



THE ULF ANDERSSON APPROACH – DIVE INTO THE ENDGAME STRAIGHT FROM THE OPENING

# Start Strong, Finish Stronger

The art of turning balanced positions into victories is a skill not solely reserved for modern champs like Magnus Carlsen. Discover the wisdom pioneered by legendary Swedish GM, Ulf Andersson, whose approach has influenced today's top players – including the author of this article and his son. Learn key strategies of how to deal with seemingly equal and symmetrical positions.

Ulf Andersson was the hero of many technically-minded players of my generation. They wanted to learn to imitate him, but knew they never would. I would like to discuss a particular ending that epitomizes Ulf's approach: taking a seemingly quiet and equal position and outplaying the opponent move by move. This ending arises right after the opening, and is an interesting "weapon" in the Anti-Grinfeld.

**A FAMOUS GAME**

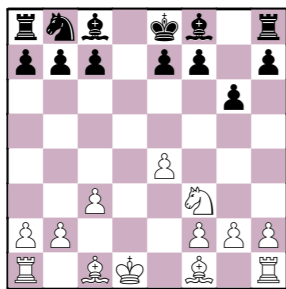
The following game is well-anthologized. Mark Dvoretzky used it as a quintessential example of practical endgame technique in his 1995 book *Technique for the Tournament Player*.

**A16**

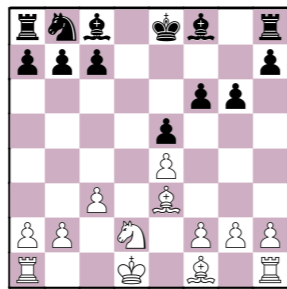
Ulf Andersson	2560
Zenon Franco Ocampos	2360

Clarín International, Buenos Aires 1979

1.♭f3 ♭f6 2.c4 g6 3.♖c3 This particular move order is designed to avoid the Grunfeld.  
 3...d5 4.cxd5 ♭xd5 5.e4 ♖xc3 6.dxc3 ♖xd1+ Black cannot avoid the trade of queens without making large concessions. For example, 6...♭d7? 7.♖c4 ♖g7? loses immediately to 8.♖xf7+ ♖xf7 9.♖g5+ ♖e8 (Or 9...♖g8 10.♖d5+) 10.♖e6. 7.♖xd1



The white king now has a ready-made refuge at c2, while Black has yet to find convenient development.  
 7...f6! The best reaction. As we shall later see, the bishop should not go to the typical Grunfeld square g7. It bites on granite from there on c3.  
 8.♖e3 e5 9.♖d2



What position should both sides be aiming for here? What pieces should each side trade? Questions like this are never easy and are the reason we turn to people like Ulf Andersson for help. The blocked pawns on e4 and e5 carry the seeds of "bad bishops" in the future. For Black, the dark-squared bishop can become bad, biting on its own e5 pawn, and for White, the light-squared bishop. Therefore, for purely structural reasons, a trade of the dark-squared bishops benefits Black, and a trade of the light-squared bishops benefits White.

While we caution our readers from looking at static considerations in this way, here we have the queens off the board and



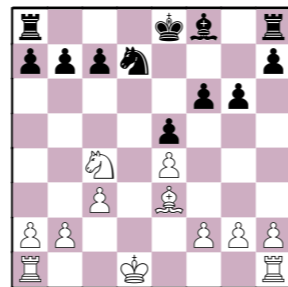
Born in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1968, Alex Fishbein relocated to the United States in 1979. Mentored by Vladimir Zak, who previously coached Boris Spassky and Viktor Korchnoi, Fishbein swiftly built a strong chess foundation. By 14, he was a master, and he climbed the ranks to become an IM in 1988 and a GM in 1992 after an international victory in Norway. In 1985, Fishbein championed the first Denker Tournament of High School Champions, setting off a string of achievements at home and abroad. Even while pursuing a career in finance, he remained an active competitor into the 2000s, appearing in four U.S. Championships.

no immediate prospects of attack by either side. Therefore, static considerations are important here.

With his last move, Ulf is waiting for Black to move his bishop to e6 so that he can trade it with ♖c4. An immediate ♖c4 is less precise. The bishop would be shooting blanks from there, as Black has no plans of castling kingside. Black could try to kick it with ...♖d7-b6, or just let it sit there and try to trade the dark-squared bishops in the meantime.

9...♖e6 Black goes along with White's plans. 9...♖d7 is the key alternative; we discuss it later.

10.♖c4 ♖xc4 11.♖xc4 ♖d7

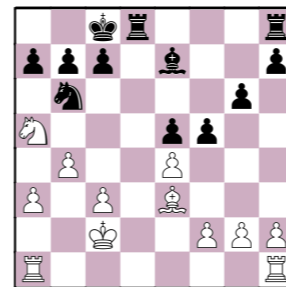


12.b4! Andersson, however, prevents the exchange of bishops with ...♖c5. White



Ulf Andersson

now has a clear advantage in space and development and also a better bishop. He also has a nice knight on c4 and a king which is ready to help on the queenside. Dvoretzky now correctly gives 12...h5 as Black's best plan, to try to trade the bishops even at the cost of time. But the game move is not yet a mistake.  
 12...♖b6 13.♖a5 0-0-0+ 14.♖c2 ♖e7 15.a3 A typical move of the past. White keeps his options open (maybe c4-c5-c6 is coming) and asks Black what he wants to do. The engine prefers the direct 15.a4.  
 15...f5



16.♖xb6!? Ulf Andersson had a great practical sense for when to change the position and when to keep it static. When the game is still within the bounds of either +0.6 or -0.6 (by current metrics),

these decisions are usually subjective. A real artist of the endgame takes into account factors such as opponent's style, tempo of the game, and others which are hard for us mortals to detect. Quite often, an objectively suboptimal move is the key decision that wins the game.

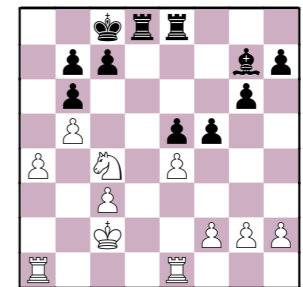
By the way, this is true in all phases of the game. Tal won many games with moves that the engine frowns on, and so did Karpov. They had similar approaches to the practical element; Karpov's "bluff" was just of a more "positional" kind. It happens today, too. To beat a strong player, you have to make practical decisions and give your opponent the chance to make a mistake. Games between top players have a lot of mistakes because they are creating positions where it is easy to go wrong. Games between weaker players sometimes have a high "accuracy score" or low "centipawn loss" because the positions are not that complicated.

Returning to the game: the text move, 16.♖xb6, has received many exclams in the literature. The alternative is 16.f3, not changing the structure for now.  
 16...axb6 17.♖c4 ♖f6? Black was totally unprepared to answer specific questions. He had to play energetically

to avoid ending up with a bad bishop versus good knight. The critical line is 17...fxe4! 18.♖d2 (18.♖ae1 b5! 19.♖xe5 ♖hf8 20.♖hf1 ♖g5 and only White can be worse) 18...e3! 19.fxe3 ♖hf8 20.♖e4 ♖d7 21.a4 ♖e6 22.a5 ♖f5 and Black has enough activity to hold.

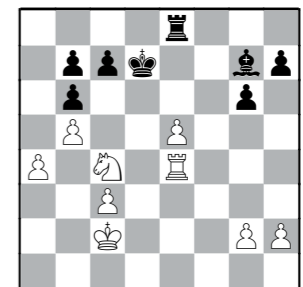
18.a4! Now it's time for prophylactics. Andersson prevents the key resource ...b5 and solidifies his knight on c4. After Black's lackluster previous move, closing the f-file, the ...fxe4 capture is not to be feared anymore.

18...♖g7 19.♖he1 ♖he8 20.b5



20...f4? It is hard to imagine a modern player rated 2360 playing this move. Black shuts down all possible counterplay and leaves himself with the bad bishop and a totally mangled queenside. All his light squares are weak, as is his king, and White can easily penetrate on the a-file. Very soon, all of Black's pieces are tied down to defense of his position, and White wins in a leisurely manner.

Instead, after 20...fxe4 21.♖xe4 it's true that Black has an isolated pawn, but with an open board one weakness can often be managed: 21...♖f8 22.f3 ♖f4! 23.♖ae1 ♖xe4 24.♖xe4 ♖e8 25.f4 ♖d7 26.fxe5



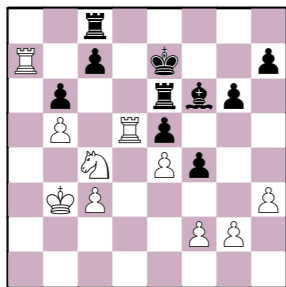
26...♖e6, with a sound blockade and good drawing chances.

21.a5! Now, the action will only be on one end of the field.  
 21...bxa5 22.♖xa5 b6 23.♖a7 ♖f6 24.♖ea1 ♖e6 24...g5 25.♖1a6 g4 26.♖a5! is ugly for Black.  
 25.♖1a6 ♖de8 26.♖b3 With the game already decided, Ulf can afford to take his time. His opponent has no good options, so



he is waiting for him to worsen his position even more.

26...♔d8 If 26...g5, then 27.h3 h5 28.f3 would stop any counterplay, because the remaining black pieces cannot participate. 27.♖a8+ ♔d7 28.♖a2 ♕f6 29.♖d2+ ♔e7 30.♖a7 ♖c8 31.♖d5! Black has almost no moves. 31...♔e8 32.h3 ♔e7



33.♖b2! The knight leaves its home on c4 and heads for even greener pastures: d5, c6, or even c5 after the white pawn moves forward.

33...♔e8 34.♖d3 ♕g7 34...c6 35.♖dd7 cxb5 36.♖b4+-.

35.c4 ♕f6 36.c5 bxc5 37.♖xc5 ♖e7 38.♖a6 ♕h8 39.♔c4 ♕g7 40.f3 ♖b8 41.♖e6 ♕f6 42.♖c6 **Black resigned**

Ulf Andersson won a few games with this variation, and it became popular for a while.

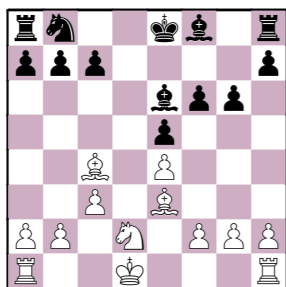
LEARNING FROM THE BEST

A16

Nodirbek Yakubboev	2574
Divya Deshmukh	2360

Abu Dhabi Open 2019

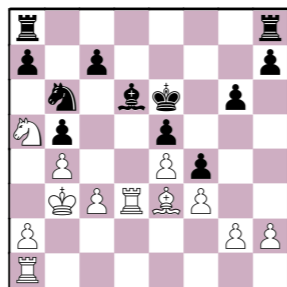
1.♖f3 ♖f6 2.c4 g6 3.♖c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♖xd5 5.e4 ♖xc3 6.dxc3 ♖xd1+ 7.♔xd1 f6 8.♕e3 e5 9.♖d2 ♕e6 10.♕c4



10...♕xc4 More precise is 10...♔f7 11.♔c2 ♖d7, although it doesn't yet solve all of Black's problems. After 12.a4 a5 13.♖hd1 ♕c5 14.♖b3! ♕d6 15.♕d5 White has a small but nagging advantage. We will see a position like this later, in the game Stern - Florstedt.

11.♖xc4 ♖d7 12.b4! We see that GM Nodirbek Yakubboev, 17-years-old at the time of this game, has learned the legacy of Ulf Andersson.

12...b5 13.♖a5 ♖b6 14.♔c2 ♕d6?! 15.♖hd1 ♔f7 16.♔b3 ♔e6 17.♖d3 f5 18.f3 f4?



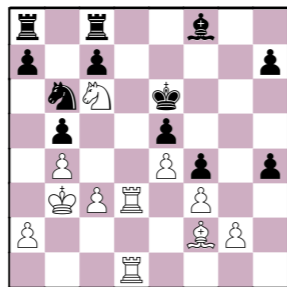
Wait, what did I say about a modern 2360 player never playing this move? In fact, this is also a mistake, but future WGM Divya Deshmukh (14 at the time) does have an idea here. The counterplay with ...g6-g5-g4 is more realistic this time.

19.♕f2 Black's bishop is actually not so "bad" at d6, as it at least defends more squares, so 19.♕c5! was the most decisive way to continue.

19...g5 20.♖c6?! ♖hc8 Black needs to hurry with 20...g4!. Now 21.fxg4 ♖hg8 22.h3 h5! is real counterplay.

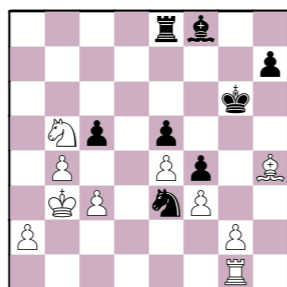
21.♖ad1 ♕f8? 22.h4! Playing on both sides of the board.

22...gxh4



23.♖d8+! ♔f6 24.♕xh4+ ♔g6 25.♖c6 The switchback maneuver has loosened the black pawn on e5.

25...♖e8 26.♖d8! ♖c4 27.♖xe8 ♖xe8 28.♖xa7 ♖e3 29.♖g1 c5 30.♖xb5



White has picked off the queenside pawns, and the rest is easy.

30...♔f7 31.g4 ♖e6 32.g5 cxb4 33.cxb4 ♖c6 34.♕f2 ♖c4 35.♖d1 ♕e7 36.a4 ♖e3 37.♖d3 ♖c2 38.♕c5 ♕xc5 39.bxc5 ♖e1 Or 39...♖xc5 40.♖c3 ♖xc3+ 41.♔xc3 ♖e1 42.a5. 40.♖c3 ♔g6 41.♔c4 ♖a6 42.♔d5 ♖g2 43.c6 ♖e3+ 44.♔xe5

Black resigned

I recently had my own opportunity to see if I could imitate Ulf. Fortunately, I was able to catch a strong opponent by surprise.

A16

Alexander Fishbein	2363
Fidel Corrales	2554

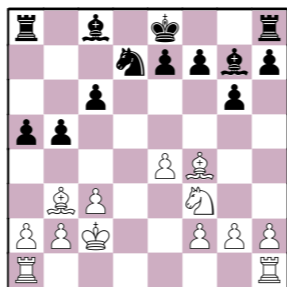
Washington International, Rockville MD 2023

1.c4! I think Fidel was expecting only 1.e4, which I had played against him three times before, with mixed results in the opening. Looking for a Grunfeld, and knowing I am not a player who plays for a draw, he drifted away from his normal opening repertoire into a line he didn't know in detail.

1...♖f6 2.♖f3 g6 3.♖c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♖xd5 5.e4 ♖xc3 6.dxc3 ♖xd1+ 7.♔xd1

7...♕g7?! 8.♕f4 c6 9.♕c4 White does not react appropriately. The priority was to develop the king with 9.♔c2, followed by 10.a4.

9...♖d7 10.♔c2 b5! 11.♕b3 a5!

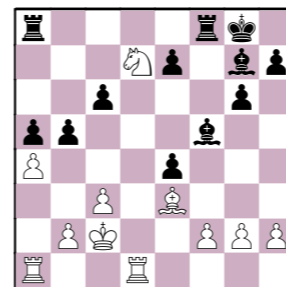


Black has legitimate play on the queenside, and even the bishop on g7 has full employment. My attempt to play like Ulf has failed so far.

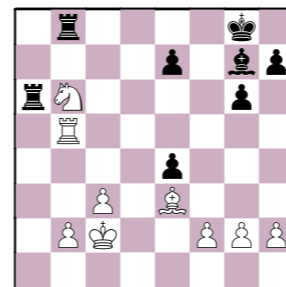
12.a4 ♖c5 13.♖d2 0-0 Black's king is fine where it is, and he can immediately contest the center with 13...f5 14.f3 fxe4 15.fxe4 ♖f8 16.♖hf1 with equality. 14.♕e3 Also not ideal; the black knight was going to take on b3 anyway. 14...♖xb3 15.♖xb3 f5 16.♖hd1

I unwittingly played like Ulf here, temporarily sacrificing my e4 pawn. Unlike Ulf's opponent, Black knows he should take it.

16...fxe4! 17.♖c5 ♕f5 18.♖d7! A well-calculated dive into the opponent's waters.

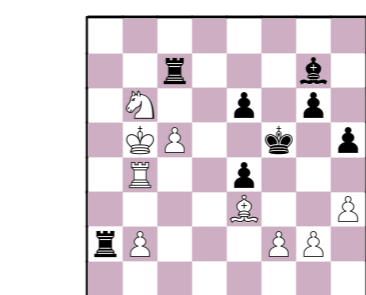


18...♖fe8?! After 18...♖fd8 19.♖b6 ♖xd1 20.♖xd1 ♖a6 (20...♖b8 21.axb5 cxb5 22.♖d5) 21.axb5 (21.c4!? bxc4 22.♖d8+ ♔f7 23.♖xc4 ♕e6) 21...cxb5 22.♖d5 b4 23.cxb4 axb4 24.♖b5 White has the better pawn structure, but Black's two bishops fully compensate. 19.♖b6 ♖a6 20.axb5 cxb5 21.♖d5! ♖b8 22.♖xb5 ♕d7 23.♖axa5! When playing my 18<sup>th</sup> move, I had intended 23.♖b3 here, with a safe position, but I then spotted the exchange sacrifice, which I thought was almost winning. 23...♕xb5 24.♖xb5

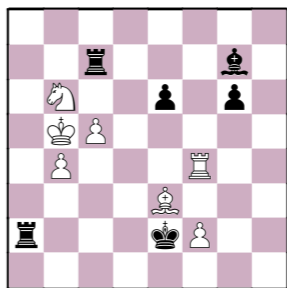


24...♔f7?! Black does not find a plan. I thought my queenside pawns would be overwhelming with all my pieces supporting them, but the machine shows that after 24...♖a1! 25.c4 ♖e1! 26.c5 ♖e2+ 27.♔c1 ♕e5! 28.♖b4 ♖d8 29.♖a4 Black is OK.

During the game, I expected 24...♕h6!? 25.♕xh6 ♖axb6 26.♖xb6 ♖xb6, which also does not lose. The black king comes in time. 25.c4 ♖b7 26.c5 ♔e6? Black has dilly-dallied too much, and now my queenside pawns are far too strong for the exchange, especially as my king can march forward to help. 27.♖b4 ♔f5 28.♔b3 h5 29.h3 ♖c7 30.♔c4 e6 31.♔b5 ♖a2



32.g4+! A simple, but precise operation. 32...hxg4 33.hxg4+ ♔xg4 34.♖xe4+ ♔f3 35.♖f4+! ♔e2 36.b4 White's pieces will defend each other.



36...♕c3 37.♖e4 e5 38.♖d5 ♔d3 39.♖xc3 ♔xc3 40.c6 ♖c8 41.♖xe5 ♖b2 42.♖c5+ ♔b3 43.c7 ♖a2 44.♔c6 ♔xb4 45.♔b7 ♖aa8 46.♖c1 ♔b3 47.♕a7 g5 48.♕b8 ♖xc7+ 49.♕xc7

Black resigned

I was proud of this win, especially because I am a fan of Fidel Corrales, who plays fearlessly against all opponents (including underrated ones) and exhibits only positivity, win or lose.

He won clear first place in the World Open this year – an achievement not matched by many. He also won a nice ending against me in Wyoming that I annotated in the previous issue of *American Chess Magazine* (ACM #34, pp.68-69 -Ed.).

HOW NOT TO PLAY FOR BLACK

There are many examples of how castling kingside in this variation leads to disaster. I chose this one:

A16

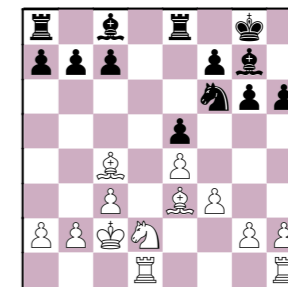
Alexandre Lesiege	2558
Simon Gravel	2226

Quebec Carnival Open 2004

1.c4 ♖f6 2.♖c3 d5 3.cxd5 ♖xd5 4.♖f3 g6 5.e4 ♖xc3 6.dxc3 ♖xd1+ 7.♔xd1 ♕g7 8.♔c2 0-0?! The king belongs in the center or on the queenside, where it can



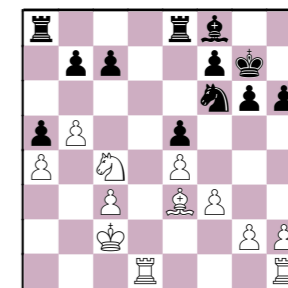
protect some potential weaknesses. 9.♕g5 e5 10.♕c4 ♖d7 11.♕e3 ♖e8 12.♖ad1 h6 13.♖d2 ♖f6 14.f3



14...♕e6 Simplifying the position actually worsens Black's woes, especially as he is trading his "good" bishop. White will have a preponderance on both the queenside and kingside. Black should look for counterplay with 14...♕d7! and ...b5.

15.b4 a5 16.b5 ♕f8 17.a4 ♔g7 18.♕xe6 ♖xe6 19.♖c4 The knight on c4 is a fixture in these positions.

19...♖ee8



20.g4! Opening a second front. Pawns are even, but Black is totally lost. Like in the Ulf game, he has no counterplay.

20...♖e6 21.h4! ♕d6 22.g5 hxg5 23.hxg5 ♖e8 24.♖d2! b6 25.♖dh2 ♔f8 26.♕f2 ♔e7 27.♖h7 ♕c5 28.♕g3 28.♕xc5+ bxc5 29.♖h8 is just as decisive. After the text move, **Black resigned**: not too soon. On 28...♕d6, the white knight can come around to d5.

HOW TO PLAY WITH BLACK

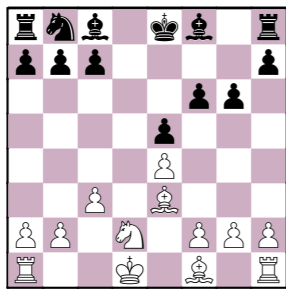
For a model game from the black side, we turn to the French top-level GM Maxime Vachier-Lagrave.

A16

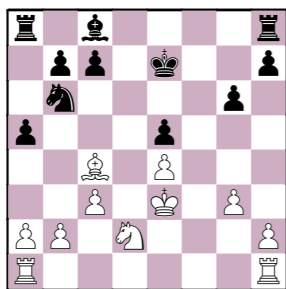
Pavel Kotsur	2550
Maxime Vachier Lagrave	2711

Al Ain Open 2012

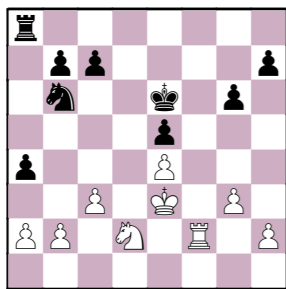
1.♖f3 ♖f6 2.c4 g6 3.♖c3 d5 4.cxd5 ♖xd5 5.e4 ♖xc3 6.dxc3 ♖xd1+ 7.♔xd1 f6 8.♕e3 e5 9.♖d2



9...d7 Rather than immediately developing the bishop to e6 where it will be traded, Black is trying to exchange the dark-squared bishops. As we mentioned before, this is logical given the pawn structure – blocked central pawns on e4 and e5. 10.c4 c5 11.e2?! Defeats the purpose of the opening: the white king is supposed to go to c2. White also has no advantage after 11.xc5 dxc5 12.b4 de6 13.c2 a5 14.a3 e7 15.b3 a4 and Black won a nice game on move 79 in C.Bauer 2576 - E.Sutovsky 2664, Leon 2001. 11...e7 12.g3 a5! 13.f4 xe3 14.e3 b6 15.fxe5 fxe5

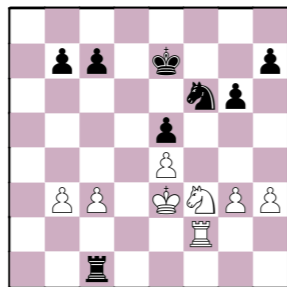


White seems to be playing only for a draw, looking for a symmetrical position. Playing only for a draw with White is almost always a bad strategy. 16.hf1 e6 17.xe6 e6 18.f2 hf8 19.faf1 fxf2 20.fxf2 a4!



While his opponent was busy trading as many pieces as humanly possible, MVL has gained some space on the queenside. The a4 pawn takes away the b3 square from the white knight and potentially prepares a rook lift like ...a5-b5 or ...a5-c5 with ...a4-a3. White gets nervous

and eliminates the annoying a4 pawn, but that gives Black an open a-file. 21.b3?! axb3 22.axb3 d7 23.f3 f6 24.h3 a1 25.g5+ e7 26.f3?? White's position is already compromised. 26.e2 or 26.g2 had to be played. Instead, hoping for repetition, White blunders a knight fork. 26...c1!



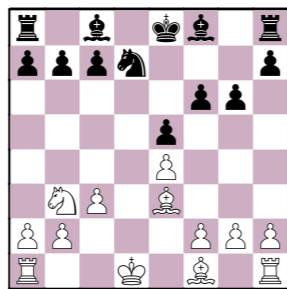
27.dxe5 27.d3 loses immediately to 27...xc3+. 27...xc3+ 28.d3 xxb3 29.d4 a3 30.e2 b6 31.f4 a4+ 32.d3 c6 33.e5 d7 White resigned as he saw no need to test the technique of his esteemed opponent.

RECENT IMPROVEMENTS FOR WHITE

<b>A16</b>	
Rene Stern	2519
Johannes Florstedt	2306

Lichtenberger Open, Berlin 2018

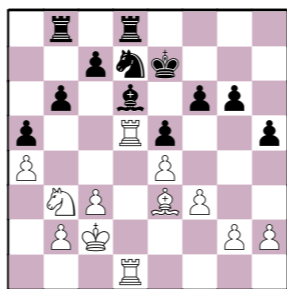
1.f3 f6 2.c4 g6 3.d3 d5 4.cxd5 dxd5 5.e4 dxc3 6.dxc3 xd1+ 7.xd1 f6 8.e3 e5 9.d2 d7 10.b3!? A good positional idea. Instead of the routine 10.c4, White takes a detour to stop the opponent from trading the dark-squared bishops.



10...a5 11.a4 b6 Upon 11...f5 12.exf5 gxf5 13.f3 g8 14.g3 b6, White should continue with 15.c2 b7 16.d2, with decent chances in a lively position. Instead, he quickly got a losing game after 15.c4 g6 16.e2 b7 17.hd1 0-0 18.f2? The king is going the wrong way! 18...d6!

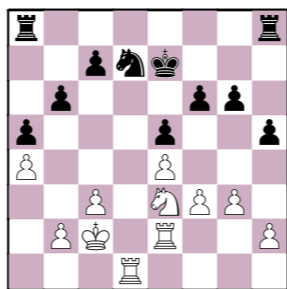
19.g1 f4! 20.gxf4 exf4 21.d4 c5 22.g7 e5 23.xg6 hxg6 24.xe5 dx5 25.e2 d3+ 26.xd3 xd3 27.g1 xf3+ 28.e1 e3+ 29.f2 h3 30.xg6 xh2+ 31.g1 xb2 32.xb6 c4 33.xb7 cxb3 34.b5 b1+ Here White resigned in S.Bogner 2599 - Li Chao 2711, Germany 2014.

11...h5, looking to trade those bishops even with loss of time, can also be considered. White can opt to avoid the trade with 12.f3. 12.c2 b7 13.f3 d6 14.c4 e7 15.hd1 hd8 16.d5 dx5 17.xd5 h5 18.ad1 ab8

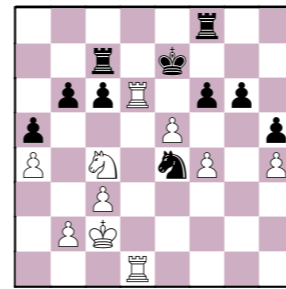


White has managed to assert a certain degree of light-square dominance. The knight can later apply for residency at its rightful place of c4. Of course, White's advantage is not serious yet, but Black is suffering a little.

19.g3 a8 Here and on the next few moves, Black should consider becoming active with ...g5. 20.e1 ab8 21.dd1 h8 22.e2 a8 23.d2! c5 Picking a bad time to trade the bishops. White's d-file control is dangerous. 24.c4 xe3? 24...hd8 was a tougher defense. 25.xe3



25...c6? Another mistake. Defending with a move like 25...a7 and allowing the white knight to enter d5 was not for the faint of heart, but it was the lesser evil. Now White gains an entry square on d6, and the position becomes winning. 26.ed2 a7 27.c4 c7 28.d6 b8 29.f4! exf4 30.gxf4 d5 31.e5 f8 32.h4 d4

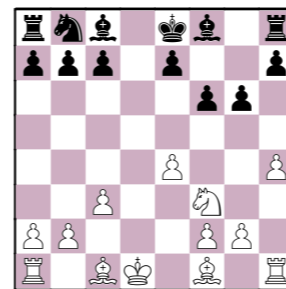


33.e1! A little tactic to finish the game. 33...b5 34.exf6+ f7 35.de5+ Black resigned

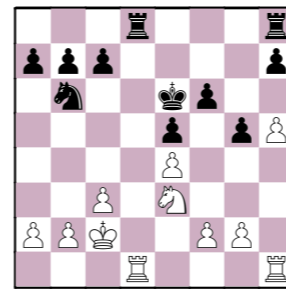
<b>A16</b>	
Ivan Cheparinov	2702
Jinshi Bai	2588

Chinese Team Championship 2018

1.f3 f6 2.c4 g6 3.d3 d5 4.cxd5 dxd5 5.e4 dxc3 6.dxc3 xd1+ 7.xd1 f6 8.h4!? This is the engine's first choice.

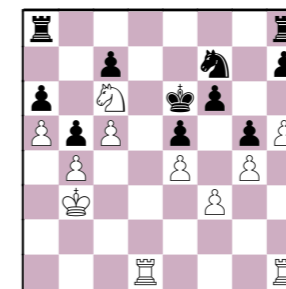


Lest you think that h-pawn advances only started with AlphaZero, I may mention that this was first played in N.Rashkovsky 2535 - A.Mikhalchishin 2535, Moscow 1981. In this game Black opted for 8...g4 9.c2 e5 10.d2 h5 11.c4 e7 12.a4 a5, and later won on move 42. 8...e5 There have been a lot of games with 8...h5 9.e5, which looks better for White as the g6 pawn is a little loose. 9.h5 g5 10.e3 e6 After 10...d7, 11.d2 is best, looking to play 12.g4 if the situation allows. 11.d2 d7 12.c4 f7 13.c2 c5 14.xe6+ xe6 15.f1 ad8 16.d1 xe3 17.d3 b6



The computer likes White's space advantage on the kingside, with the f5 square for the knight. Is this enough to win the game? Absolutely not. But this is a typical "two-result game."

18.b4! d8 19.a4 e7 20.g4 a6 21.d4 d8 22.f3 d6 23.a5? Throwing away the advantage. The knight has nothing to do on c6. White should continue with 23.d3 with serious chances. It will be hard for Black to avoid the weakening move ...c6. 23...b6! 24.d6 a8 24...d7 was simpler. 25.b3 d7 26.a5 b5 27.c4 d6! 28.c5 f7 The position has become too blocked.



29.d5 d8 30.dxd8+ hxd8 31.hd1 e7 32.xd8 xd8 33.xd8 xd8 Draw.

Our last game sees White make a better effort at exploiting this type of advantage. Many of ACM readers know that I travel to a lot of tournaments with my son Mitch, who is a strong player in his own right. A master since 2019, he would be a great sparring partner for me – except that we don't like playing against each other! But he prepares exercises for me, as I do for him. He also proofreads all of my articles to make sure I don't stray too far from reality.

Therefore, the readers will forgive me if I end this article with a recent game by Mitch in this variation, against 12-year-old NM Jasmine Su, co-winner of this year's Barber Tournament of Champions.

<b>A16</b>	
Mitch Fishbein	2157
Jasmine Su	2035

WashingtonInternational,RockvilleMD2023

1.c4 f6 2.f3 g6 3.d3 d5 4.cxd5 dxd5 5.e4 dxc3 6.dxc3 xd1+ 7.xd1 f6 8.e3 e5 9.d2 d7 10.a4



BROADEN YOUR HORIZONS!  
THE BLOG OF GRANDMASTER ALEX COLOVIC

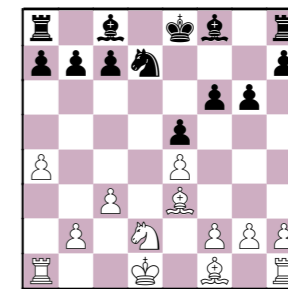
Ranked among the "Best Chess Blogs on the Planet" since 2016, Grandmaster Alex Colovic, President of Association of Chess Professionals (ACP) from 2019-2023, writes in style about all aspects of chess. From openings to endgames, psychology and practical advice, he provides deep insight into the secrets of our beloved game. Visit, read and broaden your horizons

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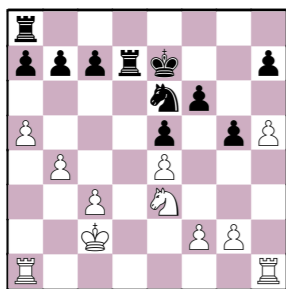
Alex writes on Substack, subscribe at substack.com/@gmalexcolovic. He also shares his views on current news in video format at www.youtube.com/@gmalexcolovic.

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.

Another reasonable approach. While Black takes time to trade the bishops, White gains space on the queenside.

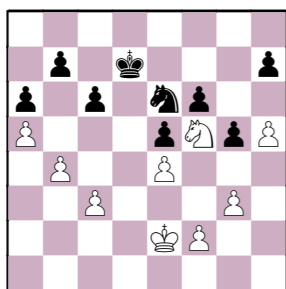


10...c5 11.xc5 dxc5 12.b4 d6 13.a5 e7 14.c2 d8 15.h4 Now White is trying to create the weak f5 square. 15...d7 16.c4 f8?! There was no need for Black to revert to the plan of trading light-squared bishops. Her pieces are well mobilized, and 16...b5 would give her easy equality. 17.h5 g5 18.f1 e6 19.xe6 dxe6 20.d3 d7



White has a long-term advantage, based on the f5 square. But the question is, will he be able to make progress after all rooks are exchanged?

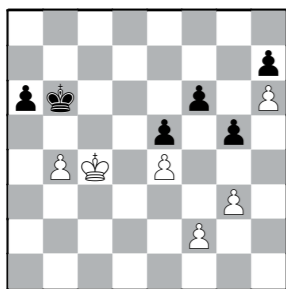
21.♖hd1 ♖ad8 22.♖xd7+ ♖xd7 23.g3 The machine wants to continue gaining space with 23.b5, which Jasmine now prevents. 23...a6 24.♖b1 c6 25.♗f5+ ♗d8 26.♖d1 ♖xd1 27.♗xd1 ♗d7 28.♗e2



28...c5? A big mistake, giving the king open space on the queenside. The surest way to draw is 28...♗c7 29.♗d3 ♗b5 30.♗c4 ♗d6+, and White cannot win the pawn ending.

29.♗d3! ♗xb4 30.♗xb4 ♗f8 31.♗c4 ♗c6 32.♗e7+ ♗d6 33.♗c8+ ♗c6 34.♗b6 ♗d7 35.♗d5! ♗b6 35...♗d6 is met by 36.b5+-.

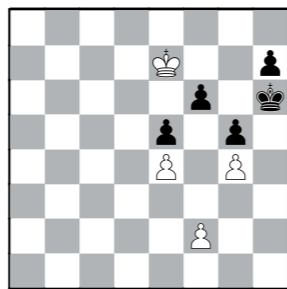
36.♗e7+ The clock is the enemy of pawn ending calculation. Mitch wasn't able to properly evaluate the position after 36.axb6! ♗xb6+ 37.♗xb6 ♗xb6, when White wins with the only move 38.h6! .



White's h-pawn is advanced far enough to win most races, and if Black holds steady on the queenside, White has a tempo in reserve:

A) 38...♗c6 39.g4! (Not 39.f3? ♗d6 40.b5 axb5+ 41.♗xb5 ♗e7 42.♗c6 ♗f7

43.♗d7 ♗g6 44.♗e6 ♗xh6 45.♗xf6 g4! 46.fxg4 stalemate.) 39...♗d6 40.b5! A1) 40...axb5+ 41.♗xb5 ♗e7 (41...♗d7 42.♗b6 ♗d6 43.f3 ♗d7 44.♗b7 ♗d6 45.♗c8 ♗c5 46.♗d7 ♗d4 47.♗e6 ♗e3 48.♗xf6 ♗xf3 49.♗f5+-) 42.♗c6 ♗f7 43.♗d7 ♗g6 44.♗e7 ♗xh6



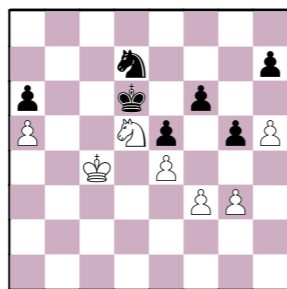
45.♗f7!+- but not taking the pawn because of stalemate! A2) 40...a5 41.♗b3 ♗c5 42.♗a4 ♗b6 43.f3 is the decisive reserve tempo.

B) 38...g4 39.♗d5 ♗b5 40.♗e6 ♗xb4 41.♗xf6 a5 42.♗g7 a4 43.♗xh7 a3 44.♗g7 a2 45.h7 a1♖ 46.h8♗+-.

36...♗d6 37.♗f5+ ♗c6 38.♗e3? White could still return to the pawn ending with 38.♗e7+ ♗d6 39.♗c8+.

38...♗d6 39.f3 ♗c6 40.♗d5 bxa5? Black needed to play ...b5+ here and earlier when she had the chance, closing things on the queenside.

41.bxa5 ♗d6



42.♗b4? 42.h6! would be zugzwang. A knight move loses the f-pawn, and a king move allows White a check forking the king and the a6 pawn: 42...♗c6 43.♗b4+ ♗b7 44.♗d5+-.

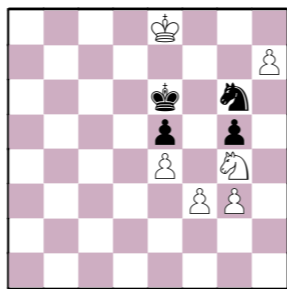
42...♗b8? 42...♗c5 43.♗d5 g4! is a draw. 43.♗d5! Correctly trying to get back to the previous position, which Black now avoids.

43...♗c6 44.♗xf6 ♗xa5+ 45.♗c3 h6 46.♗g4 ♗e6 47.♗xh6 ♗c6 48.♗f5 ♗f6 49.♗c4 ♗d8 49...a5 50.♗b5 ♗d4+ 51.♗xd4 exd4 52.♗c4+-.

50.♗e3 ♗f7 51.♗g4+ ♗e6 52.h6 The rook pawn is the sworn enemy of the knight. From here, the win is not difficult,

although when playing on increment, anything can happen, of course.

52...♗d6 53.♗b4 ♗c6 54.h7 ♗d6 55.♗a5 ♗e6 56.♗xa6 ♗d6 57.♗b5 ♗h8 58.♗b6 ♗f7 59.♗b7 ♗h8 60.♗b8 ♗e6 61.♗c7 ♗g6 62.♗d8 ♗h8 63.♗e8 ♗g6



64.♗xe5 Black resigned

Not a perfect game, but a good illustration of the difficulties Black can face in this variation. Anyone who plays this variation with White is trying to play like Ulf Andersson. As I said earlier, nobody can really play like him. But it's sometimes possible to explain how he played.

In the first game here, we saw Ulf Andersson employ some strategic motifs that, in fact, permeate this variation:

- 1) When there is a pair of blocked central pawns, a bishop of the color of the square of its central pawn can become "bad."
2) If you can support your knight near the center in such a way that your opponent cannot attack it with a pawn, that in itself can be a harbinger of weaknesses in your opponent's camp.
3) When your opponent has counterplay, don't be afraid to change the structure and guide him where he is not prepared to walk. But if your opponent has no active play, slow down and wait for the right time to pounce.

Magnus Carlsen took Ulf's endgame skill to a new level. At his best, Magnus is able to psychologically "bluff" his opponents without making second-rate moves! That's why he is the best player of all time (so far). But I cannot explain to you how Magnus Carlsen plays. For that, you will need to speak to someone smarter than I am!

A PERSONAL INSIGHT AT THE 145TH NEW YORK STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

I LOVE NY

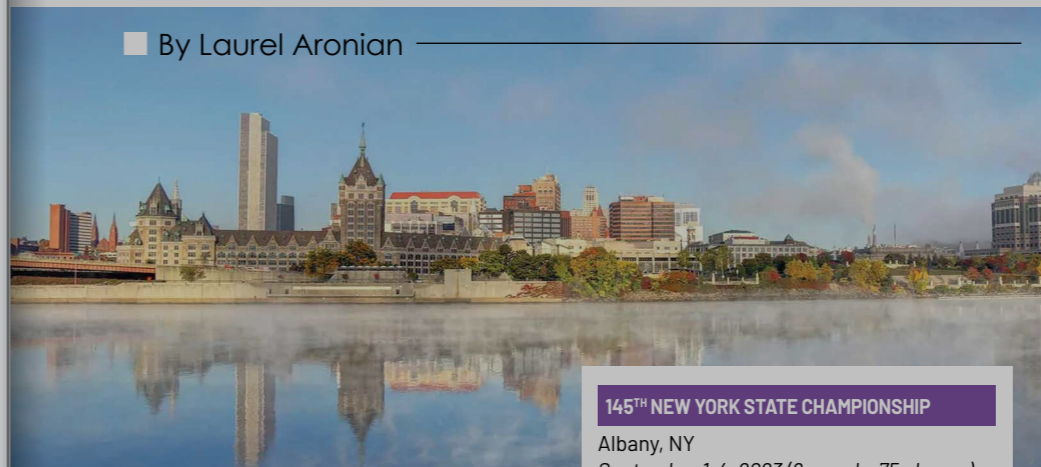
America's longest running chess tournament welcomes its participants with an action-packed schedule, in which you can play against strong opposition, learn some interesting history, meet warm people and make lasting friendships and memories. Laurel's personal story explains all these aspects that make the NY State Championship one of her favorite tournaments.

By Laurel Aronian



Laurel Aronian is a chess influencer, who has authored numerous articles for chess

publications, been featured in podcasts and periodicals, and profiled in WSJ and The Chess Journalist (forthcoming). Laurel was the 2022 Connecticut State Girls K-12 Champion and played the prestigious Ruth Haring National Tournament of State Champions Invitational. She proudly serves as the Teen Ambassador for the US Chess Women's Girls Club and is the President of St. Luke's School's Chess Club/Team, which hosts cross-cultural scholastic meet-ups. Laurel is the co-founder (with her brother) of Chessin1day.com, a volunteer teen chess initiative that teaches chess in public libraries and schools. Additionally, Laurel has intertwined her love of arts as a singer-songwriter performing music about the chess culture. She sang the National Anthem at the 2022 US Chess Open, 2022 US Chess K-12 Grade Nationals, and 2023 US Chess High School Nationals. For Laurel, chess is not only a skill to share; it's an invitation to all cultures and all populations to play, unite, and belong. Chess.com Blog @MountainLaurelA YouTube & IG @LaurelAronian



145TH NEW YORK STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

Albany, NY
September 1-4, 2023 (6 rounds, 75 players)

- 1-3. Jianchao ZHOU, Djurabek KHAMRAKULOV, Joel BENJAMIN .....5
4-6. William GRAIF, Rafael ADAM, Aritro CHAKRAVARTY .....4 1/2
7-18. Justin SARKAR, Ryan SUN, Eric FENG, Vincent LATORRE, Jasmine SU, Tobias RIZZO, Sam LUGER, Bobby QIAN, Luc William Crim HOFFMAN, Kyle DONG, Samuel ZHANG, Hugo GUILLETTE ...4

Under 2100, Under 1800, Under 1500, and Under 1200. The largest Championship in tournament history ended with a three-way grandmaster tie in tie-break order: Jianchao Zhou (MA), Djurabek Khamrakulov (NY) and Joel Benjamin (NJ). However, Djurabek Khamrakulov took the Champion title as the only NY State resident.

Here is the list of winners in their respective sections:

- U2100 Tommy ZHANG .....5 1/2 /6
U1800 Grant LIU .....5 1/2 /6
U1500 Max Lev DEPAUL .....6 /6 (!)
U1200 Sheldon ZHU .....5 1/2 /6

Surprisingly last year's champion was missing in action. Assistant TD Sunny Yang remarked, "Jason Liang did not return to defend his state title (2022, 2021). Even more surprising was the fact that Aritro Chakravarty, an expert-rated player, was leading the championship section with 4 1/2 /5 with a round to go - a very impressive feat, considering the strength of the event. Unfortunately, he lost against the top seed in the final round."

The tournament comprises mostly New Yorkers, though surrounding northeast states (NJ, CT, NH, VT) are highly represented, along with a strong contingent of Canadian players. As expected for America's longest running chess tournament, the New York State Championship's long history boasts the attendance of numerous world-renowned players. For instance, in 1900, future US Champion Frank J. Marshall won the event. Other participants included renowned artist and French Olympiad player Marcel Duchamp and GM Reuben Fine.

IA Karl Heck, chess-chronicler extraordinaire and Empire Chess' Editor further clarified myths and truths regarding