



FABIANO CARUANA CLAIMS THE TITLE WITH AN UNDEFEATED +4 SCORE

Respect!

By GM Magesh Panchanathan

In contrast to the previous couple of U.S. Championships with 12 players in the field, this year's saw 14 players in each section battling it out for the prestigious title. Caruana took an early lead, but in the second half of the tournament Ray Robson was breathing down his neck at a distance of a mere half-point. Nevertheless, at the tournament that was dubbed the 'Disrespect Championship', Fabiano managed to hold on to first place and clinch his second U.S. Championship victory.

The 2022 U.S. Chess Championship was one of the most anticipated tournaments in recent years. Just days before the tournament started, World Champion Magnus Carlsen had openly accused American GM Hans Niemann of cheating in recent over-the-board tournaments. GM Hikaru Nakamura, who has been one of the internet sensations in Twitch and on YouTube during the pandemic, had also chimed in on the allegations making things very interesting.

With every mainstream media featuring this story, all eyes were on Niemann to see how he would perform under such close scrutiny. And as it turned out, after starting with a nice win in his first-round game, he had a topsy-turvy event finishing on a +1 score – four wins, three losses and six draws.

On the other hand, pre-tournament favorite GM Fabiano Caruana put aside any doubts about his abilities after the 2022 Candidates Tournament, with a fantastic +4 performance, including a win against Niemann which set the tone for the rest of his tournament.

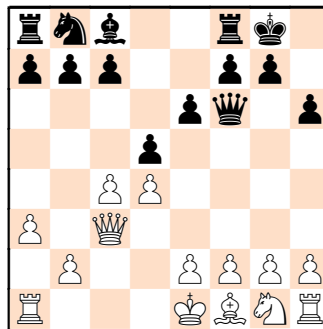
E36

Hans Niemann	2699
Fabiano Caruana	2763

U.S. Championship, Saint Louis 2022

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.♙c2 This has not been one of the top choices for Niemann in the past, as he had preferred to play the Queen's Indian or the Nimzo 4.e3 or 4.f3 prior to this game.

4...0-0 5.a3 ♙xc3+ 6.♙xc3 d5 7.♙g5 h6 8.♙xf6 ♗xf6



9.♘f3 dxc4 10.♙xc4 ♘c6 11.♙c3 ♗e8 12.♗d1 e5 13.d5 ♘b8 14.e3 ♙f5 15.♙e2 ♘d7 16.0-0 ♗ac8



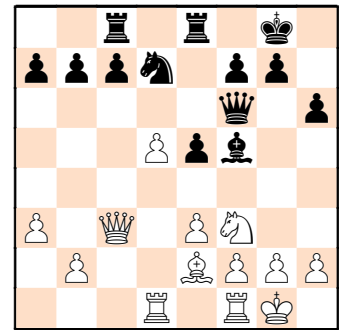


U.S. CHAMPIONSHIP, Saint Louis, October 4–20, 2022

Rk	Name	Elo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Pts	TPR
1	Fabiano CARUANA	2763		½	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	½	1	1	8½	2775
2	Ray ROBSON	2690	½		½	½	½	1	½	½	1	½	½	½	½	1	8	2757
3	Awonder LIANG	2608	½	½		½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	½	1	0	7½	2734
4	Leinier DOMINGUEZ	2747	½	½	½		½	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	1	7½	2723	
5	Jeffery XIONG	2690	½	½	½	½		½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	7	2699	
6	Wesley SO	2774	½	0	½	½	½		½	1	½	½	0	1	1	7	2693	
7	Samuel SEVIAN	2684	½	½	½	½	½	½		½	0	½	1	½	1	7	2700	
8	Sam SHANKLAND	2712	½	½	½	½	½	0	½		½	½	1	½	1	7	2698	
9	Hans NIEMANN	2699	0	0	½	½	½	½	1	½		½	0	1	1	7	2699	
10	Levon ARONIAN	2755	½	½	0	½	½	½	½	½		0	½	½	1	6	2636	
11	Dariusz SWIERCZ	2652	0	½	0	½	½	½	0	½	1	1		0	½	½	5½	2616
12	Christopher YOO	2563	½	½	½	0	0	1	½	0	0	½	1		0	1	5½	2623
13	Aleksandr LENDERMAN	2535	0	½	0	½	½	0	½	½	0	½	½	1		1	5½	2625
14	Elshan MORADIABADI	2534	0	0	1	0	½	0	0	0	0	0	½	0	0		2	2386



PHOTO: Crystal Fuller
▲ Fabiano Caruana



17.a4 This is the first new move in the game. 17.♠b5 was played previously by GM Benjamin Gledura a few months ago. After 17...a6 18.♠xd7 19.♠xd7 19.♠d2 a draw was agreed on move 41 in B.Gledura 2644 - S.Sevian 2703, Saint Louis 2022.

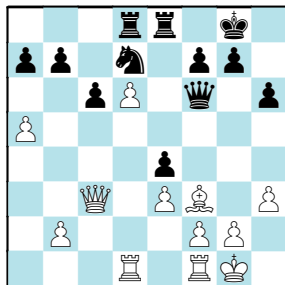
17...c6 18.d6 This is a very dangerous passed pawn, but it is also one that is overextended and well blocked by Black. Now the main struggle in the game will be whether this pawn can create enough problems in the opponent's camp or will Black be able to neutralize and eventually win it.

18...♠cd8 19.a5 ♠g4 20.h3?! 20.♠b4 is a more direct and better approach by White. 20...e4 21.♠d4 ♠e5 22.♠xg4 ♠xg4 23.h3 ♠e5 24.♠xb7 ♠xd6 25.♠f5 (25.♠xa7?? ♠a8 26.♠b6 ♠eb8 traps the queen 27.♠e2 runs into 27...♠f3+!-+) 25...♠c5=.

20...♠xf3 21.gxf3 This is the reason why 20.h3 was dubious. White is now forced

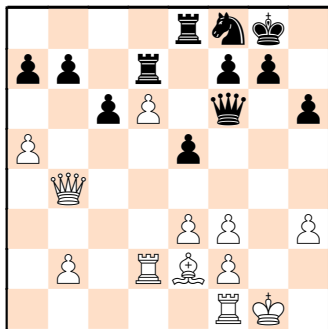


to recapture with the pawn on f3. Recapturing with the bishop eventually drops the d6 pawn.
21. ♖xf3? e4



A) 22. ♖xf6 ♜xf6 23. ♗g4 ♞e5+ (23... ♜xg4 24. hxg4 ♞e6 25. d7 ♞e7 26. a6! allows White to save the game, since after 26... b6 27. ♞d6 he buys enough time to defend the d7 pawn.)
B) 22. ♗e2 ♜xc3 23. bxc3 ♞e5 is certainly better for the second player.

21... ♜f8 22. ♜b4 ♞d7 23. ♞d2



23... ♜g6 Better is 23... a6 as it is important that Black prevents White from playing his own pawn to a6. In the next few moves it looks like both sides have underestimated the power of White's a5-a6 pawn break...

24. ♞fd1 24. a6! bxa6 25. ♞c1 ♞c8 26. ♜g4 ♞cd8 27. ♞xc6 ♞xd6=.

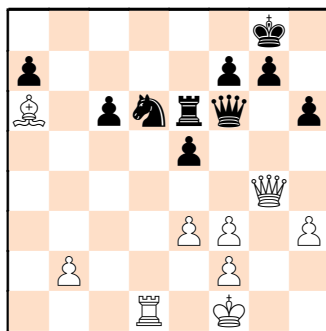
24... ♜h4 24... a6 again rules out this option for White.

25. ♜g4 25. a6 ♜xf3+ 26. ♗xf3 ♜xf3 27. axb7 ♞b8 28. ♜c5 ♜xh3 29. ♜xe5 ♞bxb7 and the position still remains balanced.

25... ♞e6 26. ♜f1 ♜f5 27. a6 bxa6 28. ♗xa6 ♞dxd6 29. ♞xd6 ♜xd6



Magesh Panchanathan is an Indian grandmaster who won the World Open in 2005 and the Hastings Masters in 2020. Magesh graduated from the University of Texas Dallas (UTD) in 2008, before switching to chess coaching. Together with his wife, WFM Anuprita Patil, Magesh founded a chess academy named "Kings and Queens Chess Academy" which has locations in both New Jersey and North Carolina.



30. ♗d3? White has to be a little more accurate in creating counterplay here. This mistake simply allows Black to consolidate his position with an extra pawn.

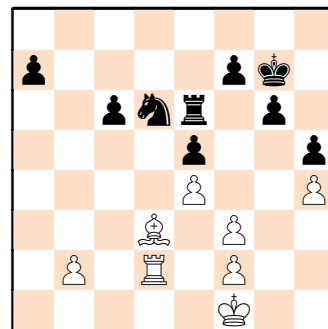
30. ♜b4 g6 31. ♗e2 (31. ♜c5 ♜f5 32. ♜xa7 is straightforward play for White, but this kind of pawn grabbing is also very dangerous. 32... ♜g7 33. ♞d7 ♜h4 34. ♗c4 ♜xf3 35. ♗xe6 ♜xe6 and Black's attack is very strong.) 31... ♜g7 32. ♜c5 ♜f5 33. ♞d7 ♜h4 (33... e4

34. ♗c4 ♞e7 35. ♞xe7 ♜xe7 36. ♜e4 ♜xb2=) 34. ♗c4 ♜f5 35. ♗xe6 ♜xe6 By avoiding ♜xa7 White has saved an important tempo and that makes a huge difference, particularly when it comes to defending the king.

30...g6 31.h4? This move will only end up as a target for Black, so it was better to leave the pawn on h3.

31...h5 32. ♜g3 ♜g7 33. e4 ♜e7 34. ♜g5 ♜b7 35. ♜c1 ♜b4 35... ♞f6! would really exploit White's h4 weakness.

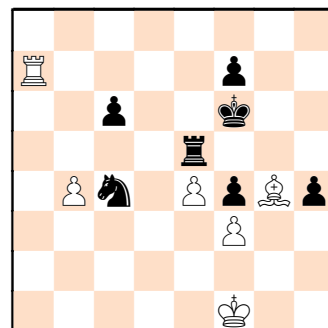
36. ♜d2 ♜xd2 37. ♞xd2



37... ♜f6 Better is 37... ♜b5 and, since the black knight is heading for d4, White has to trade off to a lost rook and pawn endgame with 38. ♗xb5 cxb5+.

38. b4 g5? 39. ♞a2 ♜c8 40. ♗a6 ♜d6 41. ♗e2 ♜c8 42. f4 Hans is expecting Fabiano to play ... ♜b6 if he repeats moves, so he tries to find a better alternative on his own. If 42. ♗a6 then 42... ♜b6=.

42...gxf4 43. ♗xh5 ♜d6 44. ♞xa7 exf4 45. f3 ♞e5 46. ♗g4 ♜c4



47. ♜g2?? This seemingly normal



PHOTO: Lemart Ootes
Hans Niemann vs. Fabiano Caruana

♠h2 75.♔d1 ♚h1+ 76.♔e2 ♔c2 77.♚d2+ ♔b3 78.♚d8 c3 79.♚b8+ ♔c2 80.♚a8 ♚h7 White resigned

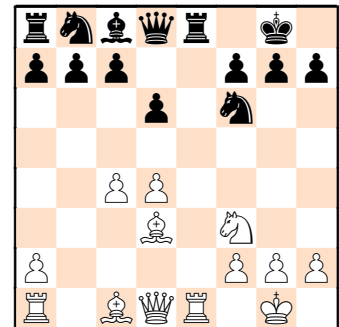
Throughout the tournament Caruana was closely followed by GM Ray Robson, who gave another brilliant performance, finishing half a point behind Fabiano with an undefeated +3 score. In this way Ray also managed to join the exclusive 2700-club. Moreover, he played one of the best games of the tournament against Wesley So.

E50

Ray Robson	2690
Wesley So	2774

U.S. Championship, Saint Louis 2022

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♙b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♘f3 ♚xc3+ 6.bxc3 d6 7.♚d3 e5 8.e4 ♚e8 9.0-0 exd4 10.cxd4 ♘xe4 11.♚e1 ♘f6



12.♚xe8+ In a 2022 Internet game, Wesley himself had tried 12.♚g5 and come very close to winning against the young Russian GM Alexey Sarana after 12...♚xe1+ 13.♚xe1 ♘bd7 14.♘d2 h6 15.♙h4 ♘f8? (15...g5 16.♚g3 ♘h5=) 16.♘e4 g5 17.♘g5 hxg5 18.♚xg5 although the game ended in a draw on move 45.

12...♚xe8 12...♘e8 did not help the world No. 2 player Ding Liren any better in the following game: 13.♚g5 f6 14.♚d2 ♘d7 15.♚c2 ♘f8 16.♚e1 c6 17.a4 ♘c7 18.d5 c5 19.♘h4 ♘a6 20.♚f5 ♘b4 21.♚e4 ♚d7 22.♚e3 ♙xa4 23.♙xh7+ ♔f7 24.♘f5 ♘xh7 25.♘h6+ 1-0 V.Ivanchuk 2678 - Ding Liren 2791, Internet 2020.

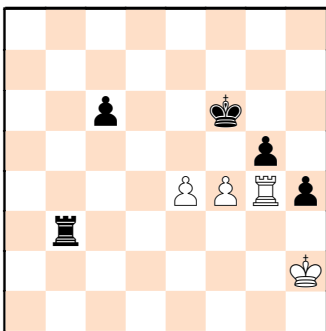
13.h3 ♘bd7 14.♚c2 b6 15.♙b2 ♙b7 16.d5

way to improve his position loses an important tempo and with it White's last chance to grab the c6 pawn. Correct was 47.♚a6 ♘e3+ 48.♔f2 ♚b5 49.♚xc6+ ♔g7 50.♚c5 ♚xb4 51.♙h3 ♚b2+ 52.♔g1 and Black has no way to penetrate into White's position.

47...♚b5 48.♚a4 48.♚a6 is no longer useful because Black has 48...♘e5.

48...♘e5 49.♔h3 ♔g5 The rest seems to be just a simple technical task for Caruana.

50.♚a8 ♚xb4 51.♚h8 ♔f6 52.♚h5 ♚b5 53.♚f5+ ♔e7 54.♙h5 ♘g6 55.♙xg6 fxg6 56.♚xf4 g5 57.♚g4 ♔f6 58.f4 ♚b3+ 59.♔h2

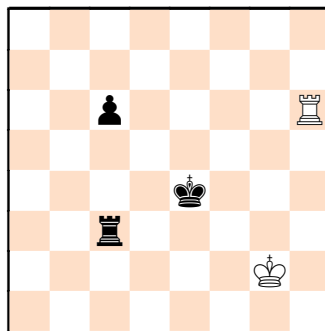


59...♚b2+?? A sudden mistake. 59...gxf4 60.♚xf4+ ♔e5 61.♚xh4 ♚e3 62.♚h6 ♚c3 (62...c5 63.♚h5+ ♔d4 64.♚d5+ ♔c4 65.♚e5=) 63.♔g2 ♔xe4 transposes to the game.

60.♔h3?? There goes the final chance to make a draw in this complicated rook endgame. The white king is supposed to be heading closer to the queening square of the most dangerous passed c-pawn.

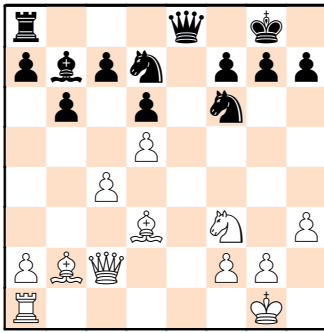
Therefore 60.♔g1! gxf4 61.♚xf4+ ♔e5 62.♚xh4 ♚e2 63.♚h6 ♚c2 64.♔f1 ♔xe4 65.♔e1 ♔d3= As you can see, the main difference in this variation from the game is the black king does not get to c2 and stop the white king from reaching the queening c1 square.

60...♚b3+ 61.♔h2 gxf4 62.♚xf4+ ♔e5 63.♚xh4 ♚e3 64.♚h6 ♚c3 65.♔g2 ♔xe4



66.♚d6 If 66.♔f2 then 66...♔d3++ and the black king reaches c2, preventing the white king from getting in front of the pawn.

66...♔e3 67.♚e6+ ♔d2 68.♚d6+ ♔c2 69.♔f2 c5 70.♚c6 ♔d2 71.♚c8 c4 72.♚c7 ♚c2 73.♚d7+ ♔c3+ 74.♔e1



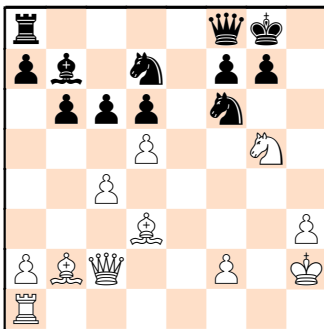
White is down a pawn, but has his full artillery pointing towards the black king. His extra space in the center also adds to Black's overall problems. Even though this position is objectively equal, it is much more comfortable to play as White.

16...xf8 **16...e7** **17.g4** **h6** **18.e1** **xf8** **19.h2** **e8** The purpose of **16...e7** is to draw the white rook to the e-file so that Black can trade it off, but after **20.g5!** there would be pretty much a transposition to the game after **20...hxg5** (**20...xe1** **21.gxf6** looks extremely dangerous for Black, since in response to the only move **21...e5**, White keeps pressing with his powerful bishop pair by **22.hxe5** **dx5** **23.h7+** **h8** **24.fxg7+** **xf7** **25.f5**.) **21.g1**.

17.g4 **h6** **18.h2** **c6?** Unfortunately this inaccuracy was something that Robson was already aware of from his home preparation and he goes on to punish it in the cleanest fashion.

Instead **18...e8** **19.g5** **hxg5** **20.g1** **b5** leads to a very interesting position which still hangs in the balance.

19.g5 **hxg5** **20.hxg5**



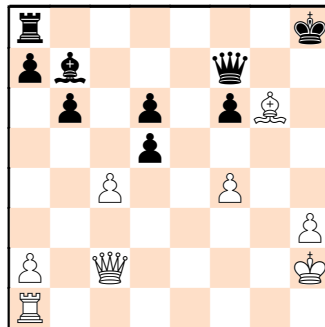
20...cxd5 **21.h7+** **h8** **22.f5** **h5** **23.f4** **g6** **24.f6** Here **24.g1** is equally good for White.



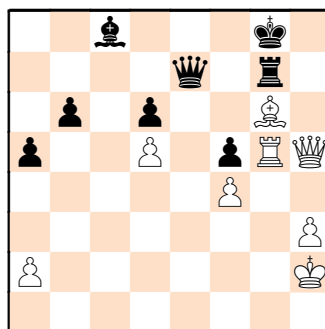
▲ Ray Robson

PHOTO: Austin Fuller

24...xf6 **25.h7+** **xf7** **26.f6** Black's king is now extremely exposed.



26...e7 **27.f2** **f5** **28.g1** **g8** **29.g5** **g7** **30.h4+** **g8** **31.h5** **h8** **32.cxd5** **a5**



33.f6! A beautiful little move that Ray was able to find in time pressure, confirming his reputation of being a "tactical beast".

33...b5 The point behind **33.f6** is concealed in the following variation: **33...xf6** **34.h7+** **xf7** **35.g8+!!** **xf8** **36.fxf6+** **xf6** **37.fxf8+.**

34.f6 **h7+** **xf8** **35.g2** The threats of **f5** and **h8** seal the deal. However not an immediate **35.f5** because of **35...e2+**, with a perpetual check. So **Black resigned.**

One more exciting thing to look forward to this year was seeing how GM Levon Aronian fared in his first ever U.S. Championship. However, Levon's outing in Saint Louis turned out to be a rather forgettable one. He had some close calls and unlucky situations, but in general was nowhere near his best form, finishing with a -1 score.

In the next game he was up against the University of Chicago student and former child prodigy, Awonder Liang, who was able to finish the tournament on a high note with a shared third place.

HOW BIZARRE

In the penultimate round, the worldwide chess audience witnessed a most bizarre incident. In the game between Sam Sevian and Hans Niemann, the latter was pondering over his 45th move, when his opponent suddenly picked up Hans' king and kept playing with it in his hands! Then, both players entered into a conversation including hand gestures, when, unexpectedly, Sevian ripped the cross off the top of the same black king and placed the 'decapitated' piece back on a random square on the board. After Niemann stopped the clock and called for an arbiter, the situation calmed down within a minute or so and play resumed.

In the post-game interview, Niemann described the incident as "just a misunderstanding and no drama," explaining that Sevian was actually intending to have the king's cross glued back onto the piece. However, Niemann added that he was confused and annoyed that all of this happened on his time – while he was thinking over his move.



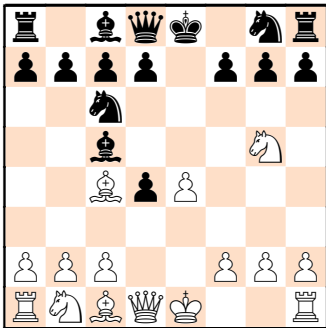
C44

Awonder Liang	2608
Levon Aronian	2755

U.S. Championship, Saint Louis 2022

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♙c4
Awonder has opened with the exciting Scotch Gambit and Aronian's ambitious play soon gets him into trouble.

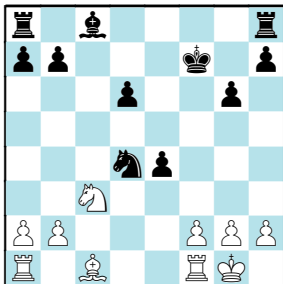
4...♙c5 5.♘g5



5...♘h6 Best according to modern theory. However, Awonder wanted to test his worthy opponent's memory of this tricky line – and it paid off!

6.♘xf7 ♘xf7 7.♙xf7+ ♔xf7 8.♚h5+ g6 9.♚xc5 d5 10.c3 dxe4 11.0-0 ♖e8
As Awonder pointed out after the game, most likely Aronian was still looking for options to play for a win and avoid a split result endgame in which Black does not have many chances.

Instead, 11...♚d6 12.♚xd6 cxd6 13.cxd4 ♘xd4 14.♘c3



- A) Efforts to save the pawn by 14...♖e8? would not help because White gets too much activity after 15.♙e3 ♘f5 16.♘d5±;
- B) 14...♙f5 15.♙h6 ♖hd8 16.♖ad1 ♘c6 17.♖fe1 and White has a much better endgame after recovering the pawn.

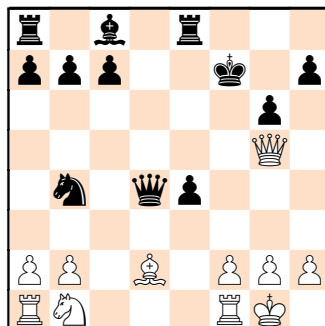


▲ Awonder Liang PHOTO: Crystal Fuller

C) 14...♙g4! 15.♘xe4 ♘c2 16.♘xd6+ (16.♖b1 ♙e2 is the main idea behind 14...♙g4) 16...♔e6 (16...♔e7 17.♘xb7 ♘xa1 18.♙g5+ ♔f7 19.♖xa1=) 17.♙f4 ♘xa1 18.♖xa1 and interestingly, the extra pawn and active knight on d6 are sufficient compensation for the exchange.

12.cxd4 ♚xd4 13.♚g5 ♘b4 Very recently in Austria former world champion Vishy Anand faced the same Scotch Gambit against Azeri GM Rauf Mamedov. Anand chose 13...♚f6 in that game and managed to survive the scare without much difficulty. 14.♚g3 ♘d4 15.♘c3 c6 16.♙g5 ♚e5 17.♖ad1N ♘f5 18.♚xe5 ♖xe5 19.♖fe1 h6 20.♙f4 ♖e8 21.♘xe4 g5 22.♘d6+ ♘xd6 23.♙xd6 ♖xe1+ 24.♖xe1 ♙e6 25.a3 ♖d8 26.♙b4 ♖e8 27.♙c3 ♙d5 28.♖xe8 ♔xe8 29.f3 ♔f7 30.♔f2 h5 and a draw was agreed in R.Mamedov 2646 - V.Anand 2756, Mayrhofen 2022.

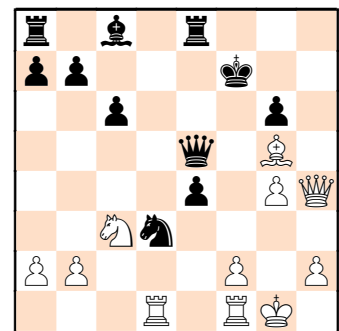
14.♙d2



14...♚d6? 14...♔g8 was the only move to remain in the game, but Aronian missed this and never had a chance to get back into it again.

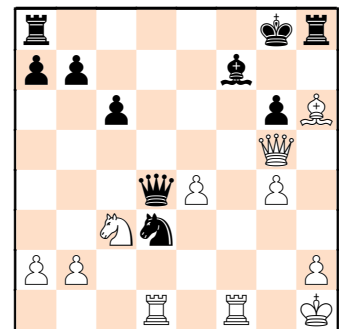
15.♘c3 c6 16.♖ad1 ♙f5 17.g4 A very aggressive approach by Awonder. Also 17.f3 would leave Black with serious problems over the board, as his king is highly vulnerable – particularly if White succeeds in opening the f-file...

17...h6 18.♚h4 ♙c8 19.♙xh6 ♘d3 20.♙g5 ♚e5



21.f3 ...and here it comes with devastating effect!

21...♖h8 22.fxe4+ ♔g8 23.♙h6 ♚d4+ 24.♔h1 ♙e6 25.♚g5 ♙f7



26.♖xf7! ♖xh6 27.♖xd3! ♚xd3 28.♚f6! The last nuance which was apparently easy to find for the young grandmaster. Now it's all over.

28...♖xh2+ 29.♔xh2 ♚d2+ 30.♔g1 ♚c1+ 31.♔f2 ♚h6 32.g5
Black resigned

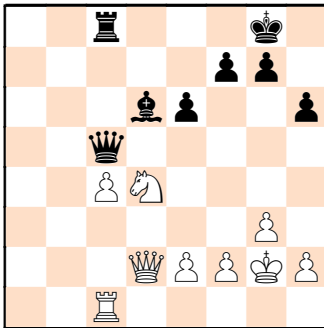
Alex Lenderman had a very interesting moment in his game against Leinier Dominguez, who also finished on a



shared third place, but with an undefeated +2 score. However, this score might well have been different had Lenderman spotted a sudden opportunity.

Aleksandr Lenderman	2535
Leinier Dominguez	2747

U.S. Championship, Saint Louis 2022



Dominguez is down a pawn and was eagerly looking for an opportunity to make a draw. And he came up with a very interesting idea – the only problem was that it was a bad one!

One curiosity is that Leinier played this move after only a few seconds thought, although he had spent 10

minutes on a couple of moves before this one. This leads us to believe that he probably had the whole thing calculated in advance and so just played his next move instantly once they reached this position, without feeling the need to spend any time checking it.

29...♔xg3?? A very exciting sacrifice, but with precise play Lenderman could have walked away with a full point. Black's idea is very straightforward – he wants to win the piece back with the ...♔d8 pin, and then follow up with ...e5 if the knight on d4 is protected.

30.hxg3?? Lenderman surprisingly returns the favour after thinking for just a little over a minute!

Correct was 30.♔xg3! Once you identify a problem with a variation, looking for a solution becomes much easier. In the main variation White was not able to save the knight with ♖b3 because of ...♗c6+, so the king recapture makes all the difference – 30...♔d8 31.♖b3! ♗e5+ runs into 32.♗f4, when White is just a piece up.

30...♔d8 31.e3 Allow me to remind you

that 31.♖b3 fails to the simple check 31...♗c6+, when White loses his queen.

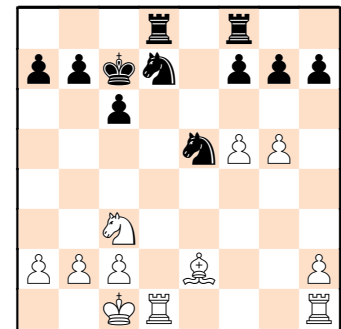
31...e5 32.♗e2 Again 32.♖b3 still runs into the same problem of 32...♗c6+ winning.

32...exd4 33.exd4 ♔xd4 The smoke has now cleared and the game quickly fizzled out to a draw after **34.♗e8+ ♗f8 35.♗c6 ♗d6 36.♗e8+ ♗f8 37.♗c6 ♗d6 38.♗e8+ ♗f8 Draw**

In the battle of the Young vs. Younger, i.e. Jeffery Xiong vs. Christopher Yoo, experience prevailed and Xiong's calm positional sense allowed him to outplay his younger opponent.

Christopher Yoo	2563
Jeffery Xiong	2690

U.S. Championship, Saint Louis 2022



From this seemingly equal position, Jeffery went on to outplay his younger opponent in elegant style. Black has a very strong knight on e5 and White's pawns on the kingside are overextended, but Black has to be very precise to make anything out of this position.

17...♗h8! Not necessarily the top choice by a computer, but a simple and powerful plan by Black.

18.h4 h6 19.♖e4 hxg5 20.hxg5 ♖b6 Threatening to take over the h-file after playing ...♔xd1.

21.♗xh8 ♗xh8 22.f6? 22.♗e1 ♗h2 23.b3 ♖d5 24.♖d1 would have left White's position passive, but still defensible.

22...g6

THE DISRESPECT CHAMPIONSHIP – NIEMANN CONTROVERSY

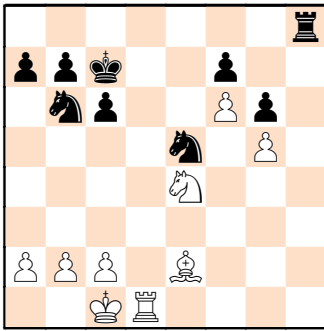
Hans Niemann had been hitting the headlines of virtually every mainstream chess media even before the start of the 2022 U.S. Championship. More spice was added in his post-game interview as early as after round 1 in which he defeated his junior arch-rival Christopher Yoo (ACM earlier reported on this rivalry – ACM #23, page 60).

"I think that this game is a message to everyone. You know, this entire thing started with me saying 'chess speaks for itself' and I think this game spoke for itself and showed the chess player that I am and also showed that I am not going to back down and I'm going to play my best chess here regardless of the pressure that I'm under. That's all I want to say about this game... It was such a beautiful game, I don't need to describe it."

In round 2, Christopher Yoo played a fantastic game, beating the 2021 U.S. Champion Wesley So, and with the black pieces – "I felt disrespected on every level... I did feel like I channeled in a bit of my anger from that to play some aggressive chess today."

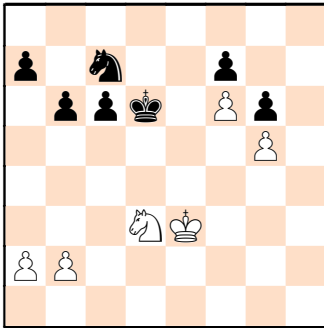
Then, after round 3, Wesley So added more wood to the fire, giving his thoughts on Niemann: "He's disrespected pretty much everybody in the chess world at this stage, calling other players idiots and stuff. And also beating the great Magnus, everybody knows that Hans is probably the most disrespectful teenager in chess."

At the same time, Fabiano Caruana tweeted that "the 2022 Disrespect Championship is just warming up", before he finally concluded the topic after round 12 with "The disrespect just reached its peak. Sam decapitated Hans' king."



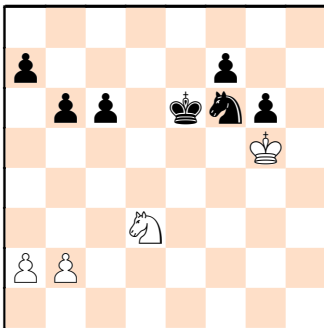
23.c4? With hopes of creating some counterplay, but in reality there is none.

23...bxc4 24.xc4 dxc4 25.dxc5 d6 26.e1 e8 27.e8 dxe8 28.d2 b6 29.d3 d6 30.e3 d7



31.e4 Or 31.f4 e6+ 32.g4 c5-+.

31...e6 32.e5 dxc5+ 33.f4 e6+ 34.e4 d8 35.f4 e6 36.g4 b7 37.g5 c5 38.f2 d7 39.d3 dxf6



Black has managed to win three pawns in the course of 10 moves or so (!) without dropping any of his own.

40.b4 c5 41.d6 a5 42.d8+ e7 43.c6+ d7 44.e5+ e6 45.d4

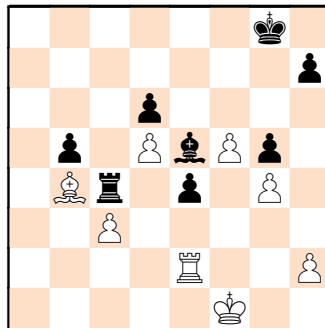
d7 46.a4 d5 47.b3 d4 48.d6 c3 49.dxf7 dxb3 50.f4 xa4 White resigned

The ever-solid Wesley So had to settle for a +1 score after two tough losses against Christopher Yoo and Ray Robson.

Elshan Moradiabadi's tournament was summed up by his ten-move loss against Leinier Dominguez in a well-known trap in the Petroff Defense (see ACM #29, page 4). Then, in the following position, Elshan was comfortably holding his own against Sam Shankland, and just when it looked like a peace treaty would be signed, things went horribly wrong after he made a slight miscalculation.

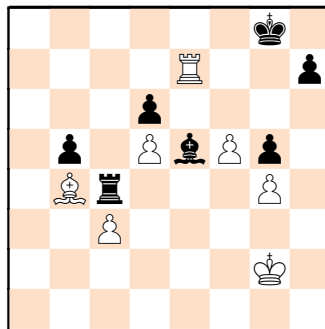
Sam Shankland	2712
Elshan Moradiabadi	2534

U.S. Championship, Saint Louis 2022



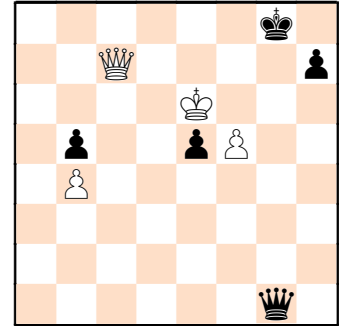
Although the position is clearly equal, things now started to go wrong for Moradiabadi.

37...e3 38.e3 xh2 39.g2 f4 40.e7 e5



Elshan was probably counting on this being a drawing continuation, but one surprise move changed this whole evaluation!

41.e5! e4g4+ 42.f3 e4b4 43.cxb4 dx5 44.d6 f7 45.e4 g4 46.d5 g3 47.d7 g2 48.d8 g1 49.c7+ e8 50.e6



Possibly the idea that was underestimated or missed by Black. The king on e6 uses the e5 pawn as an umbrella pawn shelter against any checks from the black queen. Also, White has a dangerous passed pawn on f5 which deprives Black of any queen trade into a king and pawn endgame.

50...h6 50...g7 loses to 51.g7+ xg7 52.e7+-.

51.f7+ h8 52.e8+ h7 53.d7+ h8 54.f6 e4 55.f7 g4+ 56.e7 g5+ 57.e8 g6 58.d4+ h7 59.e7 Black resigned

In the end, the tournament that was dubbed the 'Disrespect Championship' received a lot of attention off the board, but it also lived up to its expectations on the board. Several drawn games were well fought with players battling more than 100 moves before settling down peacefully. With players like Christopher Yoo, Awonder Liang, Jeffery Xiong, Sam Sevian and Hans Niemann all aged under 25, the future of U.S. Chess seems to be in safe hands. The fact that Caruana, who had just recently turned 30, might be part of the old guard feels surreal.

Chess is getting younger, and the quality of the games has reached a new high. A few years back, young players who got their GM title did not have access to play and challenge the next level of players, but thanks to the support of the Saint Louis Chess Club and the recent growth of elite grandmasters in the USA, these youngsters are now competing against the best of the best in the world. We can certainly look forward to a bright future for all of them. ■