



# BACK IN SCHOOL

The world's youngest Grandmaster passes key tests in his personal and professional life.

BY **GM ABHIMANYU MISHRA**

**Y**ou won't find this in a dictionary, but I have learned that "life" and "challenges" are synonyms.

My chess life has been a challenge for the past year or so. I had been steadily working hard to improve, but without the rating points to show my growth. I would perform well in some tournaments, reaching a performance rating of 2700, but there were other tournaments where my performance was way below my standards. The rating points I gained were washed away — easy come, easy go.

When the flicker of doubt seeps in, I believe you must muster all your strength and work harder to ward off all the negative energy. The decisive event that catapults

you forward can come at any time, and you must be prepared for it. My "jolt" came in the form of an invitation from the organizers of TePe Sigeman; for that, I will be forever grateful.

Sweden is a beautiful country with abundant natural beauty. Even though I was not able to explore the country due to my tight schedule, what I saw in my journey was breathtaking. I would certainly love to go back and visit it again.

This event — my first "super-tournament" — was held in Malmo, one of the largest cities in Sweden, and the organization was impeccable. The eight-player round-robin featured a good mix of veterans like GMs Boris Gelfand and Peter Svidler alongside some of the top young players in the world like GMs Gukesh D and Vincent Keymer. As the lowest seed by over 100 rating points, this was a chance to prove to myself that I could shake my doldrums and play good chess.

In my first round, I played Svidler with Black and held him to a solid draw. I thought this was a good start to the event.

In the second and third round, I was up against GM van Foreest and GM Keymer respectively where I prevailed in both cases. The games were wild and double

edged, and I was happy to prevail in the complications.

After a fourth-round draw with GM Nils Grandelius, it was exciting to play against two of the top rated Indian players, Gukesh D and GM Arjun Erigaisi. In both cases I held solid draws with Black; against Gukesh, I was even slightly better at one point, but did not know how to convert. Such experiences help us grow, and next time I encounter a similar position, I will know how to play it.

This left me tied for first place after six rounds, with a final round pairing against Gelfand ahead. This was a game that will haunt me for a long time.

The opening didn't go as planned, and after a long struggle, we entered a queen and pawn endgame. I had studied lots of these kinds of endgames, and I was confident that I would get a draw out of that position. But after six hours, and a long fight of 125 moves, I lost the game and ended in a tie for second place behind the deserving winner, Peter Svidler.

Playing against Gelfand, a former world championship challenger, was an honor, and once again, I was reminded that what I know about chess is a drop as compared to the ocean of all knowledge. Overall, I had an amazing experience playing in my first

super tournament, and will cherish it for years to come.

## QUEEN'S GAMBIT, CLOSED CATALAN (E11)

GM Abhimanyu Mishra (2550)

GM Jordan van Foreest (2689)

TePe Sigeman & Co (2), Malmo,

05.05.2023

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 d5 4. g3 Bb4+ 5. Bd2 Be7 6. Bg2 Nbd7 7. 0-0 c6 8. Qc2 Ne4



A rare move in a well-known position. In the short term, Black is going to play ... f7-f5 to fortify the knight on e5. The reason that he played it before castling is that Black will now have more attacking ideas involving ... g7-g5 and perhaps even ... h7-h5.

Modern theory goes along the lines of 8. ... 0-0 9. Rd1 b6 10. Bf4 Bb7 11. Ne5 Nh5 etc.

9. Bf4 g5 10. Be3

Perhaps inaccurate, as the bishop can be caught after Black's knights hop around.

10. ... Nd6 11. Nbd2

The engine suggests the wild 11. Na3 Nf5 12. Bd2 g4 13. Ne1 Nxd4 14. Qd3 Nf5 15. cxd5 cxd5 16. e4 with an unclear mess.

11. ... h5

The "human" move. Also possible was 11. ... Nf5!? directly as Nd2-f1 is not legal here! The engine laughs at my idea of 12. g4 Nxe3 13. fxe3 and claims that Black is better after 13. ... h5 14. h3 hxg4 15. hxg4 Bd6! 16. e4 Bf4! 17. Qc3 f5! which is, of course, not at all easy to see in advance.

12. Rfd1 Nf5 13. Nf1 g4 14. Ne5 Nxe3

Avoiding 14. ... Nxe5?! 15. dxe5 Nxe3 16. Nxe3 which is good for White after 16. ... Bd7 (16. ... Qc7? fails to 17. cxd5 exd5 18. Bxd5 Qxe5 19. Bxc6+) 17. Rd3 with the idea of Ra1-d1 and a potential sacrifice on d5.

15. Nxe3 Bd6 16. Nxd7?!

The engine shows that this trade is not advisable. Instead I should retreat to d3 as the knight covers f4: 16. Nd3 Qg5 (16. ... f5? 17. b4! Nf6 18. b5! Bd7 19. Ne5! with advantage to White) 17. b4 h4 looks scary for White, but the engine gives 18. Qc1 with b4-b5 to follow, leading to a better position.

16. ... Bxd7 17. Nf1

The e3-knight was clumsy, blocking the e-pawn.

17. ... f5



18. b4

Creating counterplay.

18. ... a6

Here 18. ... Bxb4 19. Qb3 Bd6 (worse is 19. ... a5 20. c5! when the bishop is in trouble) 20. Qxb7 doesn't look like an improvement for Black.

19. Rdb1

The alternative 19. a4 Bxb4 20. Qb3 fails to 20. ... a5, leaving Black well ahead.

19. ... Qf6 20. e3 h4 21. a4 Rc8 22. Qe2 hxg3

Natural but mistaken. Black should have made the g2-bishop as useless as possible with 22. ... h3! 23. Bh1 Kf7 and Black is better here, although it still will take great effort to convert this into a win. Now 24. b5? is met with 24. ... axb5 25. axb5 cxb5 26. cxd5 e5 27. dxe5 Qxe5 when Black is in full control.

23. hxg3 dxc4



On first glance the position after 23. ... Kf7 24. b5 axb5 25. axb5 cxb5 26. cxd5 e5 27. dxe5 Qxe5 is similar to the one after 22. ... h3!. The difference is that here White is fine because the g2-square is under control, and the f1-knight is securely guarded by the bishop on g2. For example, 28. Ra7 Rc7 29. Rxb5 Bxb5 30. Qxb5 Rb8 31. Nd2 Rc1+ and White has Bg2-f1. With ... h4-h3 and Bg2-h1 included, the knight would have to retreat.

24. e4!?

Not happy with the game thus far, I decided to change direction. 24. Qxc4 e5 25. dxe5 Bxe5 26. Ra3 also looked quite interesting.

24. ... Be7 25. Ne3 b5?

A mistake. Now my initiative becomes too strong. The engine recommends 25. ... c3!? with a wild game ahead.

26. axb5 axb5 27. exf5 exf5 28. Ra7 Rd8

Dodging 28. ... Qxd4? 29. Nxf5!.

29. d5 c5



30. d6!

A good move, clearing the d5-square for the knight.

30. ... Qxd6 31. Nd5 Rh6

After 31. ... cxb4 32. Ra6 Qc5 33. Re1 it is time to resign.

32. Rd1

Threatening a nasty check on c7.

32. ... Re6

This removes the pin but loses the rook. After 32. ... Kf8 33. Nf4! the black queen has nowhere to go.

33. Qc2 Qe5 34. Nc7+ Kf8 35. Nxe6+ Qxe6 36. Qc3

Here 36. Qd2? fails to 36. ... cxb4 37. Rxd7 Rxd7 38. Qxd7 Qxd7 39. Rxd7 b3 and the black pawns are a match for the rook!

36. ... Bf6 37. Qd2 Bd4

White wins quickly after 37. ... cxb4 38. Qh6+ Ke7 39. Qh7+ Kf8 40. Bd5.

**38. bxc5 Be8 39. Qg5 Rd7**

Worse is 39. ... Bxf2+ 40. Kxf2 Rxd1 41. Qg7 mate.

**40. Rxd7 Qxd7 41. Re1 Bf7 42. Qh6+ Bg7 43. Qf4, Black resigned.**

The c-pawn and the constant mating threats convinced Jordan that it was time to throw in the towel.

**QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED (D30)**

GM Vincent Keymer (2700)

GM Abhimanyu Mishra (2550)

TePe Sigeman & Co (3), Malmo, 05.06.2023

**1. c4 c6 2. Nf3 d5 3. e3 Nf6 4. d4 e6 5. Nbd2 Be7 6. b3 0-0 7. Bb2 Nbd7 8. Bd3 b6 9. e4**

While this central thrust is common in this line, it is a novelty in the current position.

**9. ... dxe4 10. Nxe4 Bb7 11. Qe2 c5**



The typical reaction to e3-e4. Black frees his position and opens the diagonal for the b7-bishop, but at the cost of also opening lines for the b2-bishop.

**12. 0-0-0!**

Ambitious, showing that Keymer is ready for a double-edged game. White's plan is to attack on the kingside, while I prepare queenside operations.

**12. ... Qc7**

Vacating the d-file.

**13. Kb1 Nxe4 14. Bxe4 Nf6?**

Conceptually and tactically incorrect. I should have traded the bishop at first sight. During the game I analyzed 14. ... Bxe4+ 15. Qxe4 Nf6 and 16. Qe5 was what I was slightly worried about, but the engine says that 16.

... Qb7 17. d5 exd5 18. cxd5 Rfe8 is fine for Black, with ideas of ... Ra8-d8 and ... Be7-f8.

**15. Bc2?**

What follows is better for White, but here an opportunity was missed: 15. Bxb7! Qxb7 16. d5 exd5 17. Rhe1! (I missed this intermediate move; 17. cxd5 Nxd5 18. Rxd5 Qxd5 19. Qxe7 Rae8 is fine for Black with ... Re8-e2 coming next) 17. ... Bd8 18. cxd5 and Black's position is in shambles due to lack of coordination.

**15. ... cxd4 16. Nxd4 Rad8 17. f3 a6 18. g4**

The bishops on c2 and b2 exert enormous pressure on Black's kingside.

**18. ... Bc5 19. Rd3**



The alternative 19. g5 Nh5 is okay for Black.

**19. ... b5**

Interesting, but not the best. Correct is 19. ... Nxc4! 20. Nxe6 Rde8! (this is the move I missed at the board!), although it turns out that after 20. ... fxe6 21. Rxd8 Qxd8! (and not 21. ... Rxd8? 22. Qxe6+ Qf7 23. Bxh7+! when White wins) 22. Qxe6+ Rf7 Black has enough counterplay to hang on.

**20. Rhd1 bxc4 21. bxc4 Bxd4?!**

The counter-intuitive 21. ... h6! is best here. Usually you should not push pawns in front of your king, but in this case, after 22. h4 Bxd4 23. Rxd4 Rxd4 24. Rxd4 Black has the nice 24. ... Qg3! with equality.

**22. Rxd4 Rxd4 23. Rxd4**

Now White is in the driver's seat once more, so I made the decision to play for complications.

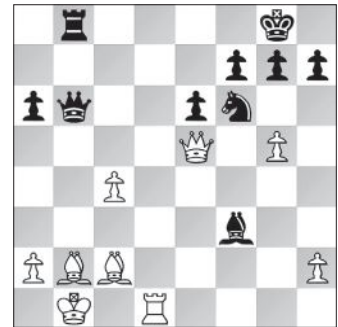
**23. ... Rb8!?**

If Black does nothing, he will lose. As an example: 23. ... e5 24. Rd1 Re8 25. g5 Nh5 26. Qd3 g6 27. Qd6 Qxd6 28. Rxd6 and White is winning.

**24. g5 Qb6 25. Qe5!**

Now 25. gxf6 fails to 25. ... Qxd4 26. Bxd4? Bxf3+.

**25. ... Bxf3 26. Rd6 Qg1+ 27. Rd1 Qb6**



Here 27. ... Qa7 is the engine suggestion, although it still claims White is winning after 28. gxf6 Bxd1 29. Bxd1 g6 30. a3! and hiding the king on a2.

**28. Rd3?**

After 28. gxf6 Bxd1 29. Bxd1 Rd8 White is for choice, but I thought that things could get messy with my idea of ... Qb6-g1+.

The cleanest winning move was 28. Rf1!. After 28. ... Be2 (28. ... Bg2 was my idea during the game, but I missed 29. Rf2! when White wins a piece) 29. Re1 Bxc4 30. gxf6 g6 White has all the chances, but his weak king means that the game isn't completely over.

**28. ... Qg1+**

The ending after 28. ... Be4 29. c5 Qxb2+ 30. Qxb2 Rxb2+ 31. Kxb2 Bxd3 32. Bxd3 seemed lost for Black.

**29. Bd1?**

Repeating the position with 29. Rd1! lets White return to the winning path.

**29. ... Rc8!**

Now Black is back in the game!

**30. Qc7?**

The last mistake; after this, I wrapped things up smoothly. The engine claims that 30. Kc1! Bxd1 31. Rxd1 Qg4 32. gxf6 Qxc4+ 33. Kd2 is equal, but it takes nerves of steel to play this with 30 seconds on the clock.

**30. ... Re8 31. Rd2 Bxd1 32. gxf6 Bh5+ 33. Bc1 Bg6+ 34. Kb2 gxf6 35. h4 Kg7 36. c5 Qg4 37. Qb7 Qf4 38. Ka3 Qc4 39. Bb2 Qxc5+ 40. Qb4 Rc8 41. Rd6 a5 42. Qxc5 Rxc5 43. Bd4 Rc4 44. Kb3 Bd3 45. h5 a4+ 46. Ka3 Be2 47. h6+ Kxh6 48. Bxf6 Kg6 49. Be7 h5 50. Rd8 Kg7 51. Bf8+ Kh7 52. Be7 h4 53. Bf6 Kg6 54. Be7 h3 55. Rh8 Bg4, White resigned.**

Our journey continued on from Malmo, with travel to Sharjah and Dubai to play in the

Sharjah Masters and Dubai Open respectively. Naturally I was hungry to continue playing after such a solid result, but there was another reason for this itinerary — I had to take my exams for the British Council IGCSE at the Dubai World Trade Center. It was a case, as they say, of killing two birds with one stone.


Some might wonder about the wisdom of playing so much high-level chess while also working on my schooling. But I was determined, drawing upon my experiences of back-to-back-to-back events from my

stint in Europe when I was chasing my GM norms. If I could do it then, I told myself, I could do it now.

The Sharjah Masters started on a bad note when I lost my first two games, partially due to time pressure (there was no second time control) and partially due to the rigors of my studies, which culminated in a third-round, zero-point bye to sit for my examination. This left me at 0/3, last in an all-GM field. But with my exam behind me, I decided that I had to step up and take control of the situation. Instead of being

at 0/3, I saw myself as beginning a new, six-round event, and I was determined to show my mettle.

With two wins and four draws, I played well, gaining six rating points in the process. I consider it a satisfactory result. I was able to come back after initial struggles, stop the bleeding of rating points, and as for my exam, it was a success! Congratulations to the winner, Arjun Erigaisi, and also to the three Americans — GMs Hans Niemann, Grigoriy Oparin, and Sam Sevian — who finished tied for second place.



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**MODERN DEFENSE (B06)**

**GM Abhimanyu Mishra (2550)**  
**GM Vitaliy Bernadskiy (2596)**  
**Sharjah Masters (7), Sharjah,**  
**05.23.2023**

**1. d4 g6 2. e4 Bg7 3. Nc3 a6 4. Be3 b5 5. Qd2**  
 The point of this setup is to play 0-0-0, h2-h4-h5, Be3-h6 in most cases, trade the g7-bishop, and try to attack Black immediately.

**5. ... d6 6. 0-0-0 Nd7 7. h4**  
 Proceeding with my plan.

**7. ... h5 8. Nh3 Nb6**



**9. Bd3**

The point of this move is that ... b5-b4 will now be met with Nc3-e2 and I don't have to worry about ... Nb6-c4 anymore.

Another path was 9. Ng5 b4!? and now (a) 10. Ne2 10. ... Nc4 11. Qxb4 Nxe3 12. fxe3 Nh6 doesn't look so clear, as Black sticks the knight on g4 and has the two bishops. (b) 10. Nb1 Nf6!? is another interesting pawn sacrifice. After 11. Qxb4 Ng4 12. Qe1 0-0

the position looks like a clear pawn up for White, but it's hard to start a kingside attack with the knight on g4. Now 13. f3? fails to 13. ... Nxe3 14. Qxe3 e5! when Black opens the long diagonal as 15. d5? is met with 15. ... Bh6! and ... f7-f6, winning a piece.

**9. ... Nf6 10. f3**

Preventing the knight from landing on g4.

**10. ... Bxh3**

And Black prevents the knight from landing on g5!

**11. Rxh3 Nfd7**

Prophylaxis against e4-e5, and preparing ... c7-c5

**12. Ne2**

With the idea of solidifying the center next with c2-c3.

An alternative way to play this position was 12. f4!?, trying to limit the g7-bishop. Play continues 12. ... c5 13. dxc5 Nxc5 (not 13. ... dxc5? 14. e5 with a great position) 14. Be2 0-0 15. f5 with a very complicated game ahead.

**12. ... c5 13. c3 Rb8**

Potentially preparing for ... b5-b4 ideas.

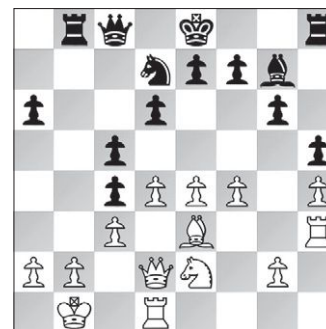
**14. Kb1 Qc8**

Here 14. ... Nc4 15. Bxc4 bxc4 16. dxc5 would ruin Black's structure.

**15. f4**

Gaining space on the kingside at the cost of the light squares and flexibility.

**15. ... Nc4 16. Bxc4 bxc4**



**17. e5?!**

Premature. Instead 17. dxc5 Nxc5 18. Bxc5 Qxc5 19. Rf3 with the idea of f4-f5 was to be preferred.

**17. ... Nb6?**

This is inaccurate. Black had to strike while the iron was hot with 17. ... cxd4!

Compare this with the capture on the next move; here, White does not have the option to capture on d4 with the bishop as he would lose a pawn. So after 18. cxd4 Nb6 19. Nc3 d5 Black can play ... e7-e6 and start attacking the white king along the b-file. It's not simple to find counterplay for White. The best the engine can do is the ridiculous looking 20. f5!? Qxf5+ 21. Ka1 to try to generate any activity.

**18. Qc2**

Naturally 18. exd6? Na4 is simply winning for Black as there is no defense to ... Rb8xb2.

**18. ... 0-0**

Now 18. ... cxd4 is much weaker. After 19. Bxd4 dxe5 20. Bxe5 Bxe5 21. fxe5 0-0 White plays 22. Ka1, calmly stepping off the b-file. This is still quite complicated, but I believe White should be a bit better. For example, the natural 22. ... Rd8? is already a huge mistake after 23. Nd4 Qg4 24. Rf1 when Rh3-f3, Nd4-c6, and even e5-e6 are threats.

**19. dxc5**

Taking my chance to ruin his structure.

**19. ... dxc5 20. Qe4**

The idea behind this move was to prevent the black queen from reaching c6, but there is a hidden resource lurking that eluded both players.

In this position the computer recommends 20. Bc1! to defend the b2-pawn. This move would not be simple to decide upon at the board, but the idea is 20. ... Qc6 21. g4! hxg4 22. Rh2 with h4-h5 and a huge attack coming.

**20. ... f5**

Good idea, but played too early. The right

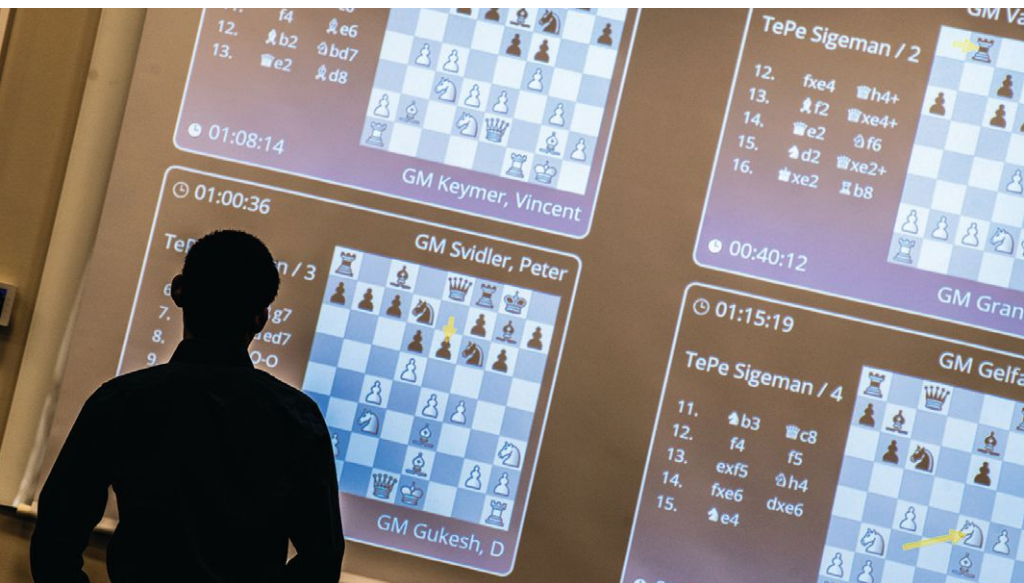


PHOTO: COURTESY ORGANIZERS / DAVID LLADA

way is 20. ... Re8! 21. Ka1 and only now 21. ... f5! when Black is taking over. If 22. exf6?! e.p. exf6 23. Qxg6? Qg4! 24. Qxg4 hxg4 25. Rg3 f5 and the rook is trapped on g3!

**21. exf6 e.p. Rxf6 22. Rg3**

Here 22. Bc1!? is also interesting, with the idea to slide the rook to e3.

**22. ... Qe6 23. Qxe6+?!**

The engine points out that 23. Qc2 Qf5 24. Qxf5 is a better way of doing things as after 24. ... Rxf5 25. Kc2 the rook is much worse placed on f5 than it would be on e6.

**23. ... Rxe6 24. Kc2 Re4?!**

Too direct. Better was a simple move like 24. ... Kf7! 25. Rf3 Bf6 26. g3 Na4 27. b3 Nb6 with an interesting endgame ahead.

**25. Rf3 e5 26. Rd2**



Now I'm threatening Be3xc5, and it's not easy to make a move for Black.

The alternative 26. Ng3 lets Black off the hook after 26. ... Rxe3 27. Rxe3 exf4 28. Re6 fxf3 with equality.

**26. ... Na4?**

A blunder. Instead 26. ... exf4 27. Bxf4 Rbe8 28. Ng3 was to be preferred, but Black still faces issues due to his bad pawn structure.

**27. b3 cxb3+ 28. axb3 exf4**

Perhaps 28. ... Nb6 29. Kd3 is what he missed in his calculations.

**29. Bxf4**

Winning material by force.

**29. ... Rbe8 30. Ng3 Rxf4 31. Rxf4 Nxc3**

**32. Rd7!**

Cleanest. I activate my rooks and bring home the full point.

**32. ... Nb5 33. Re4 Rb8 34. Ne2, Black resigned.**

Next we headed to Dubai, where the Dubai

Open was held at the Dubai Chess and Culture Club. The club itself features some captivating architecture. The building is shaped in the form of a rook, and has a checkered floor pattern. It also houses a fine library and cafeteria, making it a first-class place to play.

I played relatively well in Dubai, barring early one game that I lost. With draws against strong 2660+ players like GMs Saleh Salem and M.Amin Tabatabaei, and an interesting win against 2618-rated GM Aleksandar Indjic, I was generally happy with my performance, and I gained 17 rating points. At six points from nine games, I finished in a huge tie for second place. Congratulations to GMs Chithambaram Vr. Aravindh, Javokhir Sindarov, Arjun Erigaisi, and Maxim Matlakov, who shared top honors at 6½/9.

**SICILIAN DEFENSE, ROSSOLIMO VARIATION (B30)**

**GM Abhimanyu Mishra (2550)**  
**GM Masoud Mosadeghpour (2479)**  
**23rd Dubai Open | A (7), Dubai,**  
**06.02.2023**

**1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 e6 4. 0-0 Nge7**  
**5. d4 cxd4 6. Nxd4 Qb6 7. Nxc6 dxc6 8. Bc4 Ng6 9. Kh1 e5**

I don't want to delve too deeply into the opening theory, but this is an interesting move aimed at preventing f2-f4.

**10. Qf3 Qc7 11. Rd1**

Threatening 12. Bxf7 Qxf7 13. Rd8+.

**11. ... Nf4 12. Bxf4 exf4**



**13. e5!**

This pawn sacrifice is critical, as it opens lines against the king.

**13. ... Qxe5 14. Qb3 Bc5?**

Unfortunately, this fails tactically. Instead 14. ... Be7 15. Bxf7+ Kf8 was the right way to go, although I still believe White's play is easier after 16. Nc3 Qf6 17. Bh5.





Top: Mishra does battle with Gelfand and stares down the photographer. Above: In conversation with Jorden van Foreest.

**15. Bxf7+ Ke7 16. Nc3**

This does win, but things get complicated against best defense.

A stronger version of the same idea is 16. Nd2! as after 16. ... Bxf2 17. Bg8 as 17. ... Kf6 is now impossible due to (while 17. ... Qf5 fails to 18. Ne4! Be3 19. Nd6 and Black is busted.) 18. Qf7+ Kg5 19. Nf3+ and mates.

**16. ... Bxf2 17. Bg8 Rxc8**

An interesting practical try. I overlooked the more resilient 17. ... Kf6! when 18. Rf1! is the only winning move. The line goes 18. ... Bg4 19. Qf7+ Kg5 20. Ne4+ Qxe4 21. Qxg7+ Qg6 22. Qxh8 when White is up an Exchange.

**18. Qxg8 f3**



**19. Qd8+?**

Missing a chance to end the game immediately.

While 19. gxf3?? Bg4 is disastrous, the winning 19. g4!! had completely escaped my attention. Black cannot develop any counterplay and is hopelessly lost: 19. ... Bxg4 (or 19. ... Bc5 20. Re1 Be3 21. Nd1 and wins) 20. Qxa8 Bh3 21. Qxb7+ and White wins.

**19. ... Kf7 20. gxf3 Qf4 21. Qd3 Bb6 22. Qe4!**

Forcing the queen back to f6, after which Nc3-e4 comes with tempo.

**22. ... Qf6**

If 22. ... Qh6 23. Qe5! followed by Nc3-e4 is killing.

**23. Qe2! Bc7 24. Ne4 Qe5**

The alternative 24. ... Qh6 25. Rg1 Bf5 26. Ng5+ Kf8 27. Rae1 should also be technically winning as Black lacks time to coordinate his pieces.

**25. f4 Qf5**



**26. Ng5+**

Here I had calculated till the ending and decided it was winning. But I had missed something much simpler! Just 26. Rd8! and Black has to resign.

**26. ... Kf8 27. Re1**

The engine claims that 27. Rd2 is easier, but by this point, it does not matter.

**27. ... Qd5+ 28. Qg2 Qxg2+ 29. Kxg2 h6 30. Ne6+ Bxe6 31. Rxe6 Bxf4 32. Rd1 Re8 33. Rxe8+ Kxe8 34. h3**

The ending is a clear win.

**34. ... Ke7 35. Kf3 Bc7 36. Ke4 Ke6 37. Rd3 g5 38. Rb3 b6 39. Rc3 c5 40. Ra3 a5 41. Rf3 Bf4 42. c4 Bd6 43. a4 Be7 44. Rf5 Bf6 45. Rd5 h5 46. b3 Be7 47. Re5+ Kf6 48. Kd5 Bd8 49. Re8 Bc7 50. Rf8+ Kg6 51. Kc6 Be5 52. Kxb6 g4 53. hxg4 hxg4 54. Kxa5 g3 55. Rf1 Bd4 56. Kb6, Black resigned.**

With the final games of my journey out of the way, the work was not yet done as I still had two more exams to sit for. But soon enough I was boarding the plane to return home, and my travels were coming to an end.

Looking out over the ocean, I could not help but feel some pride and accomplishment, as I had performed to the best of my capabilities. The player who left New Jersey rated 2550 FIDE was coming back with a 2591 rating, and a number of important exams out of the way as well. Now I'm looking to build on what I learned in those games, and to my next tournaments as well. ♠