

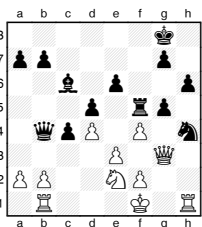
Michael Adams



Kasparov in his sights

Levon Aronian convincingly won the Tata Steel A group in Wijk aan Zee with an impressive 9/13, and showed that Magnus Carlsen may not be the only player to harbour hopes of overtaking Garry Kasparov's all-time high Elo ranking.

His understanding of the Queen's Gambit Declined, where in two wins on the Black side he turned Black's problem light-squared bishop into a monster with paradoxical play, caught the eye.



A. Giri - L. Aronian
Tata Steel A, 2012

27... **Bc6-e8**
Aronian methodically improves his pieces, first transferring his bishop to a better diagonal.

28.Ne2-c3 **Qb4-e7**
29.b2-b4 **Rf5-f8**
30.Rb1-b2 **Be8-g6**
31.Kf1-e1 **Bg6-d3**

The bishop is now established in the heart of White's position and Giri gives ground.

32.f4xg5 **Nh4-f3+**
33.Ke1-d1 **h6xg5**
Maintaining the strong knight is better than **33...Nf3xg5** **34.f2-f4**, Levon correctly judges there is no danger down the 'h' line with White's pieces scattered around the board.

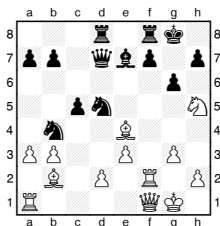
34.Qg3-h3 **Qe7-f6**
35.Kd1-c1 **Bd3-g6**
36.a2-a4 **Rf8-d8**
37.Nc3-e2 **e6-e5**
38.Qh3-g4 **e5xd4**
39.e3xd4 **Rd8-e8**
40.Qg4-d7 **c4-c3**

Aronian finishes with epic tactical vision, using little tricks to transfer his forces to unsupported squares.

41.Rb2-a2
41.Ne2xc3 **Qf6-f4+** mates.

41... **Nf3-e1**
42.Rh1xe1
No defence: **42.Rh1-h3** **g5-g4** **43.Qd7xg4** **Ne1-d3+**.

42... **Qf6-f4+**
43.Kc1-d1 **Qf4-e4**
This deadly, hard to foresee, quiet move caused White to resign as the only move, **44.Qd7xe8+**, is swiftly dispatched: **44...Bg6xe8** **45.Ne2xc3** **Qe4-d3+** **46.Ra2-d2** **Be8-h5+** **47.Nc2-e2** **Qd3-b1** mate would be a fitting finale.



H. Nakamura - D. Navara
Tata Steel A, 2012

18... **Nb4-a6**
Nakamura has skilfully transferred his forces to aim at the kingside, and Black must tread carefully, **18...f7-f5** had to be tried.

19.Be4xd5 **Qd7xd5**
20.Bb2-f6
Much stronger than the more natural **20.Nh5-f6+** **Be7xf6** **21.Bb2xf6** **Rd8-d7**.

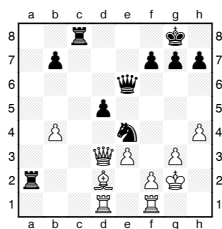
20... **Qd5-d6**
21.Bf6xe7 **Qd6xe7**
22.Nh5-f6+ **Kg8-g7**
23.Qf1-c4 **Qe7-e5**
23...Rd8-d6 **24.Ra1-f1** doesn't help.

24.Ra1-f1 **h7-h5**
25.Nf6xh5+
Well calculated, but **25.Qc4-h4** **Na6-c7** **26.Rf2-f5** is good.

25... **Qe5xh5**
26.Rf2xf7+ **Rf8xf7**
27.Rf1xf7+ **Kg7-h6**
28.Qc4-f4+ **g6-g5**
Or, **28...Qh5-g5** **29.Rf7-h7+**.

29.Qf4-f6+ **Qh5-g6**
30.Qf6-f1 **Qg6-h5**
31.Rf7xb7
31.h2-h4 is quicker, but this pleasingly highlights the ineffectiveness of Black's redundant knight.

31... **c5-c4**
32.Qf1-f6+ **Qh5-g6**
33.Qf6xd8 **Qg6-b1+**
34.Kg1-f2
Black resigned, as he soon runs out of checks after **34...Qb1-f5+** **35.Kf2-e2**.



V. Potkin - L. Bruzon Batista
Tata Steel B, 2012

26.Bd2-e1
Things aren't looking good, but **26.f2-f3** gives some hope of survival.

26... **Qe6-g4**
27.Kg2-g1 **Rc8-c2**
The doubled rooks set up mayhem along the seventh rank.

28.Qd3xd5 **Qg4xg3+**
29.Kg1-h1
29.f2xg3 **Rc2-g2+** **30.Kg1-h1** **Rg2-h2+** **31.Kh1-g1** **Ra2-g2** mate is a familiar finish.

29... **Qg3xh4+**
30.Kh1-g1 **Qh4-g4+**
31.Kg1-h1 **Ne4-g3+**
White resigned as **32.Kh1-g1** **Ng3xf1+** **33.Kg1xf1** **Rc2xf2+** cleans up.