



NO PODIUM FOR U.S. TEAMS AFTER DISAPPOINTMENTS AND A LACK OF LUCK

A BITTERSWEET EXPERIENCE



By GM David Brodsky

Before the tournament, the No.1 seeded U.S. team was seen by many as the principal favorite to win the 44th Chess Olympiad in India. Unfortunately their performance was subpar – finishing 5th is certainly an unexpected and unsatisfactory result. On the other hand, their colleagues in the U.S. Women’s team saved their best for last, winning the last round match on top board against top seeded India 1. Nevertheless, despite finishing shared third jointly with their last round opponents and Kazakhstan, the U.S. team had to settle for fourth place as the tie-breaks favored India who thereby took the bronze medal.

The U.S. team, which won gold in 2016 and silver in 2018, was stronger than ever with the recent addition of Levon Aronian. With a 2771 average rating the USA were clear favorites to win the Olympiad. Indeed they were in medal contention with 12/14 match points until their 3-1 loss in round 8 against India 2, which helped their opponents win the bronze medal. After that defeat, team USA no longer had any medal chances, despite defeating Greece and Turkey in rounds 9 and 10, and drawing against second seeds India 1 in the last round. Thus the U.S. team finished in a disappointing fifth place, tying with India 1 and underdog stars Moldova. Even if they had won their last round match, the U.S. would have only finished fourth on tiebreaks.

It’s hard to say why the U.S. underperformed so badly. All five American players lost rating points. Caruana and Aronian each finished with only a 50 percent score, despite clearly outrating all their opponents. Dominguez and Shankland had subpar but not disastrous performances, and Wesley So finished with a solid undefeated 7/10. Many match points were lost due to tragedies like Shankland “premoving” against Hovhannisyan (see page 18 -*Ed.*) or Caruana losing a much better position against Gukesh.

At the same time, it’s worth noting that the U.S. got lucky in several matches. They had several narrow wins by a 2½-1½ margin, and Shankland’s miracle save against Vakhidov prevented the U.S. from losing to the future gold medalists Uzbekistan. Of course, some luck is needed to win the Olympiad,



but American players lost seven games overall at the Olympiad, which is probably too many to win a medal.

Whatever the causes of their poor performance, the U.S. Open team will surely be back at the 2024 Olympiad, again with the highest ambitions.

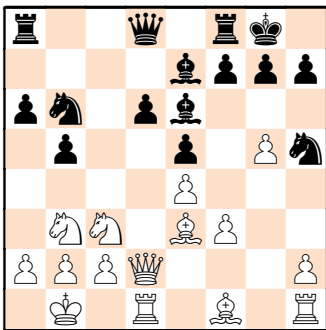
FABIANO CARUANA

Board: 1
 Result: 5 pts from 10 games
 Rating Performance: 2645

Caruana started with a disastrous 2/7 and temporarily dropped out of the world's top 10. He lost three games to Abdusattorov, Sargissian, and Gukesh all of whom had phenomenal performances. However, Fabi came back with a strong 2½/3 at the end of the tournament. This 10th round game is from that streak.

Fabiano Caruana	2783
Mustafa Yilmaz	2634

Round 10, USA vs. Turkey



14. ♖f2!? A rare move in a topical Najdorf line which I happen to play with the black pieces. Caruana previously played the highly theoretical 14. ♖a5 as in F.Caruana 2806 - M.Vachier-Lagrave 2751, Saint Louis 2021, which ended in a draw on move 46.

14. ♖d5 is the other main move.

14... ♖c4 15. ♙xc4 bxc4 16. ♖a5 I think it's safe to assume that Yilmaz was out of book in this obscure position. ♖f2 ideas are sometimes connected to 16. ♖c5, but Black is fine here after 16... ♗b8 among other moves.

David Brodsky is a 20-year-old grandmaster from Westchester County, New York. David learned to play chess at the age of 6 and has been a successful junior, winning the 2014 North American Youth Championship and the 2018 U.S. Cadets Championship. He is well-known for his work ethic and analytical approach as he works on chess every day and annotates each and every one of the games he plays. His current FIDE rating is at its peak of 2511 (October 2022). David is a computer science and mathematics double major at the University of Texas at Dallas and a member of his collegiate chess team.



16... ♗c8 A reasonable but likely inaccurate move. 16... ♗xa5?? 17. ♙b6 ♗b4 18.a3 traps the queen.

16... ♙xg5 17. ♙xg5 ♗xa5 18. ♙e7 ♗fb8 19. ♙xd6 ♗b7 is 0.00 on high depth, but rather unclear over the board.

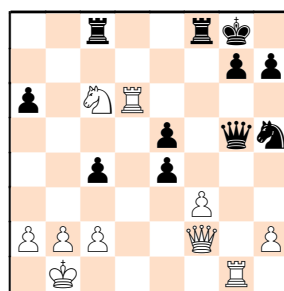
16... ♗c7 17. ♖d5 ♙xd5 18. ♗xd5 ♗ab8 is another playable option.

17. ♖d5 ♙xd5 18. ♗xd5 ♙xg5? A logical move, but a serious mistake. Moves like 18... ♗c7, 18...f6, and 18...f5 are preferable according to engines. Who knows what Caruana had prepared here.

19. ♙xg5 19. ♖b7 ♙xe3 20. ♗xe3 ♗c7 21. ♖xd6± is another strong option.

19... ♗xg5 20. ♗xd6 f5 The most logical move.

21. ♖c6 ♗ce8?! 21...fxe4 was best, but Black is already in trouble after 22. ♗g1.



22... ♗xc6! 23. ♗xc6 (23. ♗xg5 ♗xd6∞) 23... ♗f5 24. ♗e3± The position is incredibly complex, but White is much better for concrete reasons.

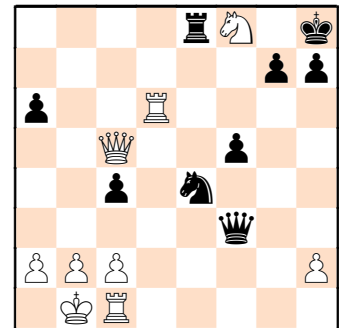
22. ♗c5 ♖h8?! Poor defense, but Black's task is very difficult regardless. After 22...fxe4 23. ♗xc4+ ♖h8 24.fxe4 White is winning, but conversion may not be easy in practice.

23. ♖xe5 ♗f4 24. ♖d7 ♗xf3 24... ♗g8

25. exf5 ♗xf3 26. ♗hd1 is clearly dominant for White.

25. ♗c1 ♖f6 25... ♗g8 26. ♖e5 ♗xe5 27. ♗xe5+-

26. ♖xf8 ♖xe4



27. ♗e6! ♗b8 27... ♖xc5 28. ♗xe8 ♖g8 29. ♖d7+ ♖f7 30. ♖e5+ ♖xe8 31. ♖xf3+- 28. ♗e5 Black resigned

ROUND		
1	Angola	½
	USA	3½
2	USA	2½
	Paraguay	1½
3	Georgia	1
	USA	3
4	USA	2
	Uzbekistan	2
5	Israel	1½
	USA	2½
6	USA	2½
	Iran	1½
7	Armenia	2
	USA	2
8	USA	1
	India 2	3
9	Greece	1½
	USA	2½
10	USA	3
	Turkey	1
11	India	2
	USA	2



It's not every day that you see a 2600+ GM get crushed in 28 moves like this! The U.S. team won this match against Turkey 3-1.

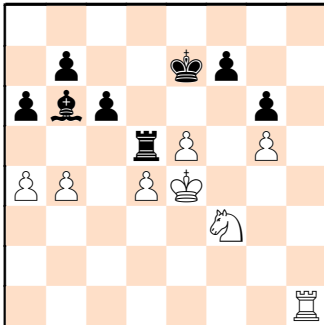
LEVON ARONIAN

Board: 2
Result: 3½ pts from 7 games
Rating Performance: 2578

Levon Aronian had a difficult tournament, facing some health issues which affected his play, while eventually losing 16 rating points. In this round 3 game, he was nursing a small advantage earlier in the game, but by move 40 Black had equalized.

Levon Aronian 2775
Mikhail Mchedlishvili 2593

Round 3, USA vs. Georgia



40.♖h8 ♜d8 41.♖h7 ♗e6? A mistake immediately after the time control. The bishop will be too passive on a7. The cleanest solution was 41...♞d7 with the idea of 42.a5 ♘d8 The bishop will be much more active pressuring g5 and perhaps even b4 after ...♗e6 and ... ♘d8-e7.

The more forcing approach of 41...a5 equalizes as well. 42.b5 (42.bxa5 ♘xa5 43.♖h1 ♞a8=) 42...cxb5 43.d5 ♞c8 44.e6 ♞c4+ 45.♗d3 ♞f4 46.♗h4 ♗e8 47.axb5 ♘c5= This line may seem dangerous, but in reality White has nothing concrete.

42.a5 ♘a7 White has a winning plan here: to play ♖h4, ♗d3-c4 and liberate the ♗f3, then maneuver ♗d2-b3 and either play ♗c5 and trade into a rook endgame, or break through with ♞f6 and e5-e6.

43.♖h1 The immediate 43.♖h4 was slightly more accurate.

43...♗e7 Black shuffles. 43...♘b8 may have provided better chances.

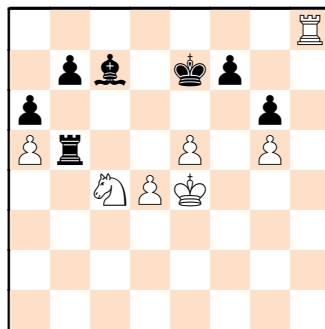
44.♗d3 ♗e6 45.♖h4 ♗e7 46.♗d2 To maneuver the knight to c5.

46...c5 46...♗e6 47.♞f4 ♗e7 48.♗c4 ♗e6 49.♗b3 ♗e7 50.♗c5 White has improved his position to the max and cashes in. 50...♘xc5 51.bxc5 Material is equal, but White is actually completely winning. For example 51...♗e6 52.♞f1 ♗e7 53.♞b1 ♞d7 (53...♞b8 54.d5+-) 54.♗d3 ♗f8 55.♗e4 ♗e7 56.♞f1 ♞d8 57.♞f6 ♖h8 58.e6 fxe6 59.♞xg6 Material is still equal, but White is crashing through.

47.bxc5 ♘xc5 48.♗c3 Precise play. 48.♗c4? ♗e6 49.♞f4 ♘e7 would allow Black to get back in the game.

48...♘a7 49.♗c4 ♘b8 49...♗e6 50.♞f4 maintains control over the position.

50.♗d3 ♞d5 51.♗e4 ♞b5 52.♖h8 ♘c7



53.♗e3 ♘xa5 54.♗d5+ ♗d7 55.♞f8 ♘d8 56.♗f6+ ♗c8 57.♞xf7 a5 58.e6 a4 59.e7 ♘xe7 60.♞xe7 White is winning thanks to the fact that his d-pawn is alive, whereas Black's outside passer is easily halted by ♞e8+ followed by ♞a8. **Black resigned**

USA won this match against Georgia 3-1, but unfortunately this was Aronian's only win at the Olympiad. After a series of four draws, he lost with White to Greece's GM Theodorou and rested for the last two rounds.

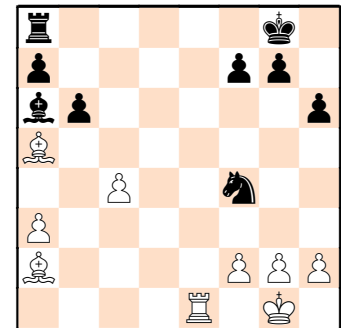
WESLEY SO

Board: 3
Result: 7 pts from 10 games
Rating Performance: 2738

Wesley So was the best performing American player, scoring +4 without losing a single game – a result which surprisingly still cost him two rating points. In this game, he squeezed water from a stone against an experienced grandmaster. Wesley has comfortably equalized out of the opening, but now his opponent gives him chances to play for an advantage.

Athanasios Mastrovasilis 2527
Wesley So 2773

Round 9, Greece vs. USA



23.♘b4?! 23.♘d2=

23...♞c8 Now White faces concrete issues. He has the bishop pair, but is having trouble hanging on to his c4 pawn.

24.g3 A bailout into a worse but drawn rook endgame. 24.♞e4 ♗d3 25.f3 ♗c1! 26.♘b1 ♘xc4

24...♗d3 25.♞e7 ♘xc4 26.♘xc4 ♞xc4 27.♞xa7 ♗xb4 28.axb4 g5!? A typical idea and a good practical decision in my opinion. Black gains space on the kingside and prevents White from playing h2-h4. Naturally the position is still drawn, but an experienced 2500+ GM was unable to hold against So. 28...♞xb4 would be met by 29.h4.

29.b5 ♞b4 30.♞b7 This is logical and perfectly playable, but White had better



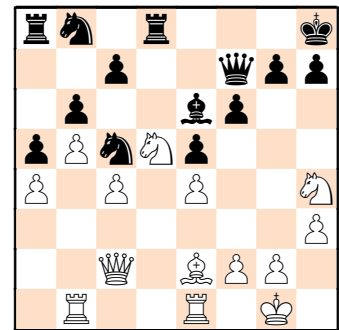
▲ Wesley So and Levon Aronian.

Photo: FIDE/Lennart Ootes

games, but his result was dampened by losing to two extremely talented Indian players (Sadhvani and Erigaisi) with the black pieces in critical matches. This was one of Dominguez's best games. He generated slight pressure on the white side of a Berlin, and his opponent cracked.

Leinier Dominguez	2754
Maxim Rodshtein	2596

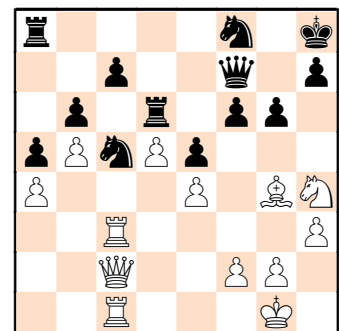
Round 5, USA vs. Israel



24. ♔g4 ♕xd5? A strange mistake. 24... ♕xg4 25. hxg4 ♖e6 is objectively okay for Black, though White is still for choice in my opinion.

25. cxd5 Black's knight on c5 looks strong, but in reality it can't move anywhere because that would lose the c7 pawn. Dominguez executes a strong plan: ♖e3-c3, ♖b1-c1, followed by an exchange sacrifice on c5. Black has no clear counterplay or way to prevent this plan.

25... ♖bd7 26. ♖e3 g6 27. ♖c3 ♖f8 28. ♖c1 ♖d6

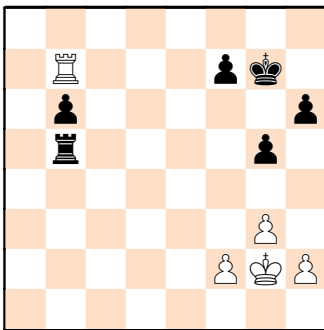


29. g3!? A human move. 29. ♖xc5 bxc5 30. ♖xc5 f5 is what Dominguez likely

defensive setups. It's better to attack the pawn from the side by 30. ♖d7 ♖xb5 31. ♖d6. White has time for 31...h5 32. f3 ♔g7 33. h4 and, after trading pawns, White should hold without serious problems.

The concrete 30. h4 gxh4 (30... ♖xb5 31. hxg5 hxg5 32. ♔g2 is tenable with a pair of pawns traded.) 31. gxh4 ♖xb5 32. ♖b7 should also hold easily.

30... ♖xb5 31. ♔g2 ♔g7 31...h5 was also possible.



32. ♔f3? A serious mistake. After 32. g4!, gaining space, White should hold. He can trade more pawns in the near future with h2-h4.

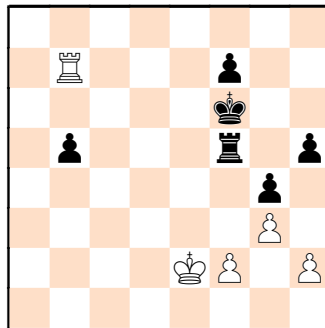
32... ♖b3+ 33. ♔e2? The more active 33. ♔e4 was necessary, though White's defensive task is much harder than it needed to be.

33... g4! Fixing White's kingside pawns. Black is already winning here, and So converted with good technique.

34. ♖b8 h5 35. ♖b7 ♖b5 36. ♔f1 ♔f6 37. ♖c7 37. ♔e2 ♔e6 38. ♔e3 ♖b3+

39. ♔e2 b5 Black will bring his king towards the b-pawn and try to promote it. White can take some kingside pawns, but he will be too slow.

37... ♖c5 38. ♖b7 b5 39. ♔e2 ♖f5



Now that Black's rook protects everything, his king is free to shoulder the b-pawn...

40. ♖b6+ ♔e7 41. f4 gxf3+ 42. ♔f2 ♔d7 43. h3 ♔c7 44. ♖a6 b4 45. ♖a4 ♖b5 46. ♔xf3 b3 47. ♖a1 ♔b6 48. g4 b2 49. ♖b1 hxg4+ 50. ♔xg4 ♔a5 51. h4 ♔a4 52. h5 ♔b3 53. h6 ♔a2 54. h7 ♖b8 **White resigned**

This technical win was needed for the U.S. team to defeat Greece by a 2½-1½ margin.

LEINIER DOMINGUEZ

Board:	4
Result:	6½ pts from 10 games
Rating Performance:	2645

Leinier Dominguez scored +5 -3 =2 at the Olympiad. He won several nice



wanted to avoid. 31.exf5 (31.♙f3, as Dominguez played in the game, runs into 31...fxe4 32.♙xe4 ♖f4. With g2-g3 included this is impossible and Black is basically lost. 33.♖xc7 ♜d7+) 31...♙xd5 32.♖e3 Engines say White is winning, but I can understand why Dominguez chose not to give his opponent so much activity.

29...♜ad8? Poor resistance. 29...♗fd7? is logical but not good. 30.♙xd7 ♜xd7 31.♜xc5 bxc5 32.♖xc5+- is also positionally dominating. White will maneuver the knight to the queenside and Black has no clear counterplay.

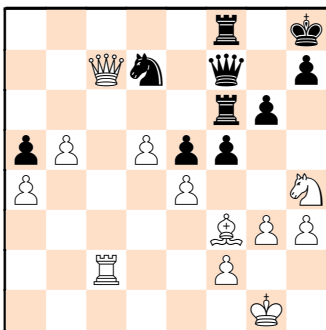
29...h5! was the only move. Then, after 30.♙f3, ...♗fd7 prevents ♜xc5 and is Black's best defensive idea. White is still much better and can improve his position in many ways (♙g2, ♗f3-d2, ♜f1 preparing f4, etc.), but Black's position will be hard to break down.

30.♜xc5! Finally!

30...bxc5 31.♖xc5 f5 32.♙f3 ♜f6 33.♜c2 Dominguez keeps everything under control.

33...♗d7 If 33...♜c8 then 34.♖c3 and Black cannot protect both the a5 and e5 pawns.

34.♖xc7 ♜f8



35.♖a7! A nice way to defend f2.

35...♗b6 36.♜c7 ♖g8 37.♜c6 ♗xa4 38.♖xa5 fxe4 39.♙xe4 ♜xf2 40.♖xa4 ♖f7 41.♜c1 Black has won f2 but lost a piece. White's king is perfectly safe with all its defenders, and **Dominguez went on to win** without any problems. This was the only decisive game in the USA 2½-1½ victory against Israel.

SAM SHANKLAND

Board:5
Result: 4½ pts from 7 games
Rating Performance: 2565

Sam Shankland started with 3/4 before losing a heartbreaking game to GM Hovhannisyanyan where he "premoved" in a drawn position and had to resign, costing the U.S. team a victory against Armenia. Still, he came back strongly in the last round and was the only victorious American in their 2-2 tie with India 1.

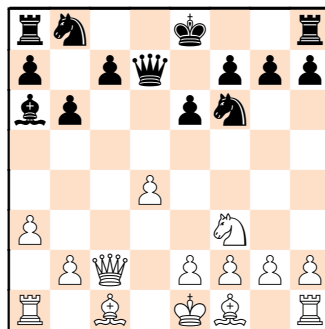
E36

Sam Shankland	2720
S.L. Narayanan	2659

Round 11, USA vs. India 1

1.d4 ♗f6 2.c4 e6 3.♗c3 ♙b4 4.♖c2 d5 5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.♖xc3 b6 A rare move. 6...dxc4 7.♖xc4 b6 8.♗f3 is a more conventional way to transpose to the game (8.♙f4 is an extra option).

7.♗f3 dxc4 8.♖xc4 ♙a6 9.♖a4+ ♗d7 10.♖c2

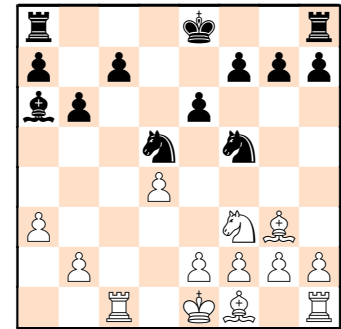


10...♖c6 This move has been played at a high level before, but White appears to be slightly better. 10...0-0 and 10...h6 are alternatives.

11.♖xc6+ ♗xc6 12.♙f4 ♗d5 12...0-0-0 is an alternative as in V.Akopian 2647 - V.Anand 2782, Riyadh 2017, which Black won on move 42.

13.♙g3 ♗ce7 13...♗a5± was a lesser evil.

14.♜c1 ♗f5



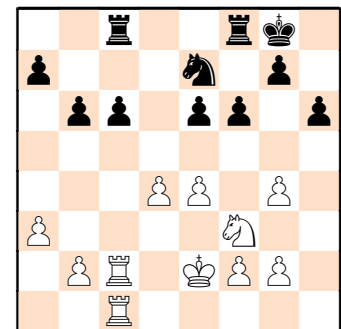
15.e3?! Shankland makes his first mistake of the game but maintains a large advantage. The more concrete 15.e4! was clearly strongest. It's not clear what Black had prepared when playing 10...♖c6 because this is disaster from a theoretical perspective. 15...♙xf1 (15...♗xg3 16.fxg3 ♙xf1 17.♜xf1 transposes.) 16.♜xf1 ♗xg3 17.fxg3 ♗f6 18.♜xc7 (18.♗e5± is very dangerous as well.) 18...♗xe4 19.♗e5 f6 20.♗c6 0-0 21.♜xa7 ♜xa7 22.♗xa7±.

15...♙xf1 16.♗xf1 ♜c8 17.♗e2 f6 18.e4 ♗xg3+ 19.hxg3 ♗e7 White has a pleasant spatial advantage, but Black is solid.

20.g4 A healthy move restricting Black's activity on the kingside, and threatening g4-g5.

20...0-0 21.♜c2 21.g5 f5± is worth considering.

21...h6 22.♜hc1 c6



23.b4? A healthy move, but this is poor timing. After 23.♗e3 White maintains a clear edge.

23...♜a8! The correct reaction. Black

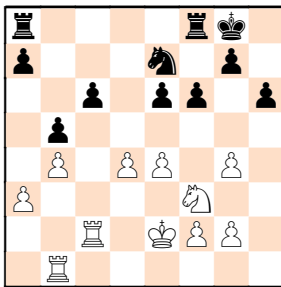


has a very serious idea in ...a7-a5.

24.♖b1 24.b5 cxb5 25.♞c7 ♜fc8! is harmless from White.

24...♜fc8? First of all 24...a5? is a mistake on account of 25.b5! (25.bxa5 b5! is OK for Black.) 25...cxb5 26.♞xb5±.

24...f5± is also playable, however 24...b5! is Black's best.



The idea is to play ...a7-a5 and it's not clear what exactly White has. For example,

- A) 25.♞c5 a5 26.a4 ♜fb8 27.bxa5 ♞xa5 28.axb5 ♞axb5 29.♞bxb5 ♞xb5=
- B) 25.♞d2 a5 26.♞b3 axb4 27.axb4 f5=
- C) 25.a4 bxa4 26.♞a1 a5 27.♞xa4 axb4 28.♞xb4 f5=.

25.♞d2! Excellent! Black must have missed something after this move.

25...♞d8 Moving the rook again and admitting that ...♜fc8 was a mistake. After 25...a5 White has a variety of good options. 26.bxa5 (Also 26.♞c4 ♞a6 27.b5 cxb5 28.♞xb5 ♞c6 29.♞d2 ♞b8 30.f3±) 26...♞xa5 (If 26...b5?, then after 27.♞b3+- Black will never win the pawn back.) 27.♞xb6 (27.♞c4 ♞b5 28.♞xb5 cxb5 29.♞e3 ♞a8 30.♞c7 ♞g6 31.♞c2±) 27...♞xa3 28.♞b7 ♞e8 29.g3±.

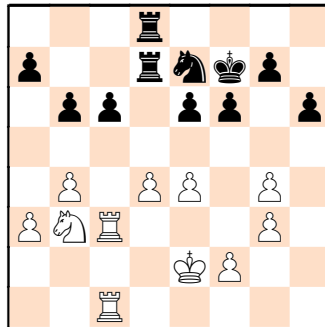
26.♞b3?! Logical but inaccurate. It's beneficial to temporarily keep the knight on d2. If 26.♞e3! f5 27.f3, the knight can maneuver to e5 via c4.

26...♞f7?! 26...f5! should be played immediately. After 27.gxf5 exf5 28.f3 ♞d6, Black has enough counterplay for equality.

27.♞bc1 ♞d7 Now 27...f5 is too slow. 28.gxf5 exf5 29.f3 ♞d6 is equal without ♞bc1 and ...♞f7 included, but here White

can already play 30.b5!? cxb5 31.♞c7±.

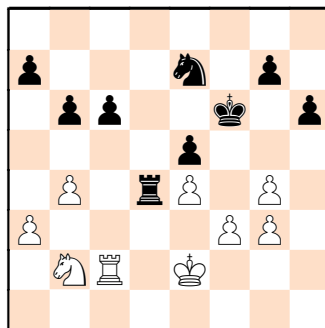
28.g3 ♞ad8 29.♞c3



29...e5?! Black chooses to release the tension in the center, but this is the wrong way to do it. 29...f5!± was preferable but still unpleasant for Black.

30.dxe5 fxe5 31.♞1c2 Shankland starts his plan: relocate the knight to c4 where it attacks e5, trade one pair of rooks, and either push f3-f4 or a3-a4-a5 to soften Black's position.

31...♞d6 32.♞d2 ♞e6 33.♞c4 ♞d4 34.f3 ♞f6 35.♞d3 ♞g6 36.♞e3 ♞xd3 37.♞xd3 ♞d6+ 38.♞e2 ♞e7 39.♞c4 ♞d4 40.♞b2



40...g6 I'm not sure what the idea of this move is, but Black's position is already won. Now White gets an additional weakness to attack - the h6 pawn. 40...g5 aimed against f3-f4 would be more logical.

41.♞e3 ♞d8 42.♞h2 The immediate 42.♞d3?! gives Black an extra avenue for counterplay: 42...♞a8 43.f4 exf4+ 44.gxf4 a5±.

42.f4! was strongest, but Shankland has a different plan in mind. It's key

to note that 42...g5 is met with 43.f5 and White will eventually infiltrate by pushing a4-a5.

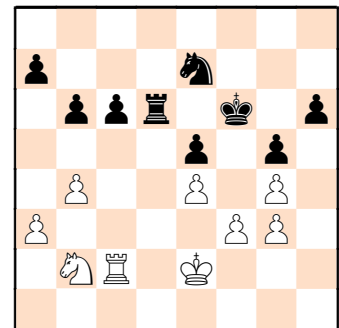
42...♞g8 43.♞d3 g5 The threat of f3-f4 forces Black to advance his g-pawn. Now the f5 square is a great looking outpost for the white knight. 43...♞a8 doesn't work. After 44.f4 exf4+ 45.gxf4 a5 46.e5+ ♞e6 47.♞e4 Black can't prevent f4-f5 which will be deadly.

44.♞c2 ♞d6 44...♞e7 seems more natural to me.

45.♞e2 Starting with 45.♞b2 is likely equivalent to the game, whereas 45.a4 followed by a4-a5 is an alternative plan.

45...♞e7?! 45...♞e6! was more tenacious. 46.♞b2 (White may choose to maneuver with 46.♞c1!? and perhaps switch to an a4-a5 plan.) 46...♞d7 47.♞c4 ♞e6± is a more resilient defensive setup.

46.♞b2!



Making use of the poorly positioned black rook on d6. If you compare this position with the one in the previous diagram, you'll note a very slight, but highly important difference - Black's pawn is on g5 instead on g7. After ♞c4-e3-f5 White exploits the weakness created by advancing the black g-pawn.

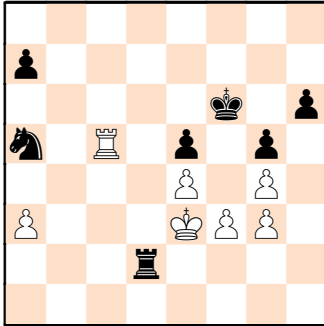
46...♞d8 47.♞c4 c5 Black goes for activity, but it is too late. The c-pawn will not survive. 47...♞e6 48.♞e3 followed by ♞f5 penetrating.

48.bxc5 ♞c6 After 48...bxc5 49.♞e3 ♞c8 50.♞d2 Black's position is collapsing.



49.♙e3 bxc5 50.♜d2 Black loses the c5 pawn.

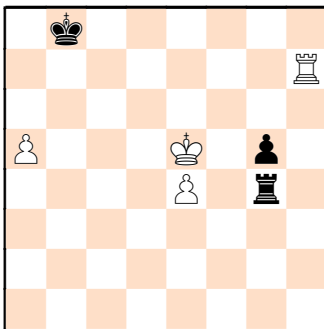
50...♜a5 51.♞xc5 ♞xd2



This “trick” only postpones the inevitable.

52.♞xa5 ♞b2 53.♞a6+ ♙e7 54.♞xa7+ ♙d6 White is two pawns up, and Shankland converts with good technique.

55.♞a6+ ♙e7 56.a4 ♞b3+ 57.♙e2 ♞b2+ 58.♙d3 ♞b3+ 59.♙c4 ♞xf3 60.a5 ♞xg3 61.♞xh6 ♙d7 62.♙d5 ♙c7 63.♞h7+ ♙b8 64.♙xe5 ♞xg4



65.♞g7 ♞g1 66.♙f5 ♞a1 67.e5 ♙c8 68.♙xg5 ♞xa5 69.♙f6 ♞a1 70.e6 ♞f1+ 71.♙e7 ♞h1 72.♞g2 ♞h7+ 73.♙d6 ♞h8 74.♞c2+ Black resigned

BEHIND THE SCENES

The U.S. Open team was again captained by the legendary IM John Donaldson, supported by GM Robert Hess who helped as team coach.

The women’s team was led by the captain GM Melikset Khachiyan, who was helped by team coach GM Alejandro Ramirez.



▲ U.S. Women’s Olympic Team: Captain Melikset Khachiyan, Anna Zatonskih, Carissa Yip, Tatev Abrahamyan, Gulrukhbegim Tokhirjonova, Irina Krush and coach Alejandro Ramirez. Photo: FIDE/Lennart Ootes

U.S. WOMEN’S TEAM

The U.S. Women’s team was ranked 7th by average rating and finished in fourth place with 17/22 match points. They tied for third place, but lost out on a bronze medal on tiebreaks. I view their result as a success – especially given their horrific start. The women’s team lost two matches to Mongolia and Peru in rounds 3 and 5 and were ranked an abysmal 42nd after five rounds. But then the team came back very strongly and won all their remaining matches except for a round 8

tie with the Czech Republic. In the last round, they defeated the top seeds and home favorites India 1 by a convincing 3-1 margin.

After a shaky start, all the American women had excellent results in the second half of the tournament except for IM Anna Zatonskih, who lost a tragic 8th round game and rested for the last three rounds. IM Carissa Yip won five games in a row, while WGM Tatev Abrahamyan almost won an individual medal for Board 5 (she was fourth by rating performance). While it was a pity not to win a medal because of tiebreaks, I doubt the players were disappointed by their team’s performance.

Hopefully, the U.S. Women’s team will repeat their success in 2024, or even win a medal for the first time since 2008.

GULRUKHBEGIM TOKHIRJONOVA

Board: 1
Result: 7 pts from 10 games
Rating Performance: 2420

WOMEN			ROUND		
1	Puerto Rico	0			
	USA	4			
2	USA	3			
	Uzbekistan	1			
3	Mongolia	3			
	USA	1			
4	Australia	1			
	USA	3			
5	USA	1½			
	Peru	2½			
6	USA	4			
	Venezuela	0			
7	Argentina	½			
	USA	3½			
8	USA	2			
	Czech Republic	2			
9	Greece	½			
	USA	3½			
10	USA	3			
	Indonesia	1			
11	India	1			
	USA	3			

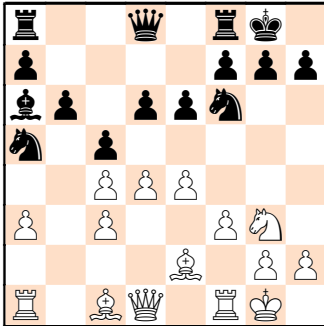
WGM Gulrukhbegim Tokhirjonova scored an undefeated +4 on board 1, with a 13.5 rating points gain. She defeated all sub-2200 opposition and Peruvian WGM Cori (2371), and made draws against all other 2250+ opponents including No.1 tournament seed – GM Humpy Koneru from India (2586). Her uncompromising combative style



had brought Tokhirjonova into serious trouble in many of her games, but she found resourceful ways to swindle her opponents. This is one of those games.

Gulrukhbegim Tokhirjonova 2329
Irine Sukandar 2373

Round 10, USA vs. Indonesia



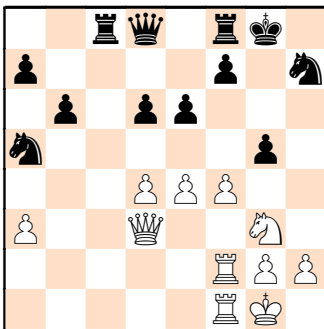
The opening has gone wrong for White, and Tokhirjonova makes a serious mistake here.

12.g5? 12.f4 with compensation for the c4 pawn was necessary.

12...h6 13.g4 Objectively speaking, 13.gxf6 is White's best move but obviously benefits Black greatly.

13...g5 Oops! The bishop is trapped. This position is completely lost for White, but Tokhirjonova finds a way to swindle her opponent.

14.gxg5 hxg5 15.f4 h7 16.a2 cxd4 17.cxd4 c8 18.d3 xc4 19.faf2 xd3 20.wxd3



20...xc4? Black has played well up to this point, but this is a strange move. The rook is honestly better on c8 than

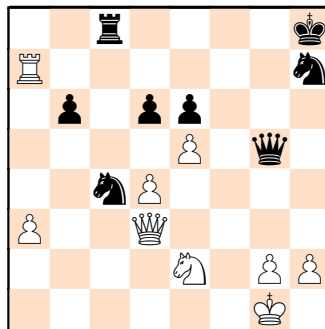
c4. Stopping White's counterplay is more important than trying to win the d4 pawn. After 20...h8 White has nothing. For example 21.fxg5 xg5 22.fxf7 c4 and White only has a pawn for the piece. The attack is dead.

21.fxg5 xg5 21...hxg5?? is suicidal, because of 22.h5+-.

22.h2 h8 Black chooses to give up material. 22...cc8 23.f3 h8 is still winning, but White has realistic counterplay.

23.fxf7 fxf7 24.fxf7 c8 25.fxa7 White has two pawns, but Black is still winning.

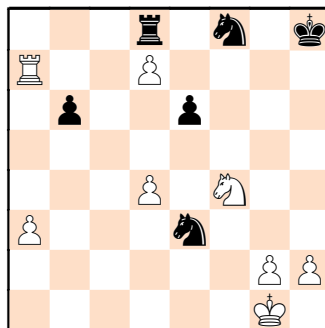
25...c4 26.e5



26...we3+? Black gets nervous and logically decides to simplify the position. This turns out to be a terrible mistake. After 26...hf8+- White has nothing.

27.wxe3 hxe3 28.exd6 White's three pawns and activity are enough to compensate for the piece, though Black is still the one pressing.

28...d8 29.f4 hf8 30.d7



30...d5 30...c2?! 31.c7! is an important idea. Then, after 31...xd4 32.c8 xd7 33.fxf8+ White is better.

30...hg7 may have been more testing. Then, 31.c7!, stopping ...c2, is best (31.f2 c2 will be tough to defend.) 31...f7 32.f2 hg4+ (32...d5 33.xd5 exd5 34.c6= is similar to the game.) 33.f3 hx2+ 34.g3 f1+ 35.f2 d2 36.e3 b3 37.d5= White will eliminate all of Black's pawns shortly.

31.xd5 exd5 32.c7 xd7 32...xd7 33.f2= Black is too tangled up.

33.c6 b5 34.b6 hg7 35.f2 f7 36.fxb5 White has fully equalized and made a draw without any problems. Even though this draw was not needed to win the match (USA won 3-1), the game is an impressive swindle at the 2300+ level.

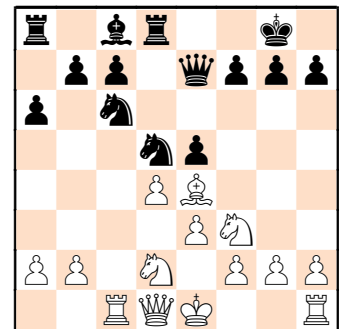
IRINA KRUSH

Board:2
 Result: 7½ pts from 10 games
 Rating Performance:2382

Olympiad veteran and eight-time U.S. Women's Champion GM Irina Krush finished with a strong +5 score, only losing one game to Peruvian WIM Chumpitaz (2278). In the following game, she defeats a young Greek FM in convincing positional style.

Irina Krush 2430
Anastasia Avramidou 2274

Round 9, USA vs. Greece

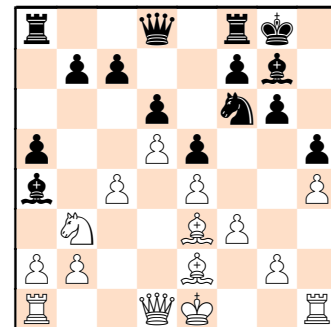


12.fxc6! This positional exchange sacrifice is the only realistic way to



CHESS OLYMPIAD-WOMEN, Chennai, India, July 29 - August 8, 2022								
RK	NAME	+	=	-	TB1	TB2	TB3	TB4
1	Ukraine	7	4	0	18	413,5	30,5	157
2	Georgia	8	2	1	18	392	29	158
3	India 1	8	1	2	17	396,5	29	160
4	USA	8	1	2	17	390	31,5	143
5	Kazakhstan	8	1	2	17	352	28	149
6	Poland	7	2	2	16	395	30	155
7	Azerbaijan	7	2	2	16	389	29,5	156
8	India 2	7	2	2	16	369,5	30	146
9	Bulgaria	7	2	2	16	361	29,5	147
10	Germany	8	0	3	16	344,5	29	140

11-20. Hungary, Armenia, Serbia, Slovakia, Mongolia, Czech Republic, India 3, Lithuania, Cuba, Netherlands 15, etc.

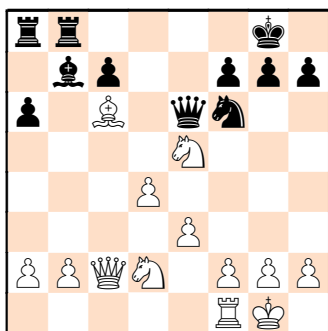


play for an advantage here. 12.0-0 exd4 13.exd4 ♖f6 should be fine for Black.

12...bxc6 13.♟xe5 ♘b7 14.♞c2 The most natural move, with a double attack on c6 and h7. Black may be objectively fine after this move, but it's far from obvious. 14.♞d3!, followed by ♟c5, results in a strong positional bind, and is stronger according to engines.

14...♟f6? Too accommodating. After the dynamic 14...c5! 15.♙xh7+ ♜f8 16.0-0 ♟f6 Black has enough counterplay to salvage equality.

15.♙xc6 ♞db8 16.0-0 ♞e6



17.♞b3?! A strange decision. The knight on b3 turns out to be misplaced. Instead, 17.b3 would prevent any counterplay from Black.

17...♙xc6 18.♟xc6 ♞b5 19.♞c1?! Relocating the knight leaves White uncoordinated. 19.♞c1+- maintains the bind.

19...♞e4? After this, White gets exactly

what she wants. 19...a5 20.a3 ♞b6 21.♟e5 ♞d7± gives Black some hope for survival.

20.♞xe4 ♟xe4 21.♞d3 a5 22.♞c1 Now the bind is secure, Black has no active counterplay, c7 is a permanent weakness, etc. In the game, **White** started slowly advancing her pawns and **won** a crushing positional game.

CARISSA YIP

Board:3
Result: **6 pts from 9 games**
Rating Performance: **2291**

IM Carissa Yip started the tournament with a disastrous 1/4 against 2200 average opposition, but ended the tournament with an impressive 5/5. This last round game topped off her winning streak and was crucial in the USA's 3-1 win against India 1.

E92

Tania Sachdev **2399**
Carissa Yip **2416**

Round 11, India 1 vs. USA

1.d4 ♟f6 2.c4 g6 3.♟c3 ♙g7 4.e4 d6 5.♙e2 0-0 6.♟f3 e5 7.d5 a5 8.♙g5 ♟a6 8...h6 is the main line, but ...♟a6 has been played by several 2600+ players.

9.♞d2 ♟c5 10.h4 h6 11.♙e3 h5 12.f3 ♙d7 13.♞b3 ♟a4 14.♟xa4 ♙xa4 Yip has misplayed the opening, but Black has practical chances. It's a King's Indian after all.

15.c5? White has played perfectly up to this point, but here makes a mistake. White's plan is to castle queenside and play on the kingside. Opening the queenside by c4-c5 simply doesn't fit in with the rest of White's position.

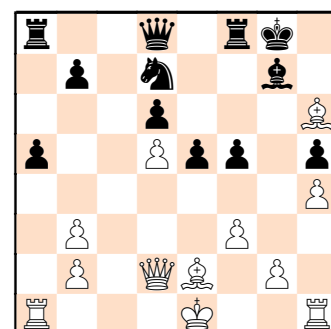
15.♞d3 is best, when after, for example, 15...♙d7 (15...♞d7 16.g4 is extremely dangerous for Black.) 16.0-0 a4 17.♟a1±, White will push g2-g4 in the near future, and Black has no good way of countering this plan.

15...♞d7 16.cxd6 cxd6 17.♞d2 This is played in conjunction with a flawed idea, but White's advantage is already gone. If 17.g4 hxg4 18.fxg4 ♞c8 Black has serious counterplay along the open c-file.

17.♞d3 f5 (17...♞c8 is perfectly playable as well.) 18.♞d2 is more convincing.

17...f5 18.exf5? This must have been White's plan. 18.♙g5 was preferable. For example 18...♙f6 19.♙xf6 ♟xf6 20.exf5 gxf5 21.♞g5+ ♟f7 22.♞xf5 ♞b6 23.♞d2 ♙d7 24.♞d3 ♞ac8∞ is playable for both sides.

18...gxf5 19.♙h6 ♙xb3 20.axb3



20...♞c5 20...f4 21.♙xg7 ♟xg7,

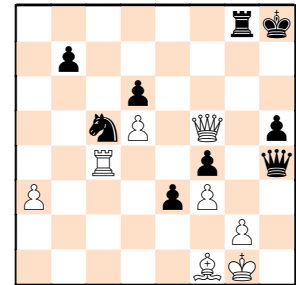


▲ Final round encounter: USA vs. India.

Photo: FIDE/Lennart Ootes

♔h6 34.♖f7 ♖f6 (34...♖f2+ 35.♔h2 ♖xf1 36.♖f8+=) 35.♖g8 Here, the only way for Black to avoid perpetual check is 35...♖f2+ 36.♔h2 ♖g3+ 37.♖xg3 fxg3+ 38.♔xg3 which is equal anyway.

32...♔g7? Blowing the win again. 32...♖g8! is winning. 33.♖f5



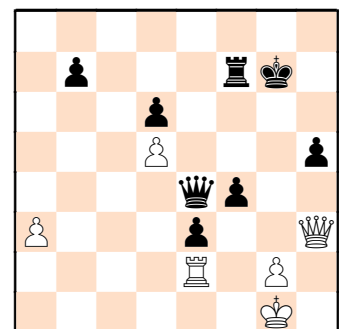
A) 33...♖g5 is the human win. 34.♖g5 (34.♖c2 h4++ is hopeless for White.) 34...♖xg5 35.♖xf4 ♖xd5 36.♖f8+ ♔g7 37.♖e8 ♖e5 38.♖xe5 dxe5 39.♔c4 ♖a4 40.♔f1 ♖c3+- Black hangs on to the extra pawn and is winning.

B) 33...♖f2+ 34.♔h2 ♖g3+ 35.♔g1 e2 36.♖f6+ (Or 36.♖xh5+ ♔g7 37.♔xe2 ♖e1+ 38.♔f1 ♖e3+ 39.♔h2 ♖h8+-) 36...♖g7 37.♖f8+ ♔h7 38.♖f5+ ♔g8 39.♖c8+ ♔f7 40.♖f5+ ♔e7 41.♖e4+ ♖xe4 42.♖xe4+ ♔d8+-.

33.♖c2? 33.♖c7+! transposes to the equalizing lines discussed above.

33...♖e7 The position is under control and Black is completely winning.

34.♔d3 ♖f6 35.♔e4 ♖f7 36.♖h3 ♖xe4 37.fxe4 ♖xe4 38.♖e2



38...♖b1+ 39.♔h2 ♖f5 40.♖f3 ♖g4 41.♖f1 ♖g3+ 42.♔h1 f3 43.♖a1+ ♔h7 44.♖b1+ ♔h6 45.gxf3 ♖xf3+ 46.♖g2 ♖f1+ **White resigned**

followed by ...♔c5, is even stronger.

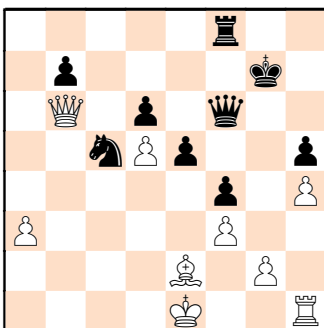
21.♖a3? Another poor move. 21.♔d1 f4 22.♔xg7 ♔xg7 23.0-0 is a lesser evil. 21.♔g5 is also worth considering.

21...f4 22.♔xg7 ♔xg7 23.b4 This was probably White's idea when she played 21.♖a3. Here 23.0-0 ♖xh4 24.♖xa5 is impossible without the bishop on d1, due to 24...♖xb3.

23...axb4 24.♖xb4 ♖xa3 25.bxa3 Black is already winning. The knight on c5 is dominant and Black has no weaknesses, whereas White has to worry about the h4 pawn, while g2 could also come under attack and ...e5-e4 is always in the air, etc.

25...♖f6 An aggressive move, aiming for a quick ...e5-e4. Black is still clearly winning, but this move isn't necessary. After a useful move like 25...♔h6, it's hard to find a move for White. Next up is ...♖g8 and/or ...♖f6.

26.♖b6



26...e4! The pawn on e3 will be a

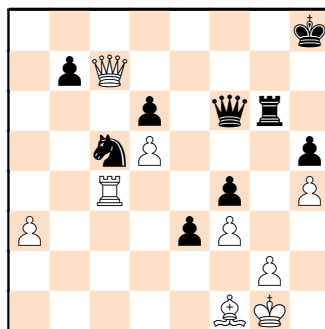
massive thorn in White's position. Now if 26...♔h6, then White is in time to play 27.0-0.

27.0-0 e3 28.♖c1 ♖g8?! Inaccurate. 28...♖d8 was a cleaner move. 29.♖xd8 (29.♖b2+ ♔h6 and White has no counterplay, just as after 29.♖b4 ♖xh4) 29...♖xd8 30.g3 ♔f6 31.gxf4 ♔f5+-

29.♖c4! The rook is now pressuring f4.

29...♔h8 29...♖xh4? 30.♖xc5! dxc5 31.♔d3 actually equalizes! White has too much counterplay.

30.♔f1 ♖g6 31.♖c7 31.♖b5 and 31.♖b1 present some practical problems, though Black is still winning or is close to winning.



31...♖xh4? In a complex position both sides make a series of mistakes. 31...♖g7! 32.♖b6 (32.♖b8+ ♖g8 33.♖c7 ♖g6 and the threat of ...e3-e2 is too strong.) 32...♖g6 33.♖b2 ♖g3+- Black has stabilized and should win soon.

32.♖c8+? The wrong check. 32.♖b8+ ♔g7 (32...♖g8 33.♖xd6=) 33.♖c7+



▲ Women's Olympic Champions – Team Ukraine. Left to right: Anna Muzychuk, Mariya Muzychuk, Nataliya Buksa, Yuliia Osmak and Anna Ushenina. Photo: FIDE/Lennart Ootes

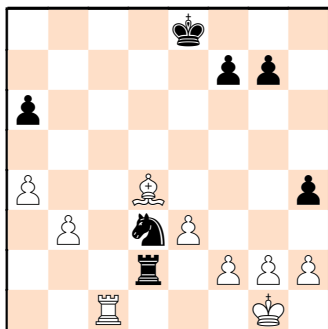
ANNA ZATONSKIH

Board: 4
 Result: 4 pts from 6 games
 Rating Performance: 2102

Veteran IM Zatonskih scored 4/5 on board 4 before this game, defeating three sub 2000 players and drawing with two 2100s. But in round eight things went very badly for her.

Anna Marie Koubova	2115
Anna Zatonskih	2383

Round 8, Czech Republic vs. USA



White has gained two pawns by tactical means and winning should be a matter of technique. Famous last words...

32.♖f1 Playing such a passive move is not a good sign, but White is still totally winning. The immediate **32.♖b1!**? was possible since **32...♗xf2** is met with **33.♖b2 ♗e4 34.♖xd2 ♗xd2 35.♗xg7 ♗xb3 36.♗d4+-**.

32...f6 33.h3 Making luft for the king.

33.f3 ♗d7 34.♖b1+- would be my choice.

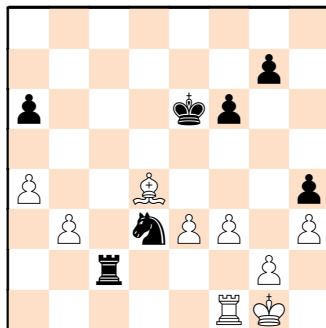
33...♗d7 The immediate **33...♖c2** was trickier.

34.♗c3?? A serious mistake which gives Black extra tempi for no reason. After **34.e4+-** Black has nothing.

34...♖c2 The rook is well placed on c2 because of **...♗c1** threats.

35.♗d4 ♗e6 The immediate **35...♗c1** is harmless on account of **36.b4 ♗e2+ 37.♗h2 ♗xd4 38.♖d1+-**.

36.f3



36...g5? Returning the favor. **36...♗c1** was best. Black wins a pawn back. **37.♗a7 (37.b4 ♗e2+ 38.♗h2 ♗xd4 39.exd4 ♖c4=** is similar to the game.) **37...♗xb3 38.♖b1 ♗c1** White is no longer objectively winning.

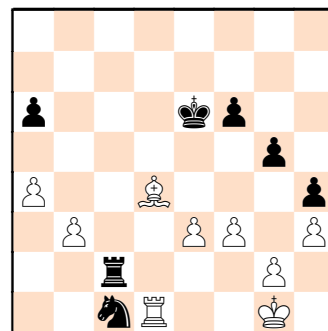
37.♗h2 ♖e2 37...♗c1 38.b4 is harmless.

38.♗g1 ♖d2 39.♗h1 ♖c2 40.♗h2 ♖e2 41.♗g1 ♖c2 After a series of

strange king moves, presumably to reach the time control before making a critical decision, White makes another mistake.

42.♖d1? Allowing **...♗c1** again!
42.♖b1+-.

42...♗c1



Black is no longer lost here.

43.b4 43.♗a7 ♗xb3±.

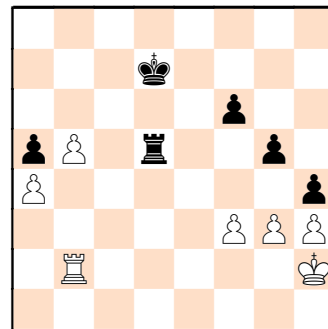
43...♗e2+ 44.♗h2 ♖c4 45.♖b1 45.♗c5 a5= may be what White missed.

45...♗xd4 46.exd4 Black has miraculously made it to a drawn rook endgame.

46...♗d7 46...a5 draws by tactical means, but there is no need to look for anything fancy.

47.d5 ♖d4 48.♖b2 ♖xd5 49.b5 a5 49...axb5 50.axb5 ♗c7 51.b6+ ♗b7 also holds.

50.g3



50...♗c7?! A sad final twist. **50...♖d4** is an easy draw. White cannot hold onto the extra pawn without placing the rook



on a2, which is too passive. White will not be able to make progress.

51.gxh4 gxh4? After coming back from the dead, Zatonskih tragically loses. The inhuman 51...♙d4!! still holds.

52.♙c2+ ♜b7 53.♙c4 White wins a second pawn and **won** 13 moves later. After this heartbreaking loss, which left the USA tying with the Czech Republic 2-2, Zatonskih rested for the last three rounds.

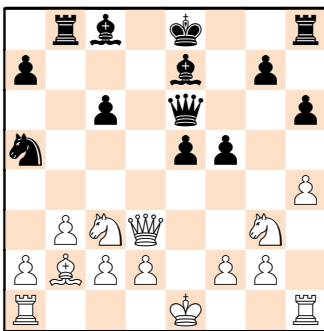
TATEV ABRAHAMYAN

Board: **5**
 Result: **7 pts from 9 games**
 Rating Performance: **2256**

WGM Tatev Abrahamyan scored +6 -1 =2, just losing to Mongolian WCM Mungunzul (2163). She only faced sub 2300 opponents until the last round when team USA was playing India 1.

Tatev Abrahamyan 2291
Kulkarni Bhakti 2373

Round 11, USA vs. India 1



In this position, White is a pawn up after a sharp line of the 4.♘g5 Two Knights Defense, but Black has full compensation. However, Black makes a greedy decision and pays the price.

17...♙b4? 17...♘c4! was best.

A) In case of 18.0-0-0 ♘xb2 19.♙xb2 0-0, the bishop pair and a strong pawn center more than compensate for White's extra pawn.

B) Or after 18.♙xc4 ♙xc4 19.bxc4 ♙xb2 20.♙b1 ♙xb1+ 21.♘xb1 ♙f7 Black has full compensation.

BOARD 1					
RK	NAME	TEAM	TPR	PTS.	GAMES
1	PIA CRAMLING	SWE	2532	9½	11
2	ELINE ROEBERS	NED	2532	7½	10
3	ZHANSAYA ABDUMALIK	KAZ	2529	7	9

BOARD 2					
RK	NAME	TEAM	TPR	PTS.	GAMES
1	NINO BATSIASHVILI	GEO	2504	7½	10
2	ANNA MUZYCHUK	UKR	2472	7	10
3	KHANIM BALAJAYEVA	AZE	2454	7	9

BOARD 3					
RK	NAME	TEAM	TPR	PTS.	GAMES
1	OLIWIA KIOLBASA	POL	2565	9½	11
2	ANNA USHENINA	UKR	2528	7½	9
3	R. VAISHALI	IND	2452	7½	11

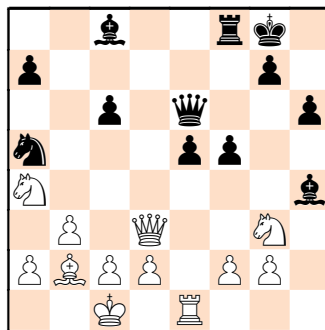
BOARD 4					
RK	NAME	TEAM	TPR	PTS.	GAMES
1	BAT-ERDENE MUNGUNZUL	MGL	2460	8½	10
2	MARIA MALICKA	POL	2453	7	9
3	TANIA SACHDEV	IND	2441	8	11

BOARD 5					
RK	NAME	TEAM	TPR	PTS.	GAMES
1	JANA SCHNEIDER	GER	2414	9	10
2	ULVIYYA FATALIYEVA	AZE	2312	5	8
3	DIVYA DESHMUKH	IND2	2298	7	9

18.0-0-0 ♙xh4? 18...0-0 is preferable, but of course ...♙xh4 is a natural follow-up to ...♙b4.

19.♙xh4 ♙xh4 20.♙e1 Material is now equal, but Black has serious issues holding on to the e5 pawn. White is simply winning here because of that.

20...0-0 21.♘a4 21.♘d1, attacking e5, was also possible.



21...♙d8 21...e4 22.♙c3+- is a double attack.

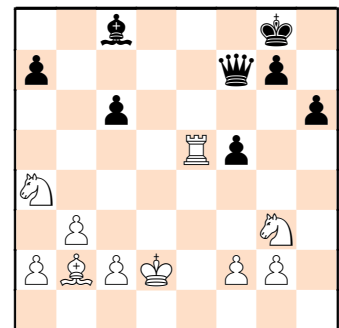
21...♙f6 22.♘h5+-, followed by ♘xf6, is deadly.

21...♙d5 22.♙c3+- The e5 pawn falls next move. (**22.♙xd5+?! cxd5 23.♙xe5**

f4 gives Black serious counterplay.)

22.♙c3 ♙g5 23.♙xe5 ♙f7 24.♙xa5! A strong queen sacrifice which admittedly isn't necessary to win.

24...♙xd2+ 25.♙xd2 ♙xd2 26.♙xd2



White has a rook and two pieces for the queen. Black's pieces are so poorly placed compared to White's that Abrahamyan is completely winning.

26...♙g6 27.♘e2 ♙f7 28.♘f4 ♙g5 29.g3 h5 30.♘c5 White has stabilized the position and **won** 18 moves later. This win helped the U.S. defeat the top seeded India 1 by a 3-1 margin. ■