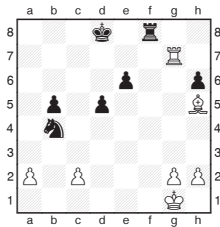


Michael Adams



Hou Yifan rocks in Gibraltar

Attracting Judit Polgar and Hou Yifan to the usual strong female field was a real coup for the landmark 10th edition of the Tradewise Gibraltar Chess Festival, held as always in the Caleta Hotel. The Chinese star played exceptionally, dispatching a raft of 2700 opposition.



A. Shirov - H. Yifan
Gibraltar 2012

28.Rg7-b7

Best was 28.Rg7-a7 Nb4xc2 29.Bh5-f7 d5-d4 30.Bf7xe6 when a draw is on the cards.

28... Nb4xc2
29.Rb7xb5 Kd8-e7

Now Black's king becomes active and, combined with the rook and knight, supports the connected passers in the centre. It is clear all the chances are with Black.

30.a2-a4 Rf8-a8
31.Rb5-b2 Nc2-e3
32.Kg1-f2 Ne3-c4
33.Rb2-b7+ Ke7-d6
34.Bh5-d1 e6-e5
35.Rb7-h7 Nc4-b2

It was also tempting to play 35...Kd6-c5 36.Rh7xh6 e5-e4, but it is a good practical decision to maintain even material when Hou Yifan can play for a win with no risk.

36.Rh7xh6+ Kd6-c5
37.Bd1-c2 Nb2xa4
38.h2-h4

White's bishop is ineffectual, so Alexei should have tried 38.Bc2xa4 Ra8xa4. Probably he feared his pawns would be too slow in the ensuing foot race, but the line 39.Rh6-e6 e5-e4 40.h2-h4 Ra4-a2+ 41.Kf2-g3 Kc5-d4 42.h4-h5 isn't that clear.

38... Na4-c3
39.Bc2-f5 Ra8-a2+
40.Kf2-f1

After 40.Kf2-g3 Nc3-e2+ 41.Kg3-g4 Ne2-d4 42.g2-g3 e5-e4 the pawn is off and running.

40... Ra2-a1+
41.Kf1-f2 Ra1-a2+
42.Kf2-f1 Nc3-d1

The immediate 42...e5-e4 43.Rh6-e6 Kc5-d4 also looks very good.

43.g2-g4 Nd1-e3+
44.Kf1-e1 Kc5-d4

With the black pieces centralised, there is no hope for White.

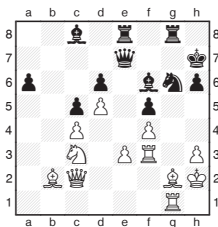
45.Bf5-c8 Ne3-g2+
46.Ke1-d1 e5-e4
47.h4-h5 e4-e3
48.Bc8-a6 Ng2-f4
49.Rh6-b6 Nf4-d3

49...e3-e2+ 50.Ba6xe2 Nf4xe2 was good enough, but this is even better.

50.Ba6xd3 Kd4xd3
51.Rb6-b3+ Kd3-e4
52.h5-h6 d5-d4
53.h6-h7 Ra2-h2

White resigned as 54.Rb3-b7 d4-d3 55.Rb7-e7+ Ke4-f3 56.Re7-f7+ Kf3-g3 is a pretty picture.

Nigel Short continued his amazing form on the Rock to win the event. Here is his key last-round win.



K. Sasikiran - N. Short
Gibraltar 2012

29.Bg2-h1

29.Nc3-e2 Ng6-h4 is a bit awkward, but the bishop should have been withdrawn to another square defending c4: 29.Bg2-f1.

29... Ng6-e5
30.Rf3-g3

The knight can't be captured due to 30.f4xe5 Bf6xe5+ 31.Rf3-f4 Rg8xg1 32.Kh2xg1 Be5xf4 33.e3xf4 Qe7-e1+ 34.Kg1-h2 h6-h5 and White's pieces are powerless to defend his king, but now a key pawn drops off.

30... Rg8xg3
31.Rg1xg3 Ne5xc4
32.Bb2-c1 Bf6-h4
33.Rg3-f3 Qe7-g7

33...Bc8-d7 mobilising the bishop was also worth considering.

34.Nc3-e2 Nc4-b6
35.e3-e4

A tactical oversight. 35.Rf3-f1 was better hanging on for the moment.

35... Re8xe4
36.Rf3-b3 Re4-e8
37.Bh1-f3

The knight still can't be captured due to 37.Rb3xb6 Re8xe2+ 38.Qc2xe2 Qg7-g3 mate, but now Nigel is two pawns to the good.

37... Bh4-f2
38.Bf3-g4 Qg7-g6
39.Rb3xb6 f5xg4
40.Qc2xg6+ Kh7xg6
41.Rb6xd6+

41.Ne2-g3 was the last, albeit forlorn, hope.

41... Kg6-f7
42.Ne2-g3 Re8-e1
43.Bc1-d2 Re1-g1
44.Rd6-f6+

Desperation as 44.Rd6-c6 Bc8-d7 45.Rc6-c7 Kf7-e8 wins a piece.

44... Kf7xf6
45.Ng3-e4+ Kf6-f7
46.Ne4xf2 Rg1-a1
47.h3xg4 Ra1-a2
48.Bd2-e3 Bc8xg4
49.Kh2-g3 Bg4-f5
50.Be3xc5 Ra2-a5
0-1