

## Games From Recent Events by Miguel Ararat



**(170) Ryan,Ratliff (1580) - Henry,Thomas [C42]**

Jacksonville Scholastic Champ 2023,  
11.02.2023

[Ararat,Miguel]

**1.e4 e5 2.Nf3 Nf6 3.Nxe5 d6 4.Nf3 Nxe4 5.Nc3 Nxc3** [A playable move that creates a mobile central pawn mass and secures a middle game with more space as in the game Escobar - Coca, Medellin 2016 (see below)]

**6.bxc3** [6.dxc3 The capture with the d pawns gives white a safe king in the middlegame (if an opposite side castling situation arrives) and play along the central files. The following game illustrates white's exploitation of the pawn structure and central files after 6.dxc3. 6...Be7 7.Be3 Nc6 8.Qd2 Be6 9.0-0-0 Qd7 10.b3 Bf6 11.h3 0-0 -0 12.g4 h6 13.Bg2 Kb8 14.Rhe1 Rhe8 15.Kb2 1-0 (54) Carlsen,M (2844)-Hou,Y (2673) Wijk aan Zee 2016]

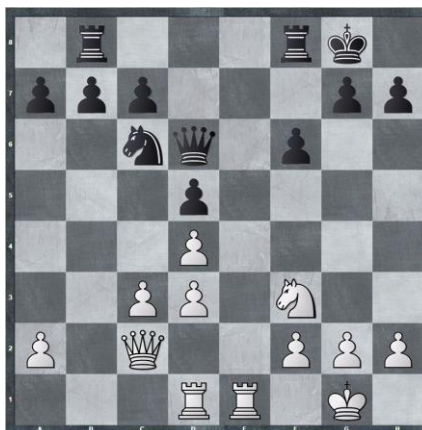
**6...Be7 7.Bc4** [7.d4 0-0 8.Bd3 Re8 9.0-0 Nd7 10.c4 Nf8 11.h3 Bf6 12.c3 Bd7 13.Qc2 Bc6 14.d5 1/2-1/2 (62) Escobar Medina,A (2297)-Coca Cubillos,J (2089) Medellin 2016]

**7...0-0 8.0-0 Nc6 9.d4 Bf5 10.Bf4 d5 11.Bd3 Bxd3 12.cxd3 f6** [[#]]



**13.Qb3** [13.Rb1 This is an alternative move to try to create light square weaknesses on the queenside after b6. This threat wins a tempo to double the rooks on the e file and was used by Anand (2817) Vs kasimdzhanov (2687), 2011. The game ended in a draw after an interesting middlegame. 13...Rb8 14.Re1 Qd7 15.Rb2 Rf7 16.Rbe2]

**13...Rb8 14.Rad1 Na5 15.Qc2 Bd6 16.Bxd6 Qxd6 17.Rfe1 Nc6** [[#] After the exchanges black equalizes and white has not time to use the e file.



**18.Re2** [18.Re3 Rfe8 19.Rde1 Kf8=]

**18...Rfe8 19.Rde1 Re7 20.Rxe7 Nxe7 20.Qe2 Ng6 22.g3 Kf7 23.a4 Qc6 24.Qc2 Re8 25.Rxe8 Qxe8 26.Qb3** [26.c4 Qc6 27.Qb3 Transposes to the game.]

**26...Qc6** [26...Ne7 This alternative is similar to 26...Qc6, but has the potential to create a massive

simplification to reach a draw if that is the result black is looking for. 27.Qxb7 Qxa4 28.Qxc7 Qd1+ 29.Kg2 Qxd3 30.Qxa7 Qxc3]

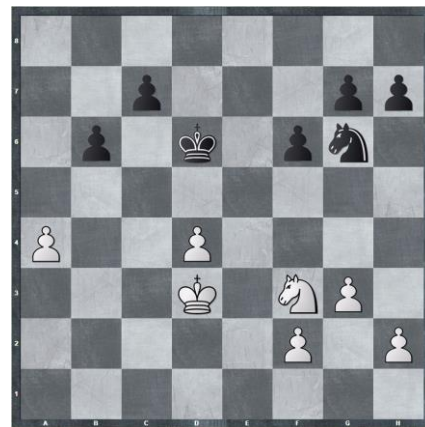
**27.c4 dxc4 28.dxc4 b6 29.c5+ Kf8 30.cxb6 Qxb6** [30...axb6 31.Kf1 Ke7 32.Ke2 Kd6 33.Kd3]

**31.Qxb6 axb6** [31...cxb6 This capture way from the center creates a queenside pawn majority 2 versus one that can be decisive in an endgame as in the game Brynell (2495) vs Berg (2612), 2010. 32.Kf1 Ke7 33.Ke2 Kd6 34.Kd3 a6 Black's better pawn structure gives him a small and stable advantage.]

**32.Kf1 Ke7 33.Ke2 Kd6 34.Kd3** [[#] Black has the better pawn structure and can look forward to attack the weak white pawns on a4 and d4. However, the pawn on a4 can only be attacked with a knight on c5, b6 or c3 and at this stage of the game all three squares are unavailable. In a short time control game this type of pawn and knight endgames are difficult to play, because the many opportunities that each knight creates after each move.]

**34...c5** [34...Ne7 35.Kc4 c6 36.Nd2 Nc8]

**35.dxc5+ Kxc5 36.Kc3 Ne7 37.Kb3 Nc6 38.Kc3 Na5 39.Nd4 Kd5 40.Nf5 g6 41.Ne3+ Kc6 42.Ng4 f5 43.Ne5+ Kd5 44.Nd7 Kc6 45.Ne5+ Kd6 46.Nd3 Nb7 47.Kb4 Kc7 48.Nf4 Kd6 49.Kb5 Nc5** [[#]]



50.a5 bxa5 51.Kxa5 Ne6 52.Nd3 Kd5 53.Kb4 Ke4 54.Kc3 h6 [54...Kf3 55.Kd2 Kg2 56.h4]

55.Kd2 Nd4 56.Nf4 g5 57.Ne2 Kf3  
[At this point black has 15 seconds on his clock and instead of winning the h2 pawn he loses the knight and the game.]

[57...Nf3+ 58.Kd1 Nxh2]

58.Nxd4+ Kxf2 59.Nxf5 Kg2 60.Nxh6

1-0

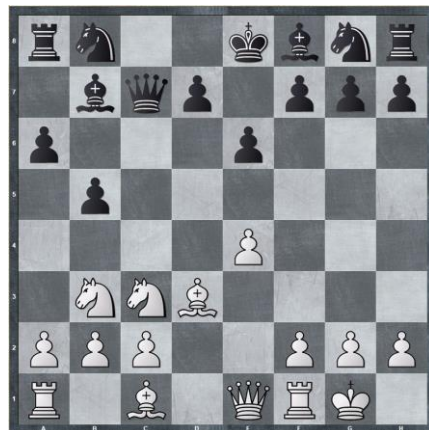
(169) Nikola,Mitkov (2535) - Vladimir,Georgiev (2500) [B43]  
8th Annual Gulf Coast 2023  
lichess.org, 08.01.2023  
[Ararat,Miguel]

1.e4 c5 2.Nc3 [A move order that bothers Najdorf players, because d6 may not fit if white decides not to play an open Sicilian.]

2...e6 3.Nf3 a6 4.d4 cxd4 5.Nxd4  
[The Sicilian Kan is a flexible option to play with the black pieces. One of the main values of playing the Kan in open tournaments is that a player can choose to go for sharp or positional middlegames according to the needs of the tournament. For example, after 5.Bd3 Black can go for 5...b5 or 5...Bc5 with sharp play or 5...Nc6 taking the game to the Taimanov variation, more likely followed by Nge7. However, using 4...a6 to attain a pure Sicilian Taimanov gives white additional options. The curious reader can find all the nuances and move transpositions out of the Paulsen/Taimanov system in the book The Taimanov Sicilian by Graham Burgess (Gambit Publications)]

5...b5 6.Bd3 Bb7 7.0-0 Qb6 8.Nb3 Qc7 [Mitkov plays this position in the same way than eleven year ago, against J.Colas at the 2012 World Open.]

9.Qe1 [#] Cunning play by white. If black continues with 9...b4 then white can play with a Bf4 instead of f4 an win a tempo on the black queen( no check after Qb6) see variation below.]



[9.Be3 b4? (9...Nf6= Black gets play against e4.) 10.Na4 Nf6 11.Nb6]

9...d6?! [Black deviates from Nf6 and gets hit with a4.]

[9...b4 10.Ne2 Nf6 11.Bf4 Qb6?; 9...Nf6 10.Bd2 b4 11.Nd1 Nc6 12.f4 a5 13.Nf2 a4<sup>3</sup> 1/2-1/2 (53) Mitkov,N (2461)-Taghizadeh,R (2346) Las Vegas 2017]

10.Bd2 Nf6 11.a4 bxa4 12.Nxa4 Nbd7 [12...Nc6 13.Na5 Be7 14.Nxb7 Qxb7 15.f4 e5 16.Bc3 exf4 17.Rxf4 0-0 [#] White gets a solid grip on the light squares after the black bishop on b7 is exchanged. 18.Rf5 1-0 (68) Mitkov,N (2527)-Colas, J (2126) Philadelphia 2012]



13.Na5 Be7 14.Nxb7 Qxb7 15.f4  
[Black is at crossroads here. One option is to play the standard Sicilian

pawn break d5 and endure a weak pawn on a6 or play e5 to destroy white's central pawn duo and decrease the protection of his light squares (see variations above)]

15...g6 [Black decides to protect f5 to lessen the effect on the light squares after e6-e5]

[15...d5 16.exd5 Qxd5; 15...e5 16.Nc3 Taking the b2 pawn ends up badly for white after Nb5 because the black queen is trapped. 16...exf4]

16.Qe2 0-0 17.c4 [White stops d6-d5 and enjoys an spatial advantage and black is going to maneuver his pieces to effective squares in Hedgehog fashion.]

17...Rab8 18.Kh1 [18.b4 Nh5 19.Rab1 e5 20.fxe5 dxe5 21.c5 Nf4]

18...Nh5 19.b4 e5 20.c5 Ra8 [?]

[20...Nxf4 Tempo move that saves the day for black after Bxf4 the Black queen and rook target the weak b4. Black does not have this resource after Ra8. 21.Bxf4 exf4 22.Bxa6 f3 23.Rxf3 Qa8= [#] The chess engine evaluate this position as equal, yet with some many pieces on the board, opposite color bishops, the black knight with access to e5 and white queenside pass pawns, makes this position difficult to evaluate. I will go with chances for both sides. It comes down to who handles all the imbalances in the position better.; 20...dxc5 Black can get closer to equality with this series of exchanges and the opposite color bishops. Although white retains a pass pawn. 21.Bxa6 Qc7 22.Nxc5 Nxc5 23.bxc5 Nxf4 24.Bxf4 exf4]

21.Nc3 Nxf4 [Passive defense of the a6 pawn does not work. 21...Nb8 22.fxe5 dxe5 23.Nd5]

21.Bxf4 exf4 23.Nd5 [Just in time to defend the b4 pawn with tempo on the black bishop. White secures the b4 pawn and black has no counter play. The two GMs played according to the pawn structure, the plan and the counter-plan. It is also instructive to see how the two masters put pressure



on the weaknesses of the opponent to draw up their plans.]

**22...Rfe8 24.Bxa6 Rxa6 25.Qxa6 Qxa6 26.Rxa6 dxc5 27.Ra7** [Black loses a minor piece.]

**1-0**

**(168) Ray Kaufman (2286) - Nikola Mitkov (2535) [D31]**

8TH ANNUAL GULF COAST NEW YEAR'S OPEN lichess.org (4), 07.01.2023 [Ararat,Miguel]

**1.d4** [The key game in Kaufman path to win the tournament. This game illustrates several principles of chess as well as the practical side of the game. Players from different levels can get valuable insights about a chess game such as: 1.Nurturing an opening advantage.

2.Using the pawn structure to develop a plan in the middlegame.  
3.Holding up a worse position and the creation of practical chances.  
4. Use your opponent's move to find tactics you missed a move ago that still working to some degree.]

**1...d5 2.c4** [2.Nf3 Nf6 3.c4 e6 4.cxd5 exd5 5.Nc3 c6 6.Qc2 Na6 7.a3 Nc7 8.Bg5 g6 9.e3 Bf5 10.Bd3 Bxd3 11.Qxd3 Be7 12.0-0 0-0 13.b4 Ne4 14.Bf4 Nxc3 15.Qxc3 Bd6 16.Bxd6 Nb5 17.Qb3 Nxd6 0-1 (62) Portisch,L (2600)-Kasparov,G (2775) Skelleftea 1989]

**2...e6 3.Nc3 Bb4** [A move design to bother opponents with a narrow opening repertoire, because black can transpose to the Nimzoindian or stay in Queens Gambit decline territory. The practical battle in this game is on.]

**4.Qa4+** [White forces black to block his c pawn and decides the type of middlegame he wants to play. In contrast, a move like 4.e3 allows the transposition to Nimzoindian type position where black can lose quickly as in the Kasparov - Polgar game below.]

[4.e3 c5 5.a3 Bxc3+ 6.bxc3 Nf6

7.cxd5 exd5 8.f3 c4 9.Ne2 Nc6 10.g4 h6 11.Bg2 Na5 12.0-0 Nb3 13.Ra2 0-0 14.Ng3 Bd7 15.Qe1 Re8 16.e4 dxe4 17.fxe4 Nxg4 18.Bf4 Qh4 19.h3 Nf6 20.e5 Rad8 21.Qf2 Nh5 22.Bxh6 Re7 23.Nf5 Qxf2+ 24.Rxf2 Re6 25.Be3 Bc6 26.Bf1 f6 27.Bxc4 Bd5 28.Be2 fxe5 29.Bxh5 exd4 30.Bg5 Rd7 31.Rae2 Be4 32.Nxd4 1-0 (32) Kasparov,G (2820)-Polgar,J (2670) Tilburg 1997]

**4...Nc6 5.e3 Nge7 6.Bd2 0-0 7.Nf3** [7.Nge2? does not work here because black can take the pawn on c4. 7...dxc4 8.Ng3 Bd7]

**7...a5** [7...h6!? [#] is Theoretical novelty I founded while analyzing this game. it offers black a few extra options if he is ok holding the exchange of his light square bishop. 8.a3 Bxc3 9.Bxc3 b6 10.b4 Bd7 11.b5 Nb8 12.Bd3 c6<sup>2</sup>]



**8.a3 Bxc3 9.Bxc3 b6 10.cxd5 exd5 11.Bd3 Ba6 12.Bxa6 Rxa6 13.b4 Ra8 14.b5 Na7 15.Qb3 Nac8 16.a4** [The opening battle left black with a backward pawn on a semi open file and white is better. Importantly, white plays against a static weakness without any counterplay by black.]

**16...Nd6=** [[#] A defensive idea traced back to the 1980's and worth to remember in your games. See game Portisch - Kasparov, 1989 cited at the beginning of this game.]

**17.0-0 Nc4 18.Nd2 Nxd2 19.Bxd2 Ra7 20.Bc1 Re8 21.Ba3 Ng6** [21...Nf5 is more flexible than Ng6 because it reduces white's options. Nf5 stops whites plan with f3 and

forces him to go for a Rac1. If white goes for play against the c7 pawn then black creates pressure on the kingside as follows. 22.Rac1 Nh4 23. Qd1 Qg5 24.g3 Nf5 25.Qf3 Re4



**22.f3** [White takes control of the e4 square, but creates a weak pawn on e3 that black will target to create counterplay. Since both players have a weak pawn and the unbalance knight versus bishop is not relevant yet, the game is equal.]

[22.Rac1 White can play against the backward c pawn, yet Mitkov will get counter play against the white king. In this variation, the computer assesses it as best for white, but g2-g3 movement is compulsive and many clear squares are weak in the white kingside. The white bishop cannot patch the weakness of the light around Kaufman's king. I definitely prefer Kaufman 22.f3 move, although the chess engine is not in agreement. 22...Qg5 23.Qd1 Nh4 24.g3 Re6°]

**22...Re6** [22...Ra8 Black can not stop e3-e4, but can deploy his forces to neutralize white's gaining central control. 23.Rae1 Qd7 24.Kh1 h6]

**23.Rae1 Re8 24.Kh1** [A well timed prophylactic move.]

[24.Kf2 Ra8=]

**24...Ra8 25.e4 Nf4 26.g3** [26.Bc1 Ne6 White has this option to remove the black knight from f4. However Kaufman wants to keep open the possibility of attacking black queenside pawns with the bishop if the opportunity comes.]

**26...Ne6 27.exd5 Nf8 28.Re4 Qd7 29.Rfe1 Ng6 30.Qc4 Rxe4 31.fxe4 Qg4** [White central strategy worked and his mobile central pawn mass give him a decisive advantage.]

**32.Qe2+– Qd7 33.Qf3 Re8 34.e5 h5!?** [Black plays the only "uno reverse move" in a lost position.]

**35.d6 cxd6 36.Bxd6** [36.Qc6 This move wins a valuable tempo on the undefended black queen. 36...Qxc6+ 37.bxc6 dxe5 38.d5 Kaufman's central passed pawn are unstopable.]

**36...Rc8 37.Rf1 h4** [#] This move creates a lot of problems for the white king and the position is equal! Chess is such a beautiful game that even the more hopeless position contain a grain of opportunity if you look hard enough.]



**38.g4 Rc4 39.Qa8+ Rc8 40.Qf3 Rc4 41.Qa8+ Rc8 42.Qd5?** [42.Qe4 Rc4 43.Qa8+]=]  
**42...h3** [Closes the knot around white's king.]

**43.Qe4** [#] White post his queen on a strong central square, unfortunately this strategic considerable move fails tactically to Nf4. The best example of a trojan horse! If white captures the knight with queen or rook, checkmate follows after Qb7 and Rc1 respectively. If the knight remains on the board the g4 falls and the white king lack pawn cover. It is interesting to note that white is playing "by the book with a centralized queen on light squares to complement his dark

square bishop. Yet, the tactics do not work on his favor.]



**43...Rc4μ** [43...Nf4! Knights are tricky pieces and particularly lethal when combined with a queen. I showed the position to my students to have a sense of how difficult is to find Nf4. The beginners played Qxg4 and the more advanced students only one student tried to decoy the queen from the long diagonal to give a check on the long diagonal. Two scenarios are possible. One scenario is that Mitkov made his mind to gets counterplay attacking the a4 and d4 pawns, instead of the white king. Yet he played h5–h4–h3 to reach the white king. Scenario two, black was low on time. 44.Rxf4 (44.Qxf4 Qb7+ 45.Kg1 Qg2#; 44.Ba3 [#] 44...Qxg4 45.Rg1 Qe6 46.Qxf4 Qd5+ 47.Qe4 Qxe4+ 48.Rg2 Qxg2#) 44...Rc1+]

**44.Rg1?** [44.Kg1 Qe6 45.Rf3 Nh4 46.Re3=]

**44...Rxd4+–** [Black is winning thanks to his h5–h4–h3 idea from a losing position ten or so moves ago. This an example of creating practical chances in bad positions.]

**45.Qc6** [45.Qxd4 Qb7+ and black mates.]

**45...Qe6 46.Bc7 Qa2** [46...Qxc6+ 47.bxc6 Rc4 and black advantage is gone!; 46...Qb3 47.e6 Rd5 Creates a matting threat on the long diagonal. 48.exf7+ Kxf7]

**47.e6 fxe6 48.Re1 Rxc4?** [This move take a pawn and defends the knight on g6, but allows the exchange of queens. Since white's

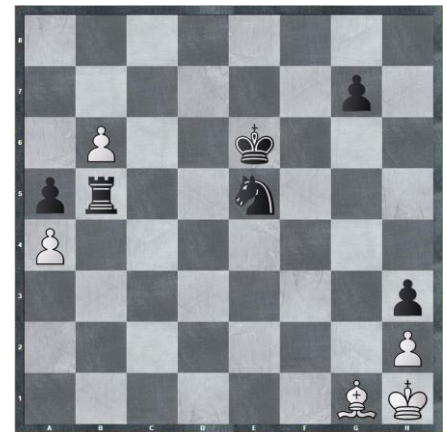
king is weak the exchange of queen is a relief to the white monarch.]

[48...Qd2; 48...Qe2 49.Rxe2 Rd1+ mates]

**49.Qxe6+ Qxe6 50.Rxe6 Rc4 51.Bxb6 Rc1+ 52.Bg1 Nf4 53.Re4?** [53.Re5 Nd3 54.Rf5=]

**53...Nd3+– 54.Re2 Rb1 55.b6 Kf7 56.Rd2 Ne5 57.Rd5 Ke6** [57...Kf6™ Only move to keep the advantage. 58.Rb5 Rd1 59.b7 Nf3 Black checkmates white in 3 moves.]

**58.Rb5 Rxb5** [#] [58...Rd1 59.b7 Nf3 Since the black king is not on f3, white can sacrifice the rook to stop the checkmate an equalize the game. The difference between 57...Ke6 and 57...Kf6 was significant.]



**59.axb5 Kd5 60.b7 Nd7 61.Be3 a4 62.Kg1 a3 63.Bc1 a2 64.Bb2 g6 65.Kf2** [The game is a draw, but white has one more trick under his sleeve to try to win the game and plays on.]

**65...Kc5 66.Kg3 Kb6 67.Kxh3 Kxb7 68.Kg4 Nc5 69.Kg5 Nd3 70.Ba1 Ne1 71.Kxg6 Kb6 72.h4 Ng2 73.Kg5 Nxb7** [Only move.]

[73...Kxb5?? 74.h5 Ne3 75.h6 and the white pawn promotes.]

**74.Kxh4** [A very exciting and instructive game from beginning to end.]

1/2–1/2

