

By Sarunas Sulskis

## Caruana outwits Yoo with a wonderful bishop pair

This game features bold strategy by Caruana, embodied in a long-term exchange sacrifice. Offered as early as move 13, this sacrifice attests both to Fabiano's inner creativity, as well as his burning practical ambition to yet again prove his superiority over all other U.S. players.

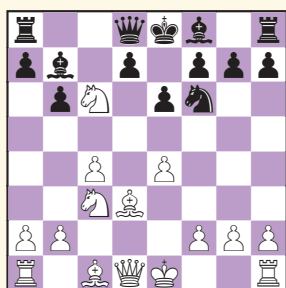
Restricted and seemingly dormant at the outset of forthcoming operations, the black bishop pair gains in strength due to Caruana's patient maneuvering. The first alarm bell for Christopher Yoo is rung by 25...e5!, significantly extending the scope of the light-squared bishop on c8. Then, after a barely noticeable 29...♖d6!, Yoo suddenly finds out that the black queen cannot be prevented from attacking his king at close quarters from d3. The sudden emergence of Black's ♖d3+♘d4 attacking brigade weighs heavily on the youngster's nerves and eventually he collapses under Caruana's mighty attack – leaving him more frustrated than grateful to the best U.S. player for what was an excellent chess lesson.

### A34

Christopher Yoo	2590
Fabiano Caruana	2796

U.S. Championship, St. Louis 2024, Round 5

1.♖f3 c5 2.c4 b6 3.♖c3 ♗b7 4.e4 e6 5.d4 cxd4 6.♖xd4 ♖f6 Caruana picks a move which is both rare and provocative. 6...d6, 6...a6 and 6...♖c6 are far superior well-trodden paths in this shady branch of the English Opening. 7.♗d3 Here 7.e5 fails in its endeavor to push back the knight, due to 7...♖e4. 7...♖c6 8.♖xc6



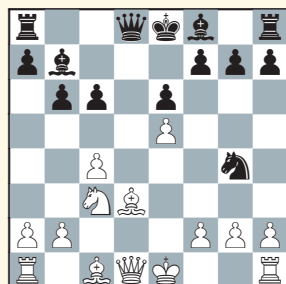
8...dxc6! Caruana shuts his b7 bishop out of play for a while. On the other hand, he opens a wide window for his queen to oversee the d-file.

9.e5 Incredibly, this logical move may be a novelty, at least according to my database. However, logical doesn't imply the best. 9.0-0 has mainly been played here.

9...♖d7 Caruana instantly retreats his knight to a square made vacant by his last move. He must have been convinced

by home preparation that it is the best move.

With no particular interest in this opening position, I am at odds to explain what Fabiano didn't like about 9...♖d4!?



A) 10.f4?! allows Black a nasty attack after 10...♖d4 11.♖e2 0-0-0 12.♗e4 ♗c5.

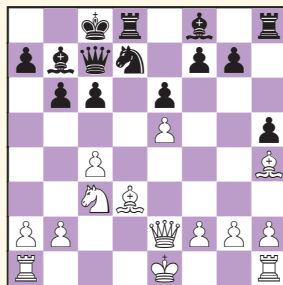
B) Perhaps he was concerned about the mass simplification that might take place following 10.♖xg4 ♖xd3 11.♖e2 (11.h4 ♗a6) 11...0-0-0 12.♖xd3 ♖xd3 13.♖e2 ♖d4 14.b3 ♗b4 15.♗b2 ♖hd8 16.♖ad1 ♗xc3 17.♗xc3 ♖e4+ 18.♖f3 c5 19.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 20.♖g3 which looks rather dry because of the opposite-colored bishops.

C) 10.♗f4 is met by 10...♖d4, after which White has nothing better than 11.♖xg4 ♖xd3 when Black is fine.

10.♗f4 ♖c7 11.♖e2 0-0-0 12.♗g3 Christopher rushes to secure his bishop. Upon 12.0-0 f6 (12...♗b4 13.♖e4 ♖xe5 14.♖b1 f6 15.c5 gives White good compensation for his pawn deficit.) 13.♖c2 g5 14.♗g3, he might have been

worried about 14...f5.

12...h5 13.♗h4 Shuffling around the bishop by ♗f4-g3-h4 is an indication of Yoo's anxiety. There was nothing inherently wrong with the simple 13.h4 ♗b4 14.0-0-0 ♗xc3 15.bxc3 c5 16.f3.

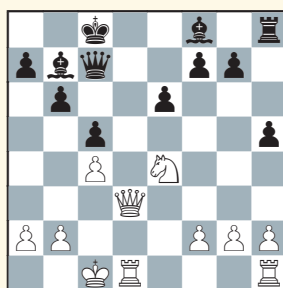


13...♖xe5!? A courageous investment. At the cost of the exchange, Caruana overthrows White's hold on the center and grants himself a nice bishop pair. Alternatively, 13...♗e8 14.f4 is the way back to slavery for Black.

14.♗xd8 ♖xd3+ 15.♖xd3 ♖xd8 16.0-0-0 Curiously, with both adversaries willing to trade queens only on their terms, this exchange never happens! On 16.♖xd8+ ♖xd8 17.♖d1+, the game could continue 17...♖c7 18.♖e2 h4.

16...♖c7 Quite concerning for Black would be 16...♖xd3 17.♖xd3 ♗e7 18.♖hd1 ♖d8 19.♖xd8+ ♗xd8 20.♖e4.

17.♖b1 The attempt at infiltration by 17.♖e4 can be met with 17...c5. (17...h4 18.c5!?)



A) Now 18.♖g5 is thwarted by 18...♗e7 19.♖xf7 ♖f4+ 20.♖d2 ♖xf7 21.♖d7+ ♖b8+.

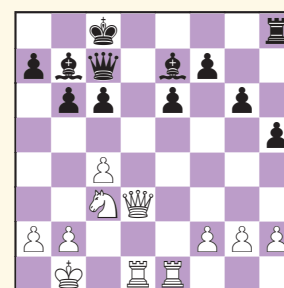
B) Or 18.♖d6+ ♗xd6 19.♖xd6 ♗xg2 20.♖hg1 ♗f3 21.♖xc7+ ♖xc7 22.♖d3 ♗e4 23.♖a3 a5 (23...g6 24.♖xa7+ ♗b7 is possible as well.) 24.♖xg7 ♗g6 25.♖g3 ♖d6.

17...♗e7 18.♖he1 g6 It's hard to give a definite assessment of the present position. At this point, I think White at least does not stand worse.



Fabiano Caruana with U.S. Championship winner's trophy

Photo by Lennart Ootes



19.g3 Here White could have tried to apply some pressure on f7 by 19.♖f3, when after ♖f8 20.g3 c5 21.♖e3 a6, the point lies in 22.♖d5!

19...♖b8 20.♖e3 20.♖d7 ♗c8 (or 20...h4 21.g4 h3) 21.♖xc7+ ♖xc7 22.f4 h4 23.g4 ♗d6 doesn't immediately harm Black.

20...♗a6 Caruana provokes b2-b3 to reduce the protection of the knight on c3. At present this seems irrelevant, but just wait for ten more moves and all will be revealed!

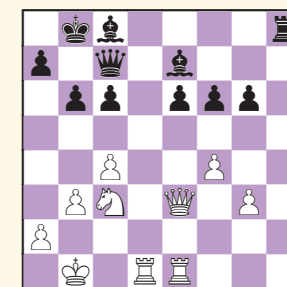
21.b3 ♗c8 22.f4 h4! Opening the h-file would allow the black rook to become fully engaged in the fight, without it having made any moves yet!

23.♖e5 I am not sure why he didn't want to keep the black rook at bay by 23.g4. One possible line runs 23...e5 24.♖xe5 ♖xe5 25.♖xe5 ♗f6 26.♖e3 ♗xg4 27.♖d6

♗f5+ 28.♖b2 ♗e6 29.♖xc6 ♖d8, when the white rook is stuck on c6.

23...f6 24.♖e3 24.♖xc7+ helps Black to bring his king closer after 24...♖xc7 25.g4 h3.

24...hxg3 25.hxg3



25...e5! With his rook now fully engaged, Caruana senses a golden opportunity for his lurking bishop pair.

26.fxe5 fxe5 27.♖h1?! On 27.♖xe5 ♗f5+ 28.♖a1 (28.♖b2? ♖h2+) 28...♖xe5 29.♖xe5 ♗f6, Yoo was certainly scared of this bishop skewering his pieces. But is Black able to justify his compensation after 30.♖e3? Well, it turns out that he needs patience, being a full exchange down. 30...♖c7! creates the not-so-funny threat ...♖h8-e8!. Then, for example, 31.♖b2 ♖h2+ 32.♖a3 ♖c2 is scary for White.

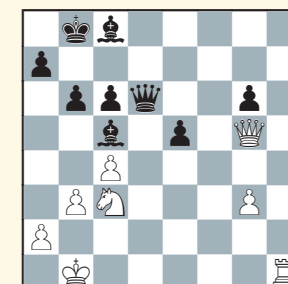
## CARUANA'S FOURTH NATIONAL TITLE, THIRD IN A ROW!

World No.2 and top-seed in the 2024 U.S. Championship, GM Fabiano Caruana has proven his dominance with an undefeated score of four wins and six draws. This was his third consecutive U.S. Champion title and fourth overall. Final standings and more details can be found on page 73.

27.♖e4!? could have prevented the bishop maneuver that Caruana carries out later in the game. 27...♗b4 (27...♗g4 28.♖h1 ♖f8 29.♖df1; 27...♗f5 28.♖b2 ♗b4 29.♖h1 ♖xh1 30.♖xh1 ♖e7 31.c5!?) 28.♖h1.

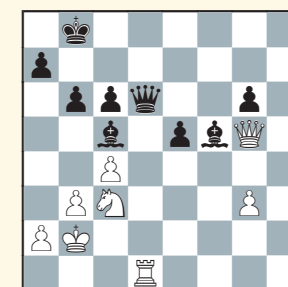
27...♗c5! 28.♖g5 Upon the speculative 28.♖xc5, Black plays not the natural 28...bxc5? 29.♖xh8±; but an intermediate 28...♖xh1! with a clear advantage.

28...♖xh1 29.♖xh1 ♖d6! Suddenly White's king is exposed and vulnerable.



Now imagine the white pawn is on b2 rather than b3. I swear it would be a fully playable position for White. Can you appreciate the wisdom of Caruana's 20...♗a6! now?

30.g4 This allows Caruana to decisively approach the white king and ultimately wrap up the game. However, 30.♖d1 loses to a semi-forced line with quite a few beautiful twists. 30...♗f5+ 31.♖b2







...♔a3+! (31...♔d4 is good enough, but nowhere near as beautiful.) 32.♔a1 ♕b4!! 33.♖c1 ♖d4 34.♕b2 ♖f2+ 35.♕a1 ♔a3 36.♖d8+ ♕b7 37.♖d1 ♖e2 38.♖c3 ♖e4+.

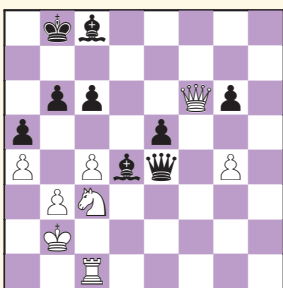
30...♖d3+ 31.♕b2 ♔d4 Now White is completely frozen.

32.♖c1 a5! Threatening to run the pawn further towards the opponent's king by ...a5-a4-a3.

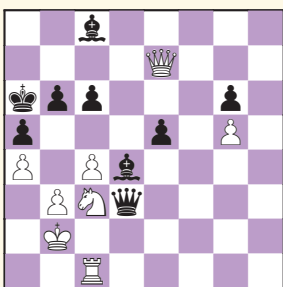
33.a4 Upon 33.♖c2, Yoo was certainly wary of 33...a4 34.bxa4 ♖xc4 35.♖e7 ♕xg4 (35...♖xa4?! only loosens Black's grip after 36.♖d6+ ♕b7 37.♕c1).

33...♖e4 Caruana is now coming after the g4 pawn, the value of which primarily consists of preventing the black bishop from reaching f5.

34.♖f6



34...♕c7 No rush! On 34...♕xg4 Caruana apparently didn't like Yoo approaching too closely with his queen. 35.♖d8+ ♕b7 (35...♕c8? runs into the fabulous 36.♖xb6+!!= and the game is again up for grabs.) 36.c5! bxc5 37.♕a3. 35.g5 The spooked g-pawn is as good as dead, since it has released the f5 square for Black's light-squared bishop. 35...♖d3 36.♖e7+ ♕b8 37.♖d6+ ♕b7 38.♖e7+ ♕a6



39.b4 A desperate last-ditch attempt to muddy the waters by the reigning U.S. Junior Champion. There's no longer any time for 39.♖e8, due to 39...♖d2+ 40.♖c2 ♕xc3+ 41.♕a3 ♕b4+ 42.♕b2 ♖d4+.

39...♖xc4 39...♖d2+ is winning, too,

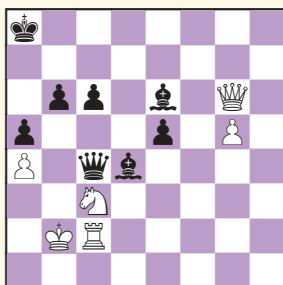


## AN UNFORTUNATE INCIDENT

albeit with more hassle. For example, 40.♕b3 (40.♖c2 ♕xc3+ 41.♕b3 ♕xb4+ 40...axb4 41.♖c2 ♖d3 42.♖d8 ♕b7 43.a5 (43.c5 bxc5 44.a5 c4+-) 43...bxc3 (43...bxa5 44.c5 a4+!-) 44.axb6 ♖d1. 40.♖e8 Or 40.b5+ cxb5 41.axb5+ ♖xb5+, whereupon the pinned knight cannot hurt the enemy queen. 40...♖xb4+ 41.♕a2 ♖c4+ 41...♕b7 42.♖xg6 ♕xc3 43.♖d3+. 42.♕b2 ♕b7 43.♖e7+ ♕b8 44.♖d6+ ♕a8 45.♖xg6 An act of despair. Yoo abandons all attempts at containing the bishop c8. On 45.♖d8 Caruana could unpin his bishop by 45...♖b4+ 46.♕a2 ♕b7+.

45...♕e6! Fully vindicating his risky strategy of putting his trust in the strength of the bishop pair, which commenced with 13...♖xe5!?. A checkmate in one is now threatened.

46.♖c2 46.♖e8+ ♕b7 47.♖e7+ ♕a6 48.♖a3 ♕c5+ and the white queen meets a sad end.



46...♖a2+! This elegant penetration starts a deadly sequence of moves leading to a forced mate.

47.♕c1 ♕e3+ 48.♕d1 ♕g4+ and the frustrated rather than appreciative U.S.

As soon as his fifth-round game against Caruana was concluded, 17-year-old U.S. Junior Champion GM Christopher Yoo was visibly frustrated, as captured on camera when he crumpled his scoresheet. Unfortunately, this frustration escalated, as he reportedly "stormed out of the tournament hall and struck a videographer from behind," according to an official statement released by the Saint Louis Chess Club following the incident.

As a consequence, Yoo was expelled from the tournament, his results were annulled, he was banned from the Club, and his case will now be addressed in the juvenile justice system.

In his own public statement, Christopher apologized to the videographer, his fellow players, tournament officials, the Club, and the entire chess community. He accepted full responsibility for his actions and promised that such behavior would not happen again.

**LATEST UPDATE:** US Chess have handed Christopher Yoo a 1-year suspension through November 14, 2025 and a 5-year probation period.

Junior Champion threw in the towel.

**White resigned**

White gets mated everywhere. For example, 49.♖e2 ♖b1+; or 49.♕e1 ♖a1+; but 49.♖e2 ♖d2!! mate would have been the most beautiful completion of Caruana's remarkable strategy!



By Sarunas Sulskis

## A Trojan Horse emerges twice in this ladies' game: both a fictional and a real one

Which one of Carissa Yip's eight consecutive wins could best describe her superiority over the rest of the field at the 2024 U.S. Women's Championship? Wouldn't it be a victory over the eight-time U.S. Women's Champion GM Irina Krush? Yes, of course!

This fascinating game in fact encompasses multiple themes, such as blockade, king walk across the board, etc. Yet, the one of Trojan Horse is the most captivating, at least to my personal taste. I admit that its first ghostly appearance for White by 17.♖d4! is mostly the fruit of both my own and my friend Donatas Vaznonis' imagination, though. I wouldn't be too surprised to find out that it never actually crossed Irina Krush's mind. Despite our best efforts and sympathy, we cannot guarantee the soundness of bringing up the Trojan Horse in this way.

However, when the bell tolled for Carissa Yip, deep in the game and beyond the first time-control, she introduced her own wonderful Trojan Horse theme by 45...♖b4!!, without blinking an eye. The tables were suddenly turned on a deluded Krush, who, with a beating heart, had presumably anticipated a hard-fought victory. With the white king now at the mercy of Carissa's attack, Irina surrendered just before the emergence of a second black queen, in what was a thrilling ladies' game.

### A40

Irina Krush	2388
Carissa Yip	2418

U.S. Women's Championship, St. Louis 2024

1.c4 g6 2.♖c3 ♕g7 3.d4 c5 4.d5 ♕xc3+!? Risky as it is to part with a trademark bishop in the King's Indian Defense structure, I guess both Nimzovich and Petrosian would nod

in approval of Carissa's exchange. The resulting position, in which White's doubled pawns on the c-file are already blockaded, significantly restricts the mobility of her bishop pair.

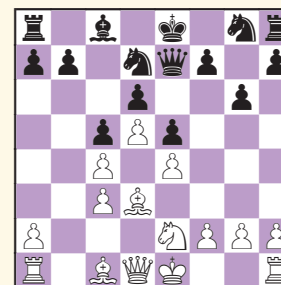
5.bxc3 e5 Although, after this move, I struggle to assign a name to the present opening, to me it looks sounder than the so-called Beefeater Defense, arising from 5...f5.

6.e4 If you asked my advice, I would

suggest driving a wedge between the black pawns by 6.d6!?, simultaneously vacating the d5 square for White's minor piece. That said, 6.d6 is not the top choice in databases, albeit not by far.

6...d6 Goodbye, wedge. Goodbye for ever!

7.♕d3 ♖d7 8.♖e2 ♖e7



9.0-0 What can be more natural than castling her king on the short side? However, the closed character of the position suggests that White may need a massive pawn assault on the kingside to bring Black to her knees.

9.h4 deserves attention. ♕e1-d2 could be her next move to make the king's journey to the queenside shorter than it is in the game, where Krush has to run it along a perilous road from g1 to a3.

9...h5 10.a4 The last reference game I found went 10.h3 ♖h6 11.f4 f6 12.f5 g5 13.♖g3 h4 14.♖h5 ♕d8 and, as is often the case in these defensive structures, beloved by Petrosian, White met a sad end trying to break it down on move 48 in I.Gorshtein 2563 - M.Kazhgaleyev 2458, Aix en Provence 2024.

10...a5! Despite her tender age, Carissa Yip has learned well the truths of blockading.

11.♖b1 ♕d8! This odd king walk is only possible under the shelter of a rigid pawn structure. Here, Carissa skillfully moves her king out of harm's way to the fortified queenside.

12.♕e3 ♕c7 13.♖b5 h4 14.♖d2 ♖a6 15.♖b2 g5! As Yip takes a greater and greater area of the board area under lock and key, Krush's bishop pair becomes badly incarcerated. Note the importance of the h4 pawn which prevents any

The duel of multiple U.S. Women's Champions - Irina Krush, eight-time Champion vs. now three-time Champion Carissa Yip.



Photo by Lennart Ootes

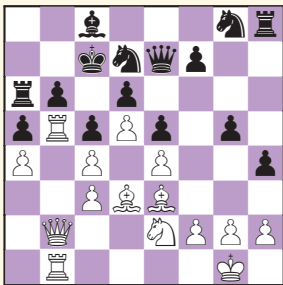




invasion by ♖e2-g3-f5.

**16.♖b1** Krush menacingly triples her major pieces...

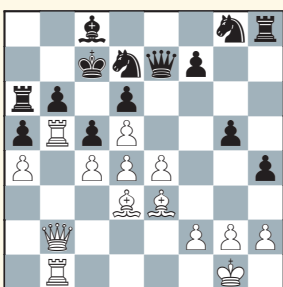
**16...b6**



Nevertheless Yip now sincerely asks her “To what avail?”

**17.f3** Such soft measures are not likely to impact the course of the game, which, generally speaking, is unfavorable for White.

I had the chance to analyze this interesting position with my friend Donatas Vaznonis. We concluded that, good or bad, Krush should have brought a Trojan Horse directly into Yip’s kingdom by 17.♔d4!?. The beast is too annoying to be left alone, but after accepting “the gift,” the miracles start to appear. Black’s mighty blockade crumbles, both white bishops come to life and, in some lines, the white queen may reach out as far distant as the rook on h8! I will give you a few sample lines from our analysis, which is by no means exhaustive. 17...exd4 (Oddly enough, there’s a huge difference between the two pawn captures. After 17...cxd4? 18.cxd4, allowing White to execute c4-c5 is not what Black should go for. Thus, after 18...exd4 19.♔xd4, White is conducting a mighty attack on both wings.) 18.cxd4



A) On 18...♔gf6 19.♔xg5 is quite unpleasant.

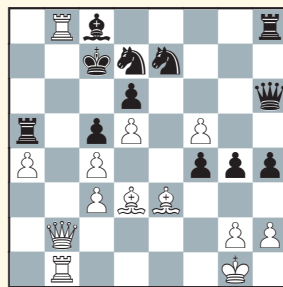
B) 18...♖h6 19.e5! dxe5 20.dxc5 bxc5 (20...♔xc5? 21.♔xc5 bxc5

22.♖b7+- triggers a range of winning lines for White.) 21.♔f5 and no matter what engines may say, such positions give a severe headache to the defender. Just have a look on his knight on g8!

C) 18...f6! 19.e5! (19.dxc5 dxc5 20.♔xg5 ♖e5+ 19...fxe5 20.dxc5 dxc5 21.♔f5 ♖d6 (21...♖h6 22.♖d2) 22.♔xd7 ♔xd7 (A ‘more logical’ 22...♔xd7 is dealt a heavy blow 23.♖xc5+!, the upshot being 23...bxc5 24.♖b8 mate.) 23.♔xg5 ♔f6 24.f4 ♖e8 25.fxe5 ♖xe5 26.♔f4 ♖e1+ 27.♖xe1 ♖xf4 28.♖xb6±.

**17...f6 18.♔c1 ♖g7 19.♔b3 ♔e7** There’s no fun with Krush’s five pieces trying to breach Yip’s defensive line, therefore Carissa moves up her knight to guard the entry point on c6, which may be relevant in case of any furious invasion by Irina.

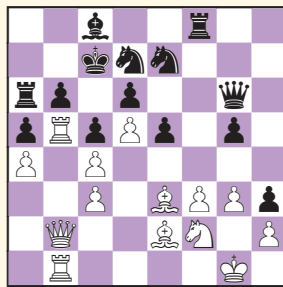
**20.♔e2** With this move, Irina signals that she knows no way forward. 20.♔xa5?!. Insolence is akin to playing roulette and there is a fair chance it may backfire. 20...♖xa5 (On 20...bxa5 21.♖b7+ ♔d8 22.♖b5 ♖a8 23.♖xd7+ ♔xd7 24.♖b6+ ♔e8 25.♖xd6, I start to like White, although she is still a rook down. 25...g4 26.f4) 21.♖xb6 g4 22.f4 f5 23.exf5 ♖h6 Here I thought of stunning Black with 24.♖b8 exf4



25.♖b7+!., but astonishingly she can survive my ferocity by the cold-blooded 25...♔d8!.

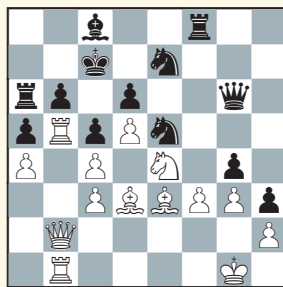
**20...♔d8 21.♔f2 ♔g6 22.♔d2 ♔c7 23.♔f1 ♔e7 24.♔e3** Krush has just completed a neat textbook knight maneuver to e3. The upshot for her opponent is that any danger of blasting Black’s king fortifications is now over. **24...♖h7 25.♔f1 f5** Carissa doesn’t hide her ambition to take command of the game.

**26.exf5 ♔xf5 27.♔g4 h3 28.g3 ♖f8 29.♔g1 ♔e7 30.♔e3 ♖g6 31.♔f2**



**31...e4!?** This brave attempt at a breakthrough has received a rather tepid appraisal from some engine-backed commentators. All I can say is that I see Yip passionately pursuing a win against a multiple U.S. Woman Champion, despite the odds of playing with the black pieces. And that is what I really like about her last move!

**32.fxe4?!** There’s no doubt that on 32.♔xe4 Yip intended 32...g4, when allegedly 33.♔d3 ‘is strong.’ (But let us first experience the thrill of the sideline 33.♔g5 gxf3 34.♔e6+ ♔b7 35.♔xf8 ♖e4! 36.♔xd7 ♖xe3+ 37.♔h1 fxe2 38.♖xb6+ ♔c7! and Black wins.) I guess Carissa intended to take out ‘the strong’ 33.♔d3 with an obvious 33...♔e5. Now starts a fierce contest of human calculation.



A) 34.♖xb6 is probably a greater concern for Black. For example, 34...♔xd3 35.♖b7+ ♔d8 36.♖b5 gxf3 (Good for White is 36...♔xb7 37.♖xb7 ♖xf3 38.♔g5 ♖xe4 39.♖b8+ ♔d7 40.♖b7 mate.) 37.♔g5 (37.♖xa6 ♖xe4 38.♖xd6+ ♔e8 39.♖xe7+ ♖xe7 40.♖g6+ and the score is yet to be settled.) 37...f2+ 38.♔f1 ♖xe4 39.♔xe7+ ♖xe7 40.♖xe7 ♔xe7 41.♖b8 ♔d7 and Black is on top in this wild position.

B) 34.♔xc5 ♔xd3 35.♔xa6+ (35.♔xd3 ♖xd3) 35...♔xa6 36.♔xb6+ ♔d7+ could have been the line upon which Yip based her bold operation, initiated with 31...e4+.

**32...♖xf2!** While Krush was hesitant

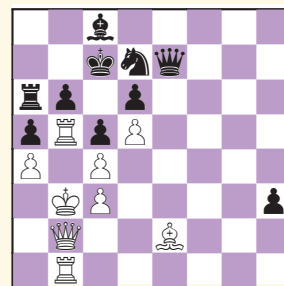
about offering sacrifices in pursuit of the enemy king, Yip rapidly takes over her role.

**33.♔xf2** Since after 33.♔xf2 ♖xe4 34.♔f1 ♔e5 35.♖e2 ♔f5 Black’s threats would remain even after the queen trade.

**33...♖xe4 34.♔xg5** This leaves her king exposed to the danger of a ferocious Black attack. I guess Irina had intended 34.♔f3 ♖xc4 35.♔xg5 ♔e5 36.♔e2 ♖xd5 37.♔xe7, but then probably disliked 34...♖f5 35.g4 ♖e5. **34...♖g2+ 35.♔e1 ♖xh2 36.♔xe7 ♖xg3+ 37.♔d2** No kidding. She must run away with her endangered king as quickly as she can. 37.♔f1? loses on the spot to 37...h2+.

**37...♖f4+ 38.♔c2** Just don’t look back at your bishop on e7! 38.♔d1 is met by 38...h2.

**38...♖e4+ 39.♔b3 ♖xe7**



**40.♔a3 ♖h4** The first time control is over. Let’s take stock.

Krush has succeeded in bringing her king to relative safety on the queenside. She is the exchange up, but all her four pawns are stopped in their tracks. Speaking of Yip’s assets, her well-advanced h-pawn is her biggest trump. Yet, a knight is often master of frozen pawn structures, dominating a bishop and occasionally even a rook. And the only knight here is Yip’s property.

**41.♔d3 ♖g3 42.♔f1** Irina must keep a low profile. 42.♔f5? runs into 42...♔e5+., winning.

**42...♖h4** Yip doesn’t rush with 42...h2, apparently unwilling to concede the g2 square. 43.♖g2 (43.♔g2 ♔e5 and White is unlikely to survive.) 43...♖h4 (43...♖xc3+ 44.♖5b3) 44.♔e2 ♔e5 45.♖h1.

**43.♔d3** Set against the prospect of threefold repetition, Carissa now decides to do things the hard way.

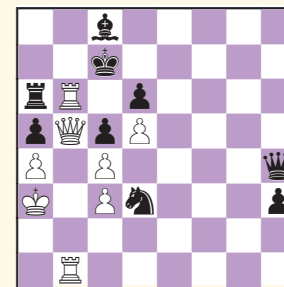
**43...♔e5!?** But this unleashes a stack of white major pieces confronting the black

king, doesn’t it? 43...h2 is countered by 44.♖h1.

**44.♖xb6** Irina just cannot resist this shot at her opponent’s king. She can easily be pardoned for missing an incredible Trojan Horse coming to visit her two moves later. On 44.♔e2, Yip had to make up her mind between

A) 44...♖e4 45.♖xb6 ♖xb1 46.♖b7+ ♔xb7 47.♖xb1 ♔c8 48.♖h7+ ♔d7 49.♔f1, when a draw is most likely; and B) 44...h2 45.♖xb6 h1♖ 46.♖xa6 ♔xa6 (Note that on 46...♖xb1? White has an important intermediate 47.♖a7+!) 47.♖b8+ ♔d7 48.♖a7+ ♔d8 49.♖xh1 (49.♖b8+ ♔c8) 49...♖xh1 50.♖xa6 ♖c1+ 51.♔b3 ♖b1+ 52.♔a3 ♔e7+.

**44...♔xd3 45.♖b5** On 45.♖c6+ ♖xc6 46.♖b8+ ♔d8 47.dxc6 ♖f6 retains the advantage for Black.



We have come to the most critical position of the game. I have little doubt that Krush thought she was on the verge of victory. Indeed, how can Black help herself?

**45...♔b4!.** Suddenly, the real Trojan Horse, not a ghostly creature, enters the fray courtesy of Carissa Yip! Having covered the vulnerable c6 square, the horse also effectively shuts out the enemy’s rear supply base. 45...♖xb6 46.♖xb6+ ♔d7 47.♖c6+ wins for White. 45...♖f6, eying c3, looks more resilient, but then Irina must surely have found the spectacular bone crusher 46.♖c6+ ♔d8 47.♖xc8+!! ♔xc8 48.♖b8+ ♔d7 49.♖1b7 mate. Alas, the day belongs to her opponent...

**46.♖xa6** 46.cxb4 axb4+ 47.♔a2 ♖xb6+- and devoid of rear support, White can resign.

**46...♔xa6** 46...♔xa6? would only mishandle the beautiful Trojan Horse after 47.♖c6+ ♔d8 48.♖xd6+ ♔e8 49.♖g1+-.

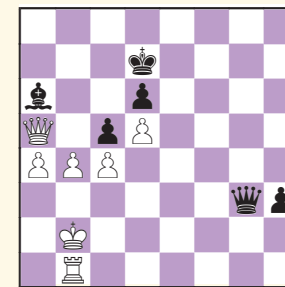
**47.♖xa5+ ♔d7 48.cxb4** The exchange up and with her long-time crippled pawns now straightened out,

the prospect of defeat now haunts Irina. **48...♖g3+ 49.♔b2?** Suddenly she spots a giant ghost and immediately veers off the road.

49.♖b3 ♖e1! was the ghost that Krush saw. Indeed, it’s frightening. Nevertheless, she should have gone down this scary road. 50.♔b2

A) On 50...h2 51.♖xa6 h1♖ 52.♖c6+ ♔e7 53.♖c7+ ♔e8 54.♖c8+ ♔f7 55.♖f5+ ♔e7 56.♖g5+ ♔d7 57.♖f5+ ♔d8 58.♖f8+ ♔d7 59.♖f5+ White keeps struggling against the pair of black queens.

B) 50...♖d2+ 51.♔a3 ♖c1+ 52.♔a2 ♔xc4 53.♖a7+ ♔e8 54.♖b8+ ♔f7 55.♖c7+ with a draw the most likely outcome of this still fierce struggle.



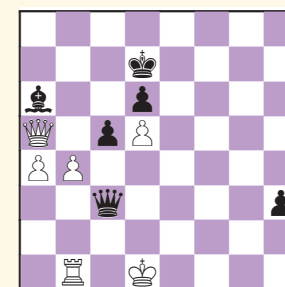
**49...♖e5+!** The reigning and future U.S. Women’s Champion now fires a precise shot! The routine 49...♖f2+ 50.♔a3 would have rekindled White’s hopes of survival.

**50.♔c2** Sadly, there’s no longer any escape for Irina. 50.♔b3 ♖e3+ 51.♔b2 ♖d4+ or 50.♔a3 ♖c3+-+.

**50...♖e2+ 51.♔c3 ♖xc4+ 52.♔b2 52.♔d2 ♖d3+ 53.♔c1 ♖c3+ 54.♔d1 h2+-.**

**52...♖d4+! 53.♔c1 53.♔b3 ♔c4+ 54.♔c2 ♔d3+ 55.♔b3 ♖c4+ 56.♔a3 ♖c3+-+.**

**53...♖c3+ 54.♔d1**



**54...h2!** This precious little black pawn doesn’t get wasted. **White resigned**

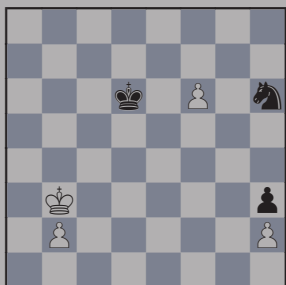




in the corner, and if the knight takes on h2 but the white king makes it to e2, it's a draw unless the black king can assist.

All of this will happen in the variations below. Yet, even if you understand all this in advance, it is very difficult (if at all possible) to find the right solution in real time.

**64.♔c5?** White needs to use the opposition on the black king (b5-d5, b4-d4, etc.) only when the black knight is on h6. The game continuation falls victim to a knight fork (idea #1). Also insufficient is 64.♔d5? ♔b4!! 65.♔d4 ♔h6! 66.♔d5 ♔b5!, opposition by Black. 67.♔d4 ♔c6 68.♔c3 ♔d6 69.♔xb3



And now only 69...♔g4! wins. (Not 69...♔e6? 70.♔c3 ♔g4 71.♔d3 ♔xh2 72.♔e2 ♔g4 73.♔f3 h2 74.♔g2= this is a draw by stalemate even after Black captures both pawns.)

To draw, White must find 64.♔d4!! ♔b4 (64...♔b5 65.♔c3!) 65.♔d5 and now: 65...♔b5 (65...♔h6 66.♔d4! ♔b5 67.♔d5! ♔b6 and now either 68.Kc4 or even 68.♔d6 ♔b7 69.♔d7!! ♔b8 70.♔d8=) 66.♔d4 ♔c6 67.♔c4 ♔d6 68.♔xb3 ♔g5 69.♔c3 ♔f3 70.♔d3 ♔xh2 71.♔e2=, similar to before. **64...♔h6 65.♔d5** White has lost the opposition, because 65.♔c4 loses immediately to 65...♔g4! 66.f7 ♔e5+. **65...♔b5 66.♔e5 66.♔d4 ♔c6 67.♔c3**

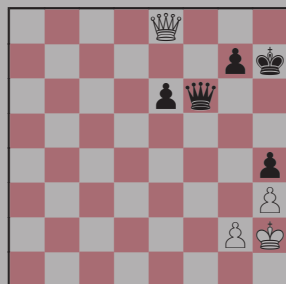
♔d6 68.♔xb3 ♔g4 is the line we already saw.

**66...♔c4 66...♔g4+ 67.♔f5 ♔xf6 68.♔xf6 ♔c4 wins also. 67.♔e4 ♔f7 68.♔f5 ♔d3 69.♔g6 ♔d6 White resigned**

Now let's watch the best endgame player of all time pull out a win from an objectively drawn position.

Fabiano Caruana	2805
Magnus Carlsen	2830

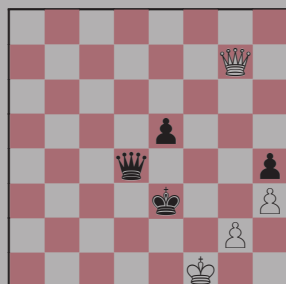
Norway Chess, Stavanger 2024



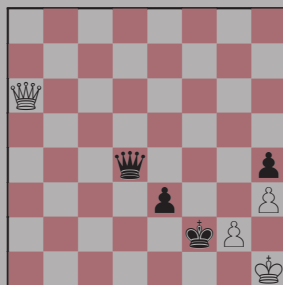
**55...♔h6 56.♔g1 e5 57.♔a4 ♔f4 58.♔c6+ ♔g5 59.♔c7 ♔d4+** It's not at all clear to an observer (or player) if White can hold here.

**60.♔f1 ♔f4!** Advancing the king, at the expense of the g7 pawn. 60...e4 would lead to a lot of checks, for example: 61.♔c1+ ♔f5 62.♔c8+ ♔f4 63.♔g4+ ♔e3 64.♔e2+.

**61.♔xg7 ♔e3**



**62.♔g1! 62.♔h6+? ♔f4+ 63.♔xf4+ ♔xf4 64.♔f2 e4 65.♔e2 ♔e5 66.♔e3 ♔d5 67.♔e2 ♔d4** and Black stalemates the white king after which White still has the g-pawn to move. **62...e4 63.♔h6+ ♔e2+ 64.♔h1 e3 65.♔a6+ ♔f2**

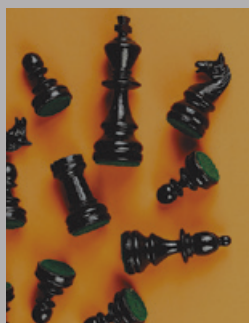


**66.♔h2??** A blunder. 66.♔a2+ would draw, for example: 66...e2 67.♔f7+ ♔e1 68.♔f5 ♔d2 69.♔g5+ ♔d1 70.♔h5! ♔e4 71.♔h2! This is not the only defense but I wanted to show the pin as a key defensive motif in these positions. Because the white king is immune to cross-checks, Black cannot engineer a trade of queens (although, again, it's far from obvious).

**66...e2**

**White resigned**

I hope that this selection of top-level endings of the past year has been interesting and instructive. Also, it should give you some perspective: even the best players will make mistakes when there is no time to think. We just have to do the best we can: know the theoretical positions that we can reasonably remember, refresh common techniques, and practice solving exercises. More importantly, try to retain energy for the end of the game. And most importantly: don't get upset at yourself for making mistakes!



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## THE MAGNIFICENT 3

Remarkable Recent Games

No. 3

By Sarunas Sulskis

### Against all the odds, Erigaisi holds his ground on the h-file

In view of the sweeping Indian dominance over the chess world, reflected clearly in Dommaraju Gukesh being the challenger for the World Championship and the recently claimed gold medals by both Indian teams at the Chess Olympiad, I think it is worthwhile to analyze a game of another Indian star, Arjun Erigaisi, incidentally world No. 4 and the highest-ranked Indian player at this moment of writing. In my analysis I have attempted to lift the curtain to uncover the reasons for Erigaisi's ongoing success.

At the recently finished European Club Cup, Erigaisi meets Andreikin who has just beaten Gukesh on the eve of the present game. Emboldened by defeating such a worthy opponent, Andreikin is in his element, disregarding that he had the black pieces. He defiantly meets Erigaisi's threats to his king by 20...g6, which is a pure pawn sacrifice. Indeed, shortly afterwards, Black's threats keep on growing with his star bishop on d4 and both rooks directed against the white king.

Erigaisi must stay calm and vigilant, and he obliges. A pawn up, taking shelter from the storm of Andreikin's fury, Erigaisi stubbornly holds his ground on the h-file with his queen, conspicuously shuffling her around from time to time by ♔h5-h6-h4-h5. Ultimately, he leaves her majesty under attack from an enemy rook and proceeds with the wonderful riposte 33.♔e3!. In the resulting four-rooks ending, Andreikin manages to recover his pawn, but his threats against the white king have evaporated. Erigaisi now takes over the attack on the weakened enemy king with both his rooks, but the final retaliation is brought about by his little pawn on the fateful h-file.

Arjun Erigaisi is one of the fastest-rising players in the world. In 2024 he gained over 60 rating points and is currently world No.4 with 2801 on the FIDE rating list as of December 2024.



B12

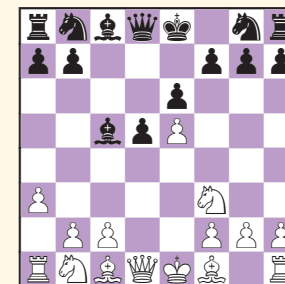
Arjun Erigaisi	2797
Dmitry Andreikin	2729

European Club Cup, Vrnjacka Banja 2024

**1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.dxc5 e6 5.a3**

A shift to modern strategy. White gives up his vulnerable extra pawn without a fight, limiting his strategic gain to hemming in the black light-squared bishop on c8. In my heyday, some 15 years ago, people used to stubbornly cling on to the c5 pawn by 5.♔e3.

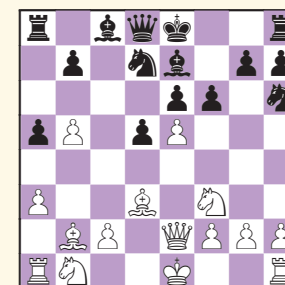
**5...♔xc5 6.♔f3**



**6...f6** Andreikin also responds with a cutting-edge opening move. It emerged only some five years ago. If you check the databases, you would see 6...♔e7 and 6...♔c6 as clear top choices for Black.

**7.b4 ♔e7 8.♔b2 a5** The game that breathed life into the 6...f6 line seems to have been R.Mamedov 2703 - M.Karthikeyan 2570, Gibraltar 2019. It went 8...♔d7 9.c4 ♔xe5 10.♔xe5 fxe5 11.cxd5 ♔f6 12.♔xe5 exd5 13.♔c3 0-0 14.♔e2 a5 15.b5 ♔e6 16.0-0 ♔d6, and Black later won on move 65.

**9.b5 ♔d7 10.♔d3 ♔h6 11.♔e2**



**11...0-0** However, this ordinary move may be a novelty. 11...fxe5 12.♔xe5 ♔xe5 13.♔xe5 ♔f6 14.♔d2 ♔f7 15.♔xf6 ♔xf6 16.0-0 0-0 17.♔ae1 was seen in E.Logozar 2058 - N.Kumar 2272, Irving 2019, which Black won on move 48.





**12.c4 ♖f7** Having defeated Gukesh on the eve of this game, Andreikin is in a creative mood and rejects the sound alternative 12...fxe5 13.♖xe5 ♖xe5 14.♗xe5 ♗f6 15.0-0 ♖f7 16.♗h5 h6.

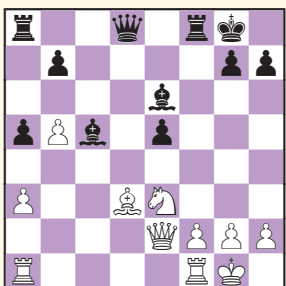
**13.cxd5 ♖dx5** 13...exd5?? would simply be suicidal, because of the fork 14.e6+.

**14.♖xe5 ♖xe5 15.♗xe5 fxe5 16.♖c3!** While Andreikin banks on his bishop pair, Erigaisi places his hopes on exploiting Black's weakened center pawns.

**16...exd5** Allowing White to triumphantly place his knight in the center. Alternatively, on 16...♗c5 17.0-0 ♗d4, White contains Black's activity by 18.♗ac1 ♗xc3 19.♗xc3 exd5 20.♗xe5±.

16...♗c7 is met by 17.♗c2 e4 18.♗xe4 ♗f6 19.♗c1 ♗f4 (19...♗c4 20.♗xh7+ ♖h8 21.♗d3) 20.♖e2.

**17.♖xd5 ♗c5 18.0-0 ♗e6 19.♖e3** On 19.♗h5? h6 White's minor pieces get stuck on the d-file.



**19...♗d4** In a superficially good-looking position, Andreikin allows a dangerous enemy queen sortie.

19...♗g5 would have prevented White's queen coming to h5. Yet, after the quiet-looking 20.♗c4, Black must be careful not to lose the game in a few moves. (20.♗xh7+!? ♖h8! is unclear with the ...♗xf2! blow looming.) For example, 20...♗ae8? 21.♗xe6+ ♗xe6 22.♗c4 ♗e7 23.♖d5 ♗d6 24.♖c7+.

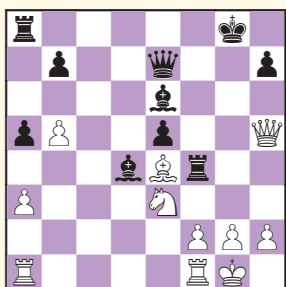
**20.♗h5! g6** And now he intentionally allows a direct blow on his king, confident that White's attacking pieces will lose their way in his camp. 20...♗xa1?? is a good tactical exercise for kids. White delivers a mate in 3 after 21.♗xh7+ ♖h8 22.♗g6+ ♖g8 23.♗h7 mate.

Upon 20...h6, White can continue his attack by 21.♗g6 ♗f6 (21...♗f6 22.♗h7+ ♖f8 23.♗ac1 ♗g8 24.♗e4) 22.♗h7+ ♖f7 23.♗ac1 ♗ac8 24.♗e4,

when Black still needs to play accurately.

**21.♗xg6 ♗e7 22.♗e4** Since on 22.♗ac1 Black can draw comfortably by 22...hxg6 23.♗xg6+ ♖h8 24.♗h6+ ♖g8=.

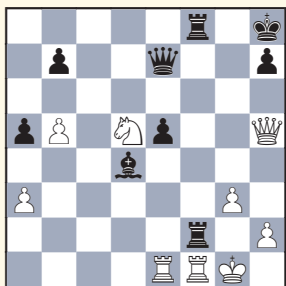
**22...♗f4** Andreikin values his nice bishop on d4 more than the humble rook on a1. Obviously, down the road, he fancied his chances of a powerful strike against the enemy king. With hindsight, he could have restrained his fervour with moderate material gain by 22...♗xa1 23.♗xa1 ♗g7=.



**23.♗d5!** This is true Erigaisi – deep and thoughtful! He now offers the exchange for the second time in a row. I bet Andreikin only reckoned on a different exploitation of the d5 square by 23.♖d5 ♗xd5 24.♗xd5+ ♖h8, when Black will soon quadruple his pieces to break through on f2.

**23...♗af8** To go for the grab with 23...♗xa1 24.♗xa1 wasn't out of the question, but then the e5 pawn immediately becomes weak. On the attempt to give it a helping hand by 24...♗f6?, Erigaisi had prepared the big hit 25.♖g4!! and all of a sudden Black's position would have completely collapsed!

**24.♗ae1 ♖h8 25.g3 ♗4f6** Focused and immersed in the game, Erigaisi has carefully examined all possible tactics, such as 25...♗xd5 26.♖xd5 ♗xf2



27.♖xe7 ♗xf1+ 28.♖g2 ♗8f2+ (28...♗xe1 29.♖g6+) 29.♖h3 ♗xe1,

when the simplest way to secure a large advantage for White is 30.♖f5+.

Also 25...♗xe3 doesn't help Black because of 26.♗xe5+! ♗f6 27.♗xe3 ♗xd5 28.gxf4 ♗g8+ 29.♗g3+.

**26.♗xe6 ♗xe6 27.♗e2 b6** Again, some incendiary tactics, such as 27...♗h6 28.♗g4 ♗xf2!? may erupt at short notice, but Erigaisi keeps a vigilant eye on them. 29.♗xf2 ♗xe3 30.♗xe6 ♗xf2+ 31.♖xf2! ♗xe6 32.♖e3 and with his pieces outmatching their counterparts in activity, White is clearly better.

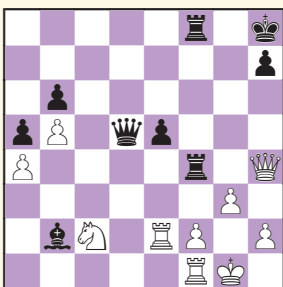
**28.♖c2!** A rather awkward square for the knight but, without uprooting the black bishop from its dominant central position, there's no way forward.

**28...♗b2** Andreikin hides his bishop on an equally, if not more, awkward square. However, his bishop continues its protection of e5. Gradually Andreikin turns his attention to the soft target of White's queenside pawns. After 28...♗c5 his bishop is parked far more conveniently, although it allows his center pawn to fall after 29.♗xe5 ♗xe5 (29...♗xf2+ 30.♖g2) 30.♗xe5, the upshot being 30...♗xf2 31.♗xf2 ♗xf2? 32.♗xc5!+.

**29.♗h4** All set to prevent ...♗e6-c4 and maintaining his blockade of the important e4 square.

**29...♗d5** If 29...♗h6, then 30.♗e4.

**30.a4 ♗f4!** By barring the enemy queen from the fourth rank, Andreikin maintains the high tension despite his pawn deficit. 30...♗f3 31.♗e4+- would extinguish any counterplay by Black.



**31.♗h6!** Meanwhile Erigaisi makes a tricky move, eyeing the rook on f8 and the pawn on b6. Instead, 31.♖e3? would be met by 31...♗f3+.

No way can Andreikin's "gift" be accepted, as after 31.gxf4? ♗g8+ 32.♗g3 exf4 33.♗xg8+ ♗xg8+ 34.♖h1 f3 35.♗g1 fxe2 36.♗xg8+ ♖xg8+, Black wins easily.

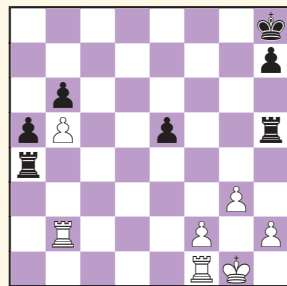
31.♗h5 doesn't bind the black rook, therefore 31...♗xa4 32.♖e3 ♗xb5 33.♗b1 ♗a1 can follow.

**31...♗c4** 31...♗8f6 weakens the back rank and after 32.♗g5 ♗6f5 the perfect moment arrives to strike Black's loose pieces with Erigaisi's trademark 33.♖e3!±.

**32.♗h5** On 32.♗fe1 ♗4f6 33.♗h5 ♗xa4, Black regains his missing pawn, whereas 32.gxf4 ♗g8+ 33.♖h1 ♗xe2 34.♗f6+ ♗g7 leads to a draw by repetition, which is most definitely not Erigaisi's ambition.

**32...♗8f5 33.♖e3!** This excellent counterstrike diffuses tensions around White's king and his queenside pawns. Meanwhile 33.♗e8+ ♗f8 34.♗h5 leads nowhere for White.

**33...♗xh5 34.♖xc4 ♗xc4 35.♗xb2 ♗xa4** Let's take stock now.



Black has finally regained his missing pawn. But his enduring threats against the white king are over. With his next move Erigaisi turns the tables on the enemy king, wounded long ago by 21.♗xg6.

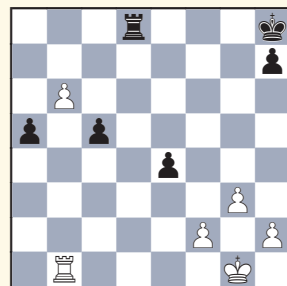
**36.♗c2** Andreikin's next two moves show that he couldn't readjust his mind quickly enough to facing hard defensive challenges.

**36...e4?** This denies Black of any chance of blocking the incoming ♗f1-d1 by ...♗a4-d4. 36...♗g5 was far more defensive-minded. Then, after 37.♗fc1 (Importantly, advancing 37.h4 is dealt with by 37...♗xh4; while 37.♗c6 can be met by 37...♗g6.) 37...♗b4 38.h4 ♗gg4 39.h5 ♗xb5 40.h6 a4 the chances seem to be equal.

**37.♗d1 ♗xb5?** The final mistake. Carried away by his strong desire to annihilate White's queenside property, Andreikin leaves his king at the mercy of an attack by Erigaisi's rook.

He could have still prevented the deadly invasion on the seventh rank by 37...♗c5. Possibly he was concerned

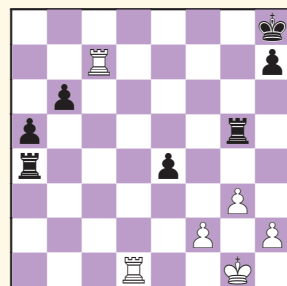
about 38.♗xc5 bxc5 39.♗b1!. True, Black must now beat a full retreat. 39...♗d4□ 40.b6 ♗d8



The resulting endgame is very difficult for Black...

**A) ...both in case of the straightforward 41.♗b5 ♗b8 42.♗xa5 (42.♖f1 a4 43.♖e2) 42...♗xb6 43.♗xc5 ♗e6 44.♖f1+;**

**B) ...and the more cunning 41.♖f1 a4 (41...♖g7 42.♖e2 a4 43.b7 ♗b8 44.♖e3 a3 45.♖xe4 a2 46.♗a1 ♗xb7 47.♗xa2.) 42.♖e2 a3 43.b7 ♗b8 44.♖e3 a2 45.♗a1 ♗xb7 46.♗xa2+-.** 38.♗c7 ♗g5□



**39.h4!** White's kingside pawn run will bring home the win for Erigaisi!

**39...♗g4** Neither 39...♗g7 40.♗d8+ ♗g8 41.♗dd7 nor 39...♗g6 40.h5+-, can save Black.

**40.♗d8+ ♗g8 41.♗dd7 ♗g4** Upon 41...♗e8 White conducts a mating attack by 42.♗xh7+ (Stronger than 42.h5 h6.) 42...♖g8 43.h5 e3 44.♗cg7+. It's important to prevent ...♗a4-g4. Then, 44...♖f8 45.h6 e2 46.♗h8 is mate.

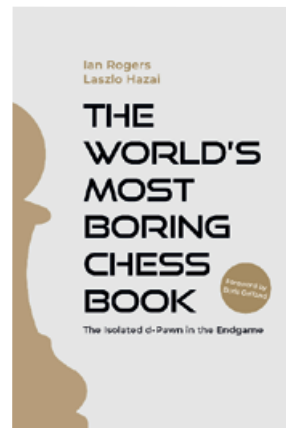
**42.♗xh7+ ♖g8 43.♗hd7 ♖h8 44.♖g2** Preventing any chance of counterplay by ...e4-e3 and getting ready for an attack with ♖g2-h3.

**44...♗b4** On 44...e3 could follow 45.f3 e2 (45...♗g6 46.h5 ♗g5 47.h6 e2 48.♗h7+ ♖g8 49.♗he7+-) 46.fxg4 e1♗ 47.♗d8+ ♗e8 48.♗xe8 mate.

**45.♖h3** This enables the advance of the h-pawn with a direct attack.

**45...♗g6** 45...e3 can be met by 46.f4.

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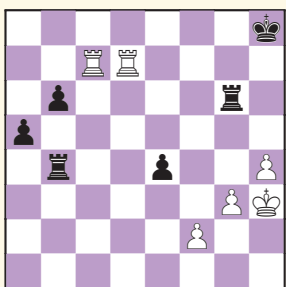


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**46.h5** Here we go!  
**46...♗g5 47.h6! ♗b1 48.h7!**  
**Black resigned**