



ANNA ZATONSKIH TRIUMPHS IN 3RD CAIRNS CUP DESPITE HAVING THE LOWEST RATING!

Anna's Comeback

By IM/WGM Anna Zatonskih



Delve into the champion's perspective as Anna Zatonskih shares her first-hand experience for ACM readers.

▲ Anna Zatonskih Photo St. Louis Chess Club

Anna Zatonskih has been among top U.S. female players for nearly two decades. She holds the titles of International Master and Woman's Grandmaster. Anna is a four-time U.S. Women's Champion, Olympic silver medallist in 2004, and bronze medallist in 2008 with an individual gold medal on board one! She also won an individual silver medal on board one at the 2017 Women's World Team Championship. Anna is married to GM Daniel Fridman and they have a daughter and a son.

As I am getting older, I am more and more rooting for the older generation. Among my role models in chess are: Pia Cramling, who is now 60-years-old, and continues to play at the highest level, then Ketevan Arakhamia-Grant, who became a grandmaster at the age of 41, and Monika Socko from Poland, who has three children and successfully combines a chess career with family affairs. She became European champion at 44!

These examples have always given me hope that not everything is lost for me and that I have not yet spoken my last word in chess.

One of the prerequisites for this is to have good playing conditions and circumstances. This is even more important when you get older. Tournaments in St. Louis are perfect for this as they are well-organized with excellent playing and living conditions. It is always a great pleasure to return to St. Louis. Before the tournament I mentioned that this is the best chess city on the planet and I am ready to repeat my words.

If you love chess and everything connected with it, then St. Louis is the place to visit. There is a special chess climate here. An amazing club, the World Chess Hall of Fame, a chess museum, universities with chess programs, chess cafe and more. Perhaps here is the highest density of GMs in the world.

This was the third edition of the Cairns Cup and the first since the end of the pandemic. It's great that the organizers managed, as in previous years, to have a strong and interesting tournament, featuring



3RD CAIRNS CUP, Saint Louis, MO, Jun 1-13, 2023

Rk	Name	Ti	FED	Rtg	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Pts
1	Anna ZATONSKIH	IM	USA	2327		1	½	1	½	½	½	1	1	6
2	Alexandra KOSTENIUK	GM	SUI	2523	0		1	1	0	1	1	½	½	5
3	Irina KRUSH	GM	USA	2436	½	0		0	1	1	½	½	1	4½
3	Bella KHOTENASHVILI	GM	GEO	2470	0	0	1		1	½	1	0	1	4½
5	Nana DZAGNIDZE	GM	GEO	2510	½	1	0	0		½	0	1	1	4
6	Harika DRONAVALLI	GM	IND	2510	½	0	0	½	½		1	½	½	3½
6	Elisabeth PAEHTZ	GM	GER	2477	½	0	½	0	1	0		1	½	3½
8	Gunay MAMMAZADA	IM	AZE	2456	0	½	½	1	0	½	0		½	3
9	Zhansaya ABDUMALIK	GM	KAZ	2497	0	½	0	0	0	½	½	½		2

*** GM Humpy KONERU from India had to withdraw after round 4 due to health issues. Since she played less than 50% of the games, her results were deleted in accordance to the FIDE rules.

eight GMs and two IMs. In addition to two former world champions (Koneru and Kosteniuk) the leading chess players of their respective countries were present: Germany, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, India and USA.

Before the start of the tournament, I singled out the two favorites: the winner of the previous tournament, Humpy Koneru, who, unfortunately, this time had to withdraw after round 4 due to illness, and former world champion Alexandra Kosteniuk, now representing Switzerland. But in general, any of the participants could claim victory, which I eventually managed to prove.

As the lowest-rated player I got off to a successful start, making a draw in a difficult clash with Nana Dzagnidze, who has always been a tough opponent for me. After that I managed to beat Bella Khotenashvili with the black pieces. In both of these games, I was accompanied by a bit of luck, without which, as you all know, such tournaments cannot be won.

These two games set an unexpected rhythm for me: a draw with White, a victory with Black. A white draw against Paetz was followed by a black win over Kosteniuk – in one of my best games in recent years.

C02

Alexandra Kosteniuk	2535
Anna Zatonskih	2327

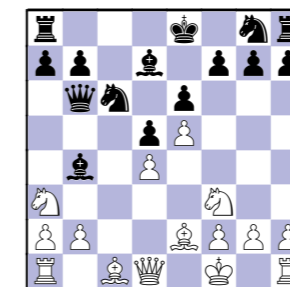
Cairns Cup, St. Louis 2023

I have played Alexandra Kosteniuk many times and somehow I have an excellent score against her. It was 4-1 in my favor before this game and 5-1 after!!! In online, blitz and rapid events I am not so impressive – she has a very good score against me in non-classical games.



▲ Anna Zatonskih Photo St. Louis Chess Club

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♟c6 5.♟f3 ♟b6 6.♟a3 Alexandra has never played this line and this move came as a surprise to me. I knew it existed but I was not aware of recent theoretical developments after the text. 6...cxd4 7.cxd4 ♟d7 8.♟e2 Here a big strategic decision presented itself to me. 8.♟c2 can be met by either 8...♟c8 or 8...♟b4. 8...♟b4+ 8...♟xa3 9.bxa3 ♟ge7 10.0-0 ♟f5 11.♟e3 is slightly better for White. 9.♟f1



The computer tells me 9...♟xa3 yields Black the advantage, but to me this

wasn't so obvious, since I have to give up my dark-squared bishop and defend for the next moves. I knew that initiative is a strong side of Kosteniuk, so I was concerned if I should go for it.

9...♟xa3 10.bxa3 ♟a5 And, like every book about the French Defense says, I am trying to exchange my light-squared bishop. In 99% of positions arising from the French it is good strategy for Black.

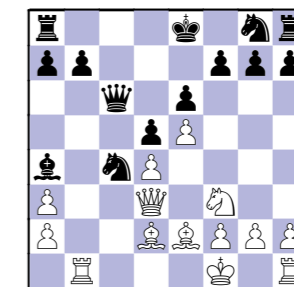
11.♟d3 11.a4 is an interesting option for White but 11...♟c4 is a very important element in that I have the possibility to castle queenside in the future.

11...♟a4 11...a6 was an alternative, when after, for example, 12.♟b1 ♟b5 13.a4 ♟xd3 14.♟xb6 ♟c8! 15.♟a3 ♟xe2+ 16.♟xe2 ♟c4 17.♟b3 ♟xa3 18.♟xa3 ♟d7 is equal.

12.♟d2 Or 12.♟b1 ♟c7 13.♟d2 ♟c8 14.h4 ♟e7 with a lot of play ahead.

12...♟c4 12...♟c8 13.♟b1 ♟c7 leads to the same position as in the previous line.

13.♟b1 ♟c6 Suddenly there are tactics in the air! 14...♟c2 is a threat! If 15.♟xc2 ♟e3+ wins a queen.



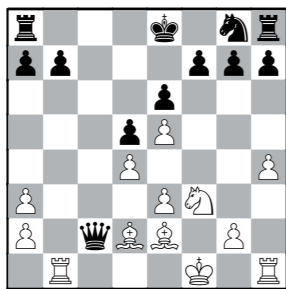
14.♟c3! The first critical decision in the game. Two other moves would have been more convenient for Alexandra.

14.♟g1 is the most logical and most human move to play. Then, after 14...♟e7 15.h4 the position is complicated and about equal.

14.h4! is a very interesting option, based on a queen sacrifice after 14...♟c2



(I was seriously considering 14...♖e7 just to complete my development.) 15.♗xc2 ♖e3+ 16.fxe3 ♗xc2 This was a possible try! All my pieces are on the back rank and only the queen is out!



During the game I had a lot of fear about whether or not I should win such a queen.

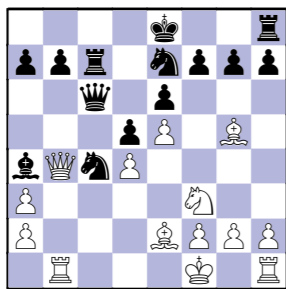
A) 17.♗xb7 Now the computer says there is only one move to keep the advantage for Black. 17...a6! An unpleasant move to play since I still don't develop my pieces, but it stops the annoying check on b5. 18.♖f2 ♖c8 19.♗b3 ♖e7 20.♗c1 ♗d8 21.♗b4 0-0 22.♗d6 ♗a7.

B) 17.♗b5+! ♖f8 18.♖e2 a5 19.♗hc1 ♗g6 20.g4 ♖e would have been a complete mess.

14...♖e7 15.♗b4?! Again, 15.♖g1 would have been better.

15...♗c8 16.♗g5 The b7 pawn is taboo. It may be surprising, but Black is winning after both 16.♗xc4? dxc4 17.♗xb7 c3 and 16.♗xb7? ♖xd2+ 17.♖xd2 ♗xb7 18.♗xb7 ♗c1+.

16...♗c7



17.♗d1? After this mistake White is lost. 17.♖g1 was necessary. Then, after 17...h6 18.♗xc4, Black is better, but nowhere close to winning.

17...♗xd1 18.♗xd1 ♗a6! All Black's pieces are better positioned, and White's doubled a-pawns are already targeted for capture.

19.♖g1 ♖c6 20.♗b3 ♗xa3 I heard somewhere that free pawns should be grabbed (smile).

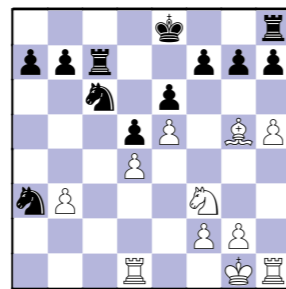
21.h4 ♗xb3 22.axb3 ♖a3 White is a pawn down without any compensation.

23.h5



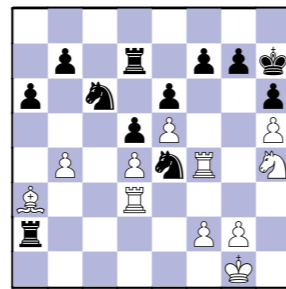
▲ Jeanne Cairns Sinquefield, AnnaZatonskih, and Rex Sinquefield

Photo St. Louis Chess Club

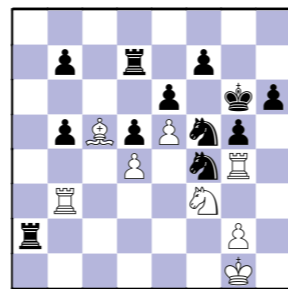


23...h6! The last finesse! The remaining part doesn't need any specific commentary, since there was more than one way to win. I managed to convert my advantage without any flaws, and eventually won this game.

23...♖b5 would allow 24.h6, after which there might be some counterplay for White. 24.♗d2 ♖b5 25.♗h4 0-0 26.♗g4 ♖h7 27.♗e1 ♗f8 28.♗d3 ♖e7 29.♗d2 ♗c2 30.♗b4 ♖c3 31.♗d2 ♖e7 32.♗b4 ♗8c7 33.♖h4 ♖c3 34.♗d6 ♗d7 35.♗b4 ♗c7 36.♗d6 ♗d7 37.♗b4 ♖e4 38.♗f4 ♖c6 39.♗a3 ♗a2 40.b4 a6



41.f3?! ♖g3 42.♗g4 ♖xh5 43.b5 axb5 44.♗c5 g5 45.f4 ♖xf4 46.♗e3 ♖e7 47.♖f3 ♖f5 48.♗b3 ♖g6



49.♖h2?! ♖h5 50.♗xf4 gxf4 51.♖e1 ♖e3 52.♖h3 ♖g5 53.g3 ♖f5 54.♖f3+ ♖g6 55.gxf4 ♗f2 56.♗b6 ♗e7 57.♗a5 ♗e8 58.♗e1 ♗e2 59.♗xb5 ♗a8 60.♗a5 b6 61.♗b4 ♗e3 White resigned

What followed was a draw with White against Dronavalli and then again a win with the black pieces. This time I managed to take advantage of Mamadzada's opening mistake. Finally, in the eighth round, I won my only game with the white pieces against the strong young GM Zhansaya Abdumalik, who did not play very well in this tournament. Surprisingly, all results of the other participants were in my favor, so I could even claim first place with one round to go!

E32

Anna Zatonskih	2327
Zhansaya Abdumalik	2497

Cairns Cup, St Louis 2023

1.d4 ♖f6 2.c4 e6 3.♖c3 ♗b4 4.♗c2 0-0 5.a3 ♗xc3+ 6.♗xc3 b6 7.♗g5 c5

An interview with ANNA ZATONSKIH



By Dusan Kronic

Was meeting and marrying your husband Daniel one of the turning points in your chess career?

It had a definitely positive influence on both of us. When we met, I had a rating of 2425 and I achieved my peak rating of 2537 in 2011. My husband Daniel Fridman had a rating of 2563 when we started dating, and peaked at 2670 some years later.

Which period of your career do you find to have been most successful for you?

It was probably 2010–2012.

Over the years, you have certainly established numerous friendships thanks to chess? Who are your best (chess) friends?

I don't want to mention my friends because I am afraid to miss someone or the list will be too long. Just before the 2023 Cairns Cup I spent time with my good friends in New York, Olga and Gennady Sagalchik. I have also met Rusa Goletiani, together with whom I played so many tournaments when I just came to the USA. It gave me positive energy to play competitive chess. I want to thank everyone who supported me during my chess career and believed in me! I have talked to many friends during tournaments and their words of support were very important to me! I am still in touch with many of my chess friends who stopped actively playing chess. Many now have kids and usually our main topic is not chess.

Similarly, you must have established many rivalries, too. Who were (are) your most worthy opponents?

I have played so many important decisive games in the U.S. Championship vs Irina Krush, so I would name her.

Speaking of women in chess, how difficult is it to be part of this world? What does one need in order to have a long and successful career like you?

As you can see in the rating lists, I almost stopped playing chess after I had each child and then came back. It is not easy. In 2015 when my son was born, I skipped the U.S. Championship, World Women's Championship and World Team Championship. My son was part of the American team in 2016 and 2018 and he



Photo St. Louis Chess Club

The Rise of a Chess Champion FROM UKRAINE TO AMERICA

When and how did you learn to play chess? What attracted you to the game?

I learned to play chess when I was 4-5 years old. Both my parents played chess and taught me. They have supported me for many years.

How have you developed as a player? Did you receive any coaching? Who were your chess idols then, and now?

My father is a FM and my mom is CM. They were my first coaches. They met each other at a chess tournament. By the way, I met my husband at a chess tournament as well. I am wondering if any of our kids will continue this wonderful tradition. I don't remember my childhood idols, but probably Kasparov and Karpov. Their world championship matches marked an important period in the development of chess for my generation.

How important do you find it to read chess books? Which one is your favorite?

Nowadays we have computers and many

books are ebooks. Chessable have developed their own way to read books. Books on strategy are more important, especially if you don't have a coach.

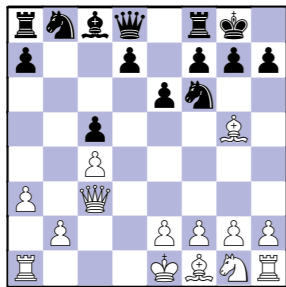
My System by Nimzowitsch had a huge influence on my chess understanding. I think I have read all of Dvoretsky's books, which I can recommend. I want to read Sam Shankland's book on endgames.

When and how did you decide to move from Ukraine to the U.S.? How did this change and affect your play and life?

I have represented the USA since 2003. I began a totally new life. Just like all immigrants it was not easy at all – and that is a long story to tell. I immigrated as someone with extraordinary ability in chess.

Luckily for me, in 2003-2004 the U.S. Women's Team had obtained some good sponsorship, including the Kasparov Chess Foundation, and we had training sessions with many great coaches including Garry Kasparov himself!

7...♗b7 or 7...h6 8.♗h4 ♗b7 are more popular options for Black.
8.dxc5 bxc5



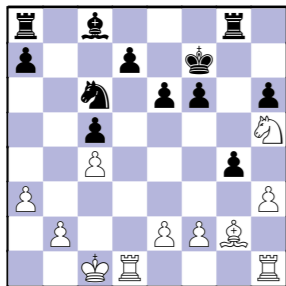
9.♖h3 I chose this rare move, which leads to an almost forced endgame. Also, it scores very well for White. Another way to develop for White is 9.e3, followed by ♗d3 and ♖e2.

9...h6 10.♗xf6 ♗xf6 11.♗xf6 gxf6 12.♖f4 ♖c6 13.♖h5 f5 14.0-0-0 f6?! Opening up the road for her king.

15.g4! If White plays in a slow manner, simply developing pieces like e3 and ♗e2, Black would have time to bring the king to e7 and release the bishop from c8, with an equal game or even take the initiative. 15.e3 ♗f7 16.♗e2 ♗e7. That's why I decided to break through quickly.

15...fxg4 16.♗g2 Perhaps it was more precise to go 16.♗g1 f5 17.♗g2 ♗f7 18.h3±.

16...♗f7 17.h3 ♗g8



18.♖f4?! 18.♖g3 is superior. After the exchange on c6, the knight is rushing to the beautiful e4 square.

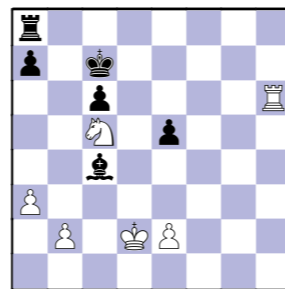
18...g3 18...♗b8! was the only way to exploit White's inaccuracy. An interesting line here follows 19.♖xe6!?! gxh3 20.♗d5 dxe6 21.♗xc6 ♗g4 22.♗xh3 ♗xc4+ 23.♗b1, which looks pretty equal. For example, 23...e5 24.♗xh6 ♗f5+ 25.♗a1 ♗d4. 19.fxg3 ♗xg3 20.♗xc6 dxc6 21.♗d6 Immediately going after all Black's pawns on the sixth rank.

21...e5 22.♖h5 ♗xh3 23.♗xf6+ ♗e7 24.♗xh3 ♗xh3 25.♗xh6 ♗e6 26.♗h7+ ♗d6 Of course, 26...♗f7 was an alternative, but I guess my opponent wanted to avoid the pin.



▲ Irina Krush vs. Anna Zatonskih

31...♗a6 32.♖c3+ ♗d6 33.♗h6+ ♗d7 34.♗d2 ♗c4 35.♖e4 ♗c7 36.♖xc5



36...♗g8?! Errors come out of difficulties. Note my previous comment on move 31.

36...♗d8+ 37.♗e3 a5 is a computer suggestion for Black's defensive setup. White is still somewhat better, but it's not at all easy to break through.

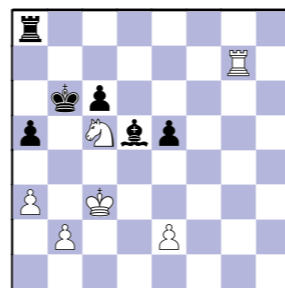
37.♗c3 a5 If 37...♗f8, then 38.♗e6! maintains the advantage effectively.

38.♗g6 My position literally plays itself, whereas Black needs to apply extreme care.

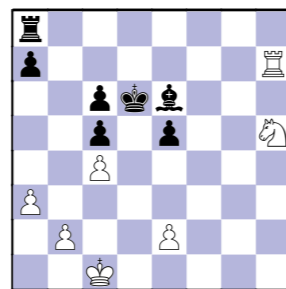
38...♗d5? And then it just happens – after suffering for a long time, my opponent blunders decisively.

39.♗g7+ All of a sudden there are mating threats.

39...♗b6



▲ Zhansaya Abdumalik Photo St.Louis Chess Club



27.♖g3?! It was not necessary to give up the pawn on c4. I counted on my knight activity to be a more important factor. Best was 27.b3!, after which Black needs to find a series of only moves in order to activate her pieces. 27...♗g8 28.♗xa7 ♗g1+ 29.♗d2 ♗f5 30.♗b7±. 27...♗xc4 28.♖e4+ ♗d5 29.♖c3+ ♗d6 30.♖e4+ ♗d5 31.♗h4! The position is equal, but much more difficult to play for Black.

Interview with Anna Zatonskih

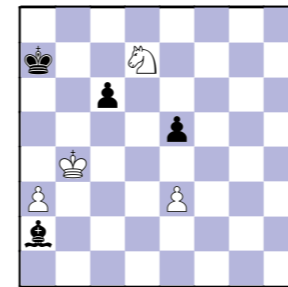
40.b4? It is difficult not to make such a logical move, especially on move 40, when you need to get through the time control.

40.♖d7+ was a correct start to the winning sequence, based on perfect geometry between my knight and my opponent's loose pieces. 40...♗a6 (Or 40...♗b5 41.a4+! ♗a6 42.e4!+-)

41.e4 ♗a2 42.b3 ♗h8 43.♗c4+- With mating threats appearing on the board, Black is faced with huge material losses.

40...axb4+? 41.♗xb4 ♗a7 42.♗xa7 ♗xa7 43.e3? It is hard to believe, but the only winning move was 43.♖d7!

43...♗a2 44.♖d7



44...e4? Looks perfectly logical, but it's losing for Black. A miraculous computer save was possible in this position, which is almost impossible



helped me by taking off all the pressure, so I did not keep thinking about good and bad moves until the next game!

Over the last few years my results had declined and I was thinking, maybe it is time to give up high level competitive chess. Then, all of a sudden, I won the Cairns Cup and that has given me extra motivation to continue. You have to accept certain things and learn everything about yourself in order to figure out why we all play good or bad games. Because chess players never play on the same level every game.

Being a mother is certainly one of the best things in life for a woman. How difficult is it to maintain the balance between daily family duties and chess improvement?

It is impossible sometimes. That's why I stopped playing actively when my daughter was five years old. It was more important to spend more time at home with her. I am still trying to find the right balance. That's why I often refuse invitations for long tournaments, but I never miss any Chess Olympiad! I have played in all Olympiads since 2004!

Your children are raised in a chess family. Do they have any connections with chess?

My son began to develop an interest in chess recently. He attends a chess club and has participated in tournaments since last April. I hope he will continue playing.

You've lived in many countries: Ukraine, USA, Germany... When and where did you feel best?

I have split my time between the USA and Germany, since my husband is German (Latvian

▲ Anna Zatonskih, Chess Olympiad Calvia 2004 Photo by Harald Fietz

The list of your achievements and titles in chess is quite long. Which ones are dearest to you?

Playing team events were the most memorable moments of my chess carrier. The Chess Olympiad in 2004 – Silver Team Medal with the American National Team – and especially the Olympiad in 2008 when we won a bronze medal and I won the individual gold medal on my board.

Then, of course, winning four U.S. Women's Championships, and, finally, my recent success in the Cairns Cup 2023!

born). Of course my heart lies with Ukraine right now!

Of all the countries you have visited or lived in, where did you like it best and why?

Curacao!! It was such a pleasant tournament and I played an underwater match there! Also Norway and Iceland – with their amazing natural environment. Many places in Romania too, since I had visited this country 20 times before immigrating to the USA. I also love the Netherlands and Latvia.

We can't avoid asking you on the lasting war in Ukraine. How does it affect you and your family?

I was born in Mariupol but I haven't lived there since 1996. I left Ukraine in 2002. Of course I have many relatives and friends in Ukraine. It is just so hard to think that real war is happening in your country. You know about it from newsreels and magazines and now it is real. My father was lucky to escape from Mariupol on the second day of war with only a small bag – and leaving his apartment with all his belongings there. I still have childhood photos and poems (which I used to write as a teenager) left in his apartment.

We have a lot of family and friends who came to visit us. My husband is helping a lot and it became his "part time" job. I am so proud of him!

You have been playing chess professionally for decades. How different was it when you started compared to the present day?

For a comprehensive answer we would need another article! One of the main differences is that we have a totally different concept of opening preparation since the computer era began. You have to dig deeper and memorize more. It would be too funny to present photos of my old notebook here.

Speaking of our noble game, what is the best advice you have ever received?

"After the game is before the game."

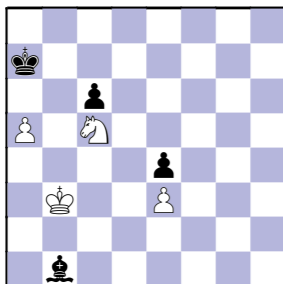
What would be your advice to the present and coming generations of female players?

Enjoy the game! Don't take losses too much to heart. And as in Shakira's song – "Try everything."



to find, even knowing that there is a draw somewhere. 44...♔a6! 45.♖xe5 c5+ 46.♗xc5 ♔a5= is an obvious draw... for a computer.

45.♖c5 ♗b1 46.a4 ♗b6 47.a5+ ♔a7 48.♗b3 Black is practically in zugzwang.



48...♗d3 49.♖xd3 exd3 50.e4 ♔a6 51.e5 Black resigned

In the final round, I had the black pieces against Irina Krush, who had played excellently in this tournament. Our games are always tense, and this 130-move marathon draw was no exception. Finally, it brought me immense joy to win this prestigious event with a +4=4-0 score, and with a full point margin!

Harika Dronavalli, Bella Khotenashvili, Elisabeth Paehtz, Nazi Paikidze, Nana Dzagnidze and Anna Zatonskih Photo St.Louis Chess Club

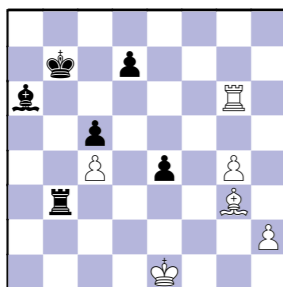


Ladies' Masterpiece Games

After she recently changed federations from Russia to Switzerland, former women's world champion, GM Alexandra Kosteniuk, finished in a clear second place. Alexandra has been among the world's elite female players for many years, and is still able to demonstrate her uncompromising style of play – aiming for a win in each and every position! The following game gives a perfect illustration of her fierce competitiveness.

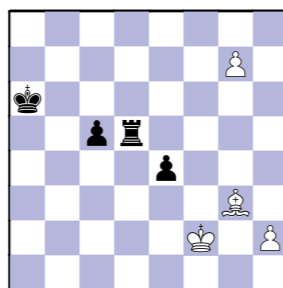
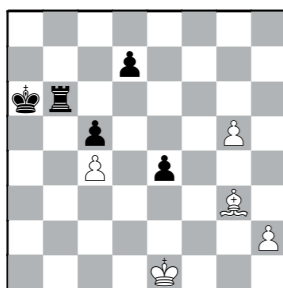
Alexandra Kosteniuk	2535
Harika Dronavalli	2501

Cairns Cup, St Louis 2023



43.♖xa6! Great move. Despite the fact that this should still be a draw, Black now needs to find a series of only moves to hold her position.

43...♗xa6 44.g5 d5? 44...♗b6□ It is very difficult and almost impossible to see why Black would ask for the 45.h4 move first, and only then play ...d7-d5 like in the game.



- A) 45.♗e2 ♗b7 46.♗e3 ♗c8 47.♗xe4 ♗d8 48.♗d5 ♗e7, and Black's king is in time to defend the kingside.
- B) After 45.h4, the bishop on g3 is not protected, which gives Black sufficient counterplay. 45...d5□ 46.cxd5 (46.h5 ♗b1+□ 47.♗e2 ♗b2+ 48.♗d1 d4□ 49.g6 e3 50.g7 d3 51.♗c1 d2+ 52.♗xb2 d1♗ 53.g8♗ ♗d2+=) 46...♗b1+ 47.♗f2 (Or 47.♗d2 ♗b2+ 48.♗c1 ♗g2 49.♗f4 ♗g4 50.♗e5 ♗b5=) 47...♗b2+ 48.♗f1 (48.♗e3 ♗b3+ and White cannot take the pawn on e4 since the bishop on g3 is hanging. 49.♗f4 c4 50.♗e1 c3 51.♗xe4 c2 52.♗d2 ♗h3 53.g6 ♗xh4+ 54.♗f5=) 48...♗b1+ 49.♗g2 ♗b2+ 50.♗h3 c4 51.g6 c3 52.g7 c2 53.♗f4 e3! 54.g8♗ (54.♗xe3?? ♗b3+)=) 54...c1♗=.
- 45.cxd5 It is all over now.
- 45...♗e3+ The alternatives are not of any help for Black – 45...♗b1+ 46.♗d2 ♗b2+ 47.♗e3+-; or 45...c4 46.g6 c3 47.♗d1+-.
- 46.♗f2 ♗d3 47.g6 ♗xd5 48.g7

48...♗g5 If 48...♗d8, then 49.h4 ♗c8 50.♗e5 e3+ 51.♗e2+-.

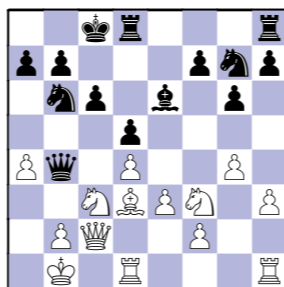
49.♗e5 ♗b5 50.♗e3 ♗c6 51.h4 ♗g4 52.♗f6 ♗g6 53.h5 ♗g4 54.h6 Black resigned

My long-time U.S. women's team colleague and eight-time U.S. Women's champion, GM Irina Krush, finished the tournament on a shared third and I'd like here to present her positional masterpiece. In a well-known position arising from the Queen's Gambit, Irina played the interesting novelty 16.♗a1. After Black made a few positional inaccuracies (17...f5 and 24...♗d3), White never gave Black a chance in this game.

Irina Krush	2436
Harika Dronavalli	2501

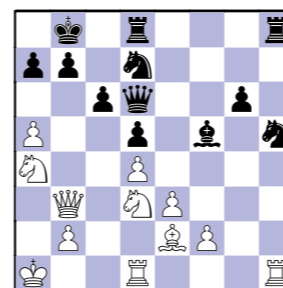
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This important win brought Irina back to one point behind first place with two rounds to go.

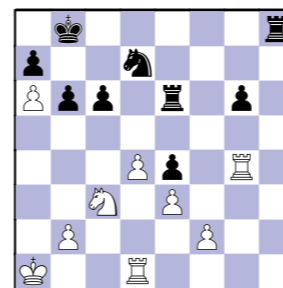


16.♗a1N ♗b8 17.♗e2 f5?! Black shouldn't give up the e5 square, despite the fact that the knight will be immediately chased away. Better was 17...h5 18.♗e5 ♗d7 19.♗d3 ♗b6 with a decent position for Black. 18.♗e5 ♗d7 19.♗d3 ♗d6 20.a5 fxg4

21.hxg4 h5 22.gxh5 ♖xh5 23.♖a4 23.a6 b6 24.♗hg1 was perhaps even stronger. 23...♗f5 24.♗b3

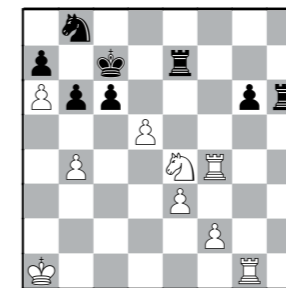


24...♗d3?! This already seems like a concession. It was time to bring the stray knight back into the game with 24...♗hf6. 25.♗xd3 ♖hf6 26.♗hg1 ♖e4?! This allows White to do more damage to Black's pawn structure. More resilient for Black was 26...♗h2, although, after 27.a6 b6 28.♗c2±, White is better, it should not be a quick conversion to a win. 27.a6 b6 28.♗xe4 dx4 29.♖c3 ♗de8 30.♗g4 ♗e6 31.♗xe6 ♗xe6

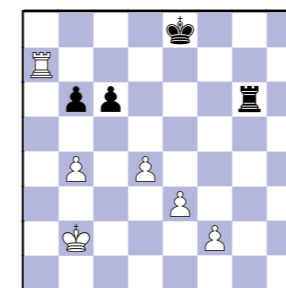


32.♗dg1! Excellent move. Irina is in no rush to collect any of the weak pawns before she engages all her pieces to their optimal positions. 32...♗h6 33.♗xe4 Correct timing. 33...♗c7 34.♗f4 ♗e7 35.b4 Another example of an "iron hand"! 35...♗b8 36.♗b2 This doesn't spoil

anything. However, 36.d5! was a cute breakthrough...



...based on geometry after 36...cxd5 37.♗f6, when Black is defenseless against ♖xd5+ or ♖g8 forks. 36...♖xa6 37.♗a1 g5 38.♗xg5 ♗b7 9.♗f7 Heading for transition to a rook ending. 39...♗g6 40.♗d8+ ♗c7 41.♗xa6 ♗xd8 42.♗f8+ ♗e8 43.♗xe8+ ♗xe8 44.♗xa7



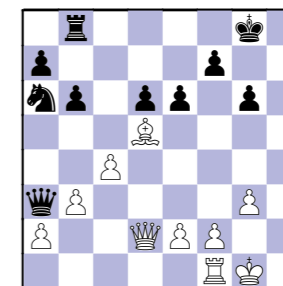
[There would be no need to present this game all the way till its end, if it were not for another article in this issue – Alex Fishbein's Endgame column (see page 78). For an experienced player such as Irina Krush, 'building a bridge' is child's play! -Ed.]

44...♗g2 45.♗c3 ♗xf2 46.♗a6 ♗e2 47.♗d3 ♗b2 48.♗xb6 ♗d7 49.♗b7+ ♗c8 50.♗c3 ♗e2 51.♗e7 ♗d8 52.♗e5 ♗d7 53.d5 cxd5 54.♗xd5+ ♗c6 55.♗e5 ♗e1 56.b5+ ♗d6 57.♗d4 ♗d1+ 58.♗e4 ♗b1 59.♗d5+ ♗e6 60.♗h5 ♗b4+ 61.♗d3 ♗d7 62.e4 ♗d6 63.♗e3 ♗b1 64.♗d5+ ♗e6 65.♗d4 ♗d1+ 66.♗c5 ♗c1+ 67.♗b6 ♗c4 68.♗c5 ♗xe4 69.♗c7 ♗d4 70.b6 ♗d7+ 71.♗c8 ♗h7 72.♗c7 ♗h8+ 73.♗b7 ♗d6 74.♗a7 ♗h1 75.♗c2 ♗a1+ 76.♗b8 ♗d7 77.b7 ♗d8 78.♗d2+ ♗e7 79.♗d4 ♗e6 80.♗c7 ♗c1+ 81.♗b6 ♗b1+ 82.♗c6 ♗e7 83.♗d5 Black resigned

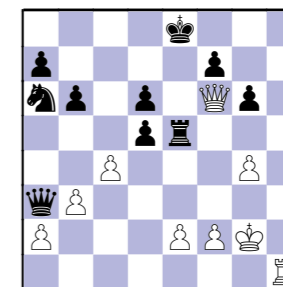
The concluding example I wanted to share here with ACM readers presents one of the most creative ideas played in the event. In a Georgian derby, GM Nana Dzagnidze was highly inspired for creating a masterpiece on the chess board. In the critical position, Nana played five consecutive brilliant moves, but unfortunately for her, failed to execute the sixth one which would have won the game in style. Instead, her compatriot GM Bella Khotenashvili seized a sudden opportunity and successfully repelled the attack on her king. What to say – it ain't over till it's over.

Nana Dzagnidze	2513
Bella Khotenashvili	2478

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24.♗g2!! After getting a clear advantage out of the opening, Nana finds a wonderful tactical solution. 24...exd5 25.♗d4! ♗e8 The most challenging defense, as White has only one way to go and needs to find a couple more accurate moves! 26.♗f6! Getting the queen in before the black rook comes to e5. 26...♗e5 27.g4! Stopping any ...♗f5 or...♗h5 defense. 27...♗f8 28.♗h1 Nana keeps playing accurately. 28...♗e8



29.cxd5? Suddenly, White is losing. Correct was 29.♗h8+! ♗d7 30.♗xf7+ ♗e7 31.♗g8 (31.♗f8 leads to the same goal.) 31...♗c7 (Or 31...♗c5 32.♗d8+ ♗e6 33.♗h6+-) 32.♗d8+! ♗e6 33.f4+-.

29...♗e7 30.♗h8+? 30.e4 was the only move to prolong the fight, although Black should be clearly better. 30...♗d7 Now it's all over. White's attack is extinguished as her pieces lack proper coordination. 31.♗a8 ♗c7 32.♗c6+ ♗d8 33.♗c1 ♗d7 34.♗c3 ♗a5 35.♗d3 ♗c5 36.♗b7 ♗e7 37.e3 b5 38.♗b8+ ♗d7 39.♗d4 ♗e8 40.♗b7 ♗b6 41.♗xb6 axb6 42.e4 ♗a8 43.♗d2 ♗a6 44.♗d4 ♗c5 45.b4 ♗a4 White resigned

I would like to thank the organizers for yet another excellent tournament and all the participants for their interesting and uncompromising chess – 60% of the games ended in a decisive result.