example of JP's unique proclivity for trading the Sicilian bishop for initiative.

19. ♖xc5! dxc5 20.e5 ♗xf3 21. ♖xf3 ♘h5 22. ♚h3 g6 23.g4 ♘g7



24. ♖e1

Tolnai gives this move an exclamation mark, leading one to think the engines weren't as strong in 2004! In fact Judit's idea is already winning – 24. ♖xf7!, when 24... ♚xf7 25. ♖c4+ is crushing. Clearly she was concerned about 24... ♚xe5 25. ♖df1,





analysis diagram

but ♖c4 next gives White a winning positional advantage, e.g. 25... ♜d4 26.b3! or 25... ♜f8 26. ♖c4 ♔h8 27. ♚g3! and White's minor pieces dance cartwheels around their counterparts.

Luckily the brilliancy is untarnished; JP's prophylactic move is also strong.

24... ♗e6 25. ♗e4 ♚xe5

More or less forced now, to stop the threat of 26. ♗f6+ ♖xf6 27.exf6 with a deadly attack on g7 and h7. Judit notes that 25... ♗g5 loses crisply to 26. ♗xg5 ♖xg5

27. ♜xf7! ♘xf7 28. ♚xh7+ ♘e6 29. ♖c4+ ♜d5



analysis diagram

30. ♖xd5+ ♘xd5 31. ♚d7+ ♘c4 32. ♜e4#.

Instead after the game's 25... ♚xe5:





26. ♖xf7!!

White hunts much bigger prey than after 26. ♗f6+? ♜xf6.



26... ♗g5

The greats try to complicate, when they realize there's no leg to stand on. After 26... ♜xf7 27. ♜xh7+ ♗g7 (27... ♜g7 28. ♖f1+ ♗f6 29. ♖xf6+ ♜e7 30. ♖xe6+ is a wipeout) 28. ♗c4+ ♖d5



analysis diagram

the simplest win, as given by JP, is 29. ♖f1+ ♔e6 30. ♗c3 ♜ed8 31. ♙xd5+ ♜xd5 32. ♚g8+, followed by taking twice on d5 and the rook fork ♜f7!

27. ♗xg5 ♚xe1+ 28. ♙f1 h5



Now a final shot breaks Black's resistance.

29. ♚b3!

With the point 29... ♙xg5 30. ♜e7+! ♔h8 31. ♜xe1 ♜xe1 32. ♚c3+.

29...c4 30. ♚xc4 ♜c8 31. ♜f8+! ♔g7 32. ♚g8+ 1-0

32... ♔h6 33. ♗f7#

Judit would have felt right at home among the 19th century greats, who valued beauty as much as victory.

Though the venerable champ Emanuel Lasker is credited with first playing the

double-bishop sacrifice, I have no doubt she would have found it first if given an opportunity like this. Probably her most famous combination is the following. It didn't fall from the sky, but was prepared by strong play for the initiative:

Game 109

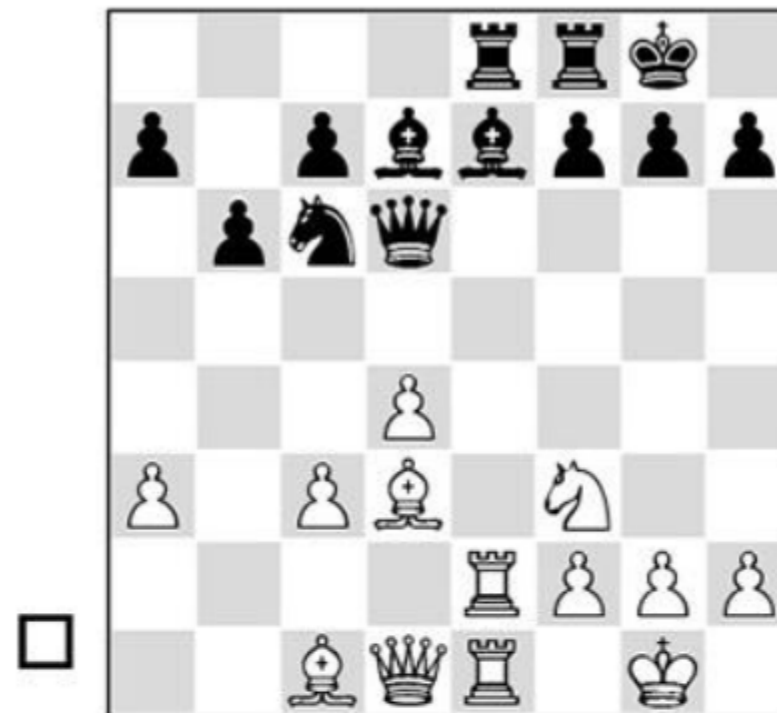
Judit Polgar

2722

Anatoly Karpov

2693

Hoogeveen 2003 (1)



20. d5! ♖a5 21. ♗e5

JP later discovered that 21. ♔c2! was even stronger. If 21... h6 22. ♗e5 Black lacks the freeing 22... ♗f6 due to 23. ♗h7+ and 24. ♗xf7+!. Ironically, the likely result was a much duller win. Great brilliancies often include a few grains of luck.

21... ♗f6 22. ♗f4 ♗xe5 23. ♗xe5 ♔xa3





Here JP made another stellar analytical discovery that stays in the notes: 24.d6!

♞xe5 (24...cxd6 25. ♞xd6 ♞xd6 26. ♞xh7+) 25. ♞xe5 ♞xd6 (on 25...c6, 25. ♞e7 is strong)



analysis diagram

26. ♞d5!, and the discovery 27. ♞xh7+ lets White capture the bishop next! Instead, despite the long odds she relates she just couldn't resist playing for mate – instinct sometimes trumps rationality!

24. ♞e3





Forced now was 24...g6!, e.g. 25. ♖f1 (25.h4!? Polgar) 25... ♔c5 26.d6 c6 27. ♗f6.



analysis diagram

The engine slightly prefers White's passer and strong bishops.

Instead, one of the great defenders in the annals of chess was caught napping:

24... ♔c5??





25. ♖xh7+! ♔xh7 26. ♚h5+

Karpov resigned at once, as you could hardly script a better version of this famous stratagem. On 26... ♔g8 the second scepter blow falls: 27. ♖xg7!



analysis diagram

The icing on White's cake is:

- A) 27... ♔xg7 28. ♜g3+ ♔f6 29. ♚g5#;
- B) 27...f5 28. ♚g6 ♜f7 29. ♖d4+;
- C) And 27...f6 28. ♖xf6 ♜xf6 29. ♜g3+



analysis diagram

29... ♖f8 30. ♗h8+ ♕f7 31. ♖g7#.

Game 110

Alexander Chernin

Judit Polgar

2600

2540

New Delhi 1990



Judit justifies her gambit with a winning rook sac!

22... ♖xg2+! 23. ♖xg2 ♗xh3!





The tactical basis of Black's thunderbolt begins with the loose ♖c3, in the variation

24. ♔g1 ♙xg2 25. ♕xg2 ♙xc3 26. ♖xc3 ♗g7+.

24. ♖e4 ♖e5!



25. ♖xe5

Forced in view of 25. ♖xf6 ♙g4+ 26. ♕g1 ♖xf3+ 27. ♕f1 ♗h1+ 28. ♕e2 ♖d4+ 29. ♕d2 ♙xd1.

25... ♙xe5



- 28. ♖f3
- 28. ♖f1 f3
- 28... ♜g8



- 29... ♜g4+ is threatened and all is clockwork, e.g. 29. ♖e4 ♜g2+ 30. ♜f3 ♜g6#.
- 29. ♖e2 f3+! 0-1
- It's over after 30. ♖xf3 ♜g4+ 31. ♖e3 ♜f4+.

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