



DJCA U18 Online Training Tournament 2021
20th February 2021, Lichess.org website and pairing software

No.	Player	Rating	Rtg Change	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	BYE	Points	Pos
1	Devrim	1581	+501	*	½									5½	=1
2	Charlie	1973	+21	½	*									5½	=1
3	Caleb	1885	-211	0	0	*	½							3½	=3
4	Suhayl	1500	+216	0	0	½	*							3½	=3
5	Ayush	1500	+157	0	0	0		*						3	
6	Pengxiao	1639	-115	0		0	0		*					3	
7	Tom	1500	-102	0	0			0	0	*				2	
8	Alfie	1500	-68		0	0		0		0	*			2	
9	Raghav	1503	-768				0	0	0		0	*	½	½	

The rather severe table, showing no ‘upsets’, doesn’t really reflect the closeness of some of the games: both first-placed players could have dropped points to lower-placed players.

I hope you were pleased with the tournament; I certainly was. The standard was good, everyone had chances, and I was especially happy with the positive and sporting comments being made in the chat between rounds.

We have arranged with the Mallison Chess Educational Trust to commission some coaching notes on the games. Mallison was a strong Exeter player who left money to the County for the improvement of young players. Inevitably the notes focus on the things that are wrong with your moves, but there are plenty of positive things in there too!

The games include move times; it doesn’t include total time but you can look those up on the Lichess site. If your think of a few seconds is followed by “??”, then I suggest spending more seconds...

I hope you all know how to ask for a computer analysis of your games on Lichess – it’s very good at spotting silly mistakes, although it can be harsh in calling things ‘blunders’. Look for the moments when the evaluation changes abruptly – one side or the other has made a mistake!

I make a few vague comments about ‘books and videos’ being available; if you want to know what to look at next and aren’t sure where to start, do ask.

And do read the notes on the other players’ games: if you didn’t make the same mistakes as they did, I bet you were thinking about it!

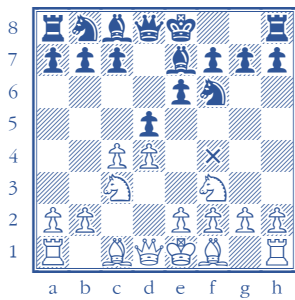
(1) Pengxiao - Suhayl (E10)

White got a big advantage out of the opening, but stubborn defence by Black held the line somehow, and then White was bullied into defending a worse position.

- 1.d4 (5) Nf6 (10)
- 2.c4 (3) e6 (2)
- 3.Nf3 (9) d5 (5)
- 4.Bf4?! (7)

This allows Black to equalise

4.Nc3 Be7



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

This is the only good time for Bf4. Allowing Black to move ...Bf8-d6 in one go just equalises, so wait for ...Bf8-e7 first. 5.Bf4

- 4 ... c5!= (11)
- 5.e3 (13) Nc6 (5)
- 6.Bd3 (26)

Allowing an IQP position

6.Nc3

- 6 ... b6 (37)

White might play cxd4 when ...exd4 allows the Bishop out anyway.

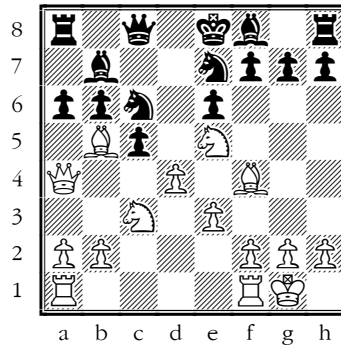
6...cxd4 7.exd4 dxc4 8.Bxc4 Bd6; 6...Qb6

- 7.0-0= (59) Ba6? (14)
- 8.Qa4! (20) Bb7 (17)
- 9.Ne5 (10)

Right idea but there was a better move order which should win a pawn.

9.cxd5 Nxd5 10.Bb5 Qc8 11.Ne5 Ndb4 12.Nxc6 Bxc6 13.Nc3 a6 14.Bxc6+ Qxc6 15.Qxc6+ Nxc6 16.Na4+-

- 9 ... Qc8 (43)
- 10.cxd5 (21) Nxd5 (53)
- 11.Bb5 (18) Nde7 (33)
- 12.Nc3 (40) a6 (7)



White has played well and logically to exploit the pin, but it looks like Black has defended well enough.

- 13.Bxc6+ (18)

But 13.Ne4!+- would have made Black worry! Black is undeveloped and uncoordinated.

- 13 ... Bxc6? (16)
- 14.Nxc6 (5) Nxc6 (5)
- 15.Qc4 (54)

15.d5!+- causes Black no end of bother

- 15 ... b5 (15)
- 16.Qd3 (28)

16.Qe2+-

- 16 ... cxd4 (14)
- 17.exd4 (8) Be7 (11)

- 18.d5! (12)

This is still good

- 18 ... Nb4 (28)
- 19.Qe4 (20)

Looks OK but not the most accurate.

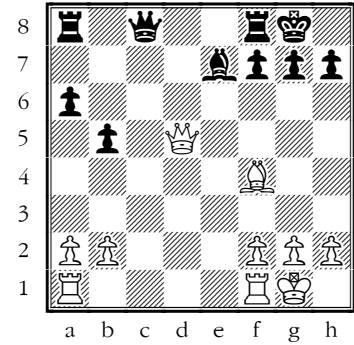
19.Qg3!+-;

19.Qd4! 0-0 20.d6!+-

- 19 ... Nxd5 (44)
- 20.Nxd5 (26) exd5 (2)
- 21.Qxd5 (9)

Again, White may be forgiven for not playing 21.Qe5!+-

- 21 ... 0-0= (5)



Now it's just level. But next White wastes time 'attacking' with the Queen, while Black gets their Rooks out, and the position quickly turns against White.

- 22.Qe4 (29)

22.Rac1 Qg4 23.g3 (23.Bc7=) 23...Rfd8 24.Qe4 Bf6 25.b3=

- 22 ... Bf6 (12)

- 23.Rab1 (25) Re8 (1:02)

- 24.Qf3 (30) Qe6 (35)

- 25.a3 (54)

25.b3 ≠ solves the problem of the b-pawn too

- 25 ... Rac8 (47)

White should move a Rook, but can't

- 26.Qd3 (57)

This doesn't really do anything.

26.Rfd1?? Bxb2; 26.g3

- 26 ... Red8 (1:40)

- 27.Qe3 (21) Qxe3 (17)

27...Qf5+-

- 28.fxe3 (19) Rc2≠ (15)

28...Rd3!+- with one idea ...g5

- 29.b3 (30)

29.Rfc1 Rdd2 30.Rxc2 Rxc2 31.b3 ≠ and White is hanging on

- 29 ... Rdd2 (4)

Now it's very tough for White

- 30.Rfc1 (34) Rxc2+ (16)

- 31.Kh1 (8) Rge2 (39)

- 32.a4 (49) h6 (41)

- 33.axb5 (13) axb5 (3)

- 34.Rxc2 (28) Rxc2 (2)

- 35.Rg1 (5) g5 (46)

36.h4 (33) **Kh7??** (43)

Black blinks, and suddenly White is back in the game

36...Rc5

37.hxg5 (9) **hxg5** (8)

38.Bxg5 (13) **Bxg5** (1)

39.Rxg5 (8) **Rb2** (1)

40.Rxb5 (4) **Kg6** (18)

This should be drawn, despite White's extra pawn

41.Rb6+? (20)

This just chases the King where it wants to go! The position is still equal, but I will give it a '?' anyway. Moves must have a point!

41.Kg1 Re2 42.e4 Rxe4 43.Kf2=

41 . . . Kg5 (23)

42.Rb7 (34) **f5** (9)

43.Rb5 (23) **Kg4** (17)

44.Rb4+?? (17)

The same mistake, but this time it's fatal.

44.Kg1 Kf3 (44...Kg3 45.Kf1 Kf3 46.Rxf5+) 45.Rxf5+ Kxe3

44 . . . Kg3 (6)

45.Rf4 (1:24) **Rb1+** (3)

46.Rf1 (4) **Rxf1#** 0-

!

(2) Charlie - Alfie (C02)

In what I guess was an unfamiliar opening for White, Black quickly got equality and then a pawn, but became too worried about White's passed pawn, and ran out of time while on the defensive.

1.e4 (5) **e6** (10)

2.d4 (2) **d5** (2)

3.e5 (3) **c5** (2)

4.c3 (2) **Nc6** (2)

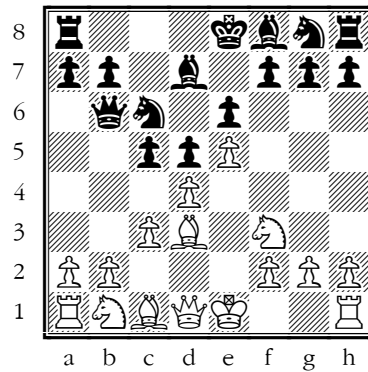
5.Nf3 (7) **Bd7** (5)

6.Bd3

The Milner-Barry Gambit -- or at least, it should be!

6 . . . Qb6 (30)

6...Rc8 is supposed to be an idea
7.0-0 cxd4 8.cxd4 Nb4=



7.Qb3 (1:27)

This doesn't make sense: White has more space and wants to keep Queens on for the attack, as White's structure will be more a target than an asset without it.

7.0-0 is the gambit idea: 7...cxd4 8.cxd4 Nxd4 9.Nxd4 Qxd4 10.Qe2; 7.Bc2 Nimzowitsch would play this or; 7.Be2 but if you want a Bishop on e2, move it there in one move!

7 . . . Qxb3 (55)

8.axb3 (0) **b6?** (2:18)

Pointless

8...cxd4 9.cxd4 Nb4 ≠

9.Be3 (58) **cxtd4** (2:33)

10.Nxd4? (4:17) **Nxe5** (5:51)

It's hard to guess what the players were thinking about for the last 10 minutes: White should never have offered the pawn, and Black should have snapped it up.

11.Bb5? (2) **a5** ≠ (2:42)

I was suspicious of this move at the time, as it doesn't stop White undoubling the pawns, but Stockfish likes it.

11...Bd6 ≠

12.b4 (2:01) **Bxb5** (2:11)

13.Nxb5 (3) **Rb8** (1:52)

14.bxa5 (2:47) **bxtd5** (49)

15.N1a3 -+ (1:59)

15.Rxa5 Nc4

15 . . . Bxa3 (1:09)

16.Nxa3 (0) **Ne7** (1:18)

16...Rxb2

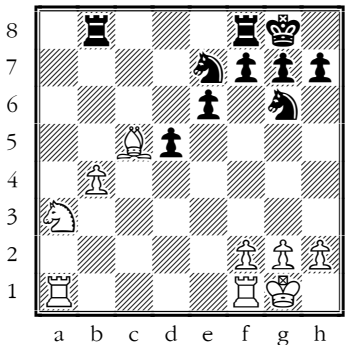
17.0-0 (46) **0-0** (30)

17...Rxb2

18.Bc5 (35) **N5g6** (39)

19.b4 (19) **axb4** (21)

20.cxb4 (0)



White now has a passed pawn too, and this worries Black who is by now short of time.

20 . . . Rfc8 (25)

21.Nc2 (1:20) **Nc6** (22)

22.Rfc1 (34) **Ra8** (1:45)

22...Nf4

23.Rab1 (36) **Rc7** (21)

24.Ne1 (57) **Rac8** (4)

24...Rb7-+

25.Bd6 (23) **Rd7** (2)

26.Bc5 (7) **Rdc7** (1)

26...Nge5; 26...f6

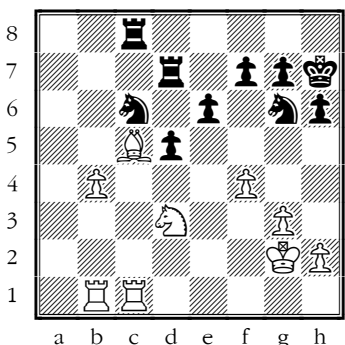
27.Nd3 (11) **Rd7** (10)

28.g3 (12) **h6** (3)

28...Nge5!-+

29.Kg2 (2) **Kh7** (2)

30.f4= (3)



Black was in terrible time trouble here, living on increments. Although the board is still OK for Black, the clock decided.

- 30 ... f5 (2)
 31.b5 (23) Nd8 (13)
 32.b6 (16) Rb8 (8)
 33.Nb4 (10) Rdb7 (3)

33...e5 ≠

- 34.Na6 (4) Rc8 (6)
 35.Rc2 (40) Nc6 (7)

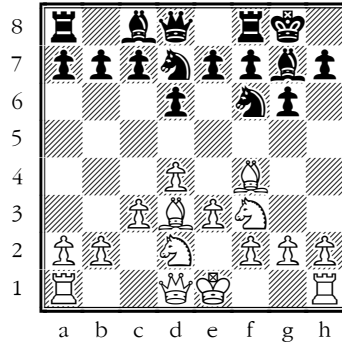
35...Nf8= was Black's last chance

- 36.Bd6+- (23) Rd8 (6)
 37.Rxc6 (5) Ne7 (4)
 38.Bxe7 (11) Re8 (3)
 39.Rc7 (16) Rxc7 (7)
 40.bxc7 (1) Rc8 (3)
 41.Bd6 (2) Kg8 (2)
 42.Rb8 (1) Rxb8 (3)
 43.cxb8Q+ (0) Kf7 (2)
 44.Qf8+ (2) Kg6 (1)
 45.Be5 (15) d4 (20)
 46.Qxg7+ (3) Kh5 (2)
 47.Nc7 (18) d3 (3)
 48.Ne8 (1) d2 (2)
 49.Nf6#
 1-0

(3) Ayush - Caleb (A48)

Some simple tactical blunders decided the game early on.

- 1.d4 (5) Nf6 (10)
 2.Nf3 (5) g6 (3)
 3.Bf4 (2) Bg7 (2)
 4.e3 (2) 0-0 (1)
 5.Nbd2 (2) d6 (2)
 6.Bd3 (3) Nbd7 (1)
 7.c3 (2)



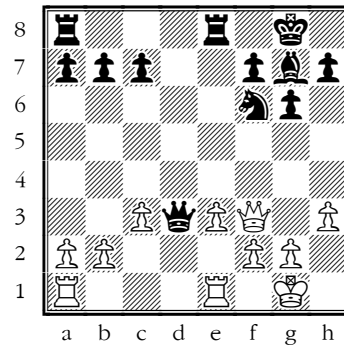
7 ... Re8 (2)

7...Qe8 is usually played, with the thought that the Rook is good on f8

- 8.0-0 (2) e5 (2)
 9.dxe5 (12) dxe5 (0)
 10.Bxe5?? (3)

10.Bg5 prevents 10...e4 and could have been found with more than 3 seconds' thought!

- 10 ... Nxe5 (3)
 11.Nxe5 (2) Rxe5 (3)
 12.Nf3 (15) Re8 (7)
 13.Re1 (4) Bg4 (9)
 14.h3 (46) Bxf3 (2)
 15.Qxf3?? (7) Qxd3(3)



I won't comment further!

- 16.Qxb7 (26) Qc4 (55)
 17.Rad1 (28) Qxa2 (38)
 18.e4 (20) Rad8 (3:08)
 19.e5 (1:12) Rxd1 (1:34)
 20.Rxd1 (8) Nh5 (44)
 21.Qxc7 (55) Bxe5 (28)
 22.Qb7 (38) Qa4 (48)
 23.b3 (42) Qf4 (1:56)
 24.g3 (53) Qf6 (1:14)
 25.Qd7 (33) Qe7 (38)

- 26.Qxe7 (29) Rxe7 (9)
 27.Re1 (8) Bf6 (4)
 28.Rxe7 (31) Bxe7 (0)
 29.c4 (4) Nf6 (5)
 30.Kf1 (24) Ne4 (2)
 31.Ke2 (11) Bb4 (8)
 32.Ke3 (32) Nd2 (3)
 33.c5 (20) Nxb3 (4)
 34.c6 (4) Ba5 (2)
 35.Kd3 (4) Nc5+ (3)
 36.Kc4 (3) Ne6 (5)
 37.Kb5 (8) Bb6 (4)
 38.Kc4 (12) Bxf2 (5)
 39.Kd5 (9) Bxg3 (4)
 40.h4 (9) Nd8 (25)
 41.h5 (9) Nxc6 (6)
 42.Kxc6 (3) f5 (1)
 43.Kd5 (6) a5 (3)
 44.hxg6 (9) hxg6 (2)
 45.Ke6 (1) f4 (2)
 46.Kf6 (2) f3 (1)
 47.Kxg6 (1) f2 (0)
 48.Kh6 (5) f1 Q (5)
 49.Kg6 (2) Qf7+ (1)
 50.Kg5 (36) a4 (9)
 51.Kg4 (15) a3 (8)
 52.Kxg3 (2) a2 (5)
 53.Kg4 (7) a1 Q (3)
 54.Kg3 (7) Qg1+
 0-1

(4) Tom - Devrim (C02)

A great start by both players: White developed a strong and probably winning attack, but Black defended well enough to hold and then forge ahead with the exchange of Queens. Black's cause was then undermined by donating a Knight, when White again was winning, but passed pawns forced White to swap off into a drawn endgame, when Black was gifted a Rook.

1.e4 (5) e6 (10)

2.d4 (4) d5 (1)

3.e5 (1) c5 (13)

4.Nf3?! (3)

4.c3 Nc6 5.Be3 is a more logical moment for Be3 (5.Nf3 is a better time for Nf3)

4 ... Nc6?! (4)

4...cxd4 is the most challenging move and should be tried!

5.Be3 (5) b6? (29)

Weakening

5...Qb6=; 5...cxd4! 6.Bxd4! Nxd4 7.Nxd4 ≠ I'd rather be Black here; without a solid centre, White will struggle for an attack, while Black can happily carry on putting pressure on White's weaknesses and enjoy the Bishop pair.

6.c3 (9) Nge7 (26)

7.Bd3 (12) Nf5 (20)

8.0-0 (12) Be7 (21)

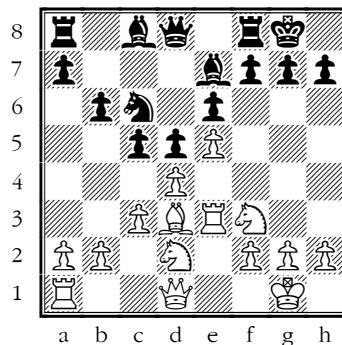
9.Re1 (13)

9.Na3

9 ... 0-0 (3)

10.Nbd2 (25) Nxe3 (29)

11.Rxe3= (13)



13]

11 ... c4? (2)

This takes the pressure off White and leaves them free to attack Black's King's-side.

12.Bc2 (5) Bb7 (1:45)

13.h4! (2:15) a5 (18)

14.Ng5! (1:09)

A perfectly correct sacrifice.

14 ... Bxg5 (43)

15.hxg5 (0) Qxg5 (10)

16.Rg3 (3) Qf4 (1:02)

17.Rf3 (20) Qg5 (1:33)

18.Rg3 (12) Qf4 (3:38)

19.Rf3 (8)

19.Nf3!+- White has a crushing position.

19 ... Qg5 (3)

20.Rh3 (5)

Avoiding repetition, but not in the best way.

20.Qe2!+-

20 ... f5 (47)

21.exf6?! (2)

Yes, White wants open lines, but the open line this created is one for Black's Rook.

21.Nf3!+-

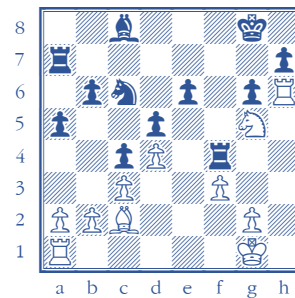
21 ... g6!± (3)

22.Nf3 (53) Qxf6 (8)

23.Qd2 (2) Bc8± (1:54)

24.Qh6 (1:54)

24.Ng5! is best, with White keeping an advantage in a complex endgame after 24...Ra7 25.Rh6 Qf4! 26.Qxf4 Rxf4 27.f3



White has a bind for the pawn.

27...e5 28.Nxh7! Nxd4! (28...Rxx7 29.Rxg6+ Rg7 30.Rxc6) 29.cxd4 Rxh7 30.Rxg6+ Rg7 31.Rxg7+ Kxg7 32.dxe5 Bf5 33.Bxf5 Rxf5 34.Re1

24 ... Ra7= (15)

25.Ng5?! (18)

Determined to keep attacking, but the moment has passed.

25.Ba4 Nd8 26.Qe3=

25 ... e5 (43)

25...Qxf2+!

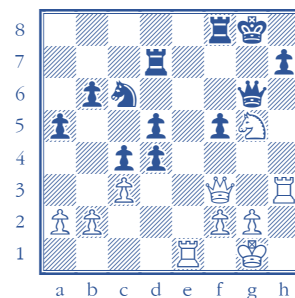
26.Rf3 (16) Bf5 (25)

27.Bxf5 (1:44) gxf5 (3)

28.Rh3 (2) exd4 (48)

29.Re1 (1:16)

29.Qh5 Qg6 30.Qf3 Rd7 31.Re1=



Again, White has plenty of compensation. Some fabulous lines suggested by Stockfish:

A) 31...f4 32.Rh4 d3 33.Re6 Rf6 34.Rxf6 Qxf6 35.Rxf4 Qd6 36.Rf6 Ne5 37.Qf5 d2 38.Rxd6 d1Q+ 39.Kh2

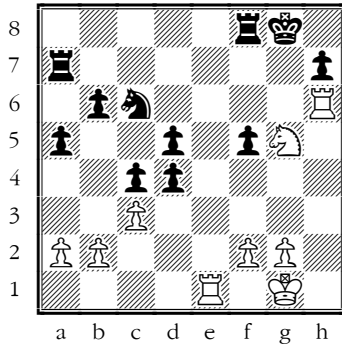
A1) 39...Rxd6 40.Qxh7+ Kf8 41.Qh8+ Ke7 42.Qxe5+ Kd7 43.Qf5+ Kc7 44.Ne6+ Rxe6 (44...Kc6 45.Qf7) 45.Qxe6;

A2) 39... Qh5+ 40.Kg1 Qd1+;

B) 31...d3 32.Rg3 Kh8 33.Nxh7 Qxh7 34.Rh3 Qxh3

29 ... Qxh6 (30)

30.Rxh6 (2)



30 ... b5?? (29)

30...Rc8 and White will struggle to defend for long.

31.Rxc6 (7) d3 (9)

32.Rd1 (18) Rb8 (14)

33.Rc5 (7) b4 (10)

34.Rxd5 (28) a4 (22)

35.cxb4 (10) Rxb4 (0)

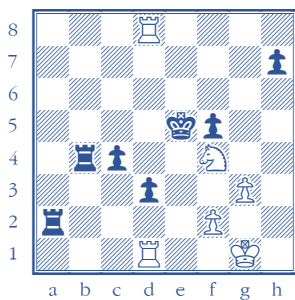
36.Rd8+ (18) Kg7 (6)

37.Rc8 (0) a3 (6)

38.bxa3 (6) Rxa3 (0)

39.Rd2?!+- (56)

It's all quite lively, but White can win most cleanly with 39.Ne6+ Kf6 40.Nf4! Ke5 41.g3 Rxa2 42.Rd8!



threat R8xd3!

39 ... Rb1+ (36)

40.Kh2 (7) Rc3 (3)

41.a4? (20)

41.Ne6+ is White's last chance to win 41...Kf6 42.Nd4+-

41 ... Rc2= (5)

42.Nf3 (25) Rxd2 (10)

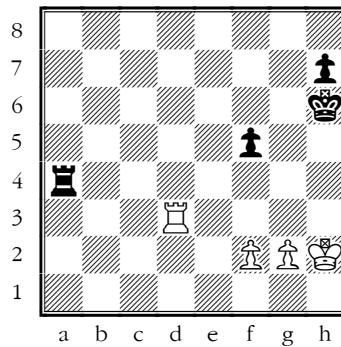
43.Nxd2 (3) Rd1 (2)

44.Nxc4 (3) Rc1 (12)

45.Rc7+ (36) Kh6 (10)

46.Rd7 (1:39) Rxc4 (8)

47.Rxd3 (2) Rxa4= (3)



'Dead equal', we say, but...

48.Rf3 (16) Kg6 (11)

49.g3 (33) Kg5 (32)

50.Kg2 (2:16) h5 (27)

51.Kf1 (18) Kg4 (13)

52.Ke2?? (3) Ra2+ (24)

53.Ke3 (3) Ra3+ (1)

54.Ke2 (1) Rxf3 0-

!

(5) Suhayl - Charlie (E21)

In a difficult opening, both sides struggled to find the best plans and the most accurate moves, and it was petering out to a level endgame when White allowed Black to exploit a simple pin.

1.d4 (5) Nf6 (10)

2.c4 (3) e6 (2)

3.Nc3 (0) Bb4 (0)

4.Nf3 (1)

4.Bg5 Leningrad Variation;

4.f3 is a currently fashionable line

4 ... c5 (2)

5.Bg5 (10)

This system is best played on the previous move.

The moves most often played here are 5.e3; 5.g3

5 ... cxd4 (27)

6.Qxd4 (2) Nc6 (9)

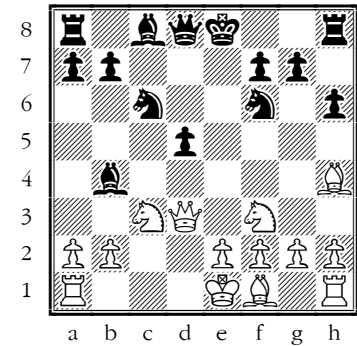
7.Qd3 (35) h6 (12)

8.Bh4 (4) d5 (1:57)

9.cxd5 (28)

9.e3

9 ... exd5 (0)



An IQP position, fairly level so far

10.Nd4 (50)

But White is behind in development, and this doesn't help. Black now spends some time chasing down the White Bishop, but that doesn't achieve much.

10.e3

10 ... g5 (6:16)

This creates some holes as well as having an IQP

11.Bg3 (16) Ne4 (17)

12.e3 (48) Nxc3 (3:05)

13.fxg3? (14)

Capturing towards the centre is nearly always best.

13.hxc3 ± would leave White a little better, solid with a game plan on the King's-side weaknesses.

13 ... a6 (1:37)

Doesn't really do anything.

14.Nxc6 (24) bxc6 (0)

15.Qd4 (5)

White gets one of Black's bishops by forking b4 and h8.

15 ... Bxc3+ (30)

16.Qxc3 (3)

White still has a fork.

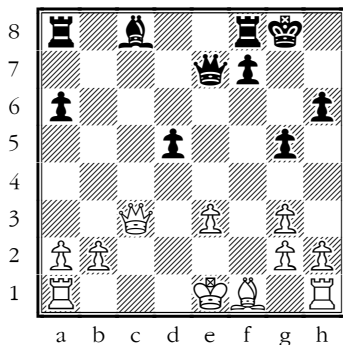
16 ... 0-0 (38)

17.Qxc6? (32)

Risky when undeveloped.

17 ... Qe7 (2:20)

18.Qc3 (45)



18 ... Re8 (17)

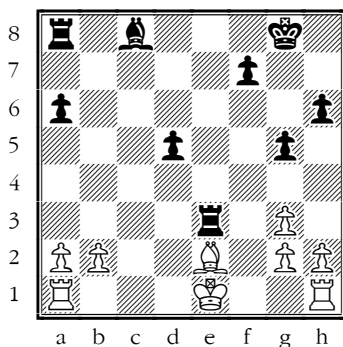
18...d4! is more or less winning for Black: the pawns matter less than Black's activity. 19.Qxd4 Bb7 20.Be2 Rfd8—+

19.Be2 (54) Qxe3 (10)

The pawn won't run away.

19...Bf5

20.Qxe3 (2) Rxe3= (1)



Equal again, but White is in a pin, which cannot be ignored.

21.Rd1?? (10) Bg4 (7)

22.Rd2 (10) Rae8 (4)

23.0-0 (37) Rxe2 (19)

24.Rxd5 (14) Rxb2 (20)

25.Ra1 (1:53) Be6 (10)

25...Ree2 should be instinctive! It's also mate in 8, as it happens.

26.Re5 (16) Reb8 (36)

27.Ree1 (26) Rxa2 (6)

28.h4 (13) Rbb2 (12)

29.Rxa2 (4) Rxa2 (1)

30.Kh2 (44) g4 (16)

31.Re4 (25) h5 (14)

32.Re5 (6) a5 (20)

33.Rxh5 (4) a4 (7)

34.Ra5 (10) a3 (4)

35.Kg1 (36) Ra1+ (17)

36.Kf2 (4) a2 (1)

37.Ra3 (1:01) Rb1 (11)

38.Ra8+ (19) Kg7 (3)

39.h5 (26) a1Q (3)

40.h6+ (2) Kxh6 0-

1

(6) Alfie - Ayush (D00)

A rather stodgy start gradually came to life when Black was able to open some files for the Rooks, then White missed Black's first threat, after which the endgame was very difficult to hold.

1.d4 (5) d5 (10)

2.Bf4 (2) Bf5 (6)

3.Nf3 (4) e6 (3)

4.e3 (3) Nf6 (4)

5.Nbd2 (5)

5.c4 and Qb3 is one idea in this position

5 ... c6 (3)

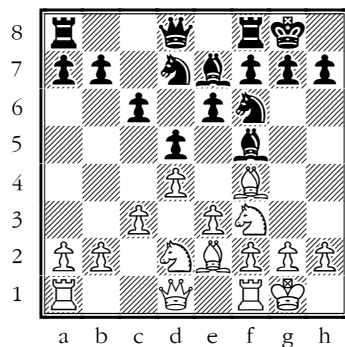
6.c3 (2)

Really, c2-c3 and ...c6 are good ways to support a threatened d-pawn. If the d-pawn is not threatened, do something more useful -- like c4 or ...c5, threatening the opponent's d-pawn!

6 ... Nbd7 (3)

7.Be2 (3) Be7 (2)

8.0-0 (3) 0-0 (2)



Both players are respectful of the correct London setup! But this very straightforward way of developing is not going to set the opponent many problems nor provoke many mistakes.

9.Ne5 (1:10) Nxe5 (1:24)

10.Bxe5 (46) b5 (36)

11.b4 (43)

11.a4 is a better reaction, threatening a pawn and maybe creating weaknesses.

11 ... a5 (13)

Black does what White omitted.

12.a3 (26) Bd6 (38)

12...Ne4 ≠

13.Bxd6 (33) Qxd6 (5)

14.Nf3 ≠ (1:00)

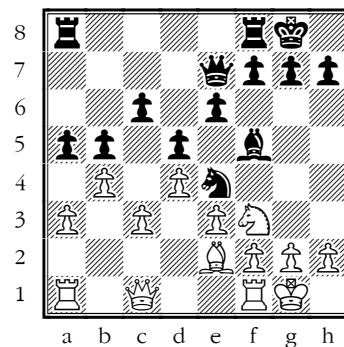
14.Nb3= is better, resolving the tension on the Queen's-side.

14 ... Ne4 (1:12)

15.Qc1 (2:56)

Black stands better, but needs a plan

15 ... Qe7 (1:33)



16.Rd1 ≠ (2:47)

This position is very unkind to Rooks but that really cannot improve White's position. The e-file is the only file White might open.

16.Ne5; 16.Nd2; 16.Re1

16 ... axb4= (1:06)

That's probably a relief to White.

16...Ra7 17.h3 Rfa8

17.axb4 (2:08) Bg4 (41)

18.Qb2 (2:49) Rfd8 (59)

Similarly, this Rook has no future on the d-file.

19.h3 (1:37) Bxf3 (41)

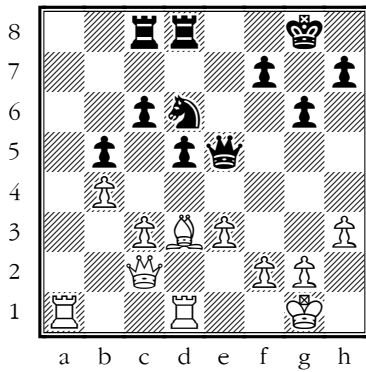
20.Bxf3 (12) Nd6 (16)

21.Be2 (30) Rac8 (30)

22.Bd3 (36) e5 (38)

23.dxe5 (1:25) Qxe5 (14)

24.Qc2 (1:20) g6 (26)



25.Re1 (1:48)

White has been given an open file and a chance to use it!

25.Ra6!

25 ... c5 (51)

26.bxc5 (37) Rxc5 (13)

All the Rooks now have options

27.Qb2? (2:47)

Overlooking Black's threat.

27.Rab1!

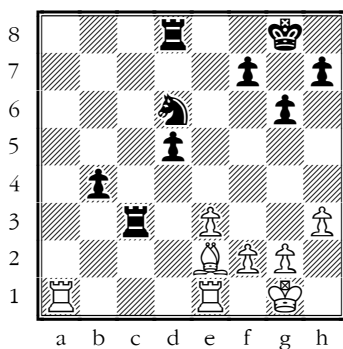
27 ... Qxc3 (20)

28.Qxc3 (5) Rxc3 (12)

29.Be2 (5)

29.Red1! White must get some activity

29 ... b4+ (24)



White has a passive position and faces a passed pawn -- difficult anyway, but White is also short of time.

30.Rab1 (16) b3 (15)

31.Rb2 (17) Nc4 (16)

32.Bxc4 (3) dxc4 (2)

33.Reb1 (9) Rc2 (14)

34.Rxc2 (4) bxc2 (2)

35.Rc1 (3) Rdl+ (12)

36.Rxd1 (5) cxd1Q+ (0)

37.Kh2 (1) c3 (4)

38.Kg3 (5) c2 (0)

39.Kh4 (2) clQ (2)

40.f3 (11) h6 (14)

41.f4 (14) Qxe3 (34)

42.g3 (7) Qh5#

0-1

(7) Caleb - Devrim (E05)

Quite a complicated game to understand. In a difficult opening, White lost the thread and Black started to develop some pressure. White tried to solve their problems tactically, which looked perfectly correct, but there was a sting in the tail, and the endgame proved lost for White.

1.d4 (5) d5 (10)

2.c4 (3) e6 (5)

3.Nf3 (1) Be7 (7)

Normally used to provoke Nf3, which has already happened!

3...Nf6

4.g3 (3)

White goes for the Catalan, a very complex opening which I wouldn't touch with a bargepole!

4 ... Nf6 (4)

5.Bg2 (1) 0-0 (7)

6.0-0 (2) dxc4 (23)

7.Ne5 (3) Nc6 (6)

The main line, which both players had seen before.

8.Nxc6 (18)

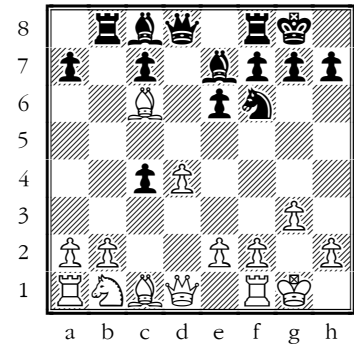
8.Bxc6 is played as often but has better results.

8 ... bxc6 (0)

9.Bxc6 (2)

Here 9.Na3 is best

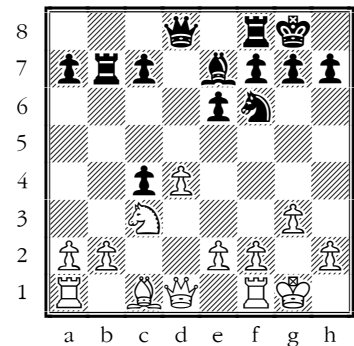
9 ... Rb8 (9)



About equal, but Black scores better here.

10.Nc3 (21) Bb7 (1:22)

11.Bxb7 (2) Rxb7= (5)



12.e3?! (28)

That's unkind to the Bishop. The position quickly swings in Black's favour.

12 ... c5! (23)

13.Rb1 (53) Qd6= (1:06)

14.b3! (1:37) cxd4 (2:15)

15.exd4 (46) Qc6 (10)

16.Be3 (1:10) Rfb8 (59)

17.Bf4 (2:59) Rd8 (1:19)

18.Be3 (1:20) Bb4 (2:53)

19.Qc2 (2:30) Rc7 (2:48)

20.Rfc1 (1:52) Ba3 (1:28)

21.Rf1 (1:23)

21.Rd1 must be better

21 ... Bb4 (1:27)

22.Rfc1 (6) cxb3 (35)

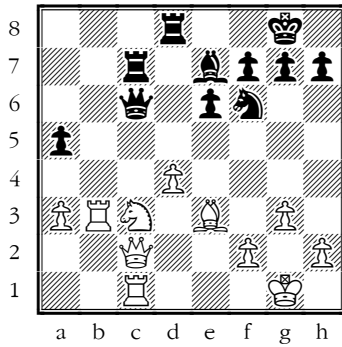
23.Rxb3 (4) a5 (20)

White is in a nasty-looking pin, so before ...Ne4 happens:

24.a3 (36)

24.Qd1

24 ... Be7= (43)



Black has strong pressure, with ideas of ...Nd5, ...a4, and ...Rdc8.

25.d5?–+ (1:47)

Understandably, White tries to solve their problems with one blow, but in fact this doesn't help.

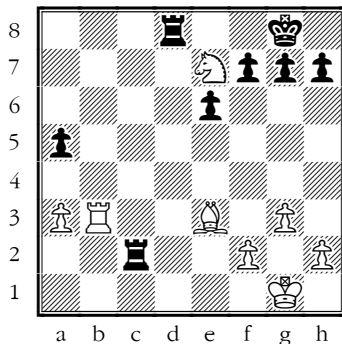
25.Qb2 ≠ gets out of the pin and prepares to fight another day

25 ... Nxd5 (13)

26.Nxd5 (45) **Qxc2** (11)

27.Rxc2 (12) **Rxc2** (13)

28.Nxe7+ (7)



So, White has won two pieces for a Rook, which is normally good, but the Knight is stuck, and the Rook gets tied up defending it, when both pieces are needed elsewhere.

28 ... Kf8 (9)

29.Rb7 (1:02) **Rd1+** (23)

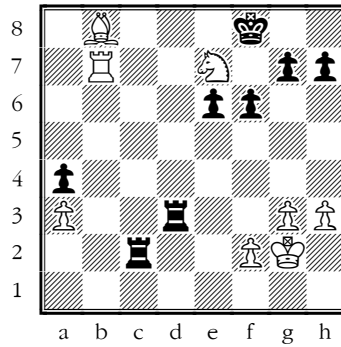
The Black Rooks are free to make havoc.

30.Kg2 (6) **Rd3** (1:01)

31.Bf4 (14) **f6** (1:03)

32.Bb8 (1:11) **a4** (1:27)

33.h3 (20)



33 ... Rb3! (1:38)

Even stronger than taking on a3.

34.Bd6 (1:27) **Rxb7** (13)

35.Nf5+ (15) **Kf7** (10)

36.Ne3 (9) **Rc6** **0–**

!

(8) Raghav - Pengxiao (C63)

After a mostly solid opening from both sides, White spent precious time on pawn moves and ran into some trouble, and the trouble, as it often does, produced a blunder.

1.e4 (5) **e5** (10)

2.Nf3 (3) **Nc6** (5)

3.Bb5 (3) **f5** (6)

4.d3 (54) **fxe4** (15)

5.dxe4 (9) **Nf6** (10)

6.Bg5 (18) **h6?** (14)

Doesn't develop and does make a weakness on g6

6...Bb4+ 7.c3 Bc5

7.Bxf6 (22)

7.Be3! takes away the best square for Black's Bishop.

7 ... Qxf6 (8)

8.Nbd2 (4) **Bc5** (18)

9.Bxc6 (1:19) **bx6** (7)

Black can be happy with the Bishop pair

10.a3 (1:00)

Pointless.

10 ... d5?! (9)

Just a bit loose right now without a Queen on d8. For example, Nb3 hits the bishop and discovers an attack on d5 -- in fact, that doesn't work, but could have done.

10...0–0; 10...d6

11.h3? (47)

Much too slow

11.Nb3 Bb6 12.exd5?? e4; 11.exd5! cxd5 12.Nb3!

11 ... Ba6!? (42)

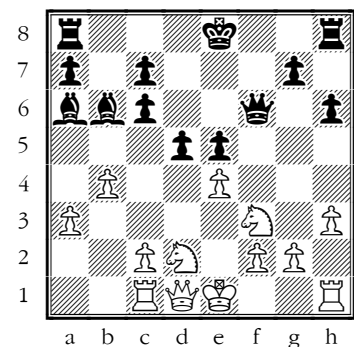
Stopping White from castling.

11...0–0

12.b4 (1:34) **Bb6** (10)

12...Rd8! is a smart idea from Stockfish: if White can't castle, aim for checkmate! 13.bxc5? dxe4! 14.Nh2 e3 15.fxe3?? Qh4+ 16.g3 Qxg3#

13.Rc1–+ (15)



13 ... Rd8 (29)

13...0–0–0 is even better

14.c4? (46)

White is opening up the position, but only Black will benefit

14 ... dxc4 (48)

14...dxe4–+ is more accurate, even though c4–c5 can't be stopped 15.c5 Rd3 16.0–0 exf3 17.Re1 0–0 18.cxb6 cxb6 19.g3 Qe6 20.Kh2 Bc8 21.g4 Qf6 22.Qc2 Qh4 23.Nf1 h5–+

15.0–0 (18) **c3** (5)

16.Re1??

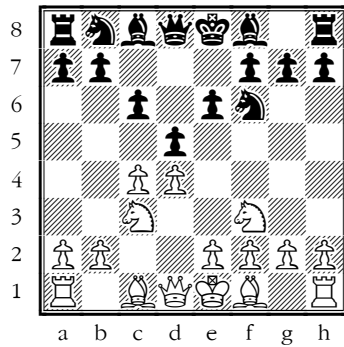
16.Rxc3 was essential

0–1

(9) Suhayl - Raghav (D43)

Black rather made things up in the opening but White didn't make the best use of their chances – in fact, could have been much worse at one point. But it all settled down into a level endgame, until Black's Knight fell foul of a pin.

- 1.d4 (5) d5 (10)
- 2.c4 (2) c6 (8)
- 3.Nc3 (1) Nf6 (9)
- 4.Nf3 (2) e6 (13)



The Semi-Slav Defence, which leads to some of the sharpest lines in chess theory!

- 5.Bg5 (1) Bb4 (34)

More usual are 5...h6; 5...Nbd7

- 6.Rc1 (3) 0-0 (1:18)
- 7.e3 (9) b6 (1:25)

This doesn't fit in with the rest of Black's moves very well. The Queen's Gambit is a common opening, and if you are looking for a system to play against it, the Tarrasch, the Tartakower and the Swiss are all recommended, and I have a booklet explaining each of them.

- 8.a3 (5) Bxc3+ (3)
- 9.Rxc3 (2) c5?+- (36)
- 10.dxc5 (14) bxc5 (1:13)
- 11.Rd3? = (31)

11.cxd5! wins the Pc5

- 11 ... Bb7 (45)
- 12.cxd5 (12) exd5 (9)
- 13.e4? (11)

Black's pawns are enticingly exposed and should be attacked, but development is the first

priority for White. Yet Black lets White off the hook.

- 13 ... Qb6? (1:06)

Getting out of the gaze of the Rook... but only for a moment. White takes over the initiative.

13...Re8+- playing against the exposed King; 13...d4 ≠ attacking e4

- 14.Rb3! (22) Qc6 (1:29)

- 15.Bxf6 (1:09)

15.Ne5!+-

- 15 ... gxf6 (2:46)

- 16.exd5?± (30)

16.Bb5+-; 16.Nh4+-

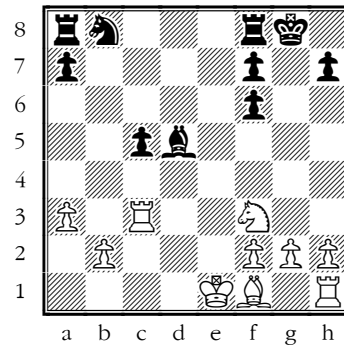
- 16 ... Qxd5 (1:03)

- 17.Qxd5? (46)

17.Be2! ≠

- 17 ... Bxd5 (0)

- 18.Rc3 (11)



White has a slight plus, with a plan of using Black's many pawn weaknesses, but it's far from the crushing position we saw a few moves earlier.

- 18 ... Re8+ (38)

- 19.Re3 (59)

19.Kd2±

- 19 ... Nd7 (1:09)

19...Rxe3+! 20.fxe3 Nd7= White has weaknesses too.

- 20.Bb5 (27) Bxf3 (1:57)

- 21.gxf3 (3) Rad8 (41)

21...Red8

- 22.0-0 (15) Rxe3 (22)

- 23.fxe3 (5) Ne5 (50)

- 24.e4 = (1:32)

24.Kg2

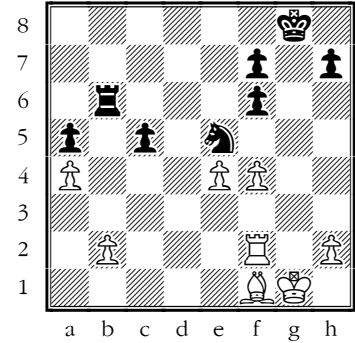
- 24 ... Rb8 (20)

- 25.a4 (10) Rb6 (54)

- 26.Rf2 (1:09) a6 (32)

- 27.Bf1 (55) a5 (40)

- 28.f4 = (14)



- 28 ... Ng4?? (58)

28...Nc6! A solid outpost on d4 is better than the cheap shot against the Rook.

- 29.Rg2 (5) Kf8 (57)

- 30.Rxg4 (4) Rxb2 (5)

- 31.Bb5 (18) Rc2 (39)

- 32.e5 (36) Rc1+ (48)

- 33.Kg2 (7) c4 (16)

- 34.exf6 (56) c3 (19)

- 35.Rg3 (7) Rc2+ (1:02)

- 36.Kh3 (3) h5 (25)

- 37.Re3 (1:19) Kg8 (7)

- 38.Re8+ (1) Kh7 (2)

- 39.Bd3+ (0) Kh6 (13)

- 40.Rh8#

1-0

(10) Pengxiao - Caleb (E61)

White didn't get anything out of the opening but ...g5 gave plenty of opportunities on the light squares. An attempt to force matters with f4 could have backfired immediately, but with an equal if muddled position White missed a simple tactic.

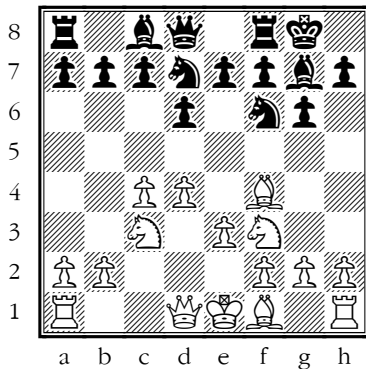
- 1.d4 (5) Nf6 (10)

- 2.c4 (7) g6 (4)

- 3.Nc3 (7) Bg7 (2)

- 4.Bf4 (4) 0-0 (3)

5.Nf3 (2) d6 (2)
6.e3 (2) Nbd7 (3)



7.Bd3 (10)

7.Be2 is the square for this piece, as g6 is too much of a barrier, and ...e4 may be coming; 7.h3 is a good precaution in this system

7 ... Re8 (2)

7...Qe8; My computer likes 7...e5
8.dxe5 dxe5 9.Nxe5 (9.Bxe5 Nxe5
10.Nxe5 Nh5 11.Nf3 Bxc3+
12.bxc3) 9...Nh5 10.Qxh5

8.0-0 (8) e5 (1)

Now ...e4 is a threat -- because of the Bishop on d3!

9.dxe5? (8)

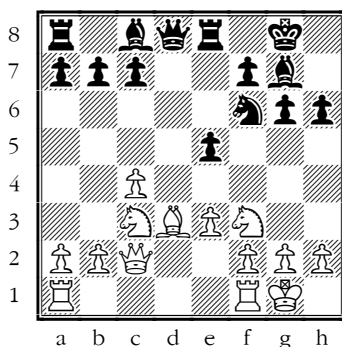
9.Bg5!

9 ... dxe5 (0)

10.Bg5 (4) h6 (6)

11.Bxf6 (6) Nxf6 (4)

12.Qc2 ♣ (5)



12 ... g5?± (1:52)

Weakening the light squares.

13.Rfd1 = (30)

13.Rad1!; 13.Nd2!

13 ... Qe7 (55)

14.e4? (1:45)

14.Ne4!

14 ... Bg4 (59)

14...c6!

15.Qe2 (23)

15.Nd5!

15 ... Bh5 (1:08)

16.h3? (19) g4? (23)

16...c6

17.hxg4 (13) Bxg4 (21)

18.Nd5! (17) Nxd5 (9)

19.cxd5 (8) a6? (29)

Pointless.

20.Rac1 ± (38) Rac8 (37)

21.Qe3 (1:04) Bf6? (2:03)

22.Be2! (41) Bxf3 (1:32)

23.Qxf3 (13)

White has been invited into the light squares.

23 ... Bg5 (19)

24.Qg4 (17)

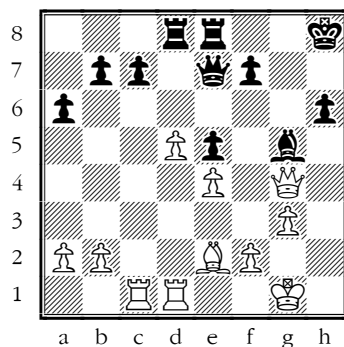
24.Rc4!

24 ... Rcd8 (48)

25.g3 (14)

25.Rd3!

25 ... Kh8 (1:01)



White is doing very well here, but does better by playing slowly, creeping in on the light squares, and keeping pressure on c7.

26.f4? (56)

An example line: 26.Rc2 Rd6
27.Rd3 Rg6 28.Qh3 Qb4 29.Bh5
Rf6 30.Qg4 Re7 31.a3 Qa4 32.Rc5
a5

26 ... exf4? (6)

26...Bxf4! 27.gxf4 Rg8

27.gxf4 (3) Rg8 (6)

28.Kf1 (19) Qf6? = (1:15)

28...f5!

29.Rxc7?? (1:06)

29.e5! Qxf4+ 30.Qxf4 Bxf4 31.Rxc7
Bxe5 32.Rxb7 =

29 ... Bxf4 (17)

30.Qf3 (13) Qg5 (30)

31.Qc3+ (29) Be5 (36)

32.Qc5 (26) Bxc7 (34)

33.Qd4+ (15) Be5 (3)

34.Qf2 (4) Rg6 (57)

35.Qc5 (16) Rf6+ (19)

36.Ke1 (20) Bg3+ (4)

37.Qf2 (10) Bxf2+ (1)

38.Kf1 (6) Qg1# 0-1

(11) Devrim - Charlie (B51)

A grand struggle! In a dynamically equal opening, Black was first to go wrong, giving White chances to attack the Queen's-side, and inflicting weaknesses on White's pawns didn't seem to help. Then White stumbled, losing a pawn, and potentially the game, but Black hesitated and allowed one too many pawns to be swapped off to win.

1.e4 (5) c5 (10)

2.Nf3 (5) d6 (1:34)

3.Bb5+ (10) Nd7 (6)

4.0-0 (12)

4.d4

4 ... a6 (3)

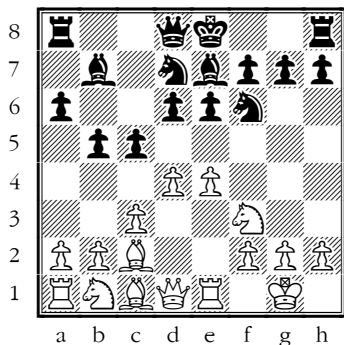
5.Bd3 (15) Ngf6 (4)

6.c3 (4) b5 (3)

7.Bc2 (2) Bb7 (11)

8.Re1 (8) e6 (20)

9.d4 (7) Be7 (17)



Impeccably played theory from both players but this position scores 50% at best for White, so somewhere White's += and 55% went missing.

10.Bf4 (28)

10.Nbd2

10 ... cxd4 (33)

11.cxd4 (2) **Rc8** (23)

12.a4 (20) **Qc7** (24)

13.Bd3 (19) **b4?±** (1:42)

13...0-0

14.Nbd2! (43) **a5** (13)

15.Rc1 (10) **Qb8** (22)

16.Qe2 (18)

16.Nc4+-

16 ... Nb6 (2:32)

17.Rxc8+ (58)

17.Bb5+ Nfd7 18.Nc4 Nxc4 19.Rxc4 Rxc4 20.Qxc4 Qd8 21.Rc1 Bxe4 22.Qc7+-

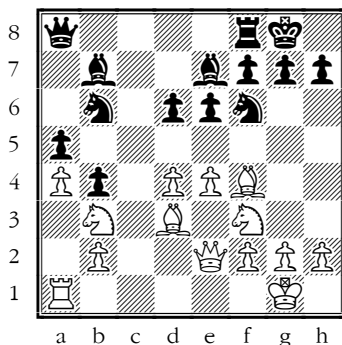
17 ... Qxc8 (29)

18.Ra1? = (3)

18.Bb5+; 18.Nb3

18 ... 0-0 (31)

19.Nb3 (7) **Qa8** (34)



20.e5? (38)

20.Nfd2

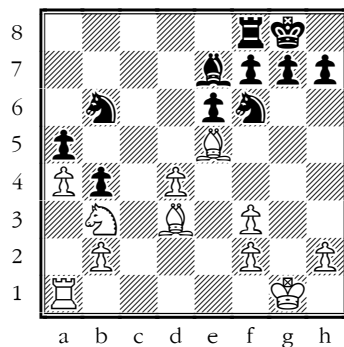
20 ... Bxf3 (33)

20...dxe5 21.dxe5 Nfd7 =

21.Qxf3 (4) **Qxf3** (4)

22.gxf3 (0) **dxe5** (41)

23.Bxe5± (21)



White's many pawn weaknesses matter less than the power of the Bishop pair; Black is not well-placed to make use of the weaknesses.

23 ... Ra8 (26)

24.Bc7? (38)

24.Bb5!+-

24 ... Bd8? (10)

24...Nfd5=

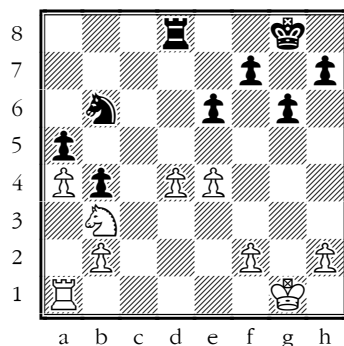
25.Bxd8 (14) **Rxd8** (0)

26.Be4? (11)

26.Bb5!+-

26 ... Nxe4 (48)

27.fxe4 (0) **g6**



58]

28.Rc1?? (1:10)

White does best to threaten to create a passed a-pawn 28.Nxa5! Ra8 29.Nc6 Rxa4 30.Rxa4 Nxa4 31.b3 Nc3 32.e5 Nd5=

28 ... Nxa4 (17)

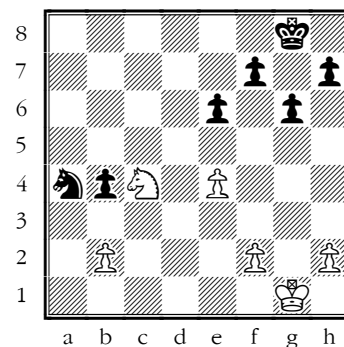
29.Nxa5? (21)

29.Ra1

29 ... Rxd4 (15)

30.Rc4 (1:52) **Rxc4** (39)

31.Nxc4 (2)



Should be winning for Black

31 ... b3 (9)

31...Kg7

32.e5 (12) **Kg7** (9)

33.h4 (18) **f6** (6)

34.exf6+ (20) **Kxf6** (0)

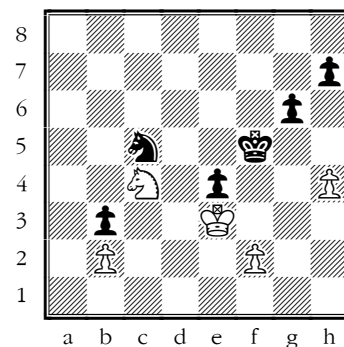
35.Na5 (6) **Nc5** (8)

36.Kg2 (12) **Kf5** (6)

37.Kf3 (15) **e5** (8)

38.Nc4 (36) **e4+** (10)

39.Ke3 (29)



39 ... h6? (32)

39...Kg4!+- puts the cat among the pigeons 40.Nd2 h5

40.f3 (34) **exf3** (1:28)

41.Kxf3 = (0)

This is much easier for White

41 ... g5 (7)

42.hxg5 (10) **hxg5** (0)

- 43.Ne3+ (12) Ke6 (40)
 44.Kg4 (31) Kf6 (21)
 45.Nf5 (20) Nd3 (36)
 46.Nd4 (34) Nc1 (1:12)
 47.Nc6 (24) Nd3 (1:26)
 48.Nd4 (9)

The Knights do some sort of TikTok dance before the two sides agree a draw.

- 48 ... Nc5 (6)
 49.Nc6 (13) Nb7 (26)
 50.Nb8 (16) Na5 (43)
 51.Na6 (9) Nb7 (46)
 52.Nb8 (6) Nc5 (10)
 53.Nc6 (2) Nd3 (1)
 54.Nd4 (8) Ke5 (2)
 55.Nxb3 (7) Nxb2 (6)
 56.Kxg5 (7)

The last few moves weren't entirely necessary. White can sacrifice their Knight quite safely!

- 56 ... Nc4 (3)
 57.Nc5 (13) Nd6 (13)
 58.Nd7+ (11) Ke6 (1)
 59.Nf6 (5) Ne4+ (0)
 60.Nxe4
 1/2-1/2

(12) Ayush - Tom (B23)

After White's rather shapeless opening, Black achieved easy equality, only to set up a devastating tactic for White, winning a piece. Black kept active though and won back the piece with a pin, getting into a Rook endgame a pawn behind but with level chances. Black then blundered by swapping Rooks, getting into a pure Pawn endgame which only White could win, which they did with precision.

- 1.e4 (5) c5 (10)
 2.Nc3 (18) Nc6 (19)
 3.d3 (12)

3.f4; 3.g3

- 3 ... Nf6 (9)
 4.Be3 (22) e6 (12)
 5.g3 (4)

All White's moves make sense, but you have to be careful with the move order.

- 5 ... d5! (27)

Black's forthright approach has gained easy equality.

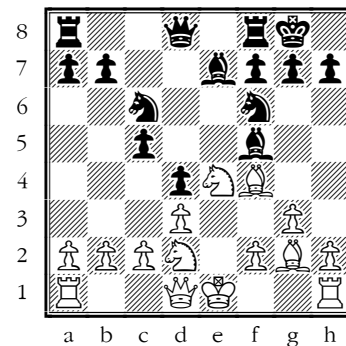
- 6.exd5 (17) exd5 (0)
 7.Bf4 (19) Be7 (50)
 8.Bg2 (4) 0-0 (11)
 9.Nf3 (9) d4! (19)

Maybe this was even better earlier.

- 10.Ne4? (16) Bf5 (25)

10...Nxe4 11.dxe4 Qa5+ 12.Qd2 Qa6 13.Qe2 Qxe2+ 14.Kxe2 Be6

- 11.Nfd2 (18)

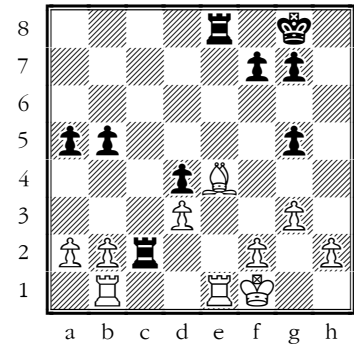


- 11 ... b6?? (42)

Allowing a terrible discovered attack.

11...Nd5

- 12.Nxf6+ (11) Bxf6 (5)
 13.Bxc6 (3) Rc8 (11)
 14.Bg2 (4) Re8+ (9)
 15.Ne4 (13) c4 (5)
 16.0-0 (6) cxd3 (2)
 17.cxd3 (3) Bxe4 (2:40)
 18.Bxe4 (10) Bg5 (13)
 19.Qh5 (24) h6 (8)
 20.Bxg5 (6) Qxg5 (5)
 21.Qxg5 (16) hxg5 (0)
 22.Rfel (8) Rc2 (6)
 23.Rab1 (5) a5 (9)
 24.Kf1 (4) b5

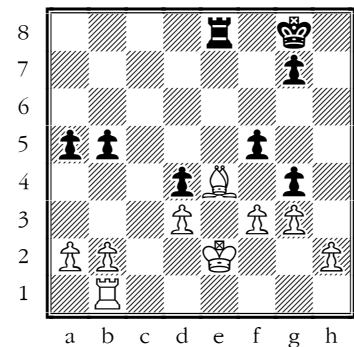


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- 25.Re2?? (2)

Walking into a pin

- 25 ... Rxe2 (32)
 26.Kxe2 (3) f5 (1)
 27.f3 (22) g4 (46)



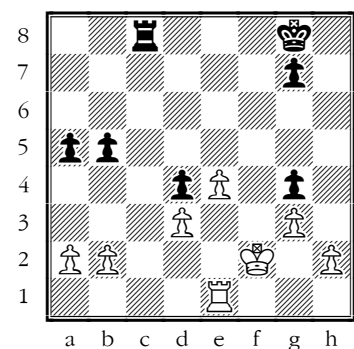
- 28.Kf2?? (26)

28.Rc1! The open file is so important!
 28...fxe4 29.dxe4 Kf7 30.fxg4 Rxe4+ 31.Kd2 Rxc4 Black has finally got equal material but Black's advanced pawns are all vulnerable. 32.Rc5

- 28 ... fxe4 (6)
 29.fxe4 (3) Rc8! (46)

Black grabs the file.

- 30.Re1



1:26]

- 30 ... Rc2+ (19)

30...Kf7; 30...b4

31.Re2 (13) **Rxe2+??** (21)

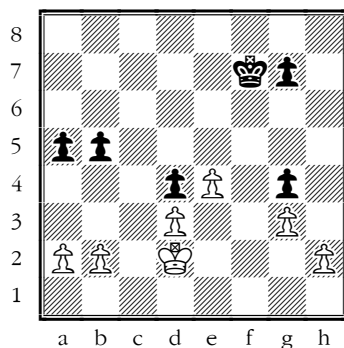
Oh, very risky! With an active Rook, Black is certainly drawing, but with a King ending facing a passed pawn, Black is dicing with Death. The only hope is that the White King has no guaranteed route through to attack Black's pawns.

31...Rc1

32.Kxe2 (0) **Kf7** (1)

32...b4! and Black can hope to keep the White King behind a wall of pawns.

33.Kd2 (16)



33 ... Ke6?? (4)

33...b4! 34.Kc2 a4 was essential.

34.Kc2! (20)

Now the King cannot be denied.

34 ... Kd6 (2)

35.Kb3 (14) **Kc5** (4)

36.Ka3 (20) **g6** (8)

37.b4+! (41) **axb4+** (16)

38.Kb3 (12) **g5** (4)

39.e5 (16) **Kd5** (4)

40.e6 (8) **Kxe6** (1)

41.Kxb4 (2) **Kf5** (2)

42.Kxb5 (21) **Ke5** (2)

43.a4 (5) **Kd6** (7)

44.Kb6 (2) **Kd5** (2)

45.Kb7 (10) **Kc5** (2)

46.a5 (2) **Kb5** (1)

47.a6

1-0

(13) Devrim - Suhayl (D38)

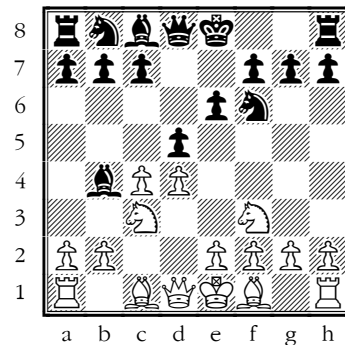
Black played rather loosely in the opening and then overlooked White's threat.

1.d4 (5) **Nf6** (5)

2.c4 (6) **e6** (1)

3.Nf3 (7) **d5** (2)

4.Nc3 (9) **Bb4** (4)



The Ragozin Defence, sharp and combative.

5.Bg5 (7) **0-0** (8)

5...Nbd7 6.cxd5 exd5 7.e3 c5 8.Bd3 Qa5 is the main line.

6.e3 (9) **b6** (17)

I think that may prove that Black is making things up. Having decided not to break the pin with ...Be7, Black should quickly play ...Nbd7, ...c5 and ...Qa5, before things get awkward. Delaying with ...O-O and ...b6 doesn't fit in.

6...Nbd7

7.Bd3 (11) **Bb7** (4)

8.cxd5 (9)

This is the usual approach to ...Bb7, asking Black to shut it in with ...exd5 or give up the centre with ...Bxd5.

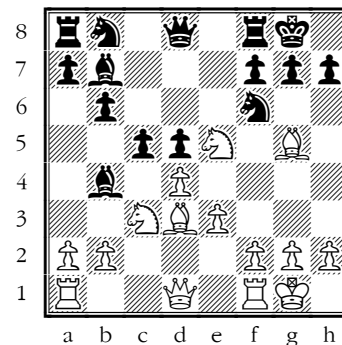
8 ... exd5 (20)

9.0-0 (1:21)

9.Ne5 is also good and a little more pointed.

9 ... c5 (28)

10.Ne5 (1:13)



The pin is about to get downright nasty...

10 ... Nc6?? (1:24)

One 'natural' move too many.

10...Bxc3! 11.bxc3 Qd6!; 10...h6!; 10...Nbd7? 11.Nxd7 Qxd7 12.Bxf6

11.Ng4 (5:46) **Kh8??** (3:22)

Not sure what that was supposed to help.

11...Bxc3 doesn't help either; 11...c4! is the only way to avoid mate. 12.Bxf6 Be7 13.Bxe7 Nxe7

12.Nxf6 (11) **gxf6** (2)

13.Qh5 (1:10)

Mate cannot be avoided.

1-0

(14) Caleb - Alfie (E10)

Black played a home-made system against the Catalan and was soon in a bit of a muddle, but ...c6 made it too easy for White.

1.d4 (5) **Nf6** (5)

2.c4 (1) **e6** (1)

3.Nf3 (4) **d5** (5)

4.g3 (1) **g6** (2)

This copycat move has no point here: the Bf8 can already be developed.

4...Be7 5.Bg2 0-0 6.0-0 is the main line: Black now has a choice about going solid or being a bit more open and aggressive.

6...Nbd7 7.Qc2 c6 8.Nbd2 b6 9.e4 Bb7;

(6...dxc4 7.Ne5 Nc6 was seen in the game between Devrim and Caleb.)

5.Bg2 (1) **Bg7** (3)

6.0-0 (6) **0-0** (1)

7.Bg5 (2) **Nc6** (6)

7...h6

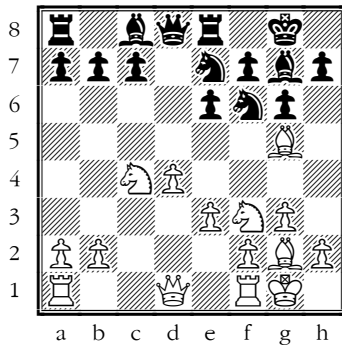
8.e3 (7) **dx c4** (18)

9.Nbd2 (6) **Re8** (6)

Getting in ...e5 is a big ask.

9...Rb8

10.Nxc4 (5) **Ne7±** (30)



Black has given up the centre and got their pieces in a bit of a muddle.

11.Bxf6 (56)

I don't see the point of this move, giving up the Bishop pair.

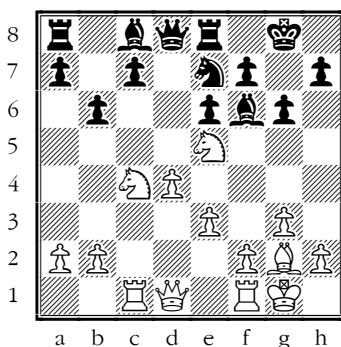
11.Qc2 Rfd1 and e4 looks good

11 ... Bxf6 (3)

12.Rc1 (9) **b6** (19)

Black has typical Catalan problems developing the Queen's Bishop.

13.Nfe5 (16)



13 ... c6?? (57)

Black gives up a pawn without a fight, and it costs a further Exchange. This really was time for a Big Think!

13...Rb8

14.Nxc6 (9) **Nxc6** (3)

15.Bxc6 (2) **Rb8** (5)

16.Bxe8 (2) **Qxe8** (2)

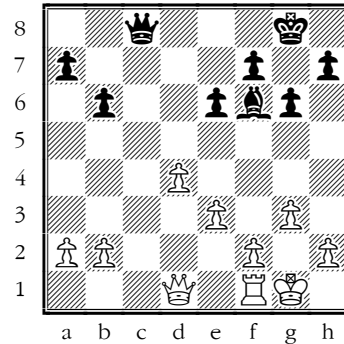
17.Nd6 (8)

White pushes for further swaps straight away.

17 ... Qd7 (5)

18.Nxc8 (4) **Rxc8** (2)

19.Rxc8+ (2) **Qxc8** (1)



20.Qf3 (8)

The Rook needs the c-file.

20.Qc1 Qb7 21.Qc2 h5 22.Rc1

20 ... Bg7 (14)

21.Qe2 (4) **e5** (22)

22.dxe5 (9)

22.d5

22 ... Bxe5 (3)

23.Rd1 (41) **Kg7** (41)

24.Qd2 (57) **Qe6** (56)

24...h5 25.Qd5 Bf6

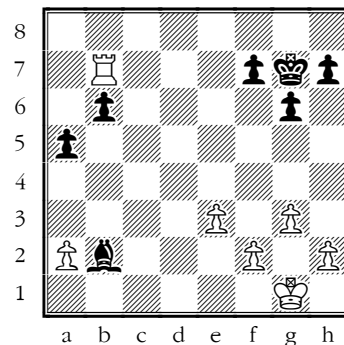
25.Qd5 (17) **Qxd5** (58)

Swaps should be avoided by Black, but are probably unavoidable.

26.Rxd5 (0) **Bxb2** (2)

27.Rd7 (4) **a5** (10)

28.Rb7 (3)



28 ... Kf6?? (33)

Overlooking a second threat besides the check.

29.Rxb6+ (6) **Kf5** (10)

30.Rxb2 (1) **a4** (3)

31.Rb4 (3) **h5** (3)

32.Rxa4 (3) **g5** (9)

33.Rb4 (2) **Kg6** (2)

34.a4 (1) **f6** (14)

35.a5 (1) **f5** (5)

36.Rb6+ (1) **Kf7** (2)

37.a6 (1) **f4** (4)

38.exf4 (3) **gxf4** (3)

39.gxf4 (1) **h4** (3)

40.a7 (2) **h3** (4)

41.a8Q (2) **Ke7** (3)

42.Qa7+ (1) **Ke8** (2)

43.Rb8# (6) **1-0**

(15) Charlie - Ayush (B52)

Black improvised in the opening but with a positionally poor move. White's attempt to force the issue backfired, leading to an equal position; White's next attempt to go ahead should have led to losing a pawn, but Black hesitated and then allowed a fatal fork.

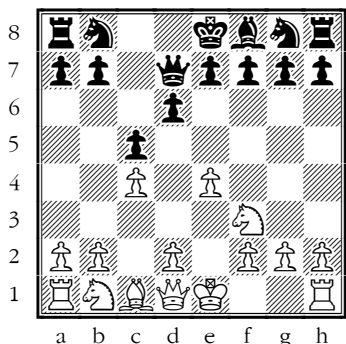
1.e4 (5) **c5** (5)

2.Nf3 (3) **d6** (2)

3.Bb5+ (2) **Bd7** (11)

4.Bxd7+ (6) **Qxd7** (2)

5.c4 (20)



White sets up a Maròczy Bind, having swapped off the 'bad' light-squared Bishop.

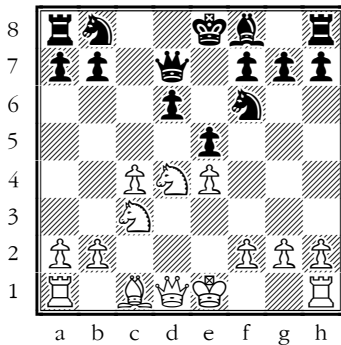
5 ... Nf6 (2)

5...Nc6 6.Nc3 g6

6.Nc3 (4) **e6** (3)

This system of development doesn't really affect White's plan.

- 7.d4** (2) **cxd4** (3)
8.Nxd4 (3) **e5+-** (4)



Not a good moment for this move! Black's Bishop becomes very bad, and there is no light-squared Bishop to contest d5.

- 9.Nf5!?** (1:00)

9.Nc2 and Ne3 is very logical

- 9 ... Nxe4?!** (17)

- 10.Nxe4?** (14)

10.Nxg7+ is better, of course. ±

- 10 ... Qxf5** (2)

- 11.Nxd6+** (11) **Bxd6** (0)

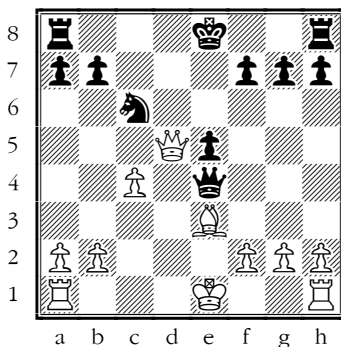
- 12.Qxd6** (2)

The position is now equal.

- 12 ... Qe4+?** (7)

- 13.Be3** (9) **Nc6** (43)

- 14.Qd5?** (33)



This sends a pawn out into the desert to die, but Black also becomes careless with their pawns.

- 14 ... Qxd5** (17)

- 15.cxd5** (0) **Nb4** (13)

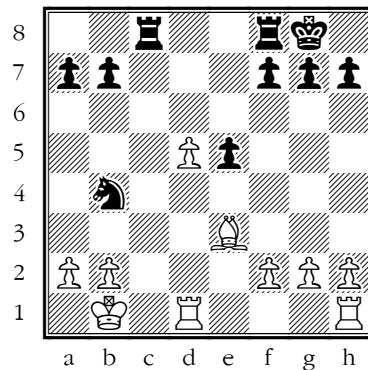
15...Ne7! is better, as a3 can be useful for White

- 16.0-0-0!** (36) **Rc8+** (33)

16...Nxa2+ is probably best

- 17.Kb1=** (7) **0-0??** (8)

17...Rd8!



- 18.Bxa7** (16)

18.a3 Na6 19.Bxa7+- White has an extra passed pawn and a Bishop.

- 18 ... Ra8??** (11)

Forcing White to find the fork!

- 19.Bc5** (4) **Nd3** (58)

- 20.Bxf8** (9)

20.Rxd3 no need for complications

- 20 ... Nxf2** (5)

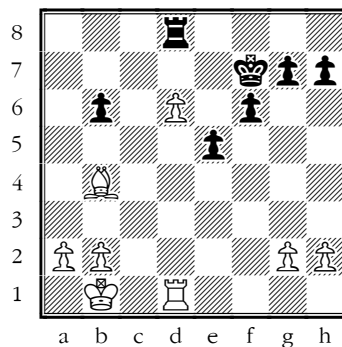
- 21.Bc5** (10) **Nxh1** (3)

- 22.Rxh1** (0) **Rd8** (5)

- 23.d6** (4) **b6** (4)

- 24.Bb4** (4) **f6** (5)

- 25.Rd1** (5) **Kf7** (3)



This is hopeless for Black.

- 26.a4** (16) **Ke6** (6)

- 27.Ba3** (4) **f5** (7)

- 28.Kc2** (4) **e4** (4)

- 29.Kd2** (2) **Rd7** (2)

- 30.Ke3** (2) **Ke5** (2)

- 31.g3** (8) **g5** (4)

- 32.Rc1** (39) **f4+** (7)

- 33.gxf4+** (0) **gxf4+** (1)

- 34.Ke2** (13) **f3+** (29)

- 35.Ke3** (17) **Kf5** (5)

- 36.h3** (3) **h5** (4)

- 37.Rc7** (6) **Rxd6** (23)

- 38.Bxd6** (5) **b5** (2)

- 39.axb5** (3) **h4** (11)

- 40.Be5** (25) **Kxe5** (9)

- 41.Rh7** (8) **Kd6** (5)

- 42.Rxh4** (1) **Kc5** (2)

- 43.Rxe4** (1) **Kxb5** (2)

- 44.Rf4** (0) **Ka5** (5)

- 45.Rxf3** (7) **Kb4** (0)

- 46.Kd2** (2) **Kc4** (4)

- 47.Rd3** (1) **Kb4** (3)

- 48.Ke3** (0) **Kc4** (2)

- 49.Ke4** (1) **Kc5** (3)

- 50.Ke5** (1) **Kc6** (2)

- 51.Rd2** (2) **Kc5** (1)

- 52.Rc2+** (1) **Kb4** (3)

- 53.Kd5** (1) **Kb3** (2)

- 54.Rc8** (1) **Kxb2** (2)

- 55.Kd4** (1) **Kb1** (3)

- 56.Rc7** (0) **Kb2** (3)

- 57.Kd3** (1) **1-0**

(16) Tom - Pengxiao (C57)

Black got their priorities wrong in the opening and White emerged with a pawn and much the better position. But while the endgame was winning throughout, there was just time to make one agonising blunder.

- 1.e4** (5) **e5** (10)

- 2.Nf3** (2) **Nc6** (18)

- 3.Bc4** (3) **Nf6** (18)

- 4.Ng5** (2) **d5** (4)

- 5.exd5** (2) **b5** (3)

- 6.Bb3** (15)

6.Bxb5 is most common; 6.Bf1 is best

- 6 ... Nd4** (15)

- 7.0-0** (1:55) **Nxb3** (13)

Not urgent: the Knight is a better piece than the Bishop!

7...h6; 7...Bc5; 7...Bg4

8.axb3 (6) Nxd5?! (7)

9.Qe2!± (34) c6 (43)

9...f6 keep the central pawn

10.Qxe5+ (12) Qe7 (12)

11.Re1! (27)

11.Qg3!

11 ... Qxe5 (30)

12.Rxe5+ (0) Be7 (6)

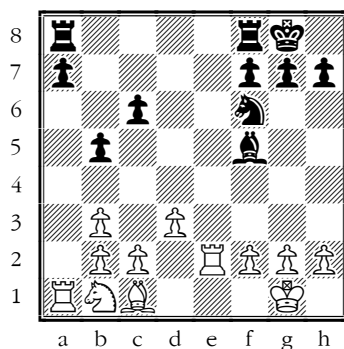
13.Re2 (18) 0-0 (13)

14.d3 (24) Bf6 (31)

15.Ne4 (1:02) Bf5 (22)

15...Bd4!

16.Nxf6+ (10) Nxf6+- (1)



This is very good for White.

17.Ra6 (6) Rfe8 (23)

18.Rxe8+ (15) Rxe8 (6)

19.Be3 (1) Nd5 (6)

20.Rxc6 (15) Nxe3 (6)

21.fxe3 (0) Rxe3 (4)

22.Nc3 (27) b4 (46)

23.Rd6 (11) h6 (10)

24.Nd5 (4) Re2 (24)

25.Nxb4 (5) Re1+ (13)

26.Kf2 (2) Rb1 (10)

27.Ra6 (12) Rxb2 (11)

28.Rxa7 (1) Be6 (14)

28...Bxd3 is a try, but I wouldn't try it!

29.Nxd3 Rxc2+ 30.Kf3 Rc3

29.Ke3 (20) Rb1 (24)

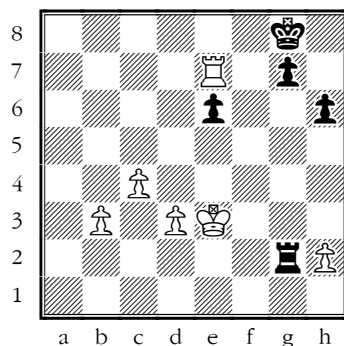
30.Nc6 (9) Rcl (19)

31.c4 (6) Rc2 (13)

32.Nd4 (55) Rxc2 (59)

33.Nxe6 (7) fxe6 (31)

34.Re7 (10)



Black now sets a terrible trap

34 ... Rg1! (22)

34...Rxc2 must be best but it wouldn't win!

35.Rxe6?? (2) Re1+ (3)

36.Kd4 (12) Rxe6 (0)

37.Kd5 (1) Kf7 (7)

38.c5 (3) Ke7 (4)

39.b4 (5) Kd7 (5)

40.b5 (3) Rg6 (8)

41.c6+ (3) Kc7 (4)

42.Kc5 (2) Rg5+ (3)

43.Kb4 (2) Kb6 (3)

44.d4 (5) Rxb5+ (4)

45.Kc4 (1) Kxc6 (3)

46.h4 (7) Rh5 (3)

47.Kd3 (3) Rxc4

0-1

(17) Alfie - Tom (D00)

After a peculiar exercise in flattering imitation, White began to press on the King's-side. Black's correct counter on the Queen's-side was correctly met there by White, only for White to fall into a wicked trap.

1.d4 (5) d5 (5)

2.e3 (2) e6 (6)

3.Bd3 (2) Bd6 (2)

4.f4 (2)

The Stonewall Attack

4 ... f5 (3)

The Anti-Stonewall Stonewall!

5.Nf3 (1)

5.c4 With the King's-side gummed up, White should switch attention to the Queen's-side. This is the right idea for the next few moves.; 5.g4?? is logical but fails to 5...Qh4+

5 ... Nf6 (2)

6.c3 (1)

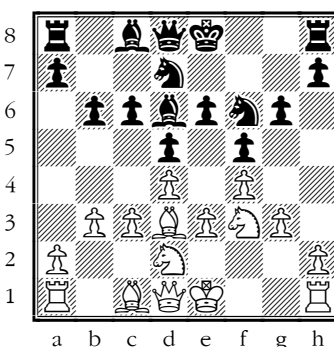
6.c4

6 ... c6 (3)

7.Nbd2 (1) Nbd7 (1)

8.g3 (5) g6 (2)

9.b3 (11) b6 (5)



Another copycat game! Earlier in the game, sharper play by White would have avoided this.

10.Qc2 (7)

10.Bb2

10 ... Bb7 (5)

11.Bb2 (1) Qc7 (5)

12.0-0-0 (4) 0-0-0 (1)

Oh dear...

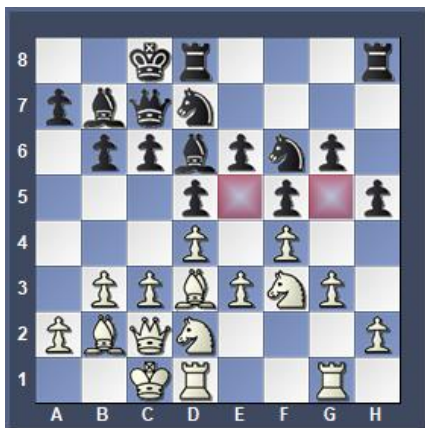
13.Rhg1 (21)

White can eliminate Black's better Bishop.

13.Ng5 Rde8 14.Nf7 Rhf8 15.Nxd6+ Qxd6 16.Nf3

13 ... h5 (3)

Black cannot afford more holes in the defences.



14.h3 (5)

14.Ng5 Rde8 15.Ndf3! makes use of the holes.

14 ... c5 (40)

15.Ne5 (1:32) **Rhg8** (46)

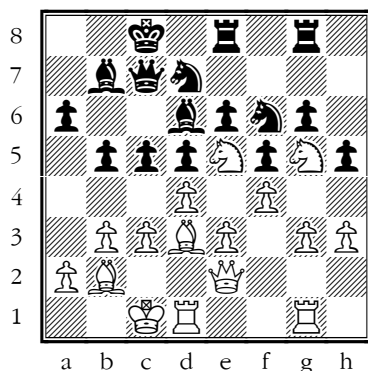
16.Ndf3 (4:25) **a6** (59)

17.Ng5 (1:16)

White has followed the best idea.

17 ... Rde8 (44)

18.Qe2 (4:57) **b5!** (2:27)



Quite rightly, Black wants to make trouble on the other wing.

19.c4! (1:58)

Surprisingly, White should meet Black's move directly. Black is no better placed to attack on the Queen's-side than White.

19 ... b4 (59)

20.cxd5 (1:44)

20.Kb1 is best

20 ... exd5+- (52)

21.Bxa6? (2:06)

White is tempted by a loose pawn, but there is more going on than that in this position!

21.Kb1+-; 21.Ngf7+-

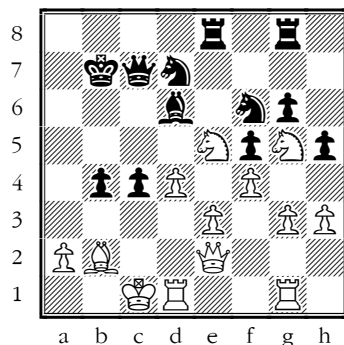
21 ... c4= (2:43)

22.Bxb7+? (17)

22.Bb5=

22 ... Kxb7 (9)

23.bxc4 (43) **dx4** (19)



Black's Queen's-side pawns have the power of an extra piece; ...c3 is coming.

24.Nxd7? (2:36)

24.Kb1 c3 25.Rc1

24 ... Qxd7! (1:02)

Setting a trap.

25.Qxc4?? (41)

25.Kb1 c3

25 ... Rc8 (2)

26.Qxc8+ (55) **Rxc8+** (3)

27.Kb1 (5) **Qc6** (15)

28.Rc1 (19) **Qe8** (18)

29.Rc2 (31) **Qxe3** (22)

30.Rgc1 (27) **Rxc2** (2)

31.Rxc2 (2) **Qe1+** (17)

32.Rc1 (8) **Qxg3** (4)

33.d5 (17) **Nxd5** (6)

34.Nf7 (26) **Bxf4** (5)

35.Nd8+ (10) **Ka8** (11)

36.Rc8+ (30) **Bb8** (2)

37.Nc6 (15) **Qd3+** (24)

38.Kc1 (16) **Qc4+**

Time forfeit

0-1

(18) Pengxiao - Devrim (A50)

In a rather improvised opening, White didn't get hold of the reins properly, and then missed something important. There was an interesting moment later when losing a piece almost seemed to help White, but Black calmly shut off all the checks and nailed the win.

1.d4 (5) **Nf6** (10)

2.c4 (12) **e6** (6)

3.Bf4 (19)

That really is too early.

3.Nf3 is my recommended move here, avoiding the Nimzo-Indian.

3 ... d5 (8)

4.Nf3 (5) **dx4** (7)

5.Nc3 (23)

5.Qa4+ Nbd7 6.Qxc4

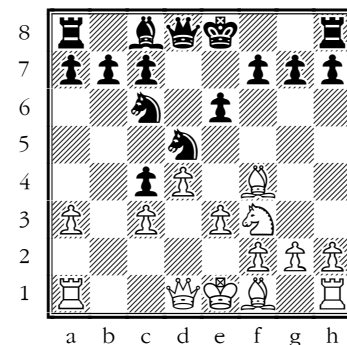
5 ... Bb4 (10)

5...c6! would give White more of a headache

6.a3 (19) **Bxc3+** (14)

7.bxc3 (3) **Nc6** (4)

8.e3 (5) **Nd5** (11)



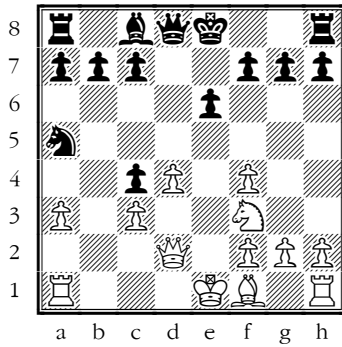
9.Qd2 (14)

Distracted, White gets their pieces muddled.

9.Bxc4! just works: 9...Nxf4 (There is a little tactic here: 9...Nxc3?? 10.Qc2!) 10.exf4=

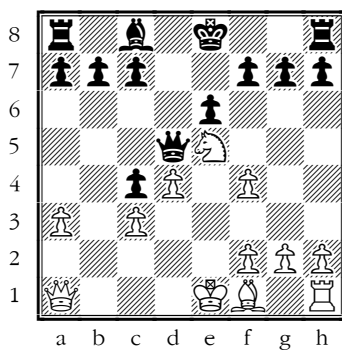
9 ... Nxf4 (10)

10.exf4 (7) **Na5** (6)



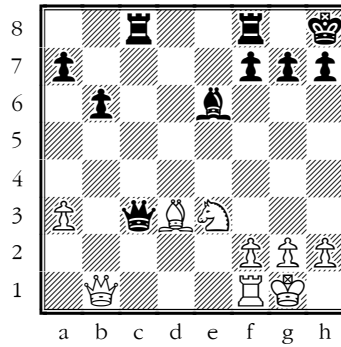
White now misses something important.

- 11.Ne5?? (25) Nb3 (14)
- 12.Qb2 (9) Nxa1 (3)
- 13.Qxa1 (2) Qd5 (18)



It's hard to give White good advice now: Black keeps control for the rest of the game

- 14.Nxc4 (17) 0-0 (1:13)
- 15.Ne3 (37) Qe4 (26)
- 16.Be2 (12) Qxf4 (20)
- 17.0-0 (9) Bd7 (1:03)
- 18.Qb1 (13) b6 (8)
- 19.d5 (20) exd5 (32)
- 20.Nxd5 (10) Qd2 (15)
- 21.Bd3 (25) Kh8 (1:17)
- 22.Nxc7 (1:00) Rac8 (3)
- 23.Nd5 (10) Be6 (16)
- 24.Ne3 (24) Qxc3 (41)



25.Bxh7 (18)

White grabs a hot pawn

- 25 ... g6 (1:53)
- 26.Bxg6 (8) fxg6 (2)
- 27.Qxg6 (0)

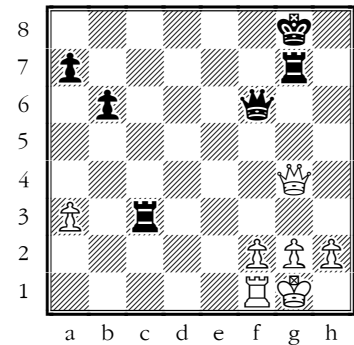
To be fair, this position is not much worse for White than before Bxh7, and there are chances of being a nuisance with endless checks.

- 27 ... Qf6 (25)
- 28.Qh5+ (17) Kg8 (7)
- 29.Ng4 (7) Bxg4 (8)
- 30.Qxg4+ (2) Kh7 (4)
- 31.Qh3+ (6) Kg6 (23)
- 32.Qg4+ (5) Kf7 (21)
- 33.Qd7+ (13) Qe7 (1:10)
- 34.Qf5+ (6) Kg7 (14)
- 35.Qg4+ (5) Kh6 (6)
- 36.Qh3+ (5) Kg5 (9)
- 37.Qg3+ (5) Kh6 (20)
- 38.Qh3+ (4) Kg7 (3)
- 39.Qg4+ (5) Kh8 (1)
- 40.Qh5+ (4) Qh7 (1)
- 41.Qe5+ (3) Kg8 (4)
- 42.Qg3+ (27)

42.Qe6+ was another try

- 42 ... Qg7 (4)
- 43.Qb3+ (5) Rf7 (21)
- 44.Qe6 (16) Rc3 (20)
- 45.Qe8+ (7) Kh7 (10)
- 46.Qe4+ (4) Qg6 (1)
- 47.Qh4+ (4) Kg7 (5)
- 48.Qd4+ (4) Qf6 (8)

- 49.Qg4+ (5) Kh7 (9)
- 50.Qh5+ (5) Kg8 (28)
- 51.Qg4+ (6) Rg7 (2)



White finally runs out of checks

- 52.Qe4 (13) Rxa3 (48)
- 53.Qe8+ (7) Kh7 (15)
- 54.Qh5+ (4) Qh6 (1)
- 55.Qf5+ (4) Qg6 (8)
- 56.Qf8 (19)

56.Qxg6+ was forced

- 56 ... Qxg2# 0-1

(19) Ayush - Raghav (D04)

White set up the Colle System and Black played one of the best lines against it, getting a solid position. But then Black gradually lost control of the position, giving up the Bishop pair and then creating weaknesses on the King's-side, and White's very straightforward plan of attack crashed through.

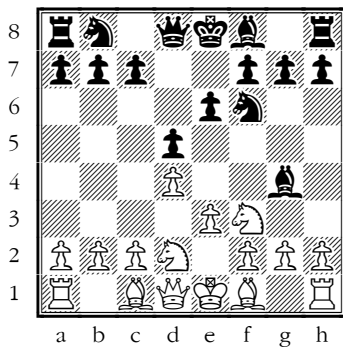
- 1.d4 (5) d5 (10)
- 2.Nf3 (4) Nf6 (14)
- 3.e3 (2) Bg4 (17)

That's a good reply to the Colle. I expect White is best advised here to change course with

4.Nbd2 (8)

4.c4 which is a line of the Slav Defence.

- 4 ... e6 (10)



5.c3 (2)

That's a good reply to ...c5, but a bit pointless here.

5.Bd3 c5 6.c3

5 ... Bb6 (3)

6.Bd3 (8) Nbd7 (24)

7.0-0 (6) 0-0 (8)

8.e4 (15)

Good! Maybe even better with Qe2 or first.

8 ... dxe4 (37)

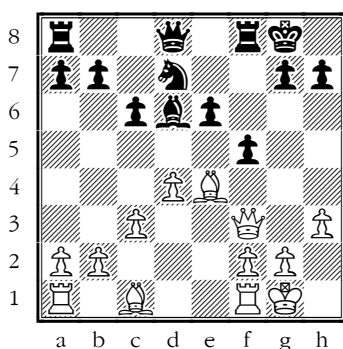
9.Nxe4 (13) Nxe4 (9)

10.Bxe4 (2) c6 (5)

11.h3 (19) Bxf3?! (56)

11...Bh5 in an open position, you must hang on to your Bishops.

12.Qxf3± (11) f5?!± (25)



And that's rather loosening. After a move like Bxf3, Black must be careful not to make weaknesses, especially on light squares like e6.

13.Bc2 (19) Nf6?!+- (39)

13...Qh4!±

14.Qe3?! (33)

Right target, wrong artillery! The Queen is in the way of both the Bishop and Rooks.

14.Re1!+-; 14.Bb3!+-

14 ... Re8 (35)

15.Re1 (19) Qd7 (15)

16.Qf3 (41) h6 (2:04)

17.Bf4 (28)

17.Bd2; 17.Re2

17 ... Bxf4 (33)

18.Qxf4 (0) Nd5 (15)

19.Qg3 (29) Re7 (1:18)

20.Re2 (56) f4? (2:22)

Aggressive but weakening: you need quite an advantage to get away with a move like this.

20...Rae8

21.Qf3 (21)

21.Qd3!+-

21 ... Rf8 (1:09)

22.Rae1 (24) g5 (1:13)

Black's King's-side is full of holes on the light squares.

23.Bb3 (1:21)

23.Re5!; 23.Qg4!

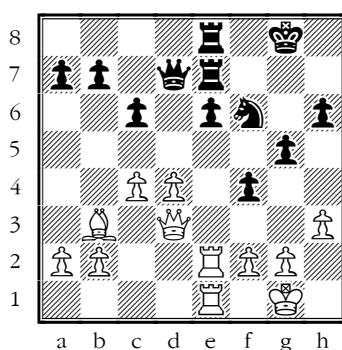
23 ... Rfe8?! (48)

24.c4 (5)

24.Qh5!

24 ... Nf6 (33)

25.Qd3 (35)



25 ... b6?? (1:35)

25...Kg7 had to be tried: White's threat is very real! 26.Re5 - 27.Bc2+- and White has a winning position but needs an idea to break through.

26.Qg6+ (3) Rg7 (35)

27.Qxf6 (10) Kh7 (13)

28.Rxe6 (16) Rxe6 (14)

29.Rxe6 (3) c5 (59)

30.Qxh6+ (9)

30.Bc2+ is more accurate.

30 ... Kg8 (4)

31.dxc5 (25) bxc5 (45)

32.Bc2 (1:55) Qf7 (2:01)

33.Rc6 (1:02)

33.Be4 - 34.Bd5 wins shortly.

33 ... Qxc4?? (57)

34.Bb3

1-0

(20) Caleb - Suhayl (E01)

Black's rather freestyle approach to the opening could have led to trouble, but White was suddenly a pawn down and gasping for air. Black missed the right follow-up and it all fizzled out in an opposite-coloured Bishop endgame.

1.d4 (5) Nf6 (10)

2.c4 (9) e6 (2)

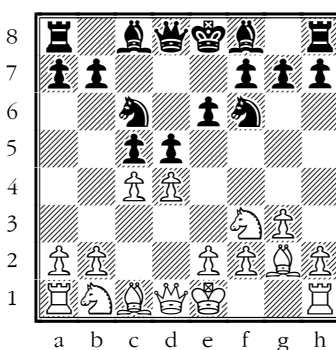
3.Nf3 (1) d5 (4)

4.g3 (1) c5!? (2)

A very rare reply to the Catalan; White is well-placed to attack Black's big centre.

4...Be7 Closed Catalan; 4...dxc4 Open Catalan

5.Bg2 (16) Nc6 (5)



6.e3?!= (24)

That move doesn't fit in at all well with the Catalan system, and is unkind to the Bc1.

6.0-0! dxc4 7.Qa4 Bd7 8.Qxc4±; 6.cxd5 exd5 is the main line of the Tarrasch Defence, somewhere between += and =

6 ... b6!? (43)

Again rather loose: Be7 and O-O is much safer.

7.0-0 (8)

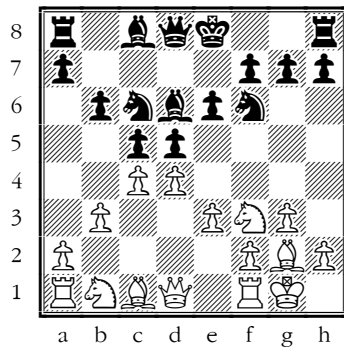
7.cxd5 exd5 establishes a weakness on d5.

7 ... Bd6?! (3)

Not the right square today: g3 blocks its view and the Bishop itself blocks the defence of d5 by the Queen.

7...Be7!

8.b3= (11)



White copies Black's unhappy habit of reaching for a pawn instead of a piece. These positions with tense pawns are really interesting, as the pawn structure can go in many directions, each requiring you to put your pieces on different squares -- but at the moment, White has too many pieces on their starting squares!

At risk of repeating myself, 8.cxd5 is best here.

8 ... 0-0 (3)

9.Bb2 (4) **Ba6!=** (32)

Being awkward.

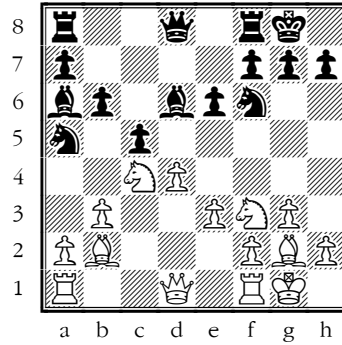
9...Bb7 \neq is surely OK but we can do better than OK

10.Nbd2 (16) **dxcc4?!** (48)

Not the right time to give up the centre. White's knight stands well on c4.

10...Rc8!

11.Nxc4 (16) **Na5** (14)



12.Qc2?! (21)

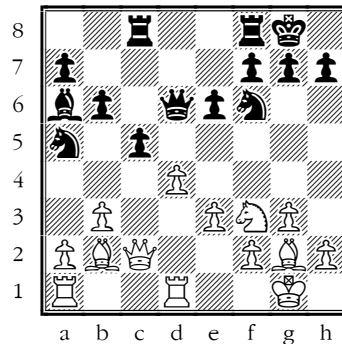
12.Nxd6!+- Qxd6 13.dxc5 Qxc5 gets the Bishop pair in an open position; then 14.Bxf6 converts one advantage (Bishop pair) for another (better pawn structure)

12 ... Rc8 (47)

12...cxd4! 13.Rad1 Qc7 14.Rxd4 Nxc4 15.bxc4 and it is White who has the worse pawn structure

13.Nxd6 (1:51) **Qxd6** (8)

14.Rfd1= (23)



The centre is still tense and the play difficult.

14 ... cxd4! (6)

15.Qd2?! (9)

15.Qb1

15 ... d3! (8)

16.Rac1?? (48) **Ne4!** (51)

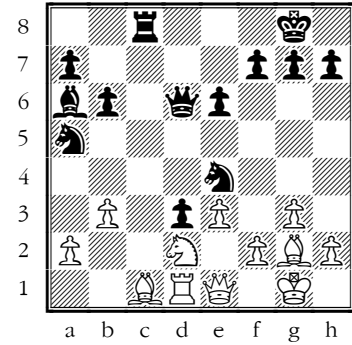
17.Qe1 (28)

Suddenly Black has an extra pawn and a dominating position.

17 ... Rxc1 (12)

18.Bxc1 (12) **Rc8** (1:26)

19.Nd2 (31)



19 ... Nxd2 (27)

19...Nc3! and I expect you both saw 20.Ne4 Nxe4 21.Bxe4 but Black must have missed 21...Rxc1 22.Rxc1 d2+-

20.Rxd2 (44) **Rc2** (1:14)

20...Bb7; 20...Nb7

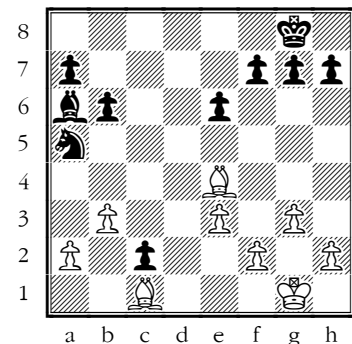
21.Qd1 (1:13) **Qc7** (2:15)

22.Rxc2 (12) **Qxc2?** (1:15)

22...dxc2! keeps the pawn alive 23.Qd2 Bb7 24.Bxb7 Nxb7

23.Qxc2 (6) **dxcc2** (3)

24.Be4! (6)



We now have a level ending, where the Bishop pair may confer slightly better odds to White.

24 ... f5?! (53)

Black wants neither weaknesses nor pawns to be on light squares.

25.Bxc2 (3) **Nc6** (18)

26.f4 (1:03)

White too should avoid weaknesses.

26 ... Nb4 (25)

27.Bb1 (35) **Nd3** (1:08)

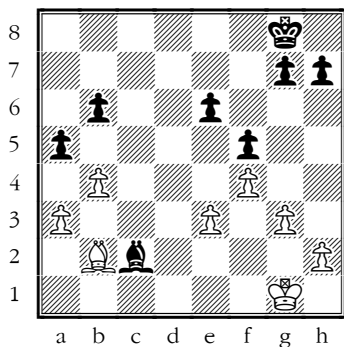
27...Bd3 28.a3 Bxb1 29.axb4=

28.Bxd3 (7) **Bxd3** (2)

29.Bb2 (14) **Bb1** (9)

30.a3 (1) Bc2 (1)

31.b4 (1) a5



Opposite-coloured Bishops can cope with being a pawn or two behind, so this is simply drawn -- either side could happily blunder away a pawn and still draw.

1/2-1/2

(21) Raghav - Alfie (C02)

Black hesitated before grabbing the legendary b2-pawn and White couldn't quite create enough problems to stop Black developing and looking good to convert.

1.e4 (5) e6 (10)

2.d4 (5) d5 (2)

3.e5 (3) c5 (2)

4.c3 (2) Nc6 (1)

5.Nf3 (2)

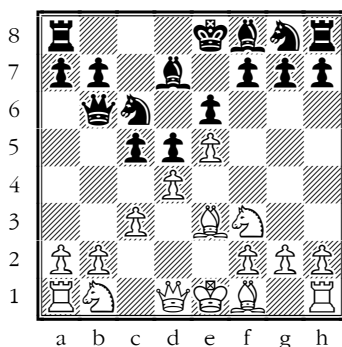
5.Be3 Kupreichik Variation

5 ... Qb6 (2)

6.Be3?? (20)

Poor timing!

6 ... Bd7?? (4)



Having made a threat, Black does not carry it out!

6...Qxb2 7.Nbd2 c4+ and Black's Queen is in no danger of being

trapped. Worth more than 4 seconds' thought!

7.Nbd2? (15)

Offering the b-pawn again, and this time Black does not resist temptation.

7.Qd2! =

7 ... cxd4 (46)

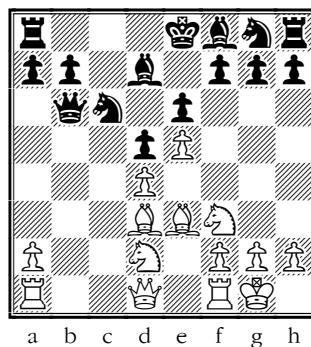
8.cxd4 (11) Qxb2 (12)

9.Bd3? (21) Qb6 ♣ (14)

Safety first, but there was better sport to be had.

9...Nb4!-+ removes White's good Bishop, and leaves them without prospects.

10.0-0 (25)



White is better developed, and can hope for some compensation for the lost pawn, as long as they play with the greatest vigour and accuracy.

10 ... Nge7 (25)

Very natural and looks safe, but you may have heard me say before, playing safe is dangerous!

11.Rb1 ± (33) Qc7 (12)

12.Qc2 (52)

12.Ng5! ± is the sort of vigorous, active move to make life difficult for Black, and White now has definite compensation 12...h6 13.Nh7 Nf5 14.Nxf8 Rxf8 (14...Kxf8 15.Qg4) 15.Qg4

12 ... g6 (12)

13.Ng5 (55)

A bit of a swing in the air: what's the threat?

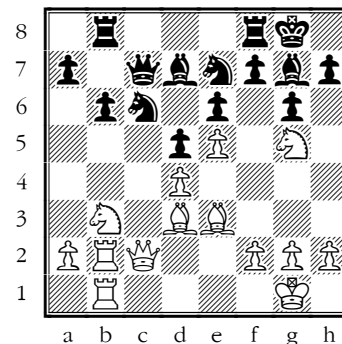
Here 13.Rfcl or; 13.h4 were the better ways to follow up.

13 ... Bg7 (7)

14.Rb2 (1:24) 0-0 (28)

15.Rfb1 (41) Rab8 (22)

16.Nb3 (42) b6 (15)



Black has completed development without having any accidents and stands well.

17.Nc5?? (18)

A horrible miscalculation.

17 ... bxc5 (1:01)

18.Qxc5 (33) Rxb2 (1:19)

19.Rxb2 (4) Rb8 (22)

20.Rxb8+ (22) Qxb8 (3)

21.g3 (29) Qb4 (57)

22.Qxb4 (2:00) Nxb4 (5)

23.Be2 (2:25) Bh6 (1:58)

24.Nf3 (48) Bxe3 (14)

25.fxe3 (0) Nxa2 0-1

(22) Tom - Charlie (B95)

White's slightly home-baked approach to the Sicilian could have led to disaster after the casual Be2, but when disaster struck White found the only move to cause Black problems, and Black went wrong immediately. It was then Black's turn to come up with a trick question to save the game, and this time White couldn't find the right answer.

1.e4 (5) c5 (10)

2.Nf3 (18) d6 (2)

3.d4 (16) cxd4 (6)

4.Nxd4 (0) Nf6 (18)

5.Nc3 (4) a6 (9)

6.Bg5 (25) e6 (2)

I admire the both players for taking on these complex main lines of theory -- but they are probably the best moves, after all.

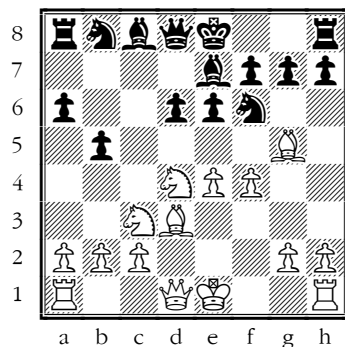
7.Bd3 (6)

A less common and less successful choice; it leaves the Nd4 floating loose.

7.f4; 7.Qf3; 7.Qd3 all score better

7 ... b5 (16)

8.f4 (18) **Be7** (7)



9.0-0? (10)

Natural, but not accurate -- Black's next asks a hard question!

9.Qf3 This 'third rank line-up' is sometimes used by players who don't want to learn theory, and bash it out against every Black system. 9...Bb7 10.0-0-0 Nbd7 11.Rhe1

9 ... Qb6! (14)

10.Be2?? (1:24)

Rather casual.

10 ... e5!?!-+ (4)

Suddenly White is facing defeat. White finds the only way to try to stay in the game:

10...Nc6! is even better

11.fxe5 (10) **dxe5** (3)

12.Bxf6 (1:02) **Bxf6** (3)

13.Nd5!-+ (2) **Qxd4+??±** (13)

So natural, but once more, not accurate!

The patient 13...Qc5! is best, when White can resign with a clear conscience.

14.Qxd4 (25) **exd4** (0)

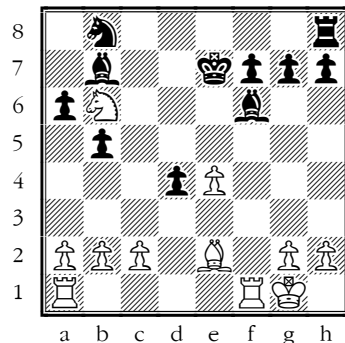
15.Nc7+ (2)

That's the point -- White has not just avoided disaster, but stands better.

15 ... Ke7 (13)

16.Nxa8 (0) **Bb7** (20)

17.Nb6 (28)



17 ... d3!? (15)

This clearance sacrifice is a very good try -- threatening e2 and Bd4+ with a fork

18.Rfd1?? (21)

This doesn't solve either problem!

18.Rxf6! Kxf6 19.Bxd3± with a solid extra pawn

18 ... Bd4+ (4)

19.Kf1 (8) **dxe2+** (7)

20.Kxe2 (0) **Bxb6** (1)

Black has three pieces for a Rook and an easily winning game.

21.Rd2 (26) **Rd8** (11)

22.Rxd8 (21) **Bxd8** (2)

23.a4 (7) **Bc8** (7)

24.axb5 (5) **axb5** (7)

25.Ra7+ (29) **Ke8** (7)

26.Ra8 (3) **Bc7** (5)

27.Ra7 (1) **Kd7** (9)

28.Kd3 (11) **b4** (9)

29.Kc4 (3) **h5** (1)

30.Kxb4 (2) **Nc6+** 0-

(23) Devrim - Ayush (D06)

A very interesting game! The pawns settled into the familiar 'Karlsbad' structure, and I was expecting a slow build-up from White on the Queen's-side, not a Benko-style gambit! In a position with dynamic equality, Black defended as well as White attacked for several moves, but a late blunder quickly decided the game in White's favour.

1.d4 (5) **d5** (10)

2.Nf3 (4) **Bf5** (7)

That's so natural, isn't it, but I'm not sure it's best: a quick c4 and Qb3 might give Black some problems.

3.c4! (6) **e6** (14)

4.Nc3 (10) **Nf6** (15)

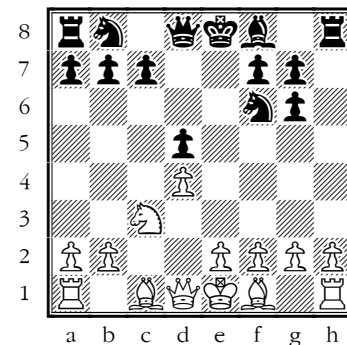
5.Nh4 (11)

5.Qb3! ≠

5 ... Bg6 (30)

6.Nxg6 (5) **hxg6** (2)

7.cxd5 (6) **exd5** (15)



White has spent some time gaining the Bishop pair and a better structure, but the scene has become clearer and easier for Black to handle.

8.g3 (4) **c6** (13)

9.h4 (12) **Nbd7** (23)

10.Bg2 (19) **Bd6** (28)

Probably not the right square: where is it going next, and why?

10...Bb4; 10...Be7

11.0-0 (7) **0-0** (16)

12.Re1 (4) **Re8** (55)

13.Bg5 (3) **Be7** (18)

13...Qc7 would be my preference

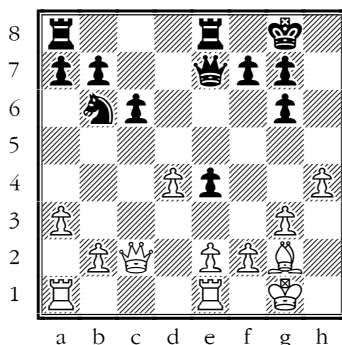
14.a3 (36) **Nb6** (16)

15.Qc2 (29) **Ne4** (32)

A common freeing manoeuvre: the Knight is outnumbered on e4 but support is on its way.

16.Nxe4 (6) **dxe4** (17)

17.Bxe7 (23) **Qxe7=** (19)



This 'Karlsbad' structure commonly arises from the Exchange Variation of the Queen's Gambit. White's chances lie on the Queen's-side, Black's on the King's-side -- especially since White has created so many holes. Black must organise some trouble for White rather urgently, as the minority attack on the Queen's-side will always be an option for White, and can tie Black down to defence.

18.e3 (2)

Another hole appears on f3

18 ... Rad8 (17)

19.b4 (15) **Nd7?!** (20)

19...Rd5! 20.a4 a6 21.Rab1 g5!= with counterplay;

19...Nd5!? 20.Qc5 a6 21.Qxe7 Rxe7= Stockfish says "=" but this is just the sort of endgame Black should avoid, I expect.

20.a4!? ± (25)

White leaves a tempting pawn. I expect Black should not be looking to the Queen's-side at all, but White emerges with nothing to show for this nice idea.

20 ... Qxb4? (5)

20...f5 idea ...g5

21.Rab1? (5)

"The wrong Rook". There are precedents.

21.Reb1! Qd6 (21...Qa5 22.Rxb7+--)
22.Rxb7+-- White's Queen's-side initiative has arrived with a bang, and Black will struggle to defend this.

21 ... Qa5 (44)

Keeping an eye on the Re1, so preventing Rxb7

22.Rec1 (6)

Nicely calm about the missing pawn. In fact, both sides play the next phase flawlessly. White has pressure on the Queen's-side, Black has an extra pawn.

22 ... Nb6 (33)

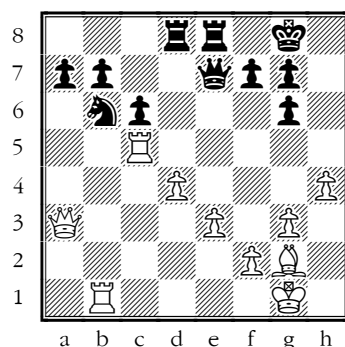
23.Bxe4 (3) **Qxa4** (13)

24.Qd3 (29) **Qa2!** (20)

25.Bg2 (19) **Qe6** (18)

26.Rc5 (34) **Qe7** (50)

27.Qa3 (28)



27 ... Nd7?? (28)

27...Nc8= and the outcome is still far from clear, although Black is rather stuck for moves.

28.Rxb7 (1:12)

Now the roof caves in.

28 ... Rb8 (33)

29.Rxa7 (7) **Rb1+** (15)

30.Kh2 (1) **Qe6** (20)

31.Rxc6 (40) **Qf5** (1:14)

32.Qa2 (5:23) **Nf6??** (44)

Rather a bad miss, but Black's position was already hopeless.

33.Qxf7+ (27) **Kh7** (7)

34.Qxg7#

1-0

(24) Charlie - Caleb (C54)

A fluctuating game! White tried a top Grandmaster recommendation in the opening, without getting an awful lot. Black then spotted a clever drawing line, only for White to avoid it to get a losing position, but Black missed how to follow up, and we then headed for a level endgame where White had more space. Black was more solid than safe, and drifted into trouble instead of picking fights where they should, and White made good use of their assets to secure a winning position. But the assessment swung between "1-0" "0-1" and "1/2" several times before White finally got the win.

1.e4 (5) **e5** (10)

2.Nf3 (2) **Nc6** (2)

3.Bc4 (1) **Bc5** (2)

4.c3 (2)

4.d3 (avoiding Nc3) is the modern treatment, playing it like a slow Lopez.

4 ... Nf6 (1)

5.d4 (6) **exd4** (1)

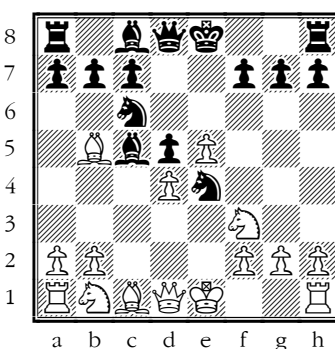
6.e5 (2)

6.cxd4 is the old main line, well known to both sides, and White is struggling to show any sort of advantage in any line.; 6.0-0 is the other try to stay out of the main lines. It scores quite well, but not if Black replies 6...Nxe4

6 ... d5 (4)

7.Bb5 (6) **Ne4** (24)

8.cxd4 (6)



8 ... Bb4+ (2)

8...Bb6 looks more solid. 9.Nc3 0-0
10.Be3 Bg4 11.h3 Bh5 12.Qc2 Bg6
13.Qb3 Ne7 14.0-0 c6 15.Bd3 Nf5

Wesley So might be right to claim that White can squeeze something out of this position, but if so, I expect an antidote will soon be found, and then the line will likely be abandoned – it's just not rich enough. In the Ruy Lopez, you can go back a couple of moves and try another idea, but I fear this part of the 'Lifetime Repertoire' will turn out more like a lunchtime repertoire.

16.Qc2 1-0 (37) So,W -Carlsen,M chess24.com INT 2021 (16.Rfe1 1-0 (45) So,W -Le,Q chess24.com INT 2020)

9.Nbd2 (4) 0-0 (31)

10.0-0 (1) Bxd2 (14)

11.Bxd2 (4)

Around here White commented about this line's drawish nature! Please don't comment on games while they are going on, but if that is your view of this line, you need a different line.

11 ... Bg4 (4)

I can find only 13 games with this less common move, but White won only one, drew three and lost the rest! In fairness, White may have the traditional +=.

12.Be3 (8) Ne7 (42)

13.h3 (1:07) Bh5 (28)

14.Rc1 (33) c6 (9)

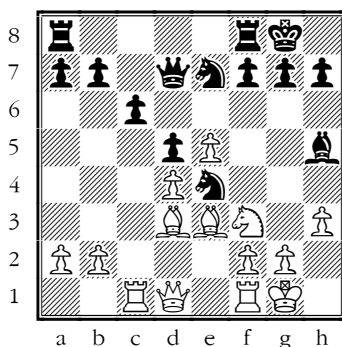
14...Nf5=

15.Bd3 (5)

15.Be2±

15 ... Qd7 (42)

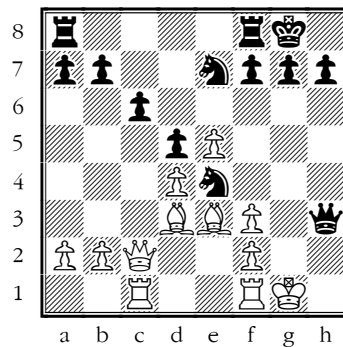
15...Nf5



16.Qc2 (19) Bxf3!? (44)

17.gxf3 (2) Qxh3= (32)

Vert alert!



18.Bxe4?? (1:02)

Trying to keep the game alive, but this is a big mistake.

18.fxe4 and Black has perpetual check 18...Qg4+ 19.Kh2 Qh4+

18 ... dxe4 (9)

18...f5! 19.Bd3 f4! 20.Bd2 Nf5 and White must give up material to avoid checkmate.

19.Qxe4 (0) Ng6= (38)

19...f5-+ is the same racket for Black: White faces mating threats 20.exf6 Rxf6 21.Bg5 Rg6 22.Qxe7 h6 23.Rc5 Rf8

20.Qg4 (18) Qxg4+ (36)

21.fxg4 (1) Ne7 (6)

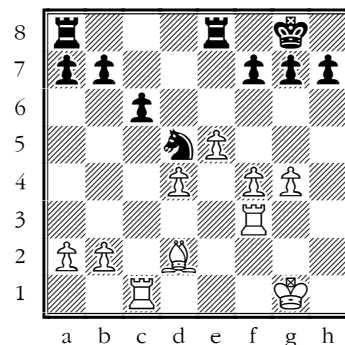
21...f5

22.f4 (17) Nd5 (2)

23.Rf3 (19) Rfe8 (15)

23...f5

24.Bd2 (21)



White has an imposing and mobile mass of pawns. Black has no weaknesses but lacks space, and less space means less active pieces, and in the endgame, a worse King. No great danger yet, but Black

does not attack the pawns, and drifts into difficulties.

24 ... Rad8 (33)

25.Bc3 (17) Nxc3? (13)

It cannot be right to exchange that terrific Knight for a bad Bishop.

25...f6! =; 25...g5! = are both still "= " but Black is heading more directly for a position without problems.

26.bxc3 (0) Rd5 (4)

27.Rb1 (20) b6 (11)

28.Rb3= (16)

28.Kf2! ≠

28 ... Ra5 (25)

28...Red8 29.g5 c5! Fighting for space and activity.

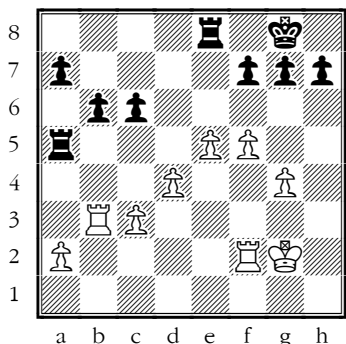
29.Rf2 (7) Rd8 (24)

29...c5!

30.f5 (34) Re8 (14)

At risk of repeating myself, Black should try 30...c5! =

31.Kg2± (29)



White has a natural plan of pushing forward while Black is passive and uncoordinated

31 ... h6 (7)

32.Rbb2 (17) Ra3 (8)

33.Rb3 (6) Ra5 (1)

34.Kg3 (24) Re7 (58)

35.Kf4 (22) g5+? (36)

69.Qg3+

1-0

Coaching tips

Devrim

You have emerged from lockdown as a very strong player – well done! You played mostly with great steadiness and accuracy (just 3 errors of any consequence and one blunder), you rarely looked in trouble and you made the most of your opportunities. There's obviously not a lot wrong with your chess, but some things you could look at to work on include:

- You switched from 1.d4 to 1.e4; I expect you should specialise in one or the other. Theory tends to get more important as you get better, and you can't learn everything! By all means have a 'plan B' set of systems, but they should be 'Worrall Ruy Lopez' which you can swap for the 'Main Line Lopez', and not a whole separate group of openings. Do you vary things as Black too? Your French against Tom could do with tightening up, and that will come as you become an expert in your lines.
- I have a prejudice that the Catalan is no opening for sub-2200 players, and you would do better to stick with the Queen's Gambit for a while.
- Despite great steadiness, your 30th move against Tom was a candidate for the worst blunder of the tournament! I hope not typical? But I wonder if it's that same over-confidence in winning positions that Charlie shows.

Charlie

You have worked hard on your chess and it has produced some great results. Your games though often showed wild swings in evaluations. We've had some conversations about what you could do next, so you have heard some of this before but:

- Your very deep knowledge of some opening lines is great, but I fear you have neglected some that you are less interested in. Try and get some way into all your opening systems, ideas as well as variations, before going any deeper with any of them. Start with the French Defence!
- You seem to have a weakness in very strong positions – maybe thinking 'anything wins'! Well, sometimes that's true, but your games often had wildly swinging evaluations, almost move by move! In games against Caleb and Tom, you almost forced your opponent to get into a winning position and did so at great speed! It didn't cost you any points this time, but it will, so it's worth double-checking everything if you have time.

Caleb

A very fine result, playing over your age range and some very good games too.

- I don't know how long you have been playing the Catalan but I expect it's not a very easy choice for a young player. The very varied and unbalanced positions are great for testing the understanding of Grandmasters, but I expect you have to be quite an expert player to make use of your opportunities. Some of your moves suggest to me you could do better getting a thorough understanding of chess basics, before moving on to this most complex of opening systems.
- You let Charlie get away twice in the same game: during both phases where you were winning, you were playing some very critical moves almost instantly. In both cases, a minute or two of extra thought might have produced an 'aha!', but you can't have an 'aha' in bullet chess.

Suhayl

That's a fine result but could easily have been better.

- Your openings are quite loose and this is giving you problems you needn't have. A little study of systems and move orders will keep you out of trouble and give you a chance to play at your best.
- In a couple of your games, you overlooked some fairly straightforward threats – not one move deep, but maybe two moves. I think you need to turn up the volume on your smoke alarm – check if something smells wrong, as you may need to put out a fire before you get burned in your bed! I'm sure you have heard of blunder checking – asking yourself simple questions like 'what is my opponent threatening?' – but it's not enough to know about it, you have to do it too.

Ayush

That was a pretty good showing, Ayush, and with a bit more luck you would have been up alongside the prizewinners. You played the endgame against Tom very well. If you want to take your chess to the next level, you probably need to:

- You need a dependable set of opening systems as Black and White – some of what you were doing looked rather improvised. If you know more about what you are doing, you can play the opening with confidence and not just speed!
- Having mentioned speed... Some of your blunders were played really very quickly. You need to adopt an Anti-Blunder Strategy:
 - Be more paranoid – what dangers are lurking, even in a quiet position?
 - Look at every check, every capture and every threat in a position when it's your move. That's hard to do fresh every move, so ask yourself – what has changed? What is my opponent trying to do?
 - And having chosen a move: is it safe? Your move will change things, and allow new threats. Check before you move!
 - Don't rush any move if you don't have to. Try not to play any move sooner than 10 seconds.

Pengxiao

I think I've said before, these higher-rated (and much older) players aren't doing anything magic, but they are doing things a bit differently to you.

- Charlie clearly knows some of his opening lines down to move 10 or 20, but I sometimes catch you free-styling in your main Queen's Gambit on moves 3 and 4, as Black and as White. You need to be more disciplined about this, and I promise it will make your life easier! You will get more of an advantage as White and avoid trouble as Black.
- There were a couple of points where you missed big threats from Black. You need to do your blunder checks (What's my opponent's threat right now? What if I move here?) or this will keep happening.

Tom

I hope you are encouraged by your performance, Tom – you tested yourself against the best in the County, and frightened the life out of some of them! Nick will have some things to say I'm sure, but I hope he won't object to what I advise below:

- The top players clearly know a bit more opening theory than you do; you don't have to know huge amounts but if you play sharp openings against good players, you will need to be a lot tighter in your choices. 7.Bd3 is not a bad move in the Najdorf, but the whole Bg5 system is very sharp and deep and the best lines are well worked out.
- If that's not what you want to spend your time doing, then you can play openings that don't depend so much on being accurate and up-to-date, and you can rely more on your good chess sense – something like the Closed Sicilian. You played the attack with a closed centre very well against Devrim! But even there I think your 4th move was a bit vague.

Alfie

I know you felt frustrated with your results, Alfie, but I believe it's not much more than practice that you need.

- Time trouble let you down in the first few games. We've talked a bit about that before – and it got better throughout the day – but you are spending a long time fretting about unimportant moves, and you then don't have time when the moves really are important. I expect practise at different time limits will help, as well as getting more familiar with your opening systems.
- You seem to be treating the London and Stonewall as a fixed set of moves, not a system that you can adapt, depending on what your opponent plays. Black should never be able to 'mirror' their way to equality, but that does mean being more flexible earlier on.
- And do understand why you make the moves in which order: your reflex c2-c3 was really a waste of a move, and may have stopped you from playing a better plan with c2-c4 in each game. You play c2-c3 so you can defend d4 after ...c5, but if Black hasn't played ...c5, why play c2-c3?

Raghav

That was a tough day at the office, Raghav, but I hope you weren't too disappointed. With a bit more accuracy, you could have got a draw or more against Suhayl and Alfie, and been half-way up the table. If you want to be at the top, here are some things to work on – much the same things as most of the other players!

- Get the bugs out of your opening systems, especially as Black. The opening is a difficult and dangerous part of the game, where one false step can find you falling helplessly down a slope. The Ruy Lopez and Advance French are fine choices, but you need more of a grip on them than you have now.
- I think most of the rest is experience. I'll give you an example: your move 12...f5 against Ayush. That move makes a threat that lasts one move and makes a weakness that might last the rest of the game! More experienced players will avoid this sort of move.
- It seems to me some players have spent a lot of lockdown online playing chess – Pengxiao I know has played 1600 games on Lichess, and more on chess.com and ChessKid.com – so there's a wealth of experience there that you can get for free.
- Practice should reduce your blunders! More advice is the same as for Ayush.
- If you don't want to spend the time playing 1600 games to learn more about the game, there are many books and videos to help, which talk about weakening moves like ...f5, and other basic strategy, often using master-level games, which are good models to follow.