



UKRAINIAN GM IN AMERICA ILLIA NYZHNYK CRUSHES THE FIELD WITH A BRILLIANT PERFORMANCE IN VIRGINIA

9-0!

By GM Illia Nyzhnyk

Achieving a personal record or a remarkable feat is what motivates a sportsman to go further, remove boundaries and open new horizons. Although he has been playing chess for almost two decades, GM Illia Nyzhnyk recently made his first perfect score in a nine-round tournament, delivering his first ever checkmate with a pawn along the way!

A BOY WITH A TEDDY BEAR

It was a photograph that made this boy well-known in his early chess career. 9-year-old Illia became "a chess prodigy with a teddy bear". Indeed, at the European Youth Chess Championships in Herceg Novi 2005 (then Serbia and Montenegro) he played all his games with the help of his cuddly companion. Sadly, I can't find an original photograph in my archive, nor any video footage I made. It's preserved in smaller resolution only because I sent it to ChessBase a long time ago.

However, I clearly remember this adorable moment being in sharp contrast to the fierceness of his play at the board. I was impressed how young Nyzhnyk was superior in blitz games, taking challenges from everyone around, including grandmasters.

Josip Asik, Editor-in-Chief





When I received an invitation to play in the 3rd Colonial Open from its organizer Anand Dommalapati, I was extremely excited, because all my previous experiences playing in Anand's tournaments were nothing but sheer bliss. Amazing conditions for titled players, convenient location of the playing venue, and a friendly and competitive atmosphere are all indicators of Anand's superb organization which make me want to play in his events again and again.

Despite the fact that the 3rd Colonial Open did not attract many titled players, it still presented some tough challenges. In fact most of my games were anything but easy and I managed to learn a lot from my mistakes – of which there were plenty! Of course, to complete a tournament with a perfect score requires a certain amount of luck, and this time around I'm excited and grateful that it came my way.

So allow me to escort you through this exciting journey, in which I was fortunate that my mistakes were not punished...

1-0!

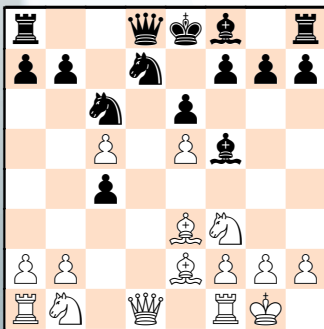
B12

Kevin Su	1980
Illia Nyzhnyk	2685

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1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♘f5 4.♘f3 e6 5.♙e2 ♘e7 6.0-0 c5 7.dxc5 It feels that the move order 7.c4 offers the biggest challenge, although with correct play Black should hold: 7...♘bc6 8.dxc5 dxc4 9.♙xc4 ♘g6 10.♙e3 ♙e7 11.♙b5 0-0 12.♙xc6 bxc6 13.♘a3 ♗b8 14.♘c4 ♙e4 15.♘d6 ♙d5 16.b3 f6 17.exf6 ♙xf6∞ was drawn on move 35 in M.Vachier-Lagrave 2784 – A.Firouzja 2749, Wijk aan Zee 2021.

7...♘ec6 8.♙e3 ♘d7 9.c4 dxc4



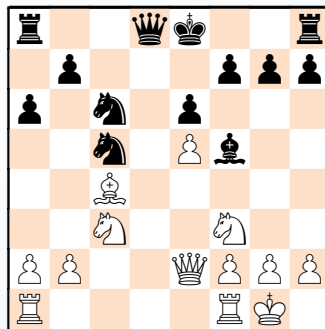
10.♙xc4?! While this move looks very logical, White thereby loses the ability

to maneuver his knight to d6. 10.♘a3!? ♙xc5 11.♙xc5 ♘xc5 12.♘xc4 0-0 13.♗c1 ♘d3 14.♙xd3 ♗xd3 15.♙d1 ♗c2 16.♘d4 ♗xc1 17.♙axc1 ♙e4 18.♘d6 ♙d5 19.♘xc6 bxc6 20.b3 a5 ended in a draw on move 41 in Y.Kryvoruchko 2676 – K.Miton 2622, Lublin 2012.

10...♙xc5 As a consequence, with the white knight unable to reach c4 and d6, the weakness of the e5 pawn is about to become a serious issue.

11.♙xc5 ♘xc5 12.♘c3 a6! It is very important to include this move, taking away the b5 square from White's pieces.

13.♗e2



13...♙g4! My goal is to remove one of the most important defenders of the

e5 pawn as soon as possible. Taking a slower approach with 13...0-0 was also possible, but it gives White some time to consolidate after 14.h3 ♗c7 15.♗e3 ♘d7 16.♙fe1 ♘b4 17.♙b3 ♘c5±.

14.♗e3 ♙xf3 15.gxf3 15.♗xc5? ♗g5 16.g3 ♗xe5+–

15...♗d4! Despite the fact that trades usually favor the defending side, in this case it forces White to shed the final defender of the e5 pawn, thus making it impossible to defend.

16.♗xd4 ♘xd4 17.♙e2 17.f4 ♘f3+ 18.♙g2 ♘d2+–

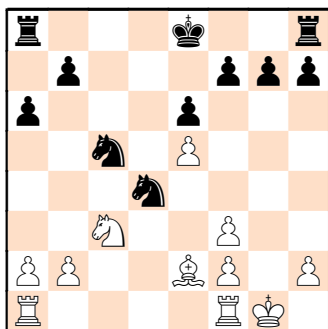


Illia Nyzhnyk was born in Ukraine in 1996. He became a Grandmaster in 2011 and subsequently moved to the U.S. Since 2014 he has been a member of Webster University's SPICE program, playing for the team that won five consecutive Pan-Am Intercollegiate Championships and three straight Final Four Championships. In addition to being a dynamic team player, Illia also won the Spice Cup Open in 2020, the U.S. Open and the National Open in 2019, as well as four World Open titles. In December 2021 Illia graduated with a Master's degree in Business Administration, and currently he is fully focused on improving his chess in an attempt to reach greater heights.



▲ Illia Nyzhnyk and Anand Dommalapati.

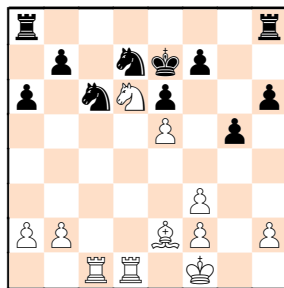
Photo by Paul Swaney



17...g5! The final touch. I am denying my opponent the possibility of playing f3-f4 which was White's only chance to consolidate and not lose material immediately.

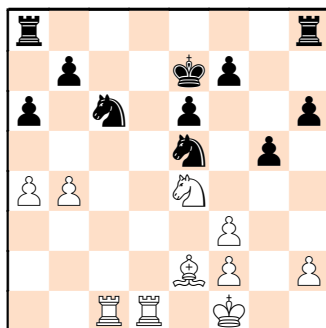
18.♖fd1 ♘c6 I was in too much of a hurry to win the pawn, but the truth is that it is unnecessary at this point. The slower approach 18...0-0-0!? feels slightly more accurate, tucking the king away while at the same time bringing the rook into the game. Then 19.♙f1 ♘c6 20.♞ac1 ♙b8+.

19.♞ac1 ♘d7 20.♘e4 ♙e7 21.♙f1 h6 22.b4 I calculated a variation with 22.♘d6 and realized that White can never go for my queenside pawns, which makes this knight move pointless.



For example, 22...♘dx5 23.♘b7 ♞hb8 24.♘c5 ♞xb2 25.♙xa6 ♙b4+ and my rooks will soon double on the second rank and wreak havoc on White's position.

22...♘dx5 23.a4



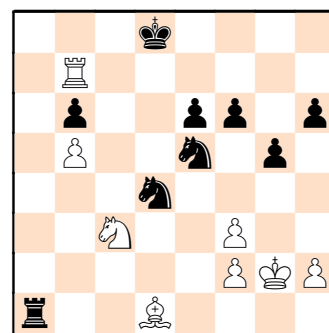
23...♞hd8 At this point there were many

ways to win. However, I do need to be wary of White's potential counterplay on the queenside.

24.b5 ♞xd1+ 25.♙xd1 axb5 26.axb5 ♘d4 White's pawns on b5 and f3 are weak and constantly under threat.

27.♞c5 The b7 pawn is immune from capture as if 27.♞c7+ ♙d8 28.♞xb7 then 28...♞a1 29.♘c3 ♞c1 wins.

27...♞a1 28.♘c3 f6 29.♙g2 b6 30.♞c7+ ♙d8 31.♞b7



31...♘d7 A graceful finish, where White's pieces are all completely paralyzed.

32.f4 ♞c1

White resigned

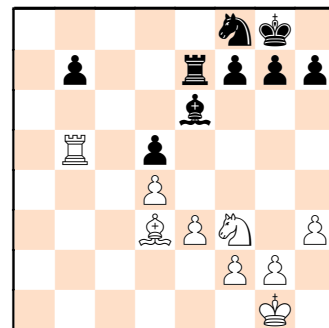
The opening and middlegame phases in my second game went quite smoothly and led to the following endgame which I considered positionally winning for White.

2-0!

Illia Nyzhnyk 2685

Bijan Tahmassebi 2059

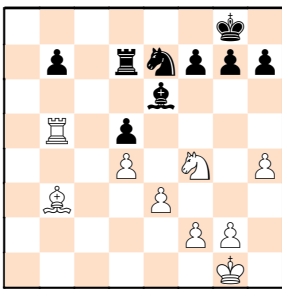
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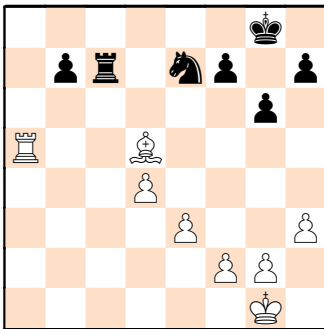
25.♔c2! It is necessary to reroute my pieces so that every one of them can apply maximum pressure against Black's weak b7 and d5 pawns.

25...♘g6 26.♙b3 ♖d7 27.♗e1 ♗e7 28.♗d3 ♗c7 29.♗f4 ♙d7 My opponent did not want to adopt a passive approach and decided to make something happen, but this only hastened the inevitable. 29...♗d7 would probably have been more resilient, after which I had planned 30.h4 when there are many ways to make progress.



For example, 30...♗g6 31.♗xd5 ♗xh4 32.♗b6 ♗d8 (32...♗c7 33.d5 ♙d7 34.♗a5+-) 33.d5 ♙f5 34.f3+- and with e3-e4 to follow it is practically game-over.

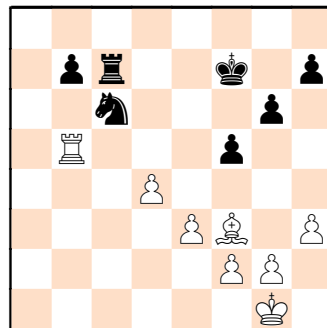
30.♗a5 ♙c6 31.♗xd5 ♙xd5 32.♙xd5 g6



33.♙e4!? The most precise. Retaining the bishop allows me to apply critical pressure against the b7 pawn. I considered 33.♙f3 inaccurate in view of 33...♗c1+ 34.♗h2 ♗c2 35.♗g3 ♗f5+, but it looks like White is still winning after 36.♗f4 ♗xf2 37.e4 ♗d6 (or 37...♗xd4 38.♗e3 ♗xf3 39.♗xf2 ♗d4 40.♗a7 ♗g7 41.♗xb7+-) 38.e5 ♗f5 39.d5+-.

is possible for the side having the knight to put up a successful defense.

33...f5 34.♙f3 ♗f7 35.♗b5 ♗c6



36.♙xc6! The simplest. Black now has only two options – to immediately concede another pawn, or to transpose into a pawn endgame where he will be down a pawn. In both cases, Black's demise is just a matter of time.

36...bxc6 37.♗c5 ♗e6 38.d5+ ♗d6 39.♗xc6+ ♗xc6 40.dxc6 ♗xc6 The rest needs no commentary.

41.♗f1 ♗d5 42.♗e2 ♗e4 43.f3+ ♗e5 44.♗d3 g5 45.g3 h5 46.h4 gxh4 47.gxh4 ♗d5 48.f4 ♗d6 49.♗d4 ♗e6 50.♗c5 **Black resigned**

My game in the third round was the first in which I experienced serious problems.

You were born and raised in Ukraine, how did you get involved in chess? Can you tell us about your first significant results, and who were your coaches on the road to becoming a GM?

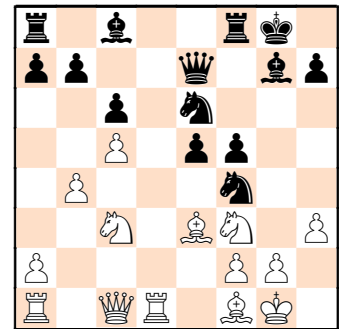
I was a rather active child, and my parents were constantly looking for activities to keep me busy. One day, my father showed me a chess program on his computer. The program would play itself in the "autoplay" mode, and I seemed to like watching it a lot, which gave my parents a tiny bit of a break time (smile). Shortly after, my parents suddenly discovered that I knew how to play chess, and immediately decided to take me to a chess school in my hometown. Since then I improved at a fast rate and showed great results in cadet and junior events in Ukraine and abroad (my very first serious accomplishment was winning the Ukrainian Championship U10, when I was 8). I owe my early successes to my first coach, IM Nikolay Bodnar, who single-handedly pushed me all the way to the IM level.

On my way from IM to GM I worked with many prominent chess professionals, but if I want to distinguish a few I would definitely say that GM Adrian Mikhalchishin and GM Vladimir Baklan were the ones who helped me the most and taught me how to play "adult chess"!

3-0!

Titas Stremavicius	2510
Illia Nyzhnyk	2685

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After a rather unusual opening phase, we reached this position where my opponent now played 17.♗d2?? with the clear intention of transferring the knight to the d6 square.

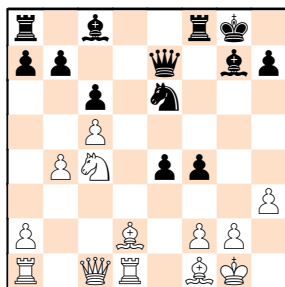
17...♗d5?! I spent a good 20 minutes calculating various lines of play, but to be honest I have no idea now what I was thinking about! Instead 17...♗xh3+! 18.gxh3 f4 19.♗de4 fxe3 20.♗xe3 ♗d4 clearly looks crushing for Black, with the white king being as weak as it can ever get.



▲ Titas Stremavicius and Illia Nyzhnyk.

Photo by Paul Swaney

18. ♖c4 ♜xb4? Another poor decision by me. Once again I saw the correct response, but failed to recognize how strong it really was. 18... ♖xc3! 19. ♖xc3 f4 20. ♗d2 e4 21. ♖c1



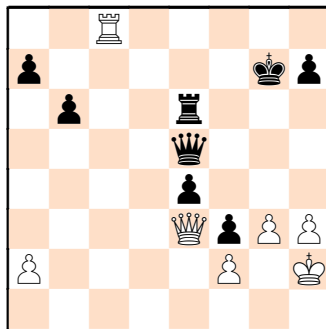
21...e3! would be the correct continuation, going after the white king. (I saw that taking the rook 21... ♖xa1? would lead more to trouble than anything else, as now my own king becomes unsafe 22. ♖xa1 ♗f3 23. gxf3 ♜g5-+.

19. ♗d6 f4 20. ♗d2 ♜xc5 21. ♖ce4 ♜xe4 22. ♖xb4 Despite the fact that I was up two pawns here, my opponent has a lot of counterplay which is more than enough to compensate for his material deficit.

22... ♗e6 23. ♗a3 ♜xd6 24. ♖xd6 ♖f7 25. ♖xc6 ♖f6 26. ♖xe6 ♖xe6 27. ♗c4 ♖g6 28. ♖b1 f3 29. g3 ♜h8 30. ♗xf7 ♖xf7 31. ♖e3 ♖e8 32. ♖b3 e4 33. ♗b2 b6 34. ♜h2 ♖d5 35. ♗xg7+ ♜xg7 36. ♖c3 ♖e7 37. ♖c8 ♖e5 38. ♖b3 ♖f7

39. ♖e3 ♖f6 40. ♖c4 ♖e6

Moving forward... Fortunately, my opponent was now in time trouble after all the complications that had arisen earlier and here gave me an opportunity by carelessly playing 41. ♖c8?!



41... ♖h6! Now suddenly the white king is in trouble, as ... ♖xh3(+) is a threat that cannot be parried.

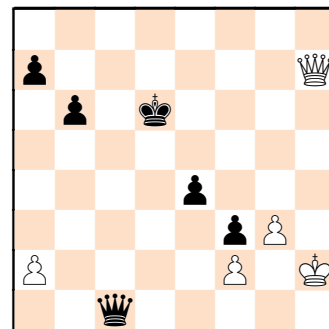
42. ♜g1? Failing to navigate his way through time pressure, my opponent decides to give up the pawn in the hope of counterplay against my king.

42. ♖c3! is the only way to achieve a draw. It is not surprising that my opponent did not go for this, because it is very difficult to predict the outcome of the resulting endgame. 42... ♖xc3 43. ♖xc3 ♖d6 44. g4 ♖d2 45. ♜g3 ♖xa2 46. ♖c7+ ♜f6 47. ♖xh7 a5 48. h4∞ will apparently lead to a draw of some sort, although I would have never guessed that myself.

Tactics for White are likely to backfire as 42. ♖g8+?? ♜xg8 43. ♖xh6 runs into 43...e3!-+. Taking on e3 with a pawn allows a quick checkmate after a queen check on b2, whereas capturing with the queen leads to a lost pawn endgame.

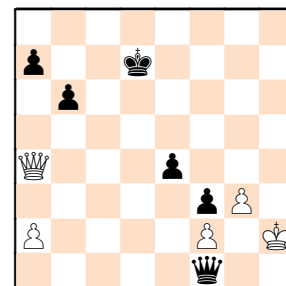
42... ♖xh3 43. ♖c7+ 43. ♖c4!? would be more resilient, but objectively speaking this position should be lost for White after 43... ♖f5! 44. ♖c7+ ♜g6 45. ♖c6+ ♜f7 46. ♖h6 (46. ♖c7+ ♜e8-+) 46... ♖xh6 47. ♖xh6 ♖g6 48. ♖f4+ ♜e6-+.

43... ♖xc7 44. ♖g5+ ♜f7 45. ♖f5+ ♜e7 46. ♖xh3 ♖c1+ 47. ♜h2 ♜d6 48. ♖xh7



48... ♖f1! At this point I started running rather low on time myself, but my intuition was correct – I am banking on the fact that my king can escape perpetual check. If it does, then the threat of ... ♖f1-g2 is unstoppable.

49. ♖h6+ ♜d5 50. ♖d2+ ♖d3? Quite frankly I hate being in time pressure and, after failing to see a relatively simple maneuver to escape the checks, I went for the second best option. Instead 50... ♜c6! 51. ♖c2+ ♜d7 52. ♖a4+



52... ♜d8!! 53. ♖d4+ ♜c8-+ would win easily.

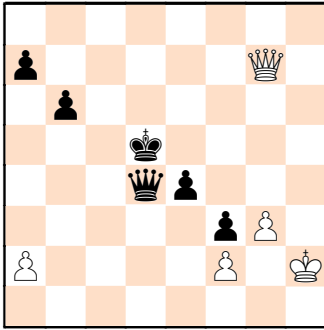


At the moment, your home country is suffering – what are your personal feelings about it? How has it affected your family?

I am angry and sad at the same time. Ukraine was not the one to provoke and start the war, leading to so much suffering. Based on some responses from the rest of the world, some people do not understand why the war began in the first place. I believe that I do understand why, but that would be a long and needless conversation, as the war is already ongoing, and no words will change that. Ukraine is fighting for sovereignty of its lands and cannot back down, especially because of the needless cruelty of the Russian Army.

My mom flew to the Netherlands along with her sister and her sister's children, but some of my family members stayed in Ukraine (my father and grandparents). Needless to say, I want Ukraine to win this war more than anything, and I am eternally grateful to the USA and other countries for their support.

51. ♖g5+ ♔c4 52. ♖c1+ ♔d4
53. ♖a1+ ♔d5 54. ♖g7 ♖d4



55. ♖d7+? This unfortunate check loses on the spot, allowing my king to reach the first rank. A far better defense was 55. ♖f7+!? when although the position is still winning for Black after 55... ♔c5 56. ♖c7+ ♔b4 57. ♖c2 it is not so easy to convert it.

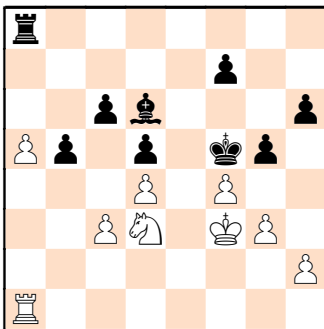
55... ♔c4 56. ♖c6+ ♔d3 57. ♖b5+ ♔d2 58. ♔h3 ♔e1 **White resigned**

In round 4 I faced my good friend GM Denes Boros. After a rather messy opening phase, I managed to trick Denes in the middlegame and we arrived at the following endgame which should be winning for White with accurate technique.

4-0!

Illia Nyzhnyk	2685
Denes Boros	2430

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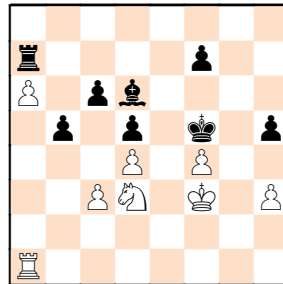


35. h3?! Not this way! My technique is lacking... 35. f5! was essential in order to leave open the option of creating an

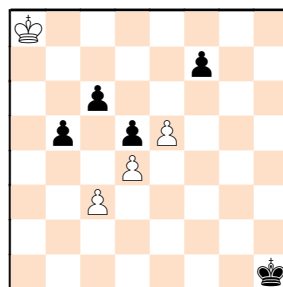
additional passed pawn after 35... h5 36. h3, when Black would eventually find it impossible to stop both the a- and h- passed pawns.

35... gxf4 36. gxf4 h5 I voluntarily went into this position thinking that the win is easily achieved by trading my knight for his bishop on b4, but boy was I wrong!

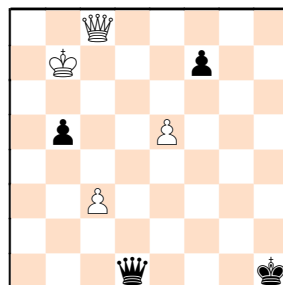
37. ♖b4?? 37. a6! was the only way to win at this point. For example, 37... ♖a7



38. ♖e5 ♖xe5 39. fxe5 h4 40. ♔e3 My king would go on an adventure trying to reach b6. 40... ♔g5 41. ♔d3 ♔f4 42. ♔c2 ♔g3 43. ♔b3 ♔xh3 44. ♔b4 ♔g2 45. ♔c5 h3 46. ♔b6 ♖a8 47. ♔b7 ♖h8 48. a7 h2 49. a8 ♖ ♖xa8 50. ♔xa8 h1 ♖ 51. ♖xh1 ♔xh1

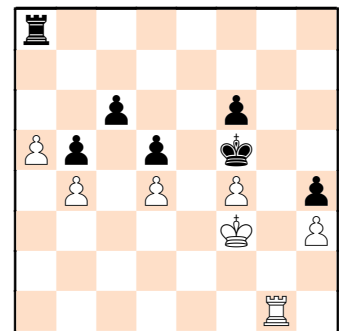


52. ♔b7 c5 53. dxc5 d4 54. c6 d3 55. c7 d2 56. c8 ♖ d1 ♖



57. ♖h8+ ♔g2 58. ♖g8+ ♔h2 59. ♖xf7+-.

37... ♖xb4 38. cxb4 h4 39. ♖g1 f6



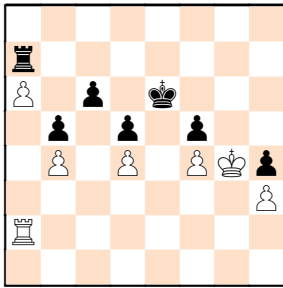
Only now did I realize that my rook can never infiltrate Black's position.

40. ♖g2 40. ♖g7 achieves nothing, as Black has 40... ♖e8 41. ♖h7 ♖e1= when his rook gets behind my pawns, providing him with enough counterplay to survive.



40...♖a7 41.♗g1 ♖e7 42.♖a1 ♗g7 43.a6 ♖a7 44.♖a2 I reached this position in my calculations and was rather happy. However...

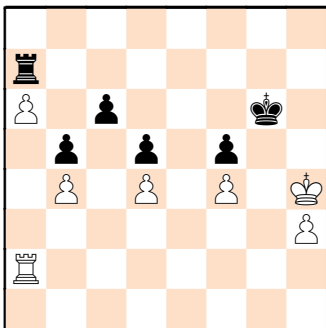
44...♔g6 As Black is in zugzwang, this is the only move he could make to not lose immediately. 44...♗e6?? fails to 45.♔g4 f5+



46.♔g5!+-.

Equally, 44...♖a8?? loses to 45.a7! ♔g6 46.♔g4 f5+ 47.♔xh4 ♔h6 48.♖a6+-.

45.♔g4 f5+ 46.♔xh4



46...♔f6?! An inaccuracy which is still enough for a draw. 46...♖h7+! is the idea that I missed. Black is able to construct an impregnable fortress, as my rook is tied to defense of the a6 pawn, and I cannot make progress otherwise. 47.♔g3 ♖a7=.

47.♖c2!? My only chance.

47...♖xa6 48.♔h5 I believe that Denes got angry at himself for not playing ...♖h7 earlier and here he **resigned**

However, a draw could still be achieved, although not as easily as before: 48.♔h5 ♖a4 49.♖xc6+ ♔f7 50.♔g5 ♖xb4 51.♖c7+ ♔e6! 52.h4 ♖xd4 53.h5 ♖d1 54.♖c6+ ♔f7 55.h6 d4



▲ Denes Boros

Photo by Paul Swaney

56.♔xf5 ♔g8 and this would be a draw even without the black pawns on b5 and d4, as the h- and f-pawns cannot win in this ending.

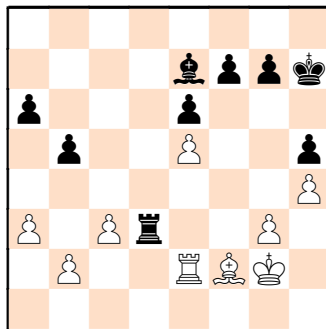
5-0!

Harshid Kunka 2078

Illia Nyzhnyk 2685

3rd Colonial Open, Sterling 2022

Round 5 saw my opponent defending excellently up to this point, although I had obtained a strong positional advantage due to my active rook and the poor positions of my opponent's pawns. However, as things stood I could not make progress just with my rook. Therefore, I needed to bring up my remaining pieces.



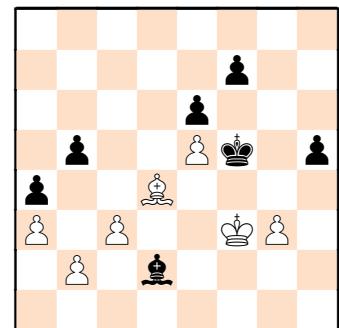
39...g5! This enables me to receive assistance from my dark-squared bishop to further restrict the movement of

White's pieces. Bringing up the king by 39...♔g6 would achieve nothing, as White has a nice defensive maneuver to push it back. 40.♗d4 ♔f5 41.♖f2+ ♔g6 (41...♔g4?? 42.♖f4 mate.) 42.♖e2♯.

40.hxg5 ♗xg5 I strongly believe that at this point White's position is hopeless, as he will eventually be forced to lose some of his weak pawns.

41.♗d4 ♔g6 42.♖f2 a5 Improving my quality of life. I will endeavor to fix White's pawn structure by playing ...a5-a4 and make sure those queenside pawns cannot leave the dark squares.

43.♖f3 ♖d2+ 44.♖f2 a4 45.♖xd2 ♗xd2 46.♔f3 ♔f5



Finally, here we have a zugzwang which makes this position untenable for White.

47.♔e2 ♗c1 48.c4 bxc4 49.♔f3 ♗d2 50.♔e2 ♔e4 51.♗c5 ♗c1

White resigned



What were the reasons behind your moving to the USA, and how did it happen?

The idea behind my potentially moving and studying in the USA came about when I was 12. At that time, I celebrated one of the biggest victories in my career – a victory at the European U16 Championship. It so happened that winners of each section in that event were provided with a scholarship to join a college in the USA, and I was no exception. Obviously, it was too early to consider the invitation, as I was about five years away from finishing school. Fast forward four years later would see me in my last year of high school. By that time, I accumulated a few other scholarship invitations, and eventually settled for Webster, because I believed that it would allow me to combine education and chess on even levels (obviously, being able to be coached by the legendary Susan Polgar also made a great impact on my final decision). It took me about a year to pass all the necessary exams and collect the documents, and in May 2014 I arrived in Saint Louis and began studying right away.



▲ Susan Polgar

Photo by David Llada

I managed to achieve one of my smoothest wins in round 6, where my opponent was surprised by my unusual opening choice.

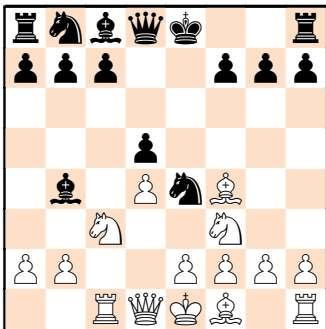
6-0!

D38

Illia Nyzhnyk	2685
Sung Ho Yim	2246

3rd Colonial Open, Sterling 2022

1.c4 e6 2.♘f3 d5 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♘c3
♙b4 5.cxd5 exd5 6.♙f4 ♘e4 7.♙c1



I tried this line against Alexander Grischuk a few years back, and won a very nice game.

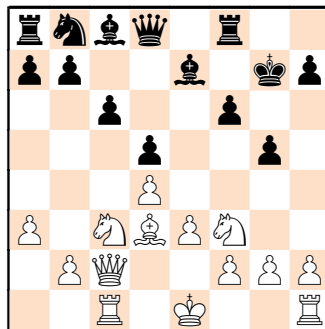
7...g5? This response came a bit too early and led to Black being saddled with numerous weaknesses without having anything to show for it. After 7...♘c6

this position often gets crazy, but more often than not, engines give preference to White. 8.♘d2 g5 9.♙e3 ♘xc3 10.bxc3 ♙a3 11.♙b1 f5 12.f4 ♙e7 13.♙f2 gxf4 14.g3 fxg3 15.hxg3 0-0 16.♙g2 and White won on move 50 in I.Nyzhnyk 2665 – A.Grischuk 2777, internet rapid 2020. [see ACM #18, page 82 –Ed.]

8.♙d2 ♘xd2 9.♙xd2 f6 10.a3 ♙e7 11.e3 c6 12.♙d3 And now the issues become clear – if I were playing with the black pieces here, I would have no idea where to put my king. Wherever it goes – kingside, center or queenside – it looks extremely dangerous.

12...0-0 13.♙c2 It is important to take control of the weak light squares quickly and not allow Black to consolidate.

13...♙g7



14.♘e2! ♙d7 15.♘g3 f5 16.♘e5 ♙e6 17.0-0 I saw at least two more good



After coming to the States, what is the greatest benefit you've experienced on the road to your chess improvement? What are the main differences between residing/playing in the U.S. and Europe, and how has it helped your chess?

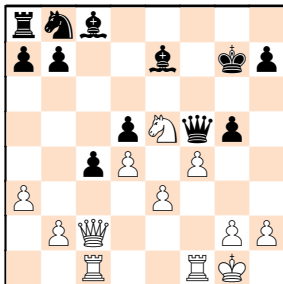
Undoubtedly, the greatest benefit I have experienced was the ability to work in a team with some of the best players in the whole world. It is a great feeling when you can get immediate feedback on your progress, work and train together, become friends!

Playing in local tournaments in the USA is way different than in Europe, mostly because of the fast paced nature of the events. I believe that this format taught me to employ a very specific playing style, and as my results show - it works quite well. However, it does not necessarily mean that this newly adopted style will work well when I go back and play in European events. I guess time will tell (*smile*).

ways to get a close-to-winning position, but this way seemed the most practical. 17.f4!? was my original intention but it did not seem to provide any tangible advantage after 17...gxf4 18.exf4 ♗h4 19.0-0 ♗xg3 20.hxg3 ♘d7 21.♖ce1. However, here my pieces are much better placed than their counterparts, which should be enough to eventually convert. 17.h4!? g4 18.h5 ♗h8 19.h6+- also looked attractive.

17...c5 This is what I was hoping for, as now Black is basically forced to lose material.

18.b3 18.♖ce1!? c4 19.♗xf5! ♖xf5 20.♘xf5+ ♗xf5 21.e4 dxe4 22.♖xe4+-; 18.f4!? c4 19.♗xf5! is a computer suggestion, but I was not sure if this trade benefits me. 19...♖xf5 20.♘xf5+ ♗xf5

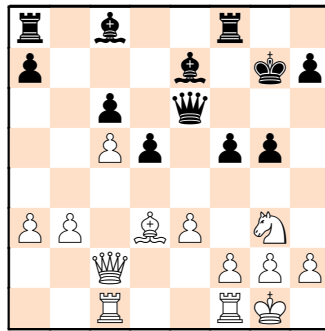


21.e4!! I missed this amazing resource. White gives up a pawn to open up the e-file for the other rook and Black's position falls apart. 21...♗xe4 (21...dxe4 22.fxg5+-) 22.♗d2+-.

18...♗c6 18...cxd4 would lose

immediately to 19.♘xf5+! ♖xf5 20.♗xf5 ♗xf5 21.♗xc8 ♗xe5 22.♗xb7+-.

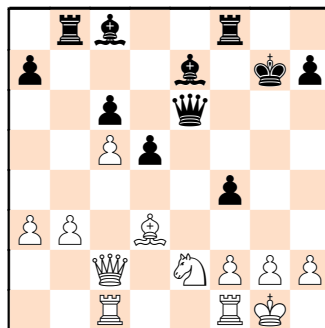
19.♗xc6 bxc6 20.dxc5



I was happy after reaching this position. Not only am I up a pawn, but I also have a nice outpost on d4 for my knight. Winning should just be a matter of time.

20...♖b8 21.♘e2 f4 My opponent decided to complicate the position, but it only hastens the inevitable.

22.exf4 gxf4



White to play. What is the most precise way to win?

23.♖ce1! ♗d7 24.♘d4

Black resigned

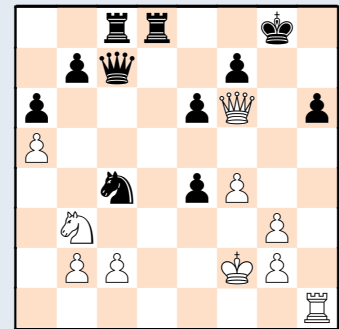
My first ever checkmate with a pawn!

7-0!

Andrew Samuelson 2158

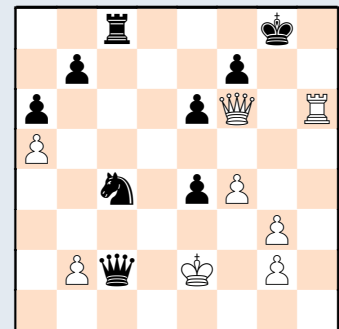
Illia Nyzhnyk 2685

3rd Colonial Open, Sterling 2022



29...♖d2+!? There are other ways, but this seemed the most precise. 29...♘e5 and 29...♘e3 were also both winning.

30.♘xd2 ♗c5+ 31.♗f1 ♘xd2+ 32.♗e2 ♗xc2 33.♖xh6 ♘c4+



34.♗f1 34.♗e1 ♗d2+ 35.♗f1 ♘e3+ 36.♗g1 ♗xg2 mate.

34...♗d1+ 35.♗f2 e3 mate.

Kudos to Andrew for allowing me to deliver this amazing pawn checkmate!

In the penultimate round I reached a very interesting rook endgame.

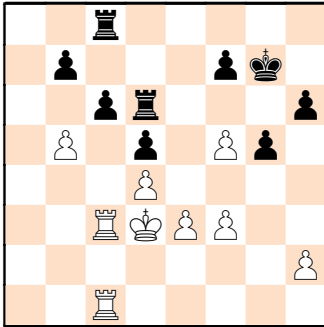


8-0!

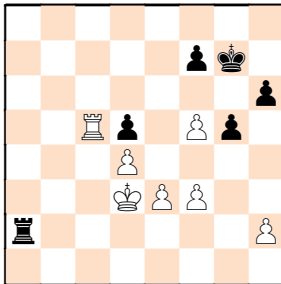
Illia Nyzhnyk 2685

Sudarshan Sriniaiyer 2195

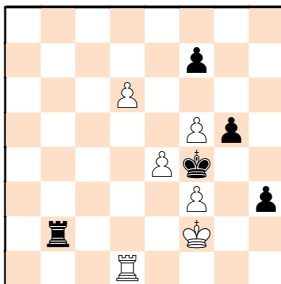
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35...h5?! The wrong approach. Usually in endgames like these, passive defense is not the way to go, so Black should try 35...♖a8! giving up a pawn but activating the rook and pushing back some of White's pieces. 36.bxc6 bxc6 37.♖xc6 ♖xc6 38.♖xc6 ♖a3+ 39.♖c3 ♖a2 40.♖c5

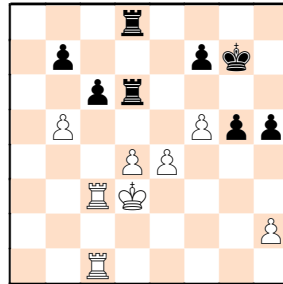


White can repeat moves, but I saw this fun line given by the engine and could not hold back from showing it! 40...♖xh2 41.♖xd5 h5 42.♖a5 h4 43.d5 h3 44.♖a1 ♔f6 45.e4 ♔e5 46.♔e3 ♖b2 47.♖d1 ♖b3+ 48.♔f2 ♔f4 49.d6 ♖b2+



50.♔g1 ♔g3 51.d7 ♖g2+ 52.♔h1 ♖h2+ 53.♔g1 ♖g2+ draw.

36.bxc6? This is just unnecessary. It also allows Black to carry out the same idea as before. 36.e4! was the way to go, but I was hesitant because of 36...dxe4+ 37.fxe4 ♖cd8

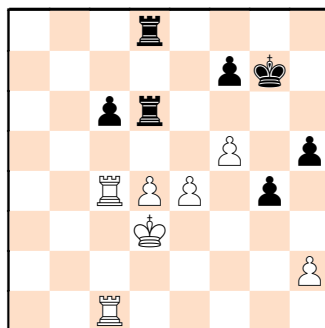


- A) 38.♖c4?! was the move that I calculated, but Black survives by 38...cxb5 (Not 38...c5? 39.d5 b6 40.♖a4 ♔f6 41.♔e3 ♔e5 42.♖ca1 h4 43.♖g1 ♔f6 44.h3±) 39.♖b4 ♖a6=
- B) 38.d5! is the key to winning. White gives up a pawn, but in return gains a lot of space plus control of the c-file. 38...cxd5 39.e5 d4 40.♖c7 ♖d5 41.♖e7± should be winnable.

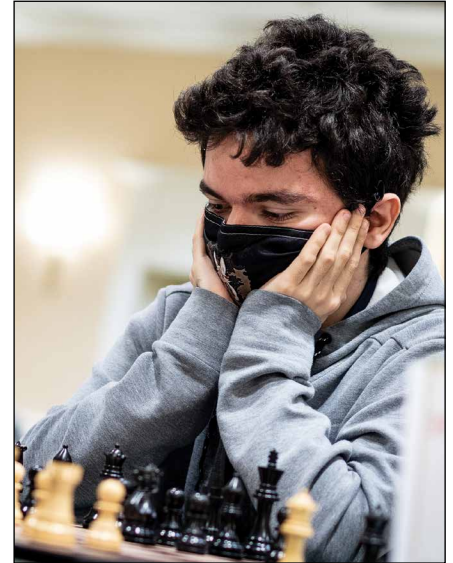
36...bxc6? 36...♖dxc6 37.♖xc6 ♖xc6 38.♖b1 (38.♖xc6 bxc6 39.e4 ♔f6 40.h3 dxe4+ 41.fxe4 g4 42.hxg4 hxg4 43.♔e3 ♔g5 44.f6 ♔h4 45.e5 ♔g5 46.♔e4 g3 47.♔f3 ♔f5 48.♔xg3 c5 49.dxc5 ♔xe5 50.c6 ♔d6=) 38...♖a6=.

37.e4 Now that Black has squandered both chances to activate his passive rooks, this breakthrough gains in strength.

37...dxe4+ 38.fxe4 ♖cd8 39.♖c4 g4



40.♔e3 Here I thought that Black was completely paralyzed, meaning that I can take my time making progress.



▲ Illia Nyzhnyk

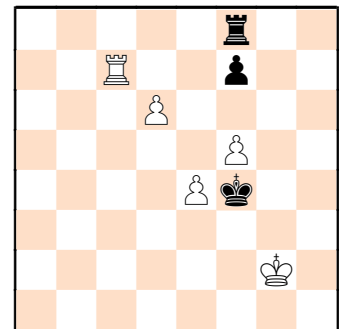
Photo by Paul Swaney

While this is true, it would still be better to be more direct: 40.e5! ♖d5 41.♔e4 ♖d7 42.♖a4+- and the c6 pawn cannot be defended.

40...♔h6 It is hard to find anything better for Black. 40...f6 only helps White because of 41.e5 fxe5 42.dxe5 ♖d3+ 43.♔f4 and the two connected passed pawns, along with a strong king on g5, should be enough to win. 40...♖a8 is no longer effective, because of 41.♖xc6 ♖a3+ 42.♖1c3 ♖xc6 43.♖xa3 ♖c2 44.♖a7 ♖xh2 45.e5 g3 46.e6 g2 47.♔f2 ♔h6 48.♖xf7+-.

41.♖xc6 ♖xc6 42.♖xc6+ ♔g5 43.d5 Fortunately my pawns are faster than Black's, so the rest was relatively simple.

43...h4 44.♖c7 ♖f8 45.d6 g3 46.hxg3 hxg3 47.♔f3 g2 48.♔xg2 ♔f4



49.♖e7! f6 50.d7 ♖a8 51.♖e8 ♖a2+ 52.♔f1 ♔f3 53.♔e1 Black resigned



With which players/coaches have you been working with in the USA? After completing your education, what are your short/mid-term plans?

Needless to say, I spent most of my time working with Susan, as she was the one coordinating our team meetings. I was also lucky enough to "catch" Wesley So during his last couple of months in Webster, as he decided to leave school in favour of a professional chess career. Ever since I arrived at Webster, I have worked with countless amazing people, and it would only be fair to mention everyone, but I am afraid the list will be a bit too long!

In terms of short/mid-term plans, I am obviously planning to stick with chess for some time, as I have seen a significant improvement in my play over the past couple of years. At the same time, I am trying myself in the role of a chess coach, but I am afraid I will eventually have to make a choice between the two. I do have some other plans in my mind, but they have not been finalized yet.

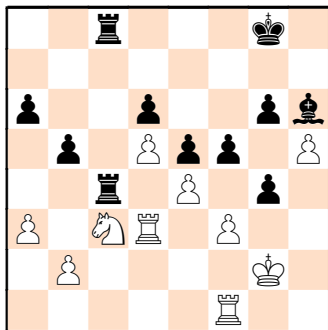
The final game was by far the most stressful of this event for me. I was feeling fatigued during the game, so was trying to end it as quickly as possible – which is an extremely dangerous state of mind.

9-0!

Daniel Lowinger 2064

Illia Nyzhnyk 2685

3rd Colonial Open, Sterling 2022



This position is completely winning for Black in many different ways. Which way do you think is the easiest?

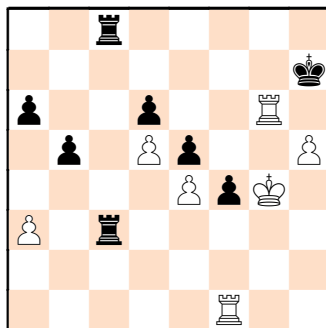
30...gxf3+?! works, but my thinking process was fundamentally flawed way before I decided to take on f3. You are completely correct if you preferred 30...fxe4! 31.fxe4 and now 31...gxh5, as White cannot comfortably recapture on h5: 32.♖h1 ♕f4 33.♖xh5 ♖d4! 34.♖xd4

exd4++ when my other rook will invade with a very easy win to follow.

31.♖dxf3 ♕d2?? This is it. I was going for simplification, wrongly assuming that anything wins. This move, however, is a horrible blunder that allows White to transpose into what I perceive to be a drawish rook endgame. It was not too late to play 31...f4! 32.hxg6 ♖g7++ but my bishop would not look pretty.

32.♖g3! is what I missed. Now I cannot escape the transposition into the rook endgame.

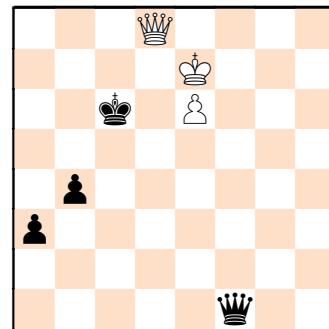
32...♕xc3 33.bxc3 f4 34.♖xg6+ ♖h7 35.♖f3 ♖xc3+ 36.♖g4



36...♖f8 37.♖xd6 ♖g3+ 38.♖h4 ♖fg8 39.♖g6 ♖8xg6 40.hxg6+ ♖xg6 41.♖c1 and my opponent proceeded to demonstrate excellent defensive technique right up to the queen endgame...

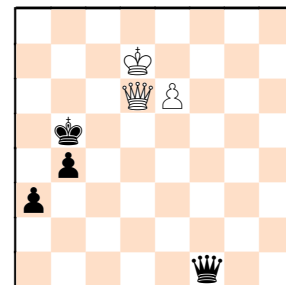
41...♖xa3 42.♖c6+ ♖f7 43.♖g5 ♖g3+ 44.♖f5 f3 45.♖f6+ ♖e7 46.d6+ ♖d7 47.♖xe5 ♖c6 48.♖e6 b4 49.♖e7 ♖g7+ 50.♖e8 ♖g8+ 51.♖e7 a5 52.e5 a4 53.d7+ ♖c7 54.e6 a3 55.♖f8 ♖xf8 56.♖xf8 f2 57.♖e7 f1 ♖ 58.d8 ♖+ ♖c6

...which we will look at starting from the following position.



My opponent had conducted a near perfect defense up to this point, just when a draw was within his reach.

59.♖d6+ ♖b5 60.♖d7+?! This move is the first inaccuracy which allows my king to squeeze in between my pawns. 60.♖d7! would lead to a simple draw, as then I cannot escape the perpetual checks.



A) 60...♖a4? might even lose, and I saw it: 61.e7 ♖f5+ (61...♖b5+?? 62.♖c6 a2 63.e8 ♖ ♖xc6+ 64.♖xc6 a1 ♖ 65.♖a8+--+) 62.♖e6 ♖xe6+ 63.♖xe6 ♖b3 64.e8 ♖ ♖a2 65.♖e5 b3 and Black will hold.

B) 60...a2 61.♖c6+ ♖a5 62.♖c7+ ♖a4 63.♖a7+ ♖b3 64.♖e3+ ♖c2 65.♖c5+ ♖b3 66.♖e3+ ♖c4 67.♖e4+ ♖c3 68.♖e5+ with a perpetual check.

60...♖c4 61.♖d8?? The decisive mistake, which enables me to promote

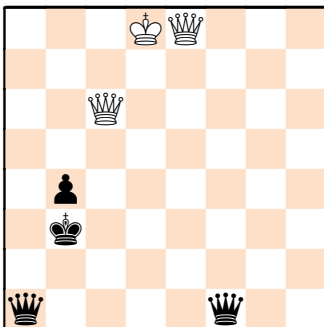


WEBSTER UNIVERSITY CHESS TEAM - THE WINNERS OF THE 2018 PAN-AM INTERCOLLEGIATE CHAMPIONSHIP

Left to right: Justus Williams, Joshua Colas, Emilio Cordova (PER), Lazaro Bruzon, Jorge Cori (PER), Vasif Durarbayli (AZE), Susan Polgar, Shawn Swindell, Paul Truong, Yuniesky Quesada Perez (CUB), Alexander Shimanov (RUS), Illia Nyzhnyk (UKR), Aaron Grabinsky, Peter Prohaszka (HUN) and Tom Shutzman.
Photo by David Llada

my a-pawn. 61.♔d2!? would be an artificial way to stop the promotion, but such a move is difficult to make with almost no time on the clock. 61...♗d3 62.♗a2+ ♕c3 63.♕f6∞.

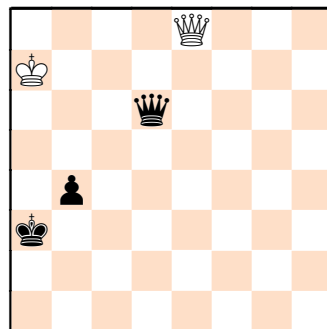
61...a2 62.e7 a1♔ 63.♗c6+ ♕b3 64.e8♗



64...♗a5+ I don't think I have ever had a position before with four queens on the board, unless we traded one pair right away. However in this game, I was lucky to be able to make a few more moves in the presence of all four queens!

65.♕d7 ♗a7+ 66.♕c8 ♗fa6+ I decided to trade a pair of queens here, as the ♗+♕ vs. ♗ endgame looked easily winning. Funnily enough, the engine wants to keep all queens on the board, claiming that I can simply switch to a try for promotion. It would be insane if I promoted my b-pawn, as then we would have not four, but five queens on the board! 66...♕a3! 67.♗e5 ♗f8+ 68.♗ce8 ♗xe8+ 69.♗xe8 ♗a8+ 70.♕d7 ♗xe8+ 71.♕xe8 b3-+.

67.♗xa6 ♗xa6+ 68.♕b8 ♗d6+ 69.♕a7 ♕a3



The white king is misplaced, so it is relatively easy to promote for Black.

70.♗e3+ b3 71.♗c3 ♗e7+ 72.♕a6 ♗e6+ 73.♕a5 ♗d5+ 74.♕b6 ♕a2 75.♕a6 b2 76.♗c2 ♗d4 77.♕a5 ♕a1 78.♗b3 b1♗ White resigned

Summarizing my experiences during the 3rd Colonial Open – I had an opportunity to play amazing games and learn a lot from them. Incredibly enough, I was able to win all my games – for the first time ever in a 9-round tournament! I would like to thank Anand Dommalapati for giving me this chance, and I hope to be part of many more events like this in the future!