

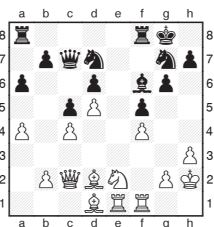
**Michael Adams**



## How Hikaru was crowned

The final of the London Chess Classic came to a fitting dénouement. Despite having worked their way through several gruelling rounds, the players put on a great show, with Hikaru Nakamura the deserved winner. His ice-cool calculation in defence carried the day, one of the hardest skills to demonstrate at a fast time control.

I enjoyed commenting on the second game, below, with Julian Hodgson. Boris had lost the first game and needed a win to take the match to a tie-break:



**B. Gelfand - H. Nakamura**  
London Chess Classic Rapid  
London 2013

### 21.Ne2-g1

Re-routing the knight towards f3, g5 and e6. Another option was 21.a4-a5, trying to keep more control on the queenside.

### 21... b7-b5

Black has to look for counterplay, as his knights are currently very passive, although opening the White squares increases the scope of White's bishop.

- 22.c4xb5                      a6xb5
- 23.a4xb5                      Qc7-b7
- 24.Bd1-e2                     Ra8-a2
- 25.Bd2-c3                     Bf6xc3

### 26.Qc2xc3                    Nd7-b6

Continuing with his plan as it is too risky for Black to capture the pawn immediately.

### 27...                              Ra2-a4

An excellent move. Black is under heavy pressure, but repositioning the rook is the best defence – based on some impressive calculation that is revealed over the next few moves.

### 28.Nf3-g5                      h7-h6

The first tactical point, as 29...Ng7xe6 30.d5xe6 is very promising for White.

### 30.Be2-f3                      Nd5xc3

After 30...Ng7xe6, the subtle retreat 31.Qc3-c2 leaves Black's pieces off balance. 31...Ra4-e4 32.Bf3xe4 f5xe4 33.Qc2xe4 Rf8-f6 34.f4-f5 keeps the initiative.

### 31.Bf3xb7                      Rf8-b8

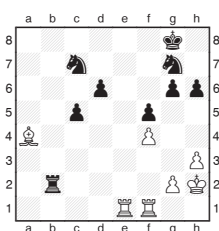
Another fine defensive move that had been planned several moves ago. 31...Ng7xe6 32.b2xc3 Ne6xf4 33.b5-b6 leaves Black in dire straits.

### 32.Bb7-c6                      Nc3xb5

Perhaps 33.Bc6-d5 Ng7xe6 34.Re1xe6 Kg8-g7 35.Re6-e7+ Kg7-h8 36.Rf1-e1 was worth considering, but Black should hold.

### 33...                              Nb5xc7

### 34.Bc6xa4                      Rb8xb2



### 35.Rf1-f3

Black gets active after 35.Re1-e7 Nc7-d5 36.Re7-d7 Nd5-e3, but this had to be tried, given the match

situation. Now Hikaru consolidates.

### 35...                              Rb2-b4

36.Ba4-d7 36.Re1-e7 was another attempt.

### 36...                              Kg8-f7

Covering the second rank and getting ready to push his passed pawns.

### 37.g2-g3                      Kf7-f6

### 38.Rf3-a3                      Rb4-b6

### 39.h3-h4                      d6-d5

### 40.Ra3-a7                      Ng7-e6

### 41.Re1-a1                      c5-c4

### 42.Bd7xe6                      Nc7xe6

### 43.Ra7-d7                      Rb6-b2+

There were still possibilities to go wrong: 43...d5-d4 44.Ra1-a7 g6-g5 45.Rd7-f7+ Kf6-g6 46.g3-g4 Ne6xf4 (Black can hold with 46...Rb6-b2+ 47.Kh2-g1 Rb2-b1+ 48.Kg1-f2 Rb1-b2+ 49.Kf2-e1 Rb2-b1+) 47.h4-h5+ Nf4xh5 48.g4xf5 mate would be a pretty finish.

### 44.Kh2-g1                      c4-c3

### 45.Ra1-e1

Better was 45.Ra1-a7 g6-g5 46.Rd7-f7+ Kf6-g6 47.g3-g4 Rb2-b1+ 48.Kg1-f2 Rb1-b2+ with perpetual.

### 45...                              Rb2-b6

### 46.Rd7xd5                      c3-c2

### 47.Rd5-e5                      Ne6-d4

### 48.Re5-c5                      Nd4-f3+

### 49.Kg1-f2                      Nf3xe1

### 50.Kf2xe1                      Rb6-b3

### 51.Rc5-c6+                      Kf6-f7

### 52.Ke1-f2                      Rb3-b2

### 53.Kf2-e3                      h6-h5

### 54.Rc3-d4                      Rb2-b3

### 55.Rc6xc2                      Rb3xg3

### 56.Rc2-c7+                      Kf7-f6

### 57.Rc7-c6+                      Kf6-e7

If Black hides his king, 57...Kf6-g7 58.Rc6-c7+ Kg7-h6 59.Kd4-e5 Rg3-g4 60.Ke5-f6 Rg4xf4 61.Rc7-c8 Kh6-h7 62.Rc8-c7+ secures the draw.

### 58.Rc6-a6                      Rg3-g1

### 59.Ra6-a7+                      Ke7-e6

### 60.Ra7-a6+                      Ke6-e7

### 61.Ra6-a7+                      Ke7-e6

### 62.Ra7-a6+                      1/2-1/2