

GM Alex Sherzer Memorial gathered many U.S. Champions and friends in Sterling, Virginia

Remembrance And Reunion

ALTHOUGH THE RESULTS WERE NOT THE MAIN FOCUS OF THIS MEMORIAL EVENT, THE GAMES PROVED THRILLING AND COMBATIVE. VETERAN LIONS AGAIN DEMONSTRATED THEIR HIGH-CLASS AND REPUTATION EARNED OVER THE YEARS, WHEREAS IT WAS A THRILL TO SEE YOUNG LIONS EMERGING ON TOP.

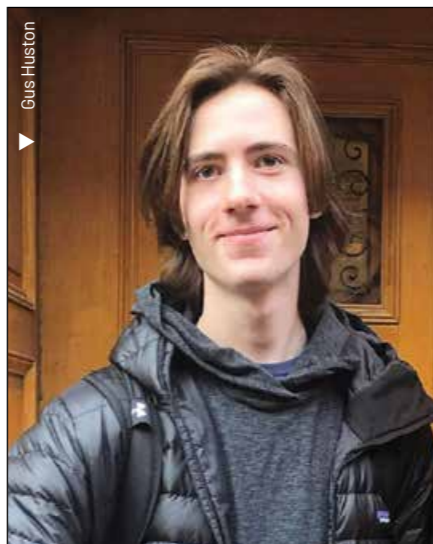
By David Mehler

This past November, the GM Alex Sherzer Memorial Mid-Atlantic Masters Tournament inspired the return of two former U.S. Champions, GM Patrick Wolff and IM Stuart Racheles, to competitive play. Wolff, a two-time U.S. Champion, flew across the country from San Francisco for this weekend Swiss in Sterling, VA. Racheles, one of Sherzer's closest friends, came up from Alabama, where he had been living in chess retirement for more than 30 years. Three-time U.S. Champion GM Joel Benjamin, who once taught Sherzer, came, too, as did GMs Alex Fishbein and Jesse Kraai, IM Justin Sarkar, and NM Geoff Gelman, all of whom had played with Sherzer in the prior millennium.

Grandmasters Jianchao Zhou and Patrick Wolff tied for first place with International Master Gus Huston, all with 4 points of five games. Half-a-point back were IM Safal Bora, whose result likely put him over the threshold for the GM title (he already had the norms; he just needed to earn the 2500 rating), along with Fishbein and Sarkar. Benjamin won the senior prize, with 3 points.

All told, five grandmasters and five international masters came to respect Sherzer's memory. During a memorial between rounds, several players recounted their relationships with him or told the attendees their stories of young Alex. There were stories about his facility with languages, hijinks he perpetrated in his youth, his generosity, and his overarching kindness. Between rounds, Sherzer's old friends, many of whom had not seen each other in decades, got together to play friendly blitz games and reminisce about events from the 1980s and '90s.

The tournament was full of interesting games and pairings. A substantial number of talented juniors attended. Former child phenom GM Joel Benjamin was held to a draw by rising superstar 10-year-old Chenxuan Ling in the second round, giving him a taste of the medicine he doled out a generation earlier.



Gus Huston

GM ALEX SHERZER MEMORIAL
(5 rounds, 33 players)
Sterling, VA
November 1-3, 2024

1-3 Gus HUSTON, Jianchao ZHOU, Patrick WOLFF	4
4-6 Alex FISHBEIN, Safal BORA, Justin SARKAR	3½
7-14 Joel BENJAMIN, Jesse KRAAI, Sullivan MCCONNELL, LMST DE SILVA (SRI), Brian TAY, Gunnar ANDERSEN, Pranav SWAMINATHAN, Matthew DIAO	3
15-20 Kalpaka VAIBHAV (IND), Roman RYCHKOV, Stuart RACHELS, Andrew JING, David RECUERO GUERRA (ESP), Chenxuan LING	2½

etc.



David Mehler is the founder and President of the U.S. Chess Center of Washington, DC, which sponsored the 2024 Sherzer Memorial. For over five decades David has been teaching and promoting chess, as well as organizing tournaments in the Greater Washington area and throughout the country. His dedication to chess earned him the Outstanding Career Achievement Award from the national federation in 2022.

GM Jianchao Zhou, the co-champion of the 2024 U.S. Open, was the top seed. Every player in the tournament held the title of National Master or better. Accelerated pairings ensured interesting games in each of the five rounds.

LEARN FROM THE LEGENDS

Excellent chess was played in Sherzer's memory. GM Patrick Wolff here annotates two of his games from the event.

B10	Patrick Wolff	2531
	Ansh Shah	2235

Sherzer Memorial, Sterling 2024

Notes by Patrick Wolff

1.e4 c6 2.♘f3 d5 3.d3 The discovery that the endgame after 3...dxe4 4.dxe4 ♗xd1+ 5.♔xd1 offers White better chances has made this a serious option for White. It is similar, but more aggressive than the line 2.d3 d5 3.♘d2, which I used to play in the mid-1990s. **3...♙g4 4.h3 ♙xf3** 4...♙h5 is somewhat more combative, after which White often plays 5.♗e2!? After 4...♙xf3, the position resembles what results after 3.♘c3 (instead of 3.d3) ♙g4 4.h3 ♙xf3 5.♗xf3, but I think having the pawn on d3 and the knight still on b1 is a better



GM Alex Sherzer
(1971 - 2022)

Sherzer was a student of the U.S. Chess Center as a young man and later became a teacher at the Center. He was awarded a Samford Fellowship to assist his efforts to become a grandmaster. Once he achieved that goal, he reduced his playing time in order to attend medical school. He created a medical practice in Florida, where he lived the rest of his life.

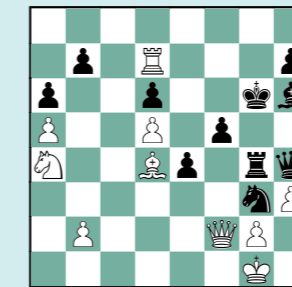
Sherzer became the first United States Cadet Champion in 1986. He was the United States High School Champion in 1989, one of only a few players to win the Championship Section with a 7-0 score. Sherzer placed second in the world in the Under-18 World Youth Festival in a performance that garnered him the International Master title. Twice, he tied for first place in the U.S. Junior Invitational, qualifying to participate in the U.S. Championship. In the 1992 Championship, he earned the grandmaster title but failed to capture first place when, leading the field in the final round, he lost his game after missing a win against his nemesis, GM John Fedorowicz.

E88

John Fedorowicz	2560
Alex Sherzer	2460

U.S. Championship, Durango 1992

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♙g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 0-0 6.♙e3 e5 7.d5 c6 8.♙d3 cxd5 9.cxd5 ♘h5 10.♘ge2 f5 11.exf5 gxf5 12.0-0 ♘d7 13.♗d2 ♘df6 14.♔h1 ♙d7 15.a4 a6 16.a5 ♗e7 17.♙c2 ♙ae8 18.♙ae1 e4 19.♘f4 ♗f7 20.♘xh5 ♘xh5 21.f4 ♘f6 22.h3 ♗g3+ 25.♔h1 ♙h6 26.♙gf1 ♗h4 27.♗f2 ♘g3+ 28.♔g1 ♘f7 29.♙c1 ♙g8 30.♙a4 ♙xa4 31.♘xa4 ♙g4! 32.♙c7+ ♔g8 33.♙fc1 ♙xf4 34.♙c8 ♙xc8 35.♙xc8+ ♔f7 36.♙c7+ ♔g6 37.♙d4 ♙h6 38.♙d7

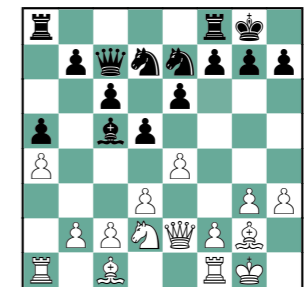


38...♙f4 38...e3!! was pointed out by Judit Polgar a few days later. **39.♙xd6+ ♔f7 40.♙xh6 ♗g5 41.♙xh7+ ♔f8 42.♙g7 ♙xf2 43.♙xg5 ♙f1+ 44.♔h2 f4 45.♙xg3 fxg3+ 46.♔xg3 ♙a1 47.♘c5 ♙xa5 48.d6** **Black resigned**

In the 1980s, Sherzer was a popular fixture in chess. He made friends easily. With his ability to speak English, Hungarian, Mandarin Chinese, Spanish, and Tagalog, he was comfortable speaking with a large majority of chess players. He was able to understand Russian and he had started learning Malay, as the Malaysian environment fascinated him. It was fitting that people with many cultural backgrounds came to play in the tournament.

version for White. One advantage is that various "King's Indian adjacent" positions if Black plays ...d5-d4 are much better for White now; another advantage is that the c-pawn can go either to c3 (to support the d-pawn if it goes to d4) or to c4 (to put pressure on the d5 point and to gain space). **5.♗xf3 e6 6.g3 ♙c5 7.♙g2 ♘e7 8.0-0 ♘d7 9.♘d2 a5 10.a4** An interesting option here to exploit the early 9...a5 is 10.c3 e5 11.exd5 ♘xd5 (11...cxd5 12.c4!±) 12.d4! (White could also just play this position like a reversed King's Indian and probably have a slight edge.) 12...exd4 13.cxd4 ♙e7 14.♗b3 with a pleasant edge. But the more automatic move 10.a4 is also fine.

10...0-0 11.♗e2 ♗c7

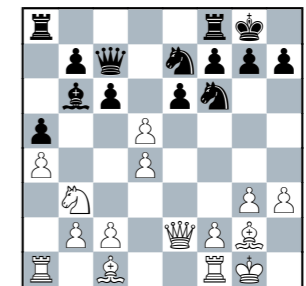


12.♘b3 According to my database, this is now a completely new position after only move 12!

12...♙b6 13.d4 While Black's position is perfectly playable, the opening result is more successful for White. White has a space advantage, the two bishops, and easy play, while Black is somewhat passive.

13...♘f6 14.♙f4 14.e5?! is inaccurate, because after 14...♘d7 Black is well positioned to play a quick ...c6-c5.

However, 14.exd5!? is an interesting option, suggested by the engine, which I did not adequately consider.



A) 14...exd5 15.♙g5 ♗d6 16.♙fe1 ♙fe8 17.♗d3 is pleasantly better for White.

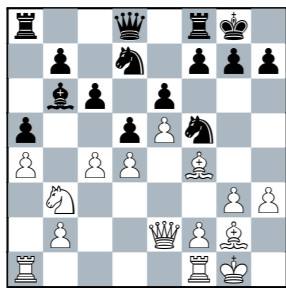


B) 14...d5?! 15.c4 and 16.c5 is pretty dreadful for Black.

C) After 14...cxd5 15.c3, White has a free hand on the kingside and the perpetual possibility of a c3-c4 break, while Black is fairly passive.

14...d8 15.e5 d7 Interestingly, the engine prefers the plan with 16.h4 and 17.c3 (or 16.c3 and 17.h4). It is probably instructive to study this position closely with the engine, especially in comparison with 14.e5?! (instead of 14.f4).

16.c4 dxc4? This is a serious error, after which Black has a badly cramped and passive game. It was imperative for Black to keep the d5 stronghold in the center and counterattack the d4 pawn immediately with 16...d5.



A) 17.f3! h6! Black gets counterplay with the intention of playing ...g7-g5 and 18...f7-f6.

B) After 17.f3! e7!, Black's dual ideas of playing 18...b4 or 18...f6 induce White to release the tension by playing 18.cxd5 (18.c5 d7 followed by 19...b6 gives Black sufficient counterplay.) 18...cxd5 19.d3 (with the idea of 20.f4). Now if Black plays precisely with 19...f6! (19...b4 20.f4 exd5 21.f5 xa4 22.c1± is also playable, but more passive.) 20.f6 xf6 21.b5! f7, White has only a slight edge.

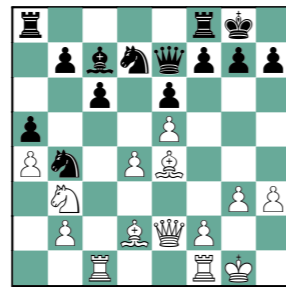
17.fxc4 d5 The engine slightly prefers the plan with 17...c7 and 18...b6-d5, to keep the knight on e7, although White still has much the better of it.

18.d2 White is already clearly better.

18...e7 19.ac1 c7 20.e2 db4 21.e4! Moves like this illustrate why this position is so tough for Black. Will White attack on the kingside? Maybe, maybe not. But Black has to burn time considering it and may eventually be induced into creating new weaknesses by defending with ...f7-f5.



Patrick Wolff



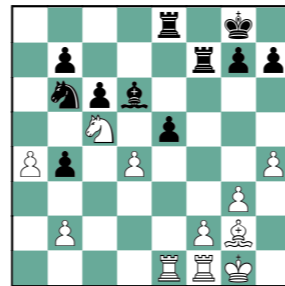
21...ae8 22.h4 f5 23.exf6 xf6 24.g2 f7 25.c4 Here the engine thinks it was even stronger to play 25.fxb4 axb4 26.d5 b6 27.d2. I'm sure the engine is correct! But it is also fine to keep the tension, and from a practical perspective it makes Black's job harder to keep as many options open as possible. I was already well ahead on the clock, and my opponent continued to burn time trying to figure out how best to defend.

25...fd5 26.d5 d6 27.ce1?! Better was 27.d4 e7 28.e2, but only for a very specific reason.

27...db6? The engine insists Black absolutely must play 27...xc5 28.dxc5 e5 here, which reduces White's advantage to a mere +0.8 pawns after 29.e2.

28.b3 e5? Getting short of time, Black cracks under the pressure. Black had to play either 28...xc5 29.dxc5 d6d5, or 28...d6d5 right away, although in either case White still has a tremendous advantage.

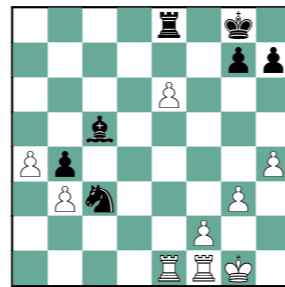
29.fxf7+ xf7 30.fxb4 axb4



31.fxb7! My opponent clearly missed (or misevaluated) this move. The resulting endgame is clearly winning for White and transforms the rest of the game into a technical challenge.

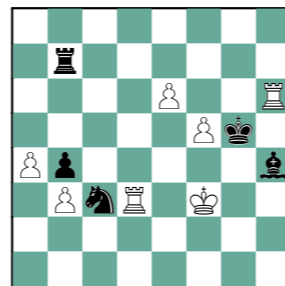
31...xb7 32.fxc6 be7 33.fxe8 xe8 34.dxe5 c5 The problem is that Black cannot recapture on e5. If 34...xe5, then 35.e4 f7 36.a5 d7 (36...a4 37.f1 f6 38.fxb4+-) 37.fxb4 is easily winning for White, while after 34...xe5 35.fxe5 xe5 36.a5! (the more sedate 36.b3 also wins) Black will quickly have to give up a minor piece to stop the a-pawn.

35.b3 d5 36.e6 c3



37.fg2 f8 38.e5 d4 39.f5+ e7 40.e1 f6 41.c5 d6 42.a5 d4 43.f4 e7 44.a8 h6 45.f8+ c5 46.f3 f6 47.c8+ d6 48.f5 b7 49.e3 e7 50.f3 g6 51.g4 White has many ways to win, but this one uses a neat tactic to wrap things up.

51...gxf5 52.gxf5 fxh4 53.fh8 f6 54.fhx6+ fg5



55.fhx4 fxh4 56.f6 The two



▲ GM Jianchao Zhou follows with great interest the game between IM Justin Sarkar and his teenage opponent

connected passers on the sixth rank cannot be stopped.

56...b6 57.f7 xe6 58.f8

Black resigned

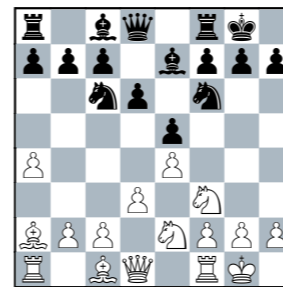
C55

Patrick Wolff	2531
Susal de Silva	2370

Sherzer Memorial, Sterling 2024

Notes by Patrick Wolff

1.e4 e5 2.f3 d6 3.f4 f6 4.d3 e7 5.0-0 d6 6.a4 0-0 7.d3 c3 8.a2 d6 9.d2?! It is more precise to play 9.e2! right away, when White keeps a slight edge after all reasonable Black moves.



For example:

A) 9...b4 10.b1 c5 11.d3 followed by 12.c3.

B) 9...e6 10.fxe6 fxe6 11.d3.

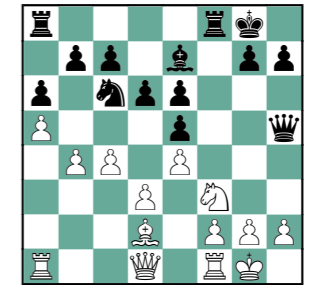
C) 9...d5 10.exd5 dxd5 11.c3.

D) 9...g4 10.c3! d5 (10...xf3 11.gxf3 is comfortably better for White because he will soon play f3-f4.) 11.d3 dxe4 12.dxe4 xd1 13.fxd1 and White retains a slight edge. I misevaluated the positions where Black captures

15...h5?! The engine prefers 15...b8 with the idea of ...b7-b6.

16.fhx5! The knight must not be allowed to reach the f4 square.

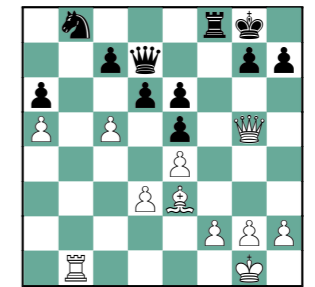
16...fxh5 17.b4 Now White has a comfortable edge.



17...ad8?! 18.b5 db8?! The engine wants Black to bail out into an inferior endgame with 18...d4 19.d4 xd1 20.fxd1 exd4.

19.d5! This is not a bad move, but the sacs on f3 are not dangerous, so White would do better just to build pressure and avoid exchanges with 19.f1.

19...g6 20.g4 fxg5 21.fg5 xe8 22.fab1 d7 23.e3 xa8 24.bxa6 bxa6 25.f7 c8 26.f8 b8 27.fxb8 dxb8 28.c5 d7



10...e6?! Better is 10...g4!

A) If 11.d2 d6! 12.c3 (12.f5!?) 12...xf3 13.gxf3 d5! 14.a2 d7, and here the fact that White has essentially wasted a move with 9.d2 makes these positions better for Black than the lines after 9.e2 g4 10.c3 xf3 11.gxf3.

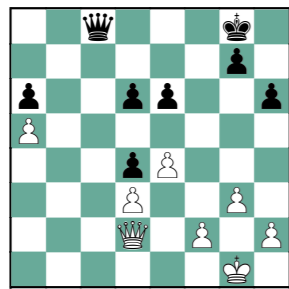
B) 11.c1!? protecting the c-pawn to be able to recapture on f3 with the queen. Then, after 11...d7 12.h3 e6, Black is getting very close to equality having successfully put the bishop on e6 without allowing doubled e-pawns, although even here White retains a very slight edge.

11.fxe6! fxe6 12.d2 d6 13.a5 a6 14.d3 fe8 15.c4 This is okay, but 15.c3 is better, keeping more flexibility in the center and also keeping the option of b3.

29.c1? This gives away a large part of White's advantage. Better is 29.cxd6 (29.h4!?) 29...xd6 (29...cxd6? 30.f6 is awful for Black.) 30.g4! d6 31.h4!± with the idea that after 31...xa5 32.h5 d6 33.h6, White has a grip on the kingside and the center, and Black's a-pawn is more of a target than a source of counterplay. The engine makes these judgments look so easy in retrospect!

29...d6! 30.cxd6 cxd6 31.f6 h6 32.d2 ce8 33.g3 d4?! This leads to an interesting queen and pawn endgame, but it was not necessary for Black to pull the ripcord and sac a pawn to go into this endgame. The right way to defend was to hang tough with 33...h7 or 33...e7. White has an edge, but it's not much.

34.fxc8+ xc8 35.fxd4 exd4



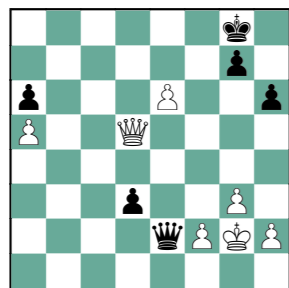
36. ♖b4 ♚c3 This is forced, because 36... ♗c5? 37. ♗b6! loses material. Now the next few moves are forced.

37. ♗xd6 ♗xd3 38. ♗xe6+ ♖h7 39. ♖g2 A roughly equivalent way is 39. ♗f5+ ♖h8 (39... ♖g8?! is an inferior route because it gives White the option of checking on d5 in some lines.) 40. ♗d5!? (40. ♖g2 could transpose to the game.) 40... ♗d1+ 41. ♖g2 d3 42. e5 ♗e2 43. e6 d2 44. e7 ♗xe7 45. ♗xd2± White has succeeded in keeping the a-pawns on the board after the inevitable exchange of White's e-pawn for Black's d-pawn, and the resulting endgame gives White some practical chances, but it should be drawn with good defense.

39... ♗e2 39... ♗c2 40. ♗f5+ ♖h8 41. h4 d3 42. e5 will eventually lead to a similar position as in the last note, with the exchange of d-pawn for e-pawn.

40. ♗f5+ ♖h8 41. ♗f8+ ♖h7 42. ♗f3 d3 43. e5 ♗c2?! With the help of the omnipotent engine, it is clear that 43... ♗xe5 was the simplest defense. After 44. ♗xd3+ ♖h8, White can either choose to protect the a-pawn, leading to a similar endgame as in the note to move 39, or White can play 45. ♗xa6?!, after which 45... ♗e4+ will eventually force White to give back the a-pawn to stop the perpetual checks. The move played in the game still draws, but it forces Black to keep making some tough decisions, which given that he was low on time eventually became too difficult.

44. ♗e4+ ♖g8 45. e6 ♗e2 (forced) 46. ♗d5



46... d2?? Black had to move the king either to h7 or h8, which would lead to a similar endgame as covered above. For example: 46... ♖h8 47. ♗a8+ ♖h7 48. ♗f3 ♗xe6 49. ♗xd3+ ♖h8.

47. e7+ ♖h7 48. ♗f5+ ♖g8 49. ♗f8+

Black resigned

Now after 49... ♖h7 50. e8 ♗ ♗xe8 51. ♗xe8 d1 ♗ 52. ♗e4+ ♖g8 53. ♗e6+ ♖h7 54. ♗xa6, Black cannot give check on e4, as before, but instead must give check on d5. But after 54... ♗d5+ 55. ♖g1 ♗d1+ 56. ♗f1, White stops the checks and keeps the a-pawn, and so the endgame is an easy win.

This win put GM Wolff into the first-place tie with GM Zhou and IM Huston, who beat GM Fishbein in the last round. In conclusion, here is that game, with Fishbein's comments:

B63

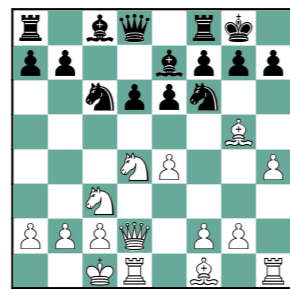
Gus Huston	2347
Alexander Fishbein	2373

Sherzer Memorial, Sterling 2024

Notes by Alex Fishbein

My main problem in this game was that I was not expecting it to take place! Safal Bora and I each had 3½ out of 4, and that looked like a forced pairing where I would have White, and given the tournament situation, I didn't think it would be hard to offer an early draw. But instead, Bora took a zero-point bye because his live FIDE rating was either 2499 or 2500, with 2500 being the requirement for GM title, and he didn't want to risk losing any rating! So instead, I was Black against a lower-rated, but still strong, IM who was a half-point behind me.

1. e4 c5 2. ♖f3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. ♖xd4 ♖f6 5. ♖c3 ♖c6 6. ♖g5 e6 7. ♗d2 ♖e7 8. 0-0-0 0-0 9. h4

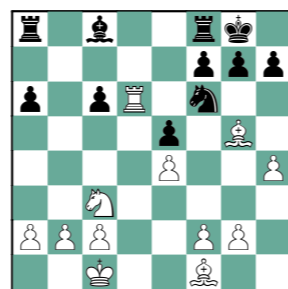


9... a6?! The first indication of being psychologically unprepared for a fight. I knew the right continuation, 9... ♖xd4

10. ♗xd4 ♖d7, but wanted to take the game out of the theoretical (and most principled) path.

10. ♖xc6 bxc6 11. ♗h3! e5 12. ♗d3 ♗c7 13. ♗xd6! ♖xd6 Sacrificing a pawn with 13... ♖e6 14. ♗d3 a5 was better, keeping the tension. I was just trying to escape into any sort of ending (even a losing one).

14. ♗xd6 ♗xd6 15. ♗xd6



15... ♖e6? 15... ♖b7 16. ♖xf6 gxf6 17. ♖a4 ♗ad8 18. ♗xf6 ♖g7 was better for me than the game.

16. ♗xc6 Now White is definitely winning. My exchange is no match for his two pawns (and the advantage of the two bishops). But I was able to find some practical chances.

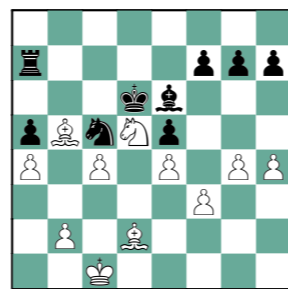
16... a5 17. a4 Unnecessarily making White's queenside less flexible.

17... ♗fc8 18. ♗xc8+ ♗xc8 19. ♖d2 ♖f8 19... ♖d7 20. ♖d5+-.

20. f3 ♖d7 21. ♖a6 ♗a8 22. ♖b5 ♖e7 23. ♖d5+ ♖d6 24. g4 The direct 24. c4 looks good; for example, 24... f5 25. b4! fxe4 26. fxe4 ♖xd5 27. c5+ ♖xc5 28. bxc5+ ♖xc5 29. exd5 ♖xd5+-.

24... ♗a7 24... h5!? was a good try to disrupt White's plans.

25. c4 ♖c5?!



26. ♖c2?! White could have concluded the game brilliantly with 26. b4! ♖b3+ (26... ♖d3+ 27. ♖b1 ♖xb4 28. c5+; other moves are also hopeless.) 27. ♖c2 and Black cannot take the bishop because of mate: 27... ♖xd2 28. c5 mate.

26... ♖d7 27. b4 axb4 28. ♖xb4



▲ A piece of atmosphere from the playing venue of the Sherzer Memorial

♗xa4! The only chance. Objectively, I am still losing, but now White has to make a difficult choice between several promising continuations.

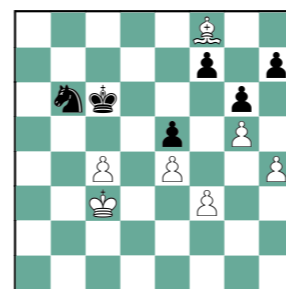
29. ♖xd7 29. ♖xa4 ♖xa4+ 30. ♖d2 ♖c6 31. ♖xc5 ♖xc5 32. ♖e3 is winning, although it was not obvious that White can manage the situation with the weak f3 pawn.

29... ♖xd7 29... ♗xb4 30. ♖xb4 ♖xd7 31. ♖d3+-.

30. ♖b6+ ♖c6 31. ♖xa4 31. ♖xc5 ♗a2+ 32. ♖b3 ♗e2 33. ♖a4 ♗h2 34. ♖f8!+- was also good (but not 34. ♖e3? ♗h3 35. ♖c3 ♗xf3 36. ♖d5 ♗g3 37. g5 ♗g4).

31... ♖xa4 32. ♖f8 g6 33. g5 ♖b6 Black has some drawing chances in this ending. The question is whether White will be able to use the passed c-pawn as a decoy and penetrate with his king to the kingside, or whether Black will create some sort of barrier.

34. ♖c3



34... ♖a8 A tempting move, sending the knight along greener routes where it can attack the f3 pawn. But it may make it easier for White. Keeping the knight around d7 and b8 would make White trade his c-pawn for my e-pawn, but it looks like that is still a winning position for White. Now the stage of many mistakes (by both sides) begins. I was in

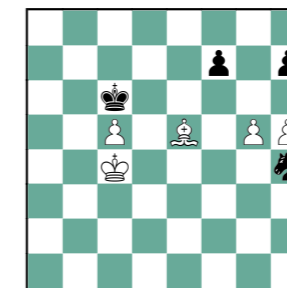
time trouble, and my opponent was also playing quickly. The strategy of playing quickly in a winning (or better) position when your opponent is in time trouble is rarely recommended. Then again, I cannot judge the winner of a game very harshly...

35. c5?! A clean win here is 35. ♖g7 ♖d6 36. ♖b4 ♖c7 37. ♖f6 ♖e6 38. ♖b5 ♖d4+ 39. ♖b6 ♖xf3 40. c5+ ♖d7 41. c6+ ♖c8 42. ♖c5 ♖xh4 43. ♖xe5 ♖f3 44. ♖f4+-.

35... ♖c7 36. ♖d6? 36. ♖g7 wins, but in the aforementioned 4 vs 3 ending.

36... ♖b5+ 37. ♖c4 ♖d4? The pawn ending after 37... ♖xd6+! 38. cxd6 ♖xd6 39. ♖b5 ♖d7 40. ♖c5 ♖e7 41. ♖d5 (41. ♖c6 ♖e6!) 41... f6 is drawn. If 42. ♖c5 (42. gxf6+ ♖xf6 43. ♖d6 h5 44. ♖d5?? g5 45. hxg5+ ♖xg5 46. ♖xe5 h4 47. f4+ ♖h6!) 42... ♖d7! (42... ♖e6? would lose to 43. ♖c6 ♖e7 44. ♖d5 ♖f7 45. ♖d6) 43. ♖b5 ♖e7 44. ♖b6 ♖d6! holds. With about 5 minutes left on the clock, it was not trivial for me to calculate the pawn ending. If you could spend all 5 minutes it would be easy to ascertain that it is drawn, but you don't know that in advance and you need to leave time in the event you choose another path.

38. f4 ♖e6 39. f5! gxf5 40. exf5 ♖d4 41. ♖xe5 ♖xf5 42. h5 ♖h4



43. ♖b2? 43. ♖f4 ♖f5 44. h6 ♖d7 (44... ♖e7 45. ♖d4) 45. ♖d5+-.

43... ♖f5? I missed another chance to save the game with 43... ♖f3! 44. ♖c1 (44. ♖f6 ♖d2+ 45. ♖b4 ♖e4 46. ♖e7 ♖d7) 44... ♖e5+ 45. ♖d4 ♖d7 46. ♖a3 ♖f8 47. ♖e5 ♖d7+ and Black has built a barrier.

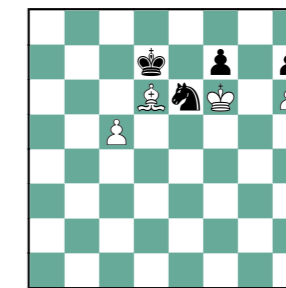
44. ♖c1? Again giving my knight too many squares. 44. ♖e5 would win.

44... ♖g7! 45. h6 ♖e6 46. ♖e3 ♖f8! 47. ♖d4 ♖d7 Now it's a fortress, but Black still has to make many precise moves and eventually, on 30-second increment, my good luck ran out.

48. ♖e4 ♖f8! 49. ♖e5 ♖d7+ 50. ♖f5 ♖d5 51. ♖d4 ♖c6! 52. ♖e4 ♖f8! 53. ♖f6 The only winning try is to put the black knight in zugzwang on d7, but it doesn't work because I have the e6 square when I need it, to attack two pawns from.

53... ♖e6! Not 53... ♖d7? 54. ♖e7+-.

54. ♖e7 ♖d7! 55. ♖d6 ♖xg5+ 56. ♖f5 ♖e6 57. ♖f6



57... ♖d4! 58. ♖f4 58. ♖g7 ♖f5+ 59. ♖xh7 ♖c6 is a draw, as the white king cannot get out.

58... ♖c6?? 58... ♖e8! is a simple draw. 59. ♖g3 (On 59. ♖e5 Black can even sacrifice the knight for the c-pawn; not necessary, but I saw this idea: 59... ♖c6+ 60. ♖d6 ♖d8 61. c6 ♖xc6 62. ♖xc6 ♖f8= with a well-known fortress.) 59... ♖c6 60. ♖g7 f5 61. ♖xh7 ♖f7=.

59. ♖e3! The only move, but it wins. 59... ♖f3 59... ♖xc5 60. ♖xf7 ♖d5 61. ♖xd4 ♖xd4 62. ♖g7+-.

60. ♖xf7 ♖h4 61. ♖g7 ♖f5+ 62. ♖xh7 ♖xe3 63. ♖g6! The final precise move. Of course, 63. ♖g8?? ♖g4 64. h7 ♖f6+ would be a draw. But in the game, White queens the pawn, and Black soon resigned. ■