

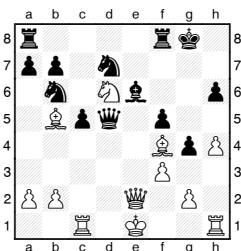


Christmas in Pamplona for the running of the pawns

Chess professionals don't always get to put their feet up over Christmas, as some tournaments are traditionally held during this period. This year all eyes were on Pamplona, where the organisers assembled an attractive field with many strong, imaginative, attacking players.

Some of the participants may wish they had stayed at home for turkey and minced pies, but at least the players get a day off on Christmas Day, with or without good behaviour. Here are two interesting games from the early rounds.

In the first, from Christmas Eve, Morozevich gifts Shirov a couple of pawns, but his generosity contains a sting in the tail.



Morozevich, A – Shirov, A Pamplona 2006

Shirov has an extra pawn, but the White pieces are much more actively placed and the Black kingside resembles Swiss cheese.

23...g4xf3

I would have preferred 23...Rf8-f6 as opening the

'g' file exposes the Black king even more.

24.g2xf3 Kg8-h7
25.Rc1-d1 Qd5xa2

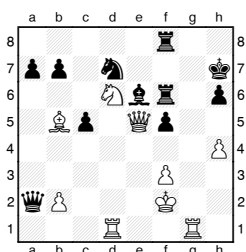
Black is forced to win another pawn, but the queen is driven offside.

26.Ke1-f2 Rf8-f6
27.Rh1-g1 Ra8-f8

The hazardous nature of Black's position is demonstrated by the fact that this natural move loses by force. Correct was 27...Qa2-b3 inching the queen back into the game.

28.Bf4-e5 Nd7xe5
29.Qe2xe5 Nb6-d7

There is no good alternative but this meets with a brutal response.



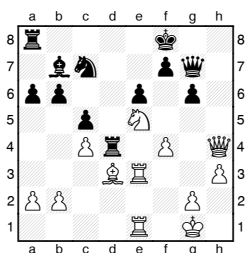
30.Bb5xd7 Be6xd7
31.Nd6-e4

This crafty withdrawal opens the path for the White rooks.

31... f5xe4

If 31...Rf6-f7 32.Ne4-f6+ Rf7xf6 33.Rd1xd7+ Rf8-f7 34.Qe5xf6 leads to mate.

32.Rd1xd7+ Kh7-h8
33.Rg1-g6. Black resigned as after 33...Qa2-e6 34.Rg6xh6+ Kh8-g8 35.Qe5-g5+ is decisive.



In this game, we see black's kingside nastily gored by White's forces rather like a laggardly competitor in the running of the bulls, that takes place in this city every year.

Jakovenko, D- Illescas Cordoba, M

Pamplona 2006

The young Russian player has menacingly massed his pieces on the kingside so Illescas tried to bring his knight over to aid the defence.

24... Nc7-e8

If 24...Ra8-d8 25.Re3-g3 sets up a decisive sacrifice on g6.

25.Ne5xf7

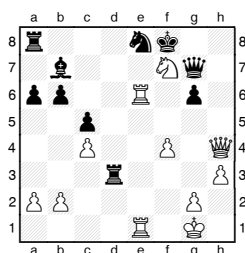
White has a choice of strong moves, 25.Bd3xg6 f7xg6 26.Re3-g3 was also very tempting.

25...Rd4xd3

Capturing the knight doesn't work: 25...Qg7xf7 26.Re3xe6 Rd4xd3 27.Qh4-h8+ Qf7-g8 28.Re6xe8+ Ra8xe8 29.Re1xe8+ Kf8xe8 30.Qh8xg8+ leaves White a queen to the good. So Miguel desperately tries to distract some of the White forces.

26.Re3xe6

Jakovenko ignores the rook and continues to target the Black king.



26...Qg7-d4+

The capture 26...Qg7xf7 27.Qh4-h8+ transposes to the variation above, and 26...Kf8xf7 27.Re6-e7+ is no better.

27.Kg1-h2 Bb7xg2

Aiming to open up the White monarch, but White's attack strikes first.

28.Qh4-e7+ Kf8-g8
29.Nf7-h6+ Kg8-h8
30.Qe7-f8+ Kh8-h7
31.Qf8-g8+ and Black resigns as 31...Kh7xh6 32.Qg8xg6 is mate.

Michael Adams

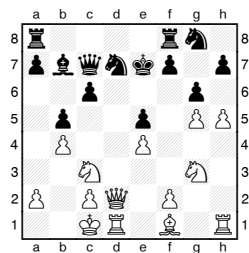


Pearly kings take the air at Hastings Congress

Shortly after Christmas, thoughts turn to the traditional Hastings Congress which is in its 82nd year. Although the tournament no longer has the grandeur of the past, it still receives loyal support from the local council and this year several other sponsors.

Most importantly however, Hastings provides a very valuable opportunity for young players from around the UK to pit their wits against international opposition.

In a very exciting game from the event, Simon Williams produces the sadly flawed 'Pearl of Hastings' against the top seeded Georgian Merab Gagunashvili.



Williams, S - Gagunashvili, M
2006-7 Hastings

As we join the game both kings are well ventilated, but the more actively placed White pieces give him the edge.

- 19... Rf8-d8
- 20.h5xg6 h7xg6
- 21.Qd2-e3 a7-a5
- 22.Bf1-h3 Ke7-f8

The king runs for cover as 22...a5xb4 23.Bh3xd7 Rd8xd7 24.Qe3-c5+ is rather nasty.

- 23.Bh3xd7 Rd8xd7
- 24.Qe3-c5+ Rd7-e7
- 25.Ng3-f5

Now Simon really gets into his stride with this brilliant sacrifice.

- 25... a5xb4
- Black doesn't accept immediately and tries to accelerate his queenside play.

- 26.Rh1-h8 g6xf5

Now Black is forced to remove the steed as 26...b4xc3 27.Nf5xe7 Qc7xe7 28.Rh8xg8+ wins the queen.

- 27.e4xf5 b4xc3
- 28.f5-f6 Ra8-e8

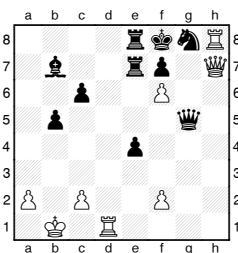
Going on the defensive as White's attack comes first after 28...Ra8xa2

- 29.f6xe7+ Qc7xe7
- 30.Rd1-d8+ Kf8-g7
- 31.Rd8xg8 mate.

- 29.Qc5xc3 e5-e4

There is no way for the Black king to escape, so the queen is transferred over to aid the defence.

- 30.Qc3-h3 Qc7-f4+
- 31.Kc1-b1 Qf4xg5
- 32.Qh3-h7



- 33... Re8-a8

Unfortunately, the rook has to move to give the Black king breathing space as if 32...Re7-c7 33.Rh8xg8+ Qg5xg8 34.Qh7-h6+ leads to mate.

- 33.Rh8xg8+ Qg5xg8
- 34.f6xe7+

After an inspired sequence of play Simon starts to lose the thread, the simple 34.Qh7xg8+ Kf8xg8 35.f6xe7 would have been a fitting conclusion to a great game.

- 34... Kf8xe7
- 35.Qh7xe4+ Ke7-f6

The king goes via the scenic route as after 35...Ke7-f8 36.Qe4-b4+ Kf8-e8 37.Qb4-d6 there is no escape.

- 36.Qe4-f4+

White quickly plays a few checks to reach the time control.

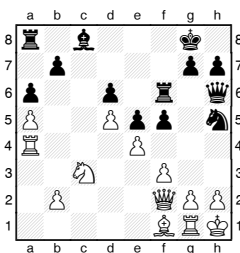
- 36... Kf6-e6
- 37.Qf4-e4+ Ke6-f6
- 38.Qe4-f4+ Kf6-e6
- 39.Qf4-d6+ Ke6-f5
- 40.Qd6-c5+ Kf5-f6
- 41.Qc5-d4+

The win was still available with the subtle 41.Rd1-d6+ Kf6-g7 42.Rd6-d3 when Black must give up his queen, or get caught in a mating net for example 42...Qg8-h7 43.Rd3-g3+ Kg7-f6 44.Qc5-d6+ Kf6-f5 45.Rg3-f3+ Kf5-g5 46.Qd6-f6+.

- 41... Kf6-f5
 - 42.Qd4-d3+
- 42.Qd4-c5+ would have set White back on the winning path.

- 42... Kf5-f6
- 43.Qd3-f3+ Kf6-e6
- 44.Qf3-h3+ Ke6-f6
- 45.Qh3-f3+ Kf6-e6
- 46.Qf3-e4+

Now Black jumped at the opportunity to claim a draw by threefold repetition. 1/2-1/2



Finally, an unusual tactic from a game in the first round:

Narayanan, S - Ikonnikov, V
2006-7 Hastings

- 26... Nh5-g3+
- 26.Qf2xg3 f5-f4

When White was forced to give up his queen, as 26.Qg3-f2 Qh6xh2+ 27.Kh1xh2 Rf6-h6 leads to mate. The game continued:

- 27.Qg3-h3 Bc8xh3
- but Black had no problems in securing victory.

CHESS

January 20th 2007

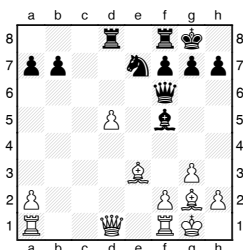


Odessa steps to a landmark win for Hungary's number one

The Association of Chess Professionals has been in existence since 2003, and recently achieved the highpoint of their brief existence by holding a major event, a 16 player knock-out rapid tournament, which took place in Odessa, Ukraine and had a prize fund of \$136,000. I am not too familiar with the sponsor, the Bank of Pivdenny, but their generosity is much appreciated.

The ACP was first set up to act as a conduit between players and organisers, and the efforts of a few individuals who have given their time to serve on its board have paid dividends. Although it is very hard to please everyone - particularly chess players - for a paltry fee members have been amply rewarded.

The Hungarian number one Peter Leko, ended 2006 successfully by tying for first in the Tal Memorial, and continued his good form by winning this very strong event, here are some crucial moments.



RUBLEVSKY, S - Leko, P ACP Rapid Odessa 2007

Leko had already won the first game of this mini match and only needed a draw to progress. However, in the second game Rublevsky is exerting some pressure due to the bishop pair and powerful passed 'd' pawn. Now Peter conjures up an inspired tactical sequence.

17... **Ne7xd5**
18. **Bg2xd5** **Qf6-e5**

If 18...Bf5-e6 19.Be3-d4 wins material so this is the only way to regain the piece.

19. **Bd5xf7+**

The bishop doesn't die in vain as the Black king is drawn out into the open.

19... **Kg8xf7**
20. **Qd1-h5+** **Kf7-g8**
21. **g3-g4**

Now the Black bishop is pinned, this time crossways, but Peter has it all under control.

21... **Qe5-e4**
22. **g4xf5** **Rf8xf5**

The exposed White king and active major pieces give Leko enough compensation for the piece.

23. **Qh5-h3**

If 23.Qh5-e2 Rf5-g5+

24. **Be3xg5** **Qe4xe2**

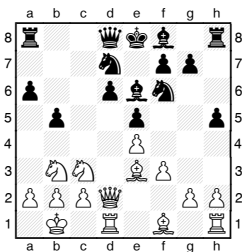
25. **Bg5xd8** **Qe2-g4+**

26. **Kg1-h1** **Qg4-f3+** leads to an immediate draw.

23... **Rd8-d6**
24. **Rf1-e1** **Rd6-g6+**
25. **Kg1-f1** **Qe4-c4+**
26. **Re1-e2** **Qc4-d5**
27. **Re2-d2** **Qd5-c4+**
28. **Rd2-e2** **Qc4-d5**
29. **f2-f4**

Objectively White had to settle for perpetual check, but Rublevsky is forced to play for a win due to the match situation. It doesn't work out well.

29... **Qd5-h1+**
30. **Kf1-f2** **Qh1xa1**
31. **Qh3xf5** **Qa1-g1+**
32. **Kf2-f3** **Qg1-h1+**
0-1



Leko, P - Gelfand, B ACP Rapid Odessa 2007

This tiebreak game was played at the much faster rate of 3 minutes plus 2 seconds a move. The players are contesting a critical line of the Nadjorf variation, Gelfand has advanced his 'h' pawn at an early stage to impede a White pawn storm on that side. In this game Leko is able to counter the plan classically and effectively by blasting open the centre.

11... **Ra8-c8**
12. **Bf1-d3** **Nd7-b6**

Now or on the previous move would have been a good time to continue development with 12...Bf8-e7.

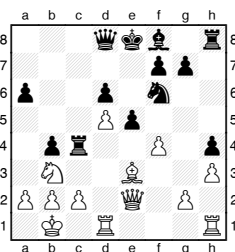
13. **h2-h3** **h5-h4**
14. **f3-f4**

White's forces are much better mobilised so it's time for action.

14... **b5-b4**

This makes matters worse, better were 14...Bf8-e7 or 14...Nb6-c4.

15. **Nc3-d5** **Be6xd5**
16. **e4xd5** **Nb6-c4**
17. **Bd3xc4** **Rc8xc4**
18. **Qd2-e2**



Black's position is already desperate as 18...Rc4-e4 is met by 19.Nb3-d2 trapping the rook mid board.

18... **Qd8-c8**
19. **f4xe5** **d6xe5**
20. **Be3-d4** **Bf8-d6**
21. **Nb3-a5** **Rc4xd4**

The retreat 21...Rc4-c7 22.Bd4xe5 Rc7-e7 23.Na5-c6 is no better, but now the extra material decides.

22. **Rd1xd4** **0-0**
23. **Rd4xh4**

The far flung 'h' pawn drops off and Leko finishes the game crisply.

23... **e5-e4**
24. **Rh1-f1** **Rf8-e8**
25. **Rf1xf6** **g7xf6**
26. **Qe2-h5** **Kg8-f8**

27. **Na5-c6**
Cutting off the king's escape. 1-0

Michael Adams



Dutch courage required to stand out in the Corus

The Corus tournament at Wijk aan Zee is one of the best organized and most professional competitions on the circuit. The organizers always go the extra mile to provide excellent playing conditions and they are rewarded with many interesting games.

The only problem they can't solve is the weather on the North Sea coast of Holland in January. It is not uncommon to see snow on the impressive golden-sand beach and the wind howls mournfully around the walls of the hotel.

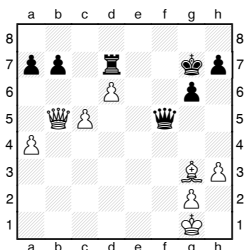
This year however the gales were so powerful that the plush marquee erected on the village green for the spectators to enjoy a drink and some analysis, had to be closed during the fifth round.

Some of the players have also taken a buffeting in the early running.

Kramnik, V - Shirov, A Corus 2007

In this game the World Champion Vladimir Kramnik has been gradually turning the screws for some time and the blunder

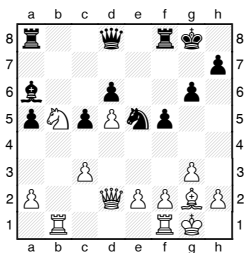
34...Rb8-b7 brought an end to the suffering as Shirov resigned without waiting for 35.Rc6xe6 Kf7xe6 36.Na4-c5+ winning a piece.



Carlsen, M - Navara, D Corus 2007

The next game featured a double oversight. The advanced passed pawn and exposed Black king position provide some compensation for the exchange but after the very careless: **31...g6-g5**. Carlsen had a golden opportunity to decide the game with the simple **32.c5-c6 Qf5xb5 33.a4xb5** when one of the passed pawns touches down. Instead White played **32.a4-a5**

and no doubt disillusioned by the missed opportunity, went on to lose the game.



Navara, D - Radjabov, T Corus 2007

Radjabov was already on an impressive 3.5/4 before this game, and buoyed by his good start he had made a very ambitious pawn sacrifice earlier in this game.

21.e2-e4

Navara decides to open up the game, but it would have been much better to secure his knight first. He should have played 21.a2-a4, when Black falls short of full compensation.

21... Ne5-c4
22.Qd2-c1 a5-a4

Radjabov takes advantage of White's omission, and leaves the White knight looking rather loose.

23.e4xf5

It may have been better to play 23.Rf1-e1 getting out of the way of the bishop.

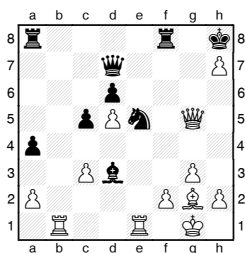
23... Qd8-d7
24.f5xg6 Ba6xb5
25.Qc1-g5

It's not clear what the queen move achieves so the immediate **25.g6xh7+ Kg8-h8 26.Rf1-e1** was preferable.

25... Nc4-e5
26.g6xh7+ Kg8-h8

Black doesn't recapture as the White pawn provides cover for the Black king.

27.Rf1-e1 Bb5-d3



28.Rb1-b6

This looks tempting but leaves the back rank exposed **28.Rb1-d1** was stronger. Now the black initiative becomes overwhelming.

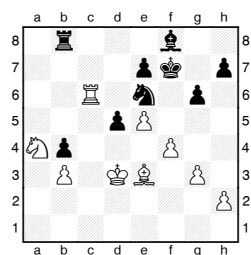
28... a8-e8
29.Re1-e3 Ne5-c4
30.Re3xd3

If **30.Re3xe8 Qd7xe8** and White must lose a rook to prevent mate.

30... Re8-e1+
31.Bg2-f1 Qd7-h3

White has only a few spite checks to prolong the game.

32.Qg5-g8+ Rf8xg8
33.h7xg8Q+ Kh8xg8
34.Rb6-b8+ Kg8-g7
0-1



CHESS

February 3rd 2007

Michael Adams



Women have the men on the rocks in Gibraltar

Let's face it, many intensely anticipated experiences can be a bit of a disappointment when you finally encounter them. The impressive first sight of the Rock of Gibraltar looming out of the night sky is not one of them and neither is the excellent Gibtelecom Masters.

This open, held at the Caleta Hotel in Gibraltar, has a lot going for it: a great location and beautiful scenery as well as offering the chance to escape the English winter and do some duty-free shopping.

It is no surprise that the tournament is expanding fast. A lot of the credit must go to Brian Callaghan, the driving force behind the tournament and an extremely gracious host.

He is particularly keen on supporting women's chess and the growing strength of the top female players was shown during the early going with notable scalps for Irina Krush over Vladimir Akopian, Zhu Chen over Georgiev and Arakhamia over Nakamura, the latter two with the black pieces.

Caruana, F - Adams, M Gibtelecom Masters Gibraltar 2007

My young opponent may well be a star of the future, but in this game he is facing a rather imposing center, and I was able to find a tactical resolution.

30 ... **Bc8xh3**

31. **Re1-e2**

If 31.Kh2xh3 Qg5-h5 is mate, and after 31.g2xh3 Rf8-g8 32.Qd2-f2 Rb8-b2 decisively deflects the queen, 33.Nf1-d2 Rb2xd2 34.Qf2xd2 Qg5-g3+ 35.Kh2-h1 Qg3xh3+ 36.Qd2-h2 Qh3xf3+ and mate next move. Relatively best was 31.Ra1-b1 Rb8xb1 32.Re1xb1 Rf8-g8 but white is not long for this world.

31 ...

Rf8-g8

32. **Ra1-e1**

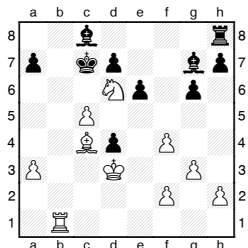
Bh3xg2

33. **Re2xg2**

Qg5-h4+

and White resigned as 34.Kh2-g1 Rg8xg2+ 35.Qd2xg2 Qh4xe1 picks up the rook.

Ivan Sokolov has struggled in Super tournaments recently but his aggressive style is well suited to open events and here we see him scoring a couple of quick wins on the way to an early tournament lead.



Sokolov, I - Greet, A Gibtelecom Masters Gibraltar 2007

It's not possible for Black to develop his light squared bishop so he brings his king into the action.

26 ... **Kc7-c6**

27. **Bc4-b5+** **Kc6-d5**

The king continues its march to the galls as if 27...Kc6xc5 28.Nd6xc8 wins a piece

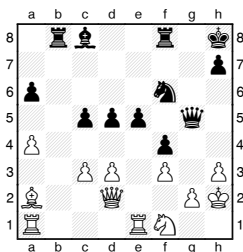
28. **Nd6-e4** **Rh8-f8**

Trying to create some breathing room with 28...e6-e5 seems logical but white is still winning after 29.f4xe5 Bg7xe5

30. **c5-c6**

29. **c5-c6**

d7-d6



The capture 29...d7xc6 30.Bb5-c4 would have created a beautiful help mate.

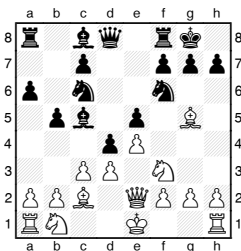
30. **Rb1-c1** **Rf8-d8**

The alternative 30...e6-e5 31.Bb5-c4+ Kd5xc6 32.Bc4-e6+ loses a piece but the game move is even worse.

31. **c6-c7**

with the rather powerful twin threats of Bb5-c6 mate and c7xd8=Q

1-0



Ramesh, R - Sokolov, I Gibtelecom Masters Gibraltar 2007

10. **c3xd4**

A horrible move conceding the very important d4 square. Better was 10.Nb1-d2

10 ...

Nc6xd4

11. **Nf3xd4**

Bc5xd4

12. **Nb1-c3**

h7-h6

13. **Bg5-h4**

Qd8-d6

14. **0-0**

Bc8-g4

15. **Qe2-d2**

Nf6-h5

The black pieces have quickly become very active.

16. **Nc3-d5**

Ra8-e8

17. **Bc2-d1**

White stands a lot worse after 17.Nd5-e3 but now he loses material.

17 ...

Bg4xd1

18. **Ra1xd1**

f7-f5

Surrounding the bishop on h4.

19. **Nd5-e3**

g7-g5

20. **Nd3xf5**

Rf8xf5

21. **e4xf5**

g5xh4

The two pieces are much more powerful than the rook and pawn particularly the dominating bishop.

22. **Qd2-e2**

Nh5-f6

23. **Kg1-h1**

Kg8-h7

24. **Rd1-c1**

c7-c5

25. **Rc1-c2**

a6-a5

26. **Qe2-f3**

Qd6-d5

white resigned rather prematurely but after 27.Qf3-h3 Qd5xa2 28.Qh3xh4 Re8-f8 Black's queenside pawn majority will roll home.

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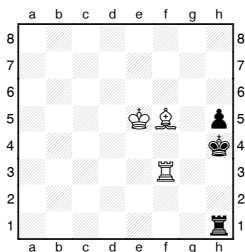
February 10th 2007

Michael Adams



Let's skip the start and get to the finish

I had hoped to show you some brilliant miniatures from The Gibtelecom Masters, but most of the games became drawn-out technical affairs. The unfamiliar time control, with an long increment of one minute per move, meant that few players had the energy to produce exciting chess as they staggered from one lengthy playing session the next. Here is the finish of my last round epic. I have spared you the first 91 moves.



Adams, -Al Modiahki, M Gibtelecom Masters 2007

I still have some hopes to win this game, despite the reduced material because of my opponent's restricted king position. But this works to his advantage due to recurring possibilities of stalemate.

92.Ke5-f6

92.Ke5-f4 Rh1-f1

93.Rf3xf1 is an immediate stalemate.

- 92 ... Rh1-h2
- 93.Bf5-e6 Rh2-h1
- 94.Kf6-f5 Rh1-g1
- 95.Rf3-f4+ Rg1-g4
- 96.Rf4-f1 Rg4-g5+
- 97.Kf5-f4

After 97.Kf5-f6 I could eventually annex Black's pawn and reach the technically drawn ending of rook and bishop versus rook. Perhaps the game move was a merciful release as now the game ends much quicker.

97 ... Rg5-g1

For some reason this clever move didn't occur to me.

98.Rf1-f3

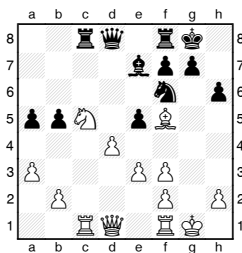
98.Rf1xg1 stalemate

98 ... Rg1-f1

99.Rf3xf1

1/2-1/2

The women's prize was shared between Jovanka Houska and former Women's World Champion Antoaneta Stefanova. Jovanka played an impressive game in the last round conjuring up some winning chances from an apparently unpromising position.



Dzagnidze, N Houska, J Gibtelecom Masters 2007
18 ... e5xd4

A very interesting decision which forces White to display a lot of precision. The standard 18...Rc8-c7 gives White a slight edge.

19.Bf5xc8 Qd8xc8
20.Qd1xd4 Qc8-h3

White is the exchange and a pawn ahead but the knight on c5 is a bit loose and the White king is surprisingly vulnerable.

21.Qd4-f4 Rf8-d8
22.Qf4-g3

Accuracy is required as the tempting 22.e3-e4 Be7-d6 23.e4-e5 Bd6xe5 24.Qf4xe5 Rd8-d5 works out fine for Black.

22 ... Qh3-h5
23.Nc5-e4

It looks logical to exchange pieces but 23.Nc5-b3 Rd8-

d5.f4-f3 Be7-d6 25.Qg3-g2 was the best way to make the extra material count.

23 ... Nf6xe4
24.f3xe4 Rd8-d6
25.Kg1-h1

This is a bad blunder, correct was 25.Rc1-c8+ Kg8-h7 26.Rc8-e8 Rd6-e6 (26...Rd6-g6 27.Re8xe7 is good for White) 27.Re8xe7 Re6xe7 when a draw seems a likely result.

25 ... Rd6-g6
26.Qg3-b8+ Kg8-h7
27.f2-f4

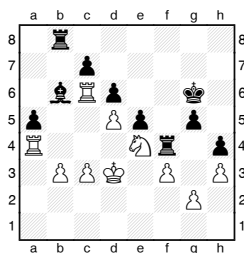
27.f2-f3 Be7-d6 wins

27 ... Qh5-e2

There is no way to evade mate.

0-1

Tournament winner Vladimir Akopian affected a successful Swiss gambit, and followed up his first round loss with a run of 7.5/8. His most notable victory was against Ivan Sokolov



Akopian, V - Sokolov, I Gibtelecom Masters 2007

Black has been reduced to complete passivity and Akopian decided it was time for the final breakthrough

44.b3-b4 a5xb4
45.Ra4xb4 Kg6-h5

The king can't retreat as 45...Kg6-g7 46.Ne4xg5 wins a pawn en route to the e6 outpost. Now Akopian showed the disadvantages of moving up the board by playing

46.Ne4xd6

and Black resigned If 46...c7xd6 47.Rb4xb6 Rb8xb6 48.Rc6xb6 is a winning ending and after 46...Rf4xb4 the neat intermezzo 47.Nd6-f7 threatening Rc6-h6 mate is decisive after 47...Rb8-h8 48.c3xb4 Rh8-h7 49.Nf7xe5.

CHESS

February 17th 2007

Michael Adams

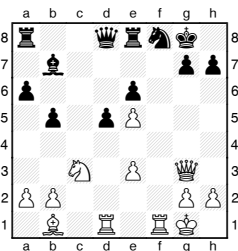


None but the strong survive these shark-infested waters

I always think of Russia as a very traditional chess environment but in the Moscow Open they adopted some American trends that included varying the schedules. This gave players the possibility of playing four rapid games in one day instead of the regular one game per day timetable.

I doubt whether this innovation would have gone down well with such luminaries as the late World Champion Mikhail Botvinnik, who was no great fan of quick play games. Nonetheless, these schedules are often popular with top players as they do not risk losing rating points in these games and their tournament ends up a few days shorter.

Some strong players took this option but few survived the shark infested waters and one of the stronger players, Victor Bologan, subsequently withdrew after a 2.5/4 start - making his tournament shorter still!



Ionov, S- Kremenitsky, A Moscow Open 2007

White has a very nice position, and is planning to swing even more attackers to the kingside by 21.Nc3-e4 or 21.Rd1-d4.

20 Nf8-d7

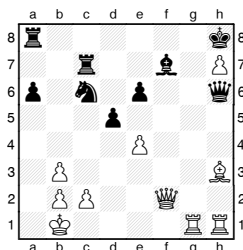
Black should have played 20...Qd8-e7, in the game he is quickly dismembered.

21.Bb1xh7+ Kg8xh7
22.Rf1-f7 Re8-g8

The rook move is forced but now e6 is undefended.
23.Qg3-h3+ Kh7-g6
24.Qh3xe6+ Nd7-f6

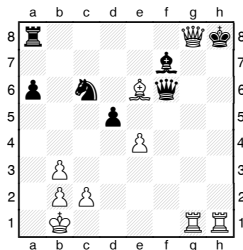
If 24...Kg6-h7 25.Qe6-f5+ Kh7-h6 26.Qf5-h3+ Kh6-g6 27.Rf7xd7 and White regains his material with an excellent rate of interest.

25.Rf7xb7 Rg8-e8
26.Qe6-f7+ 1-0



Najer, E - Ulko, J Moscow Open 2007

With such an array of firepower staring down at the denuded Black king, it is no surprise that a decisive breakthrough is imminent. The most brutal way to bulldoze through is 36.Qf2-g3 Rc7-c8 37.Bh3xe6 Qh6-f6 38.Qg3-g8+ Rc8xg8 39.h7xg8=Q mate which deserves a diagram.



In the game tournament winner Najer, who had already won his first five games, actually played

36.Bh3xe6 Qh6xe6
37.Qf2-g3 Bf7-g6
38.Qg3xc7

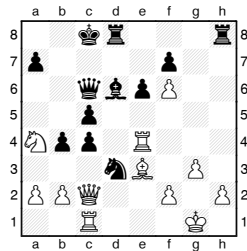
White has a material advantage and the threats continue to mount.

38... Nc6-e5

If 38...d5xe4 39.Rh1-h6 Nc6-e5 40.Qc7-c3 wins immediately

39.e4xd5 Qe6xd5
40.Qc7-c3
40.Rg1-d1 Qd5-e6
41.Rd1-d8+ was simpler but White's position is too good to spoil.
40 ... Ra8-e8
41.Rh1-h6 Bg6-f5
42.Rh6-h5 Qd5-f7

42...Bf5-g6 43.Rh5-g5 Kh8xh7 44.Rg1-e1 is a decisive pin
43.Rg1-g8+ Re8xg8
44.Qc3xe5+ 1-0



Ovod, E - Smirnov, P Moscow Open 2007

A typical game from the early rounds where Smirnov has tried to bamboozle his lower rated opponent in the razor sharp Botvinnik variation. With the game on a knife edge White was unable to thread his way through the tactical maze.

24.Re4xc4

The right way to sacrifice material was 24.Na4xc5 Bd6xc5 (Not 24... Nd3xc1 25.Re4xc4 when White gets a big attack.) 25.Re4xc4 Rh8-h5 26.Be3xc5 Rh5xc5 27.Rc4xc5 Nd3xc5 28.h2-h4 (28.Qc2xc5 Rd8-d1+ wins the queen), with some compensation due to the awkward pin and well protected White king.

24 ... Rh8xh2

White was probably expecting 24...Nd3xc1 transposing to the promising line above after 25.Na4xc5, and this must have come as a very unpleasant surprise.

25.Kg1-f1 25.Kg1xh2 Rd8-h8+ leads to mate

25 ... Nd3xc1

And White resigned as 26.Be3xc1 Qc6-g2+ 27.Kf1-e1 Qg2-g1+ is not good news.

CHESS

February 24th 2007

Michael Adams



Travel light with this slim endgame companion

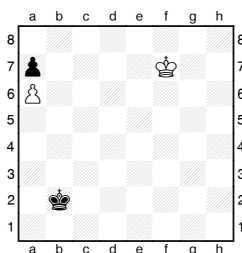
Since the abolition of adjournments, chess players have been saved the trouble of trying to cram hefty endgame tomes into their luggage. This is something of a relief as they often became excess baggage in more ways than one.

When I received *101 Chess Endgame Tips* by Steve Giddins (£11.99 www.gambitbooks.com), I was surprised to see such a slim volume. Although it might appear that the reduced material in this stage of the game would make things simpler there are often many hidden complexities. The author has managed to pack a lot of information into the 111 pages and this book will be instructional for players of all levels.

Steve Giddins is a real chess aficionado who can often be found at tournaments in a variety of guises - author, arbiter, player and spectator. He takes several examples from events where he was present and adds advice from an eclectic variety of sources from Mark Hebden to Mikhail Botvinnik.

Endgame books can be hard work, so Giddins's dry sense of humour is appreciated. Each of the 101 tips gets a snappy

title such as "Knights hate Rook's pawns". Here is the game illustrating tip no. 2: "The Gentlemanly Art of Shoulder Charging"..



**Schlage - Ahues
Berlin, 1921**

**1.Kf7-e6 Kb2-c3
2.Ke6-d6**

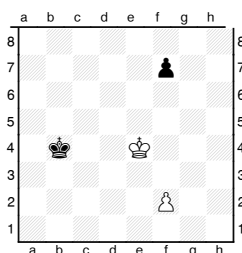
As Steve points out White should have 'shoulder-charged' the Black king away with 2.Ke6-d5 winning a crucial tempo. Then 2...Kc3-b4 3.Kd5-c6 Kb4-c4 4.Kc6-b7 Kc4-c5 5.Kb7xa7 Kc5-c6 6.Ka7-b8 promotes the pawn.

2 ... Kc3-d4

Now Black's king races back just in time to make a draw.

**3.Kd6-c6 Kd4-e5
4.Kc6-b7 Ke5-d6
5.Kb7xa7 Kd6-c7
½-½**

Here is a recent game where White could have used this knowledge to secure a valuable extra half point.



**Malakhov, V - Najer, E
Moscow Open 2007**

In the game White made a beeline for Black's pawn with

61.Ke4-e5

White should have 'shoulder charged' the Black king by 61.Ke4-d4 forcing it offside, or enabling White to gain time to advance his pawn before capturing the Black pawn. After 61...Kb4-b5 62.Kd4-d5 Kb5-b4 63.f2-f4 Kb4-c3 64.f4-f5 Kc3-d3 65.f5-f6 Kd3-e3 66.Kd5-d6 Ke3-f4 67.Kd6-e7 wins the pawn and the game.

**61 ...
Kb4-c5
62.f2-f3**

If 62.Ke5-f6 Kc5-d5 63.Kf6xf7 Kd5-e4 White's pawn is also eliminated.

**62...
Kc5-c6
63.f3-f4
Kc6-d7
64.Ke5-f6
Kd7-e8
65.Kf6-g7 f7-f5
66.Kg7-f6.
½-½**

As after 66...Ke8-f8 67.Kf6xf5 Kf8-f7 Black's king has been able to take up a defensive position in front of the pawn reaching a technically drawn position.

Another top quality recent release is Andrew Greet's debut effort: *Play The Ruy Lopez* (£14.99; www.everymanchess.com). My fellow Cornishman has put a great deal of work into this comprehensive, well researched repertoire book packed with original analysis.

It is hard work for professional players to stay up to date with the vast number of variations which Black can choose from in this opening, and this is reflected in the chunky 376-page book. The lynchpin of the proposed repertoire is the Worrall Attack, which featured heavily in Short's victory in his 1992 candidate's match against Karpov and has been a mainstay of Tiviakov's repertoire for many years. If you do play the Ruy Lopez this book will be an invaluable asset.

CHESS

March 3rd 2007

Michael Adams



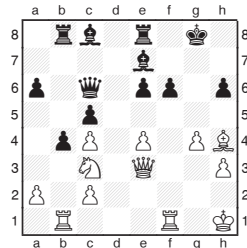
Fighting chess is the order of the day.

The Aerflot Open with a 1st prize of \$30,000 is probably the richest open tournament in the world at the moment. It is also the strongest as with the exception of a few promising juniors, players need a rating of 2549 or upwards to participate in the top section.

This year's event proved a success for Evgeny Alekseev, who completed an impressive double after chalking up the Russian Championship in December.

Some participants had a little trouble getting their Russian visas this year, probably no great surprise to anyone who has ever tried to acquire this illusive document. The hours spent queuing are always a contemplative pleasure. Delays mounted when some local embassies declined to accept faxed invitations and so the organizers instructed the competitors to remind them of Russian Foreign Ministry instruction N 31 75/KD which states that they nevertheless must do so.

In my experience such an approach does not always charm embassy staff but it seems that overcoming bureaucratic difficulties inspires fighting chess and there were many similarly fiery encounters over the board.



Jobava, B - Ehlvest, J Aerflot Open 2007

As we join the game the board is in total chaos with both kings feeling draughty. White's pieces seem better placed to take advantage of this but if Black manages to coordinate his pieces his light squared bishop could rule the board.

27... Kg8-h7

It was better to play 27...Rb8-b7 breaking the pin on the 'b' line and defending laterally along the second rank. After 28.Nc3-e2 (lf 28.Qe3xh6 Be7-f8) 28...f6-f5 29.Bh4xe7 Rb7xe7 30.Ne2-g3 Bc8-b7 the mayhem continues.

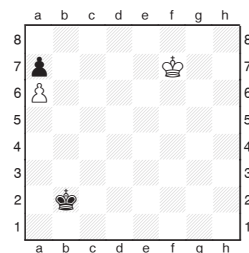
28.Bh4xf6 Bc8-b7

The calm sidestep 28...Be7-d6 is best met by the surprising 29.Kh1-g1, so that after 29...Bc8-b7 30.Qe3-d3 threatens the very powerful 31.e4-e5+ 29.Bf6-e5 Kh7-g6

Relatively best was 29...Re8-f8 30.Be5xb8 winning material, the game move meets with a dazzling refutation.

30.Rf1-f7

Black resigned as his king can run but can't hide in the variation 30...Kg6xf7 31.Qe3xh6 Re8-g8 32.Qh6-h7+ Kf7-e8 33.Qh7xg8+ Ke8-d7 34.Rb1-d1+



Yakovich, Y - Naiditsch, A Aerflot Open 2007

The position looks fairly level but Yakovich found a way to put his opponent to the test with the enterprising 19.Nf3xg5 h6xg5

Accepting the sacrifice is best as after 19...Bc8-a6 20.Qe2-h5 Ne5-d3 21.Rc1-c7 the White pieces flood in.

20.Ne4xg5 Bg7-h6

21.Qe2-h5 Bh6xg5

Naiditsch cracks under the pressure, correct was 21...Kg8-g7 22.Rc1-c7 Bh6xg5 23.Bb3-c2 (23. Qh5xg5+ Ne5-g6 is short of full compensation) 23...

Ne5-d7 24.Rd1xd7 Bc8xd7 25.Rc7xd7 Kg7-f6 26.Qh5-f3+ Kf6-g7 27.Qf3-h5 with a draw by repetition.

22.Bb3-c2

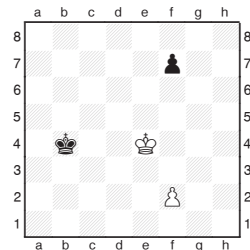
This zwischenzug was hard to anticipate and it proves quite deadly, Black was anticipating 22.Qh5xg5+ Ne5-g6 with no problems.

22...

Kg8-g7

23.b2-b4

Black resigned as the attack is unstoppable after 23... Qa5xb4 24.Qh5xg5+ Ne5-g6 25.Bc2xg6 f7xg6 26.Rc1-c7+ Rf8-f7 27.Qg5-e5+.



Svetushkin, D - Smirin, I Aerflot Open 2007

Black has an extra exchange but the very active White pieces circling round Black's exposed king, combined with the passed pawn on g7 mean that great accuracy is needed to survive.

30... Kd8-c8

Missing his only chance to eliminate the 'g' pawn by 30... Rg8xg7 31.Bf6xg7 a6-a5 32.Ra1-d1+ Kd8-c8 33.Bg7-d4 Bb6xd4 34.Rd1xd4 a5xb4 35.Bc6xb5 although the ending is still good for White.

31.Bc6-f3 a6-a5

32.Ra1-c1+ Kc8-d7

It looks more natural to interpose the rook but after 32...Ra7-c7 33.Rc1xc7+ Bb6xc7 34.Nb4-c6 Ne7xc6 35.Bf3xc6 the 'g' pawn costs a whole rook.

33.Nb4-d5 Ne7xd5

The tactics work for White after 33...Bb6-d8 34.Bf6xe7 Bd8xe7 35.Nd5-b6+ Kd7-e6 (35...Kd7-d6 36.Nb6-c8+) 36.Bf3-d5+.

34.Bf3xd5 Ra7-a8

35.Bd5xa8

35.Rc1-d1 Kd7-c7 36.Bf6-e5+ also wins immediately but the game finish is much prettier.

35... Rg8xa8

36.Bf6-d8

is a beautiful interruption forcing the coronation of the White pawn. If 36...Ra8xd8 37.Rc1-d1+ 1-0

CHESS

March 10th 2007

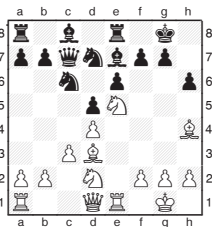
Michael Adams



Chess on the small screen

There is little opportunity to watch chess on television, there doesn't seem to be room for the Royal Game on the small screen. The closest you can get is watching the amiable Australian Richard Farleigh on *Dragons' Den* showing on Wednesdays and Saturdays on BBC2. Richard has represented both Bermuda and more recently Monaco at Chess Olympiads. He credits chess with boosting his confidence as a child and one of his first money-making ventures was outsmarting chess hustlers in a Sydney park. Later, his interest in chess led to a friendship with my predecessor on this column David Norwood, which has proved lucrative for both as they have collaborated on many successful business ventures.

Here is his favourite game, decided in his favour by some speculative sacrificial play.



Farleigh, R - Saarerd, B

Sydney 1986

14.Ne5xf7

As we can see from this move, Richard no longer lacks confidence and here he takes a punt which not for the first time provides spectacular returns.

14... Kg8xf7

Black captures the wrong piece after 14...Be7xh4 15.Nf7xh6+ g7xh6 16.Qd1-h5 Bh4xf2+

17.Kg1xf2 Nd7-f6 the attack runs out of steam.

15.Qd1-h5+

Kf7-f8

16.Re1xe6

Nd7-f6

Better was 16...Qc7-f4 although after 17.Re6-e3 there is ample compensation for a piece.

17.Bh4xf6

Bc8xe6

18.Bf6xg7+

Kf8-g8

18...Kf8xg7 leads to a nice mate

19.Qh5-g6+ Kg7-f8 20.Qg6xh6+

Kf8-f7 21.Bd3-g6+ Kf7-g8

22.Qh6-h7+ Kg8-f8 23.Qh7-h8+

Be6-g8 24.Qh8-h6

19.Qh5xh6

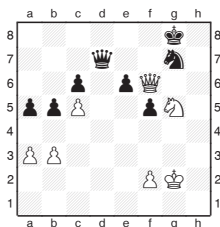
Be7-d6

20.Bd3-h7+

Kg8-f7

21.Qh6-f6 mate

Although it is not easy to follow chess on television, there is an increasing opportunity to view clips posted on the net. When Shakhriyar Mamedyarov analysed his recent game against Judit Polgar and revealed the intricacies of his preparation in the Breyer variation of the Ruy Lopez, he may not have been aware that the fruits of his labour would shortly be available on YouTube. A quick search of the net reveals that many post-mortems from Linares also provide interesting viewing. The most shocking conclusion from the event so far was when Topalov resigned in a drawn position. His 16-year-old opponent was reported to have pointed out the drawing line immediately after accepting his resignation. Sadly this moment is not yet available for downloading.



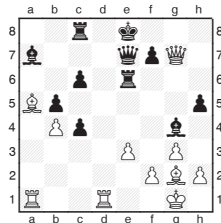
Carlsen, M - Topalov, V

Morelia 2007

Carlsen played

64.Qf6-g6

In fact the waiting move 64.Kg2-h2 was stronger, but it is hard to argue with the result of the game move as Topalov resigned. However after the calm 65...e6-e5 allowing the queen to defend Black hangs on as the immediate assault with 66.Qg6-h7+ Kg8-f8 67.Qh7-h8+ Qd5-g8 68.Ng5-h7+ Kf8-f7 69.Nh7-g5+ leads to perpetual check.



Leko, P - Anand, V

Morelia 2007

Black had been under pressure from the opening but had been defending inventively trying to maintain some coordination in his forces. Now Leko took his foot off the gas with

25.Rd1-d2

allowing Black to consolidate, but there was a brilliant tactical blow to take advantage of the Black king stuck in the centre:

25.Bg2xc6+ Re6xc6 26.Ba5-d8

Qe7-f8 (26...Rc8xd8 27.Qg7-g8+

wins the queen) 27.Qg7-e5+ Rc6-e6

28.Qe5xb5+ Re6-c6 29.Bd8-f6

Bg4xd1 30.Ra1xd1 Ba7-b6

31.Qb5-e5+ Rc6-e6 32.Qe5-d5

and White wins back the rook with a winning ending.

25...

Ba7-b8

26.h2-h3

White should keep the queens on by 26.Qg7-h7

26...

Bb8-e5

27.Qg7-g8+

Qe7-f8

28.Qg8xf8+

Ke8xf8

In the ending the protected passed 'c' pawn is a big factor.

29.Ra1-c1

Bg4-f5

30.e3-e4

Bf5-h7

31.Ba5-b6

Be5-f6

32.h3-h4

Bh7xe4

Vishy seizes the chance to grab the initiative with this clever sacrifice.

33.Bg2-h3

Be4-d5

34.Bh3xe6

f7xe6

Now the bishop on d5 dominates the board.

35.Bb6-c5+

The exchange of bishops invites in the Black king with decisive effect 35.Kg1-f1 was better

35...

Bf6-e7

36.Bc5xe7+

Kf8xe7

37.Rd2-b2

Ke7-d6

38.Kg1-f1

c6-c5

39.Kf1-e2

c5xb4

40.Rb2xb4

Kd6-c5

41.Rc1-b1

Bd5-c6

Leko resigned as the gradual advance of the queenside pawns will be decisive.

CHESS

March 17th 2007

Michael Adams



Vishy for the number 1 slot ?

Vishy Anand emerged the convincing winner of the Morelia-Linares tournament that concluded recently. The victory is doubly significant for Vishy as it is likely to take him into the No.1 slot on the upcoming April FIDE rating list for the first time. In a tournament that was notable for the breakthrough performance of Magnus Carlsen in the Super Tournaments it was good to see the relaxed but speedy Indian showing that life begins at 37. Morozevich was the most successful player in the second half with a score of 5.5 out of 7 showing either impressive stamina or immunity to late-lag. Not for the first time he was able to put early tournament defeats to the back of his mind to complete an impressive rally.

30...
31.Rd7xb7
32.Rb7xb4

Chucky would have been happy to see the back of both 'b' pawns, but the downside is that Morozevich has hoovered most of White's kingside pawns in the meantime.

33.Rb4-d4 Kg8-h7
Ruling out any possibility of White swapping a pair of rooks.
34.b3-b4

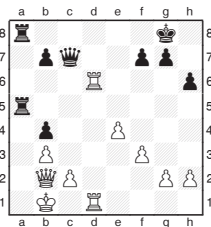
Ivanchuk understandably wants to advance his passed pawns but this creates more air around his king.

34... Ra5-a4
35.e4-e5
If 35.b4-b5 Ra4xd4 36.Qb2xd4 Ra8-b8 the 'b' pawn is a goner.

35... Qf3-e2
36.Rd4-d3 h6-h5
As there are no pieces in the vicinity of the Black king it is much safer to advance his pawns.

37.b4-b5
White had to try 37.Qb2-d4 now there is a decisive liquidation.

37... Ra4-a1+
38.Qb2xa1 Ra8xa1+
39.Kb1xa1 Qe2xe5+
The 'b' pawn drops off and the gradual advance of the kingside pawns will win the game so White resigned. Here is the crucial game that enabled Anand to secure overall tournament victory by beating his co-leader Magnus Carlsen.

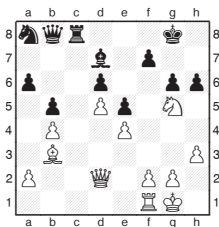


Anand, V - Morozevich, A
Linares 2007

30.Rd6-d7
Ivanchuk's king is in too much danger if he tries to maintain his extra pawn 30.g2-g3 Kg8-h7 31.Rd6-d3 (31.f3-f4 Qc7-c3 is a mating net) 31... b7-b5 preparing to treble on the 'a' line.

Anand, V - Carlsen, M
Linares 2007

27.Ng5-e6
It was hard to foresee this audacious leap. Carlsen was hoping for 27.Ng5-f3 Kg8-g7 followed by the transfer of his knight to c4.



27... Kg8-h7
Carlsen was probably better off capturing the knight and hoping for the best. The main lines are 27...f7xe6 28.d5xe6 Bd7-e8 29.e6-e7+ (29.Qd2xh6 Na8-b6 30.f2-f4 Qb8-a7 31.f4-f5 Nb6-c4+ 32.Kg1-h1 Qa7-g7 33.Qh6-h4 g6-g5 34.Qh4-f2 Qg7-f6 and Black has blockaded the pawns with good survival chances.) 29...Kg8-g7 30.Qd2-d5 Rc8-c4 31.Bb3xc4 b5xc4 32.Qd5xc4 Na8-c7 33.Rf1-c1 Nc7-b5 34.Qc4-c8 Qb8xc8 35.Rc1xc8 Kg7-f7 36.Rc8-a8 and now there is an important pawn move 36...d6-d5 37.e4xd5 Nb5-c7 38.Ra8-a7 Nc7xd5 with a tenable ending. After declining the sacrifice black's problems multiply, the frisky steed proves immune from capture and whilst it remains on e6 it dominates the board.

28.f2-f4 Qb8-a7+

If the knight is removed now by 28...f7xe6 29.d5xe6 Bd7-e8 30.f4-f5 Be8-c6 31.f5-f6 Bc6xe4 32.e6-e7 the two connected passed pawns are too strong.

29.Kg1-h2 Bd7-e8

It looks logical to exchange pawns but after 29...e5xf4 30.Qd2xf4 Bd7-e8 31.Qf4xd6 f7xe6 32.Qd6xe6 the knight on a8 is a bystander as the White attack is decisive.

30.f4-f5 g6xf5
31.e4xf5 f7-f6
32.Rf1-e1

Planning to swing the rook to h4 or g4 via e4.

32... Na8-c7
A better try was 32...Na8-b6 33.Re1-e4 h6-h5 but the holes can only be plugged for so long.

33.Re1-c1
The pin down the 'c' line distracts the bishop from the kingside.

33... Be8-d7
34.Rc1-c3 e5-e4

It was still not possible to remove the knight as 34...Nc7xe6 35.d5xe6 Rc8xc3 36.e6xd7 wins a piece
35.Rc3-g3 Nc7xe6
36.d5xe6 Bd7-e8
37.e6-e7 Be8-h5
38.Qd2xd6 1-0

CHESS

March 24th 2007

Michael Adams



Siberia comes out of the cold and into the limelight

Siberia is rapidly becoming the capital of the chess world. The knockout World Cup stage of the last World Championship cycle was held in Khanty-Mansiysk and it seems that the next two editions are also destined to be played there.

The Poikovsky event held in another area of the region has also established a big reputation aided by the support of former world champion Anatoly Karpov and is already into its eighth year. According to players who have visited, the locals are very generous hosts, although stamina is needed to withstand the closing ceremony where participants are encouraged to knock back numerous vodka toasts.

Bologan would have reflected the natural 32.Ng6-f4 as it allows good counterplay after 32...Bg7-f8 33.Qa3-a2 Rb8-b4. The correct way to implement the same idea was 32.Rg3-g5 Bg7-h6 33.Ng6-f4 as the compensation is overwhelming if Black captures the rook.

32... Rb8-c8

This simple response shows the downside of White's last move as the exchange of rooks leaves White's king feeling lonely.

33.b2-b3 a7-a5

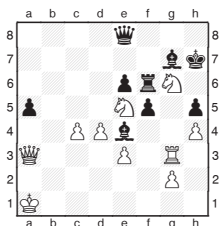
It was more accurate to play 33...Rf6xg6 34.Ne5xg6 Rc8xc1+ 35.Qa3xc1 Qe8-b8 36.Ng6-f4 Qb8xb3 37.Nf4xh5 Qb3-a4+ with a draw. However fortune favours Jakovenko as White's erroneous reply enables him to use a similar tactic to win the game.

34.Rc1-c4

Both players struggle to thread their way through the complications. Unfortunately this sensible-looking move has a hidden flaw. Now was the right moment to withdraw the knight as after 34.Ng6-f4 Qe8-f8 35.Qa3-b2 Rc8xc1+ 36.Qb2xc1 White has regained the advantage.

34... Rc8xc4

35.b3xc4



35- Rf6xg6

This was hard to foresee as Bologan's attention would have been focused on his exposed king.

36.Ne5xg6

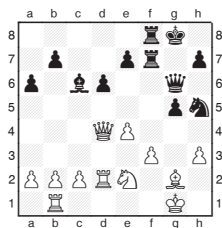
The alternative recapture 36.Rg3xg6 Bg7xe5 37.Rg6-g5 Be5-f6 is no better.

36... Qe8-b8

The brutal point as there is no way to prevent mate and save the rook on g3 which

unexpectedly turns out to be vulnerable.

0-1



Alekseev, E - [Ras] [A] Poikovsky 2007

Black has a very nice position and could continue manoeuvring by 28...Nh5-g7, but instead decides to take a tin-opener to the White king side.

28- .. Rf7xf3

29.Bg2xf3 Rf8xf3

30.Rb1-f1 g5-g4

It was also tempting to continue 30...Rf3xh3 31.Qd4-c4+ Kg8-g7 32.Ne2-d4 Nh5-g3, but the move played is a better practical choice as it maintains the initiative and keeps Black's king out of the firing line.

31.h3-h4 Bc6xe4

32.Ne2-c3 Nh5-f6

I would have been tempted to retain the powerful light squared bishop by 32...Qg6-f7 33.Rf1xf3 Be4xf3 34.Qd4-e3 Nh5-f4.

33.Nc3xe4 Nf6xe4

White would have been happy to swap pieces but now the knight takes up an enviable post.

34.Rd2-d3

White cracks under the pressure of conducting a tricky defensive task. Correct was 34.Rd2-g2 Rf3xf1+ 35.Kg1xf1 Qg6-f5+ 36.Kf1-e1 and the king scuttles to relative safety with some drawing chances.

34... e7-e6

35.Rd3-e3

If 35.Qd4-b6 Qg6-f6 defends against the checks and forces home the Black attack.

35... Ne4-g3

Menacing forks on e2 or f5.

36.Rf1xf3

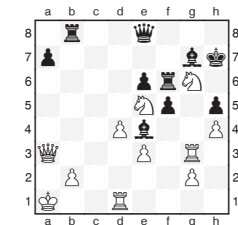
36.Rf1-e1 Ng3-f5 leads to a losing ending but now things are even worse.

36...

37.Kg1-f2 g4xf3

38.Qd4-c3 Ng3-f5

0-1 Qg6-g2+



Bologan, V - [Jakovenko, A] Poikovsky 2007

White has an extra pawn and two well posted knights on the kingside. His only problem is a scarcity of pawn cover for his king.

32.Rd1-c1

CHESS

March 31st 2007

Michael Adams



Masters come up with both beginners blunders and crisp calculations

The annual Amber Blindfold and Rapid extravaganza is the only event of its type where half the games are played without sight of the board. One year I happened to be passing through Monaco while it was on and dropped in to witness an eventful encounter between Karpov and Zoltan Almasi. It was hard to judge which player looked more confused when Anatoly completely lost track of the position and allowed a monstrous discovered check.

This year's blindfold games also provided plenty of entertainment: according to your taste you can offer a wry smile at top grandmasters making beginners' blunders or, in the better played games, marvel at their calculatory abilities. To cater for all tastes I present examples from both categories, starting off with an unexpected oversight from the winner at Linares: Viswanathan Anand.

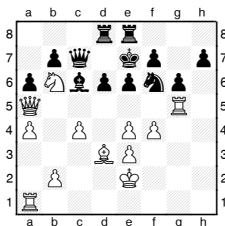
Kramnik, V - Anand, V Amber Blindfold Monte Carlo 2007

Kramnik, who is especially strong in blindfold chess, might have fancied his chances of converting the extra pawn in a protracted endgame but the finish was rather more abrupt.

28... Ne8-d6
29.Bf5xe6 Rf8-f2

Anand must have thought he was capturing White's rook with this move, so his opponent's reply was a particularly unpleasant surprise.

30.Rf1xf2 1-0



Vallejo Pons, F - Svidler, P Amber Blindfold Monte Carlo 2007

Vallejo is a pawn down but could have created a bit of confusion with 24.e4-e5. Instead, he loses track of the position.

24.Qa5-c3 Qc7xb6
25.Qc3xf6+

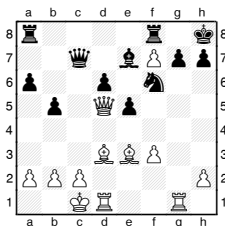
Imagining the king was on f8.

25... Ke7xf6

Whoops!

0-1

Now we move on to the second category with two crisp combinations.



Anand, V - Van Wely, L Amber Blindfold Monte Carlo 2007

21.Rg1xg7

A brilliant tactical blow. Van Wely would have thought the attack

on the White queen bought him time to defend after 21.Qd5-e6 Be7-d8

21... Kh8xg7

Unfortunately 21...Nff6xd5 22.Rg7xh7 is mate

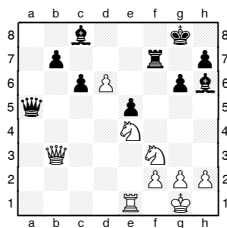
22.Rd1-g1+ Kg7-h8
23.Be3-h6 Nf6-g4

This is the only way to struggle on as the other attempt to return material leads to forced mate:

23..Rf8-g8 24.f7xg8Q+ Ra8xg8
25.Qd5xg8+ Nf6xg8 26.Bh6-g7.
24.Rg1xg4 Rf8xf7

Not a bad try as 25.Qd5xf7 Be7-g5+ turns the tables completely but Anand is alert to the danger.

25.Qd5xa8+ 1-0



Van Wely, L - Morozevich, A Amber Blindfold Monte Carlo 2007

In this game Loeky comes up with some deep analysis to chalk up the point.

24.d6-d7

White can't take advantage of the pin directly by 24.Ne4-g5 as Bh6xg5 25.Nf3xg5 Qa5xe1 mate is a cold shower, so instead he clears the d6 square.

24... Bc8xd7
25.Ne4-d6 Qa5-d5
26.Qb3xd5 c6xd5
27.Nd6xf7 Kg8xf7

Materially Black is not too badly off but there is still a sting in the tail to come.

28.Nf3xe5+

The fork means the Black king must protect the bishop:

28... Kf7-e7
29.Ne5-g4+

But now the discovered check wins the other prelate:

29... Ke7-d6
30.Ng4xh6

and White soon converted the extra rook into victory.

