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Stress of being a team player

The World Team Championship is the fairest test of the strongest nations, as the all-play-all format is more even-handed than the vagaries of the Swiss pairing system that is currently used in the Olympiad.

The games below are typical of the tense encounters that frequently occur under the additional pressures of team events.



Ding, Liren - A. Areshchenko
Ningbo 2011

White begins with an interesting pawn sacrifice, restricting Black's dark-squared bishop and increasing the options for White's forces.

- 12.f4-f5** **g6xf5**
- 13.e4xf5** **Bc8xf5**
- 14.Nf2-g4** **Bf5xg4**
- 15.Be2xg4** **Nf6xg4**

It looks natural to play 15...e5-e4 but 16.Bc1-g5 is an awkward pin.

- 16.Qd1xg4** **Qd8-d7**
- 17.Rf1-f5** **e5-e4**
- 18.Bc1-h6** **f7-f6**
- 19.b2-b4** **Nc5-a6**

It seems much more normal to centralise the knight with 19...Nc5-d3.

20.Bh6xg7
It must have been

tempting to lock the knight completely out of play with 20.a2-a3 but Ding continues to direct operations on the kingside.

- 20...** **Qd7xg7**
- 21.Qg4-f4**

The sneaky 21.Nc3xe4 Qg7xg4 22.Ne4xf6+ regains the material with a pleasant edge.

- 21...** **Na6xb4**
- 22.Nc3xe4** **Kg8-h8**

22...Re8-e5 would have given more chances of a successful defence.

- 23.Ra1-f1** **Nb4-d3**
- 24.Qf4-h4** **Re8-e5**

The only try was 24...Re8-g8 25.g2-g3 Qg7-g4.

- 25.Rf5-f3** **f6-f5**
- 26.Ne4-f6** **Nd3-c5**

26...Re5-e2 is well countered by 27.Rf3-g3.

- 27.Rf3-h3** **Re5-e7**
- 28.Nf6xh7**

Black resigned as 28...Qg7xh7 29.Qh4xe7 is terminal.



B. Amin - V. Akopian
Ningbo 2011

With several major pieces hovering around the Black king, Akopian is in trouble but he defends in typically determined style.

- 18...** **g7-g6**
- 19.Qh5-h6** **Qd8-e7**
- 20.Nd4-f5** **e6xf5**
- 21.Rf4-h4** **Qe7xh4**

Sensibly giving up his most powerful piece immediately as 21...f7-f6 22.e5xf6 Qe7-f7 23.Re3-e7 also wins the queen.

- 22.Qh6xh4** **Rf8-e8**

Although White has gained material, the attack has been extinguished and Black's remaining forces are securely placed. Now he plans to transfer the knight to e6.

- 23.Qh4-d4** **Nd7-f8**
- 24.Nc3-d5**

24.Re3-d3 keeping more material on the board and contesting the open file was better.

- 24...** **Bb7xd5**
- 25.Qd4xd5** **Ra8-d8**
- 26.Qd5-b7** **Rd8-d2**

White relies on pushing his passed pawn but it is still not well advanced so 27.Qb7xa6 Rd2xc2 28.Qa6xb5 Re8-d8 29.Re3-d3 Rd8-a8 30.Qb5-d5 was safer.

- 27...** **Rd2xb2**
- 28.c4-c5** **Re8-d8**

Black's rooks are becoming very active.

- 29.h2-h4** **Nf8-e6**
- 30.Qb7xa6**

Amin had to play 30.c5-c6 Rd8-d2 (30...Rb2-c2 31.h4-h5 keeps counter chances) 31.c6-c7 Ne6xc7 32.Qb7xc7 Rd2xg2+ 33.Kg1-f1 Rb2-f2+ 34.Kf1-e1 Rf2-b2 35.Qc7-d8+ Kg8-g7 36.Qd8-f6+ Kg7-h6 37.Ke1-f1 Rb2-f2+ 38.Kf1-e1 Rf2-b2 with a draw.

- 30...** **Rd8-d1+**
- 31.Kg1-h2** **f5-f4**

White had been concerned with the possibility of Black doubling rooks on the seventh, but now White's king is caught in a mating net and the fatal blow is delivered on another rank.

- 32.Re3-c3** **Rb2-b1**
- 33.Qa6-a8+** **Kg8-g7**
- 34.g2-g3** **Rd1-d2+**
- 35.Kh2-h3** **b5-b4**

White resigned as 36.Rc3-c4 Rb1xb3 wins.