



22...♙f8 23.♖h1 ♗b4? A tactical mistake. 23...a4 24.♘d2 a3 or 23...♗b4 were more precise ways for Black to continue.

24.♖h6? White misses 24.♙xc6 bxc6 25.♘xd4! with a great advantage, as the knight can't be taken in view of 25...exd4 26.♙xb4.

24...♙f8 25.♖h4 ♗e7 26.♖h1?! White is trying to avoid the perpetual attack on his queen. But he should go to h2 followed by ♗g2 and ♖h1.

26...♗g7 Black is getting ready to fight for the open file, after moving his light-squared bishop and bringing his rook to h8.

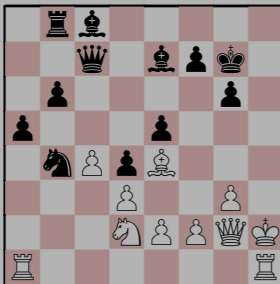
27.♘d2 ♗b4 27...♙d7! ♖ was natural and strong.

28.♖g2 ♖b8 Black has to waste time on this move as the pawn on b7 is unprotected.

29.♗h2? This is a big mistake which allows Black to seize the key file. It was necessary to block Black's light-squared bishop by 29.g4.

29...b6 Black could already seize the h-file by 29...♙h3 or 29...♙g4.

30.♖h1



30...♙h3! An unexpected blow!

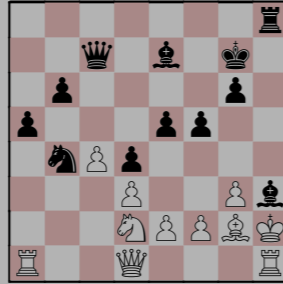
31.♖g1 A major concession. 31.♗xh3? would lose by force after 31...♖h8+ 32.♗g4 f5+ 33.♙xf5 gxf5+ 34.♗f3 e4+ 35.dxe4 fxe4+ 36.♘xe4 ♖f8+ 37.♘f6 ♖c6+ 38.e4 ♖xf6+ 39.♗e2 d3+ 40.♗d2 ♖b2+. But 31.♖xh3 ♖h8 32.♖xh8+ ♗xh8 33.♗g2+ leads to an unclear position.

31...♖h8 Threatening ...♙f1.

32.♖d1 f5! Black has now seized both the h-file and the initiative. He will now

endeavor to increase his advantage.

33.♙g2 In the event of 33.♙f3 e4! 34.dxe4 d3, Black opens the center and dark squares for his queen and bishop, as ...♖e5 and ...♙c5 will follow with great force.



33...♘xd3! Winning a second pawn for the exchange.

34.♗g1 The knight can't be taken because of the discovered check: 34.exd3 ♙g4+.

34...♙xg2 35.♖xh8 ♗xh8 36.♗g2 ♘c5 37.♖h1+ ♗g7 38.♖h3 So it's White who again controls the open h-file. Does it mean he stands better again? Well, there have been some changes. Fewer pieces are left on the board and by now Black has two pawns for the exchange, which represents a small material advantage. However, White preserves some chances of launching an attack on the open file.



38...♖b7+ 39.♘f3 39.f3 was another and probably better way to continue. White prepares a pawn attack with g3-g4 and after 39...♙f6 40.♖h1 ♗g8 41.g4 ♘e6 both sides have their chances.

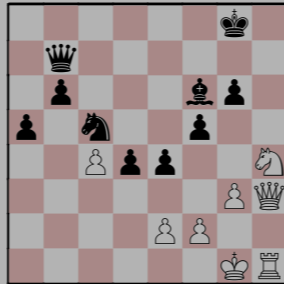
39...♙f6! The bishop transfers to the long diagonal, where it will be able to control the important g7 and h8 squares.

40.♖h1 ♗g8! A nice king retreat. White's pieces are stationed on the open h-file, but Black controls both the h8 and h7 squares. Any attempt to infiltrate by ♖h6 can be met by ...♖g7.

41.♗g1 An understandable attempt to free the knight and reinforce the attack. However White should play 41.♖b1, followed by ♖h6, in order to attack Black's pawns.

41...e4! Black is not afraid of the attack. He advances his central pawn and obtains a decisive advantage.

42.♘h4

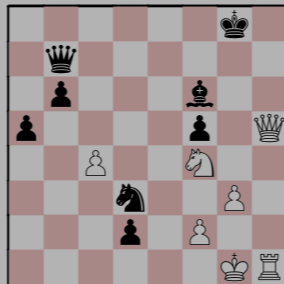


42...d3! There is no need to protect the g-pawn. It's more important to quickly create a passed d-pawn.

43.exd3 exd3 44.♘g6 d2 45.♖h5 White has brought three pieces into the attack. Nevertheless Black remains confident as his king is safe!

45...♘d3 Black's knight has to prevent its counterpart from accessing the f4 square.

46.♖h4 Nor do other moves save White. For example, 46.♘f4 is met by a spectacular blow.



46...♖xh1+! 47.♗xh1 d1♖+ 48.♖xd1 ♘xf2+.

46.♖h3 is the most stubborn defense, although after 46...♗b2 47.♘e7+ ♖xe7 48.♖g6+ ♗f8 49.♖h6+ ♙g7 50.♖xd2 ♘xc4, Black has a decisive material advantage.

46...♗b2 Black is ready to promote his d-pawn so **White resigned.** ■



THE MAGNIFICENT 3

Remarkable Recent Games

By GM Sarunas Sulskis



Sarunas Sulskis is a nine-time champion of Lithuania and a regular member of his country's national team. As a teenager, he studied at the Botvinnik-Kasparov Chess Academy and later graduated from the Kaunas College of Management and Law. He qualified three times for the knock-out World Championship, and his most notable recent result is a victory at the traditional 2022/23 Hastings Chess Congress. In addition to his achievements as a player, Sarunas is a FIDE trainer, arbiter, writer, and passionate chess promoter.

Recent U.S. events have provided me with plenty of candidate games for this column, but Saint Louis Chess Club tends to stand out if distinctions among the numerous chess contests on U.S. soil have to be made. The American Cup 2023 has been extensively covered by my ACM colleagues, therefore I will focus on the Spring Chess Classic 2023. (The crosstables can be found on page 95 -Ed.)

Despite trailing the American Cup in terms of the competitors' status and average rating, the Spring Chess Classic nevertheless distinguished itself by staging a classic style closed tournament in which the losing player is not threatened with elimination from the contest, but continues on equal terms with the rest of the field. Moreover, in contrast to the American Cup, the Spring Chess Classic featured a greater international mix of players representing such countries as the Netherlands, Hungary, Uzbekistan and others. This added a flavor of diversity to the field and ultimately, I believe, served as a high-quality masterclass for the array of up-and-coming, often teenage American talents.

1

LIANG'S HEROIC KING WALK, A DORMANT ROOK AND A MONSTER KNIGHT!

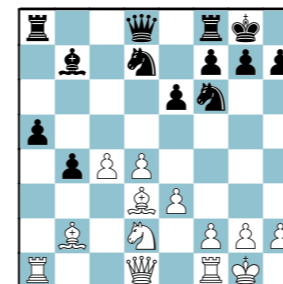
I will start off with a Group B tournament game between a Hungarian GM Gergely Kantor and an American junior Jason Liang. Out of the Noteboom Variation of the Queen's Gambit Declined, Kantor achieves a promising position with a nice pawn center, supported by a bishop pair. Kantor declares his intentions with four consecutive middlegame pawn moves, 19.e4, 20.e5, 21.f4, 22.c5, only to soon discover his invasion has stalled badly. After installing his bishop proudly on d5, Jason proceeds to squeeze White's threats dry by consecutively trading the light-squared bishops and then also the queens. By that stage White's position must have certainly lost all its appeal for Kantor. Nevertheless he could hardly have believed his eyes as young Liang escorted his king across the board on a breathtaking circuitous journey ...♗e8-d7-c6-b5-c4-d3-e4!

D31

Gergely Kantor	2532
Jason Liang	2529

Spring Chess Classic - B, St.Louis 2023

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 c6 4.♘c3 dxc4 5.a4 ♗b4 6.e3 b5 7.♙d2 a5 8.axb5 ♙xc3 9.♙xc3 cxb5 10.b3 ♗b7 11.bxc4 b4 The players are walking along the path of the Noteboom Variation, which is quite old and famed for its middlegame complexity. 12.♗b2 ♘f6 13.♙d3 0-0 14.0-0 ♘bd7 15.♘d2 A well-known line in the Noteboom, but it allows Liang's knight jump. 15.♖c2 and 15.♙e1 are the most frequently seen alternatives.



15...♘c5!? Up to now this knight jump

hasn't been too popular. Players normally prefer 15...♖c7 or 15...e5. However, as a consequence of the present quite spectacular win by Liang, 15...♘c5 may increase in popularity.

16.♙c2 ♘ce4 17.f3 In terms of stopping Black's queenside pawns from advancing, the white queen does not feel out of sorts on d1. The direct 17.♘e4 is therefore also worth considering. For example, 17...♘xe4 (or 17...♙xe4 18.♙a4 ♖c7 19.f3 ♙c6 20.♖b3) 18.f3 ♘f6 (18...♘d6 19.c5 ♘c4?? runs into a double attack 20.♖d3+-.) 19.♖f2 ♙a6 20.♗b3 ♖c7 21.♖c2 is better for White.

17...♘xd2 18.♖xd2 ♖e7 Liang demonstrates fine strategical vision. Instead of immediately pouncing on c4 with 18...♖c7, he connects his rooks and defends b4 in advance so as to enable the Noteboom trademark ...a5-a4 advance once an opportune moment arrives.

19.e4 Kantor, typical for any young player, now embarks on an ambitious central and kingside expansion, consisting of four consecutive pawn moves. Surprisingly, though, it also activates Liang's bishop on the long diagonal

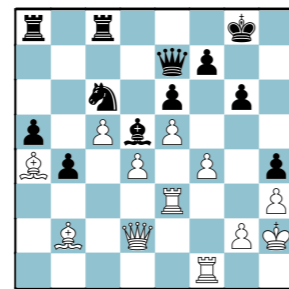
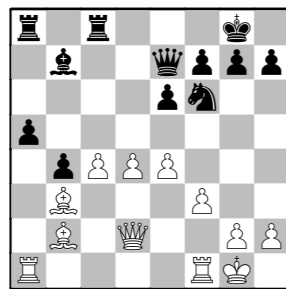
and this gradually proves to be the most significant factor in the position.

19...♖f8 20.e5 Such an advance is almost impossible to resist, yet the sad outcome of the game for Kantor makes me consider other strategies – both more restricting for the b7 bishop and more gracious for the b2 bishop.

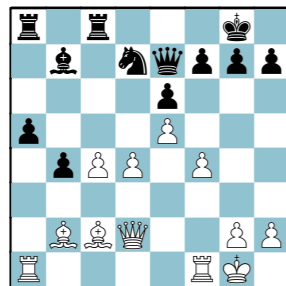
An alternative was 20.♗b3!?



Jason Liang, Spring Chess Classic, St.Louis 2023. Photo by Austin Fuller

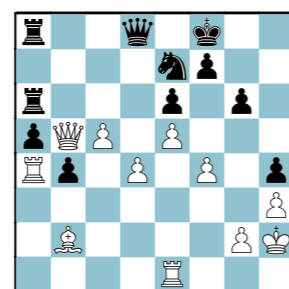


- A) 20...♗c6 21.d5 a4 22.e5! displacing the black knight 22...♗e8 23.d6 ♖h4 24.g3 ♗d8 25.♗c2±.
- B) 20...♗d7 21.♖a2 e5 22.♖fa1 ♗d8 23.♗e3±.
- 20...♗d7 21.f4 Continuing in the same optimistic vein. The player of the black pieces now needs to have the guts not to be intimidated by White's rapid expansion. With hindsight, an immediate 21.c5 may also be a candidate move in order to meet 21...♗d5 with 22.♗e4 as 21...♗xc5? 22.dxc5 ♗xc5+ 23.♖f2 doesn't work for Black.



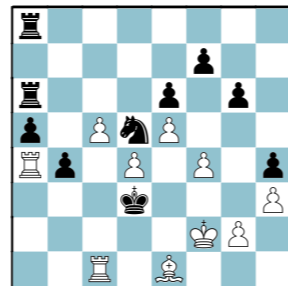
- 21...g6! However, despite his tender age, Liang keeps his cool. On 21...♗xc4 Kantor must have planned 22.♗xh7+! ♗xh7 23.♗d3+ g6 24.♗xc4, when Black fails to regain his lost exchange by 24...♗a6 due to 25.♗c6.
- 22.c5? It may be unfair to lay blame on this final pawn move of the faulty sequence of four, for the failure of Kantor's strategy, but now Liang proudly places his bishop in the very heart of the position, essentially turning its opposite colored number on b2 into a big pawn.
- On the less rigid 22.♗d3 Kantor naturally disliked 22...a4, but perhaps he could then still continue 23.♖fb1, hoping for 23...a3? 24.♗xa3.
- 22...♗d5! 23.♗a4 ♗b8 24.h3 h5! Discouraging g2-g4.
- 25.♖ae1 ♗c6 26.♖e3 h4! Freezing White's kingside attack even further. If White doesn't break through, he has strategically little to hope for with his dark-squared bishop being miles away from f6.
- 27.♗h2

- 27...♗f8! One doesn't need to be either too old or too wise to be concerned by White's heavy major piece build-up on the kingside. With the text move Jason prepares to evacuate his king – an evacuation that later turns into a glorious king march across the board!
- 28.♖a1 Unable to break through Black's powerful defense, commanded by the bishop on d5, Kantor now goes over to defense. Black's strategical advantage has already become apparent, e.g. 28.g4 hxg3+ 29.♖xg3 ♗e8 30.f5 exf5 or 30...gxf5.
- 28...♗d8! A further display of excellent positional understanding for a 16-year-old. The e7 square is vacated for a knight maneuver, which will consolidate Black's grip on key squares of the board.
- 29.♗d3 ♗e7 30.♖ee1 ♗c6 With the d5 square under tight control of four of Black's pieces, Jason now begins to soften up White's blockade of his queenside assets. The d5 square will soon be taken over by another eager black piece.
- 31.♗xc6 ♖xc6 32.♗b5 ♖ca6 33.♖a4

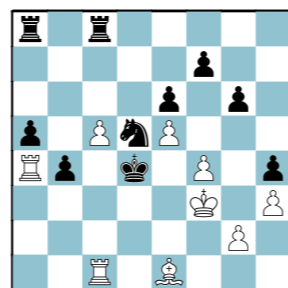


- 33...♗e8! Forcing a trade of queens and subsequently dispelling White's last hope of an attack.
- 34.♗xe8+ ♗xe8 Now it's easy to foresee Black's forthcoming king walk to b5, from where it will invigorate his passed pawns. However what is much harder to foresee is that this king can march even beyond b5!
- 35.♗g1 ♗d5 Now establishing a fresh classic blockader, which in contrast to the previous one, may not only munch on f4, but also impede the white bishop by

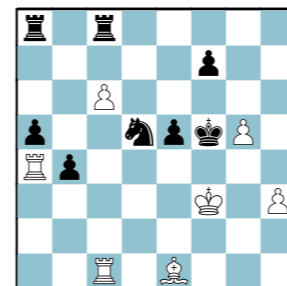
- observing the c3 square.
- 36.♗c1 ♗d7 37.♗d2 ♗c6 38.♖ea1 ♗b5! With the arrival of Black's king on b5, the white rooks will now be confined to the queenside.
- 39.♗f2 ♗c4! Without losing any momentum, Jason now continues his king walk, both terrific and terrifying for his opponent. Kantor now faces the prospect of losing both his d4 and c5 pawns to the fearless black king. That said, the simple 39...b3 40.♖a3 a4 must win easily too.
- 40.♖c1+ ♗d3! This deep invasion is more terrifying than the obvious 40...♗xd4 41.♗f3 (41.c6 ♖c8) 41...♖c6 42.♗e1. It's better to let the white bishop suffer buried under his own pawns.
- 41.♗e1 41.♖a2 b3 42.♖b2 a4 43.♗f3 a3 44.♖xb3+ ♗xd2 45.♖f1 ♗c2 wins thanks to the sheer force of the black king.



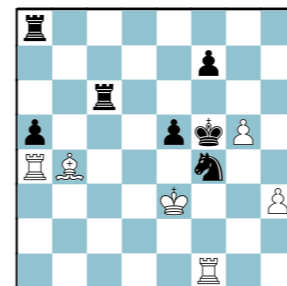
- 41...♗e4! And now we come to the pinnacle of Jason's breathtaking king march along the light squares from e8 via b5 to e4! Yet again this move not only displays the full power of the black king, but also serves important practical purposes. The f3 square is now denied to his frightened white counterpart.
- 42.♗d2 ♖c6 43.♖d1 ♖c8 44.♗e2 ♖cb8 With the center of the board completely claimed by Black's forceful play, nothing can save Kantor from imminent defeat. White has nowhere to run and, with his last move, Jason has prepared the ...b4-b3 advance under optimal conditions.
- 45.♖c1 ♗xd4 Ultimately the long-frozen white central pawn chain crumbles.
- 46.♗f3 ♖c8 47.♗e1



- 47...g5 48.fxg5 By now Kantor could have no doubt as to the fearlessness of his teenage opponent. 48.♗f2+ only invites in the black king further, i.e. 48...♗d3 49.fxg5 ♗c3 50.♖a1 a4-+.
- 48...♗xe5 The result of a terrific royal promenade is liquidation of White's central pawns on d4 and e5. Well done, Jason!
- 49.g4 49.♗xh4 ♗c3 50.♖xc3 bxc3 51.♖c4 ♗d5 52.♖xc3 ♖xc5-+.
- 49...hxg3 50.♗xg3+ ♗f5 51.♗e1 e5 Bringing up fresh resources to put an end to Kantor's desperate defense.
- 52.c6



- 52...♗f4! Once the black king has fulfilled his principal role, the final episode now belongs to the knight.
- 53.♗d2 ♗d3 54.♖f1 54.♖c2 b3 55.♖c3 b2 56.♖b3 ♖ab8-+.
- 54...♖xc6 55.♗e3+ ♗f4 56.♗xb4 Have Black's mighty queenside pawns now all been eliminated?



- 56...♖d8! It turns out that this black rook has been lying in wait for 56 moves to finally deliver a lethal blow to the white king.
- 57.♖xa5 Allowing a straightforward finale, but by now White's position was beyond hope.
- 57...♖d3+ 58.♗f2 ♖c2+ and finally Kantor admitted defeat against his bright teenage opponent. **White resigned.**
- The black knight, a joint hero of the fabulous king march, may be pinned but it nevertheless helps to efficiently deliver twin checkmates after 59.♗e1 ♖e2 and 59.♗g1 ♖g2+ 60.♗h1 ♖xh3. ■



SMALL CHESS LECTURES

By GM Nikola Nestorovic

Our present lecture is dedicated to the policy of always choosing a counterthreat in response to direct threats. A very common motif for this type of decision is the existence of an undefended piece.

M.Aslanov

Hossein Aryanejad

U14 Asian Championship 1998



The bishop on c3 has just won a pawn and is now also threatening the white rook on a1. The question is: how to react? 11.♗g5! The correct answer is a counterthreat! The idea is to combine checkmate threats with an attack on the vulnerable bishop. We can see that every undefended piece is a potential target for attack.

11.♗g5!? was another good counterthreat option. After 11...♗e8 12.♖b1 White has a huge advantage, which is reflected in his powerful center and pieces aiming at the black king.

11...♗xa1 Black wants to eliminate the potential threat to his bishop and in the process win material. 11...d5! was the best practical chance – combining defense with a counterthreat. Then 12.exd6! is the only game plan that allows White to launch an irresistible checkmating attack.

12...♗xa1 (12...g6 13.♗xf7!+-) 13.♖h5 ♗f5 14.♗xf7+! ♗h8 (14...♖xf7 15.♖xf7+ ♗h8 16.♖xf5 g6 17.♖b1! ♗xd4 18.♗f7+-) 15.♗xh7!+- By combining an attack on the f7 and h7 squares, White wins material while continuing his mating attack.

12.♖h5! White attacks two squares simultaneously and it is already difficult to offer Black good advice.

12...h6 The most logical reaction. 12...♖xg5 was the best way to defend

Nikola Nestorovic became a Grandmaster in 2016 and a FIDE Trainer in 2018. Still an active player, Nikola is mostly dedicated to chess teaching. Together with his father, IM Dejan, he co-authored two chess books – *The Power of Defence* and *The Art of Counterattack in 64 Pictures and Secrets of Positional Sacrifice*.



the position. However, after a few correct moves, 13.♗xg5 ♗xd4 14.♗f6!, White easily comes up with an attack on Black's king.

13.♗xf7! The correct choice. It is important to note that after this move the threats continue.

On the other hand 13.♗xf7+? would be a bad way of creating a threat, and may even lead White into trouble after 13...♖xf7 14.♖xf7+ ♗h8 15.♗e4 ♖e7. The critical threats then disappear and Black can count on gaining the advantage.

13...♖xf7 14.♖xf7+ ♗h7 After 14...♗h8



A) 15.♗xh6? would be the wrong way to continue his plan of attack. After 15...gxf6 16.♖xa1 White has yet to prove his compensation for the sacrificed piece. (16.♖f4 merely leads to perpetual check after 16...d5 17.♖xh6+ ♗g8 18.♖g6+ ♗f8 19.♖h6+).

B) 15.♗g5!! An important tactical motif that ensures material gain or a checkmate for White in all lines, i.e. 15...♖xg5 16.♖g8 mate or 15...hxg5 16.♖h5 mate.

15.♗g5! The last threat! White will soon force a checkmate.

15...♖xg5 15...hxg5?? is met by 16.♖h5 mate while 15...d5 16.♗d3+ ♗h8 17.♗xd8 would also soon lead to checkmate.

16.♗d3+ ♗h8 17.♖f8 mate.

By GM Sarunas Sulskis

2



◀ Christopher Yoo. Photo by Austin Fuller
▶ Abhimanyu Mishra. Photo by Crystal Fuller
Spring Chess Classic, St. Louis 2023.

TWO U.S. JUNIORS WAGE A WILD WEST DUEL!

My next choice is a game played between Christopher Yoo and Abhimanyu Mishra. U.S. chess, energetically propelled by the unceasing efforts of the Saint Louis Chess Club, now has an impressive array of young talents. Just take 14-year-old grandmaster Abhimanyu as a telling example! Yet they must all fight their inner battle for their place in the sun. And they do ... yes, they deliver!

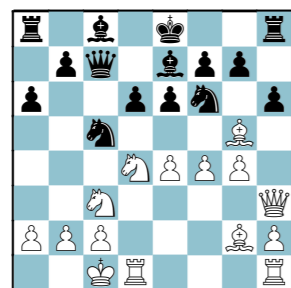
In the aforementioned game Yoo was poised to crush his younger opponent right out of the opening in a sharp classic Najdorf Sicilian. A powerful center break 16.e5! set the scene for an upcoming 17.♗xe6! blast. However, Mishra didn't wait to get struck by lightning and unloaded a piece sacrifice of his own: 16...♗xe5!. From this point on, the game defied any normal means of assessment. Christopher pursued an attack on his opponent's king, whereas Abhimanyu banked on his awesome five-pawn-strong central phalanx. In addition to the two original queens, five more were promoted – only to find themselves quickly leaving the board. One of the most incredible games I've ever seen!

B99

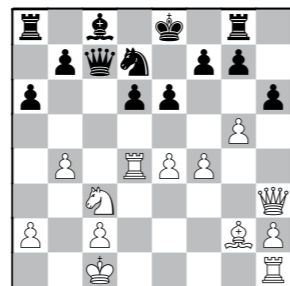
Christopher Yoo	2591
Abhimanyu Mishra	2548

Spring Chess Classic - A, St. Louis, 2023

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 a6 6.♗g5 e6 7.f4 ♗e7 8.♗f3 ♗c7 9.0-0-0 ♗bd7 10.g4 It's a classical Sicilian Najdorf. Although 6.♗g5 is quite an old variation, it has never really left the stage. 10...h6 Black follows a modern trend. 10...b5 11.♗xf6, followed usually by g4-g5, has historically been the most frequently seen continuation. 11.♗h3 This pin of the pawn is quite a rare idea, and it might possibly have caught the youngest player in the Group-A Tournament off guard. In Round 7 of the same Spring Chess Classic, Swiercz went for the customary 11.♗xf6 ♗xf6, but failed to impress after 12.h4 ♗b6 13.g5 ♗xd4 14.♗xd4 ♗c5, which later ended in a draw on move 42 in D.Swiercz 2646 - A.Mishra 2548, St. Louis 2023. 11...♗c5 12.♗g2



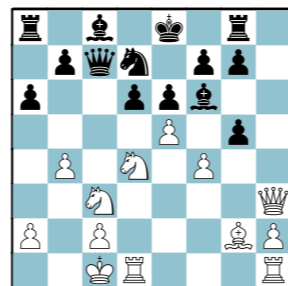
12...♗g8?! In my humble view, voluntarily renouncing short castling for good adds legitimacy to the 11.♗h3 idea. After 12...♗d7 13.♗he1 (13.♗xf6 ♗xf6 14.g5?? ♗xd4 15.♗xd4 e5 16.♗d5 ♗d8 nets Black a rook.) 13...0-0-0 Black could have attacked the white bishop on g5 without the need for artificial play. 13.♗xf6 ♗xf6 With a black rook in an awkward position on g8, Christopher now spots a smart tactical idea and proceeds resolutely towards its execution. 14.b4! First the black knight is pushed back to obstruct its own bishop on c8. 14...♗d7 15.g5 Designed to give the queen access to h7, but first and foremost to e6! 15...hgx5 By this stage Mishra must have foreseen his counter-sacrifice. The alternative is 15...♗xd4 16.♗xd4



A) 16...e5? Black needs to really have some guts to allow the white knight to go to d5. After 17.♗d5 ♗c6 18.♗h4 exd4 19.gxh6, although a full rook down, White has a ferocious attack.

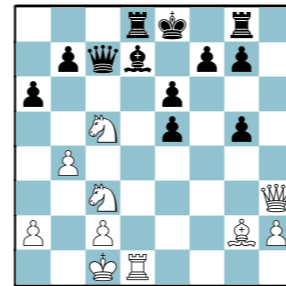
B) 16...hgx5 17.♗hd1 gxf4 (17...g4? 18.♗d3+-) 18.♗xd6 ♗e5 19.♗h7 ♗f8 20.♗xg7 ♗xc3 21.♗d8+ ♗e7 22.♗xf8+ ♗f6 23.♗h8+ will soon end in a checkmate.

16.e5! With a second pawn sac, Yoo now comes close to a charming conclusion of his combination. Mishra, however, remains alert and in the nick of time intercepts the final strike.

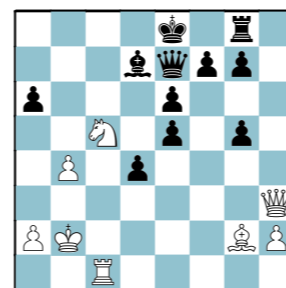


16...♗xe5! 16...dxe5? 17.♗xe6 fxe6 (17...♗c4 is, of course, more resilient but one needs nerves of steel to tread the path of 18.♗d5 ♗xb4 19.♗c7+) 18.♗xe6+ ♗f8 19.♗d5+- winning beautifully. 17.fxe5 ♗xe5 18.♗he1 Materially speaking, the position is still balanced, but with all the white pieces well placed for a fight, and the black rook misplaced on g8, Yoo has excellent chances to decisively conclude the attack. 18...♗d7 19.♗xe5! The black bishop, stationed in the very center of the board, is too great a nuisance for White to bear. Now the material scale tips in Black's favor, but Yoo nevertheless continues to fervently pursue his attack. 19...dxe5 20.♗b3 ♗d8 The 'king in the center' strategy has its share of drawbacks,

too. On 20...0-0-0 Mishra obviously feared 21.♗a5 ♗c6 22.♗xc6. Yet, after a trade of rooks, I think he could have tolerated the lasting damage to his pawn structure following 22...♗xd1+ 23.♗xd1 bxc6 24.♗c3±. 21.♗c5

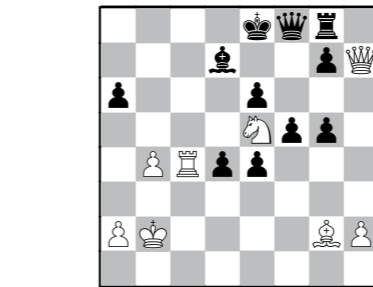


21...♗c8?! This passive defense leaves Mishra's pieces dangerously confined. Apparently he distrusted 21...♗c6 due to a possible strike on e6, but I'm not sure White can find the right moment to carry this out. 22.♗f1 (22.♗xe6 ♗xd1+ 23.♗xd1 fxe6 24.♗xe6+ ♗f8+-) 22...♗xg2 23.♗xg2 b6 24.♗5e4 f5 25.♗xg5 ♗d4 26.♗f6+ ♗f7 27.♗xg8 ♗xc3 28.♗e7+ ♗xg8 29.♗xe6+ ♗h8 30.♗e8+ ♗h7 31.♗h5+ ♗g8 32.♗e8+ leads to an awesome perpetual. 22.♗f1 ♗d4 23.♗3e4 b6 The position remains one of utmost complexity. On 23...♗xb4 24.♗h7 ♗f8 25.♗xg5 (25.♗h3 is met by 25...♗b6; but the more subtle 25.♗g6! keeps White's attack going.) is repelled by 25...♗f4. 24.c3 On 24.♗h7 ♗f8 25.♗xg5 Black holds by 25...♗f4! 24...bxc5 25.cxd4 cxd4+ 26.♗b2 The imbalance has increased even further. Due to the better engaged white pieces, Mishra's position remains critical. 26...♗e7 27.♗c1! ♗d7 27...♗xb4+ nets Black a fifth pawn for the piece. Yet, due to the clumsiness of his rook on g8, he will find it hard to coordinate his pieces after, for example, 28.♗a1 ♗d7 29.♗b1 ♗a5 30.♗b8+ ♗e7 31.♗xg8 ♗e1+ 32.♗b2 ♗e2+ 33.♗a3+-.

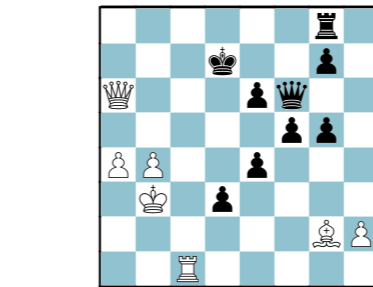


28...f5 Naturally, Mishra endeavors to set his massive pawn phalanx in motion, but in doing so further exposes his king. 29.♗h7 ♗f7 29...♗f7 30.♗f3 g4 31.♗xg4! allows Black no respite. 30.a4 30.♗b7 lets Black off the hook after 30...♗e7 31.♗c7 ♗c8.

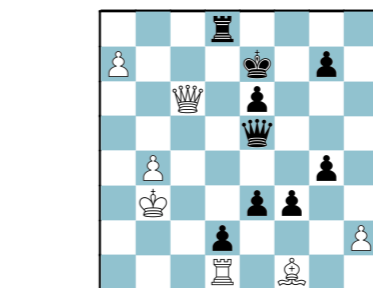
On the other hand, I think Christopher missed a forced win here by 30.♗d3 e4 31.♗e5 ♗f8 32.♗c4!



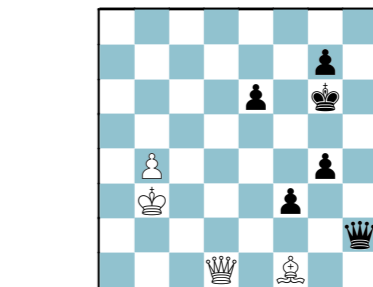
32...d3 33.♗b3!+- with a near-perfect coordination of White's pieces. 30...♗e7 31.♗h3 Allowing Black a sigh of relief. 31...♗f6 32.♗xd7 ♗xd7 33.♗d3 e4 34.♗xa6 d3+ 35.♗b3



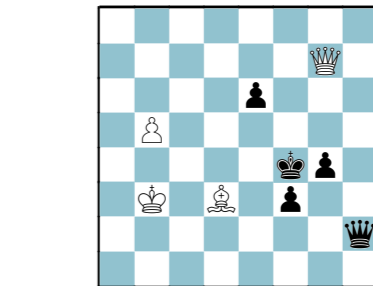
35...♗d8! Black's position remains critical, but first he needs to avoid being immediately checkmated.. 36.a5 d2 37.♗d1 ♗e7 38.♗f1 ♗e5 A wild west fight, possibly in a time scramble, now rages. The unusual position defies any assessment, so I will spare you any comments and allow you to just enjoy the action. 39.♗c4 f4 40.a6 f3 41.♗c6 g4 42.a7 e3 Sheer madness!



43.♗b7+ ♗f6 44.a8 ♗ ♗xa8 45.♗xa8 e2 46.♗d8+ ♗g6 47.♗xd2 exd1 ♗+ 48.♗xd1 ♗xh2 White is probably still in the driving seat, but with those well advanced black pawns it's never going to be an easy ride.



49.♗d3+ ♗g5 50.♗d8+ ♗f4 The e6 pawn now proves very useful. 51.♗d4+ ♗f5! Very good judgment! Respecting the safety of his king, Abhimanyu now deflects the white bishop and then gains access to the hot g2 square. 51...♗g3?? is strictly out of bounds due to 52.♗e5+, whereas 51...♗g5 52.♗xg7+ ♗f4 53.♗d4+ leaves the g7 pawn perishing without a sound. 52.♗d3+ ♗g5 53.♗xg7+ ♗f4! 54.b5 On 54.♗d4+ Black is no longer denied access to g3: 54...♗g3 55.♗e5+ ♗g2.



54...♗g1! The only move that holds for Black. 55.♗f7+ 55.♗c7+ e5 56.b6 ♗d1+ 57.♗c2 ♗d5+ 58.♗c4+ ♗xc4+ 59.♗xc4 g3 60.b7 g2 61.b8 ♗ g1 ♗= is also a draw. 55...♗g3 56.♗c7+ ♗h3 57.b6 ♗d1+ 58.♗c2 ♗d5+ 59.♗b4 ♗d4+ 60.♗a3 f2 61.♗h7+ ♗g2 62.♗e4+ ♗xe4 63.♗xe4+ ♗g1 64.♗d3 g3 65.b7 g2 66.b8 ♗ f1 ♗ 67.♗xf1 gxf1 ♗ Draw agreed.

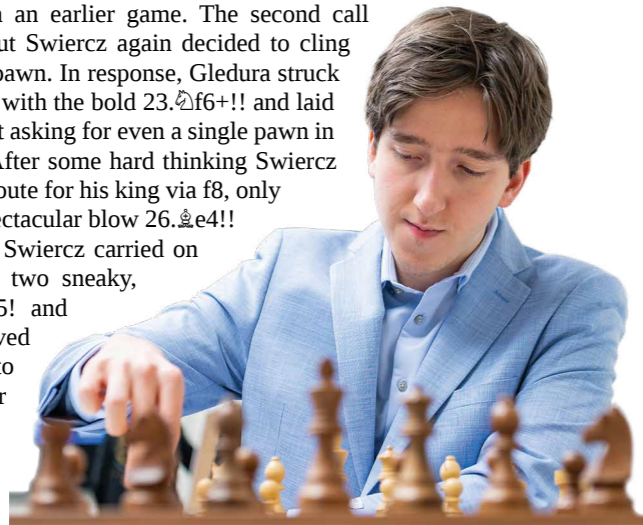
A truly epic battle between two star American juniors!

By GM Sarunas Sulskis

3

HOW GLEDURA BOLDLY CHARGED SWIERCZ'S KING

I round off my Spring Chess Classic selection with an American on the losing side – unfortunately! Following a sharp early fianchetto in the English Opening, the players plunged into a dynamic middlegame. Known for his solidity, Swiercz was reluctant to give up a pawn as Caruana had done in an earlier game. The second call came six moves later, but Swiercz again decided to cling stubbornly to his center pawn. In response, Gledura struck his opponent's king hard with the bold 23.♖f6+!! and laid a long-term siege without asking for even a single pawn in return for his audacity. After some hard thinking Swiercz devised a clever escape route for his king via f8, only to be dealt the further spectacular blow 26.♗e4!! by Gledura. Astonished, Swiercz carried on resisting the attack, but two sneaky, tiger-like moves 28.♗h5! and 30.♗h6! by White proved too heavy a task to handle even for the ever tenacious American.



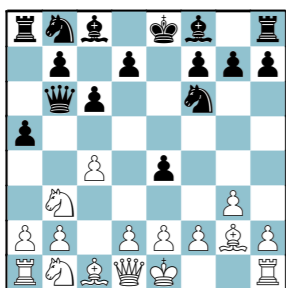
▲ Benjamin Gledura. Spring Chess Classic, St. Louis 2023 Photo by Crystal Fuller

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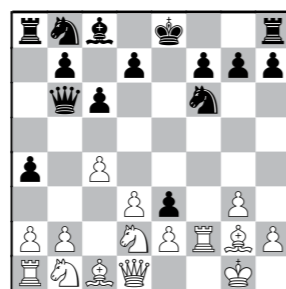
Benjamin Gledura	2637
Dariusz Swiercz	2646

Spring Chess Classic - A, St. Louis 2023

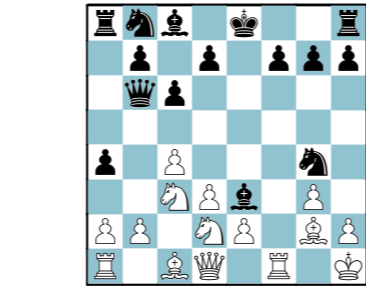
1.c4 e5 2.g3 This early fianchetto is currently at the height of fashion in the English Opening market.
2...♖f6 3.♗g2 c6 4.♖f3 Cutting-edge strategy. Before Black is able to conveniently grab the center with ...d7-d5, White provokes another pawn advance towards his own territory, only to undermine it later. 4.d4 exd4 5.♗xd4 d5 for decades used to be the main line.
4...e4 5.♖d4 ♗b6 6.♖b3 a5



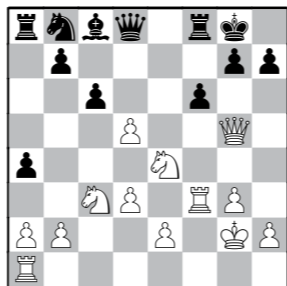
7.d3 True to his strategy, White now attempts to undermine Black's presence in the center.
7...a4 8.♖d3d2 ♗c5 9.0-0 e3 Both players must still have been in their preparation as the line has seen a significant input by U.S. players. I am mildly surprised that so far nobody has essayed the strike 9...♗xf2+, when, in my humble view, White needs only three moves to avoid a lost position out of the opening. 10.♗xf2 e3



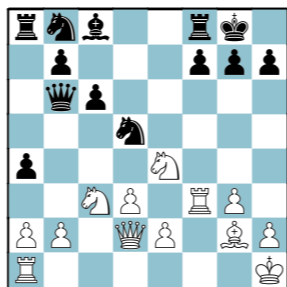
11.♗xf6! exd2+ (11...gxf6? 12.♖e4!+-)
12.♗f2♣ dxc1♗ 13.♗xc1 and White is slightly better.
10.fxe3 ♗xe3+ 11.♖h1 ♖g4 12.♖c3



12...0-0 There were two ways to greedily grab the exchange, each of which is punishable: 12...♖f2+ 13.♗xf2 ♗xf2 14.♖de4 ♗c5 15.♖xa4± and 12...♗xd2 13.♗xd2 ♖f2+ 14.♗xf2 ♗xf2 15.♖e4-.
13.♖de4 d5 14.cxd5 ♗xc1 15.♗xc1 ♖e3 16.♗f3 ♖xd5 Swiercz seems reluctant to play on a pawn down. However, this was actually the case in a trailblazing game between Wesley So and Fabiano Caruana, played in 2019 in the very same premises of the Saint Louis Chess Club. That sharp battle continued 16...♖xg2 17.♖xg2 ♗d8 18.♗g5 f6

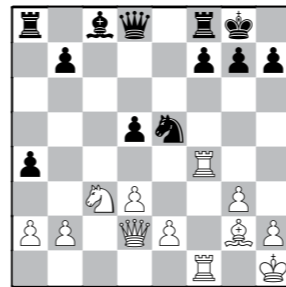


19.♖xf6+ ♗xf6 20.♖e4 ♖d7 21.♗af1 ♖h8 22.♖xf6 ♖xf6 23.e4 ♗d7 and was later drawn by perpetual check on move 36. W.So 2776 - F.Caruana 2818, Saint Louis 2019.
17.♗d2



17...♗d8 Two years later, Wesley So again left his mark on the line, this time as Black in a blitz game against Peter Svidler. There he chose 17...♖d7 and a draw was agreed on move 42 in P.Svidler 2714 - W.So 2770, Paris 2021.
18.♗af1 Now the game looks more pleasant for White.

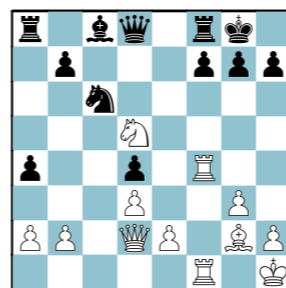
18...♖d7 19.♖xd5 cxd5 20.♖c3 d4?! Hardly the best as it allows in the white knight. However, there are no easy solutions for Swiercz.
 An alternative was 20...♖e5, met by 21.♗f4



A) When he obviously rejected 21...♗e6 as it loses the a4 pawn. However, White loses time and central control while he picks it up, e.g. 22.♗xa4 (22.♖xa4 g5! 23.♗f6 ♗xa4 24.♗xg5+ ♖g6) 22...d4 23.♗xa8 ♗xa8 24.♖b5 ♗a4±.

B) 21...d4 22.♖d5 transposes into the game. **21.♖d5! ♖e5** On 21...♖b6 22.♖f6+ is possible, when 22...gxf6 23.♗xf6 ♗e6 24.♗h6 allows White a strong attack. However, in case of the humble 22...♖h8, I am less sure about the strength of White's attack. For example, 23.♗f4 gxf6 24.♗h4 ♗g8 25.♗h6 ♗g7 26.♗xf6 ♗e6 27.♗e4 ♗g8 28.♗h5 ♖d7 and Black holds. **22.♗f4 ♖c6?** In search of an easy solution, Swiercz underestimates his opponent's resolve and by stubbornly clinging to the d4 pawn commits the principal mistake of the game. 22...♗g5? would have failed even quicker but no less spectacularly after 23.♗xf7!! ♖xf7 24.♗xg5 ♖xg5 25.♖e7+.

22...♗e6, leaving the d4 pawn to its fate, was a hard solution to come by.
A) 23.♖f6+? would be an unlikely response, because of 23...gxf6 24.♗h4 ♖g4 25.♗f4 (25.♗e4 ♖e3 26.♗xh7+ ♖g7±) 25...f5;
B) 23.♗xd4 ♖h8! creates the nasty threat of ...♖c6. Then after 24.e4 b5, with the white rook stuck on d4 there is still a lot of play ahead.



BROADEN YOUR HORIZONS!

THE BLOG OF GRANDMASTER ALEX COLOVIC

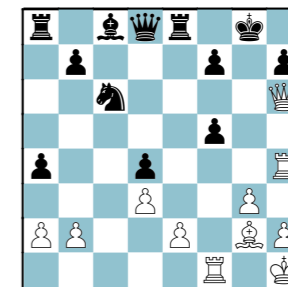
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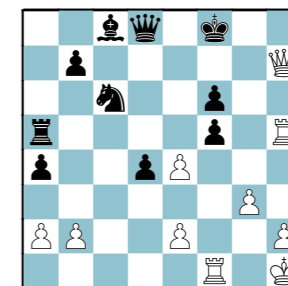
Alex writes on Substack, subscribe at substack.com/@malexcolovic. He also shares his views on current news in video format at www.youtube.com/@malexcolovic.

GM Colovic is the author of *The Sinquefeld Chess Generation*, a book that analyzes and explores in great depth the styles and preferences of America's top young talent.

23.♖f6+!! A spectacular knight sac, exposing the enemy king to a strong attack.
23...gxf6 This time Black doesn't have any other choice than to accept the 'gift'. If 23...♖h8 then 24.♗h4 wins on the spot.
24.♗h4! Gledura has no need to take the f6 pawn. In fact it obstructs Black's defensive resource of ...f7-f5.
24...♗e8 Vacating the flight square for the king is the only chance of continuing the fight.
 24...♖e5 25.♗h6 ♗e8 26.♗xh7+ ♖f8 27.♗h8+ ♖e7 28.♗xf6+ ♖d7 29.♗xd4+-.
 24...♗a5 25.♗h6 ♗f5 26.♗e4 ♗xe4+ (26...♗g6 27.♗xg6+-) 27.dxe4+-.
25.♗h6 f5 The most stubborn. Other moves lose more quickly.
 25...♗e6 26.♗e4 f5 27.♗xf5 ♗xf5 28.♗xf5 f6 29.♗xh7+ ♖f8 30.♗g4+-.
 Or 25...♗a5 26.♗xf6 ♖e5 27.♗e4.
 Or 25...♖e5 26.♗xh7+ ♖f8 27.♗h8+ ♖e7 28.♗xf6+ ♖d7 29.♗xd4+-.



26.♗e4!! Swiercz must have missed this incredible resource when provoking his opponent to play 23.♖f6+!.
26...♗xe4 Relatively best.
 26...♗xh4 27.gxh4 fxe4 28.♗g1+-.
 26...♖e5 27.♗xh7+ ♖f8 28.♗h8+ ♖e7 29.♗xe5+-.
 26...♖e7 27.♗xh7+ ♖f8 28.♗h6+ ♖g8 29.♗h8 mate.
 The beauty of Gledura's idea is best revealed by 26...♗a5 27.♗g4+!.
27.dxe4 ♗a5 28.♗h5! Gledura continues with a few clever sneaky moves, which illustrate the well-known saying "The threat (♗xh7+) is stronger than its execution."
28...f6 28...♖e5 29.exf5 d3 (29...♗d5+ 30.♖g1 ♗e4 31.♗g5+ ♖g6 32.f6 ♗e3+ 33.♖h1 ♗e4+ 34.♗f3 ♗b1+ 35.♖g2+-)
 30.f6 ♗d5+ 31.♗f3+-.
 28...f4 29.gxf4 ♗g4 30.♗g1+-.
29.♗xh7+ ♖f8



30.♗h6! Yet another sneaky rook move by Gledura! He continues to skilfully increase the number of threats until it becomes unbearable even for Swiercz, who is famed for his tenacity.
30...♗e5 30...♗e6 31.♗h8+ ♗g8 32.♗xf6+-.
 30...d3 31.♗xf6+ ♖e8 32.♗h8+ ♖d7 33.♗d6+-.
 30...d3 31.♗g6 ♗e6 32.♗h8+ ♖e7 33.♗xf6+ ♖d7 34.♗xe6+-.
31.♗g6 ♖e7 A futile attempt to run away from White's attack, but anyway there was no defense. 31...♗d6 runs into 32.♗h8+ ♖e7 33.♗e8 mate. Or 31...♗e8 32.♗h7+-.
32.♗xf6+ ♖d7 33.♗d6+! ♖e8 34.♗h8+ Black resigned