



C O L U M N I S T S

The Instructor

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An "Easy" Win

The esthetic impression made by a game of chess must stem from its content, not its appearance... In the final analysis, the only thing that is beautiful in chess is the world of ideas.

- Aron Nimzovich

Sometimes, a grandmaster game can be like an iceberg: nothing special to look at, everything simple and understandable. But looking at the part that's underwater makes a far different impression. And this you cannot do without an annotator's help. I especially love to read annotations which talk about the hidden forces motivating the struggle, the motives for selecting one move instead of another, the player's psychological sufferings at the board. All this is what one usually sees when a game is demonstrated by one of its participants.

The semifinal Candidates' Match of 1992 between Yusupov and Timman started off with a quick, sure win by Yusupov. The spectators present, as well as the specialists in attendance at the press-center, noticed no hidden finesses at all. But Artur came out of the game worn to a frazzle. The reason for this became clear to me when he described the problems he had had to solve.

Yusupov - Timman 1st Candidates' Match Game, Linares 1992



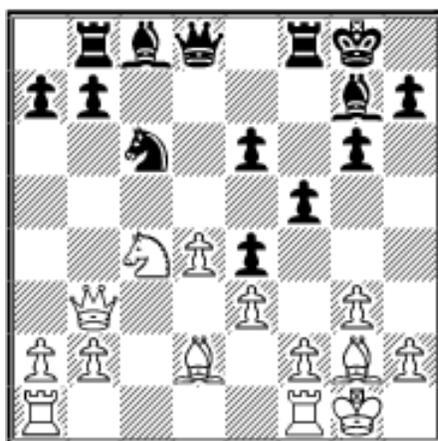
1 d2-d4 Ng8-f6 2 c2-c4 g7-g6 3 Ng1-f3 Bf8-g7 4 g2-g3 0-0 5 Bf1-g2 c7-c6 6 0-0 d7-d5 7 c4xd5 c6xd5 8 Nb1-c3 Nf6-e4

In this opening system, one (and sometimes both) of the knights must invade a central square. For example, on 8...Nc6 White plays 9 Ne5! Anatoly Karpov likes to get the knight to e5 even earlier, instead of playing 8 Nc3.

9 Nc3xe4 d5xe4 10 Nf3-e5 f7-f6

The game follows a different course after 10...Qd5!? 11 b3!? Nc6 12 Bb2.

11 Qd1-b3+ e7-e6 12 Ne5-c4 Nb8-c6 13 e2-e3 f6-f5 14 Bc1-d2 Ra8-b8



15 a2-a4!?

This variation had occurred a year earlier, in the 4th Candidates' Match Game **Yusupov - Dolmatov** (Wijk aan Zee 1991); there, however, White chose a different continuation:

15 Rac1 Bd7 16 Rfd1 b5! This begins an interesting plan, aimed at restricting the bishop on d2. A weaker line is 16...Qe7 17 Ne5! Nxe5 18 de Rfd8 19 Ba5 b6 20 Bc3, when White has the better chances (Andersson - Nunn, Skelleftea 1989).

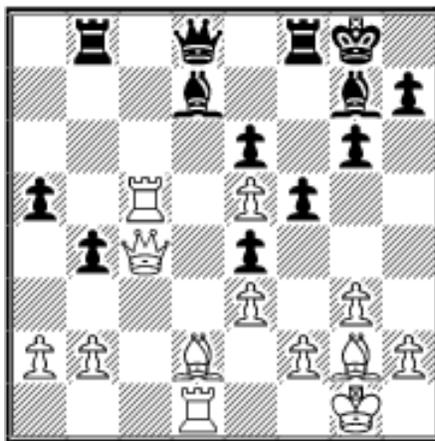
17 Ne5 Nxe5 18 de b4! Of course not 18...Bxe5?! 19 Bc3 Bxc3 20 Qxc3, when White has an obvious advantage.

19 Rc5. The queen sacrifice, 19 Bxb4 a5 20 Bxf8

Rxb3 21 Bxg7, leads only to an equal position after 21...Rd3! 22 Bf6 Qb6.

19...a5! 19...Qb6 20 Bxb4! (20 Qxb4 Ba4! 21 b3 Bxb3 22 ab Qxb4) 20...Rfd8 21 Ba3 Qxb3 22 ab Rxb3 23 Bf1 is inferior.

20 Qc4! On 20 a3, Black can now play 20...Qb6 21 Rdc1 (21 ab?? Qxc5) 21...Rfc8 22 Rxc8+ Rxc8 23 Rxc8+ Bxc8 24 ab ab, with equality



Now how does Black continue? 20...Qb6?! is dangerous, in view of 21 Bxb4! Qxb4 22 Qxb4 Rxb4 23 Rxd7 Rxb2 24 Bf1! Rxa2 25 Bc4 Ra1+ 26 Kg2, when the initiative is firmly in White's hands. Dolmatov replied 20...Rc8?!; the continuation 21 Qd4! Rxc5

22 Qxc5 Bc8 23 Bf1 left White with the better chances - although after some entertaining adventures, the game still ended in a draw.

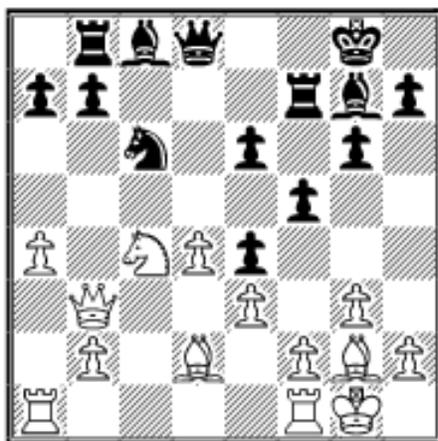
Sergey later found the strongest defensive plan, involving the reinforcement of his weak points at d7 and b4.

20...Rf7! 21 Rc1. If 21 Be1 Bf8 22 Rc7, then either 22...Rc8 with equality, or 22...Qe8!?, with 23..Bb5 to follow.

21...Bf8 22 Rc7 Rb5! Now problems have unexpectedly cropped up for White - the Black rook wants either to take on e5 or to occupy the strong square d5. In this variation, Black's chief strategic idea stands out: the exclusion of the d2 bishop from play.

Playing Timman, Yusupov noted that 15 Rac1 could be met, not only with 15...Bd7, but also with the immediate 15...b5. This is why Artur decided to cut off his opponent's queenside activity at once. On the other hand, 15 a4 is not a new move. It was played in a game Ribli - Andersson (Clermont-Ferrand 1989). After 15...Bd7 16 Qa3 Re8 17 a5 Bf8 18 Qa2 Qe7 19 Rfc1 Rec8 20 Bf1 Qd8 21 Rab1 Be8 22 b4, White retained some pressure.

15... Rf8-f7



Question: What is White's most accurate reaction to his opponent's novelty?

After half an hour's thought, the grandmaster played 16 Rac1!! I suspect that this news will leave you at least surprised, if not upset. Why the two exclamation marks

for the most natural of moves, one which any chessplayer would make, even in a blitz game?

But the move itself is only the tip of the iceberg. Once you see what lies beneath, you will understand why this moment became the critical point of the whole game, and largely decided the outcome.

It is useful to begin the solution of any positional task with this question: "What is my opponent up to - what was the point of his last move?" It turns out that Black was preparing the central break 16...e5! 17 de (17 Nxe5 Bxe5 18 de Qxd2) 17...Be6.

How does White parry the threatened e6-e5? 16 Rfd1 would seem to be the simplest solution - after all, this move is part of White's plan, preparing the programmed

thrust Ne5 (as we saw in the games Yusupov - Dolmatov and Andersson - Nunn). However, at this point, moving the rook from f1 would be a positional error, allowing the Black queen to occupy the wonderful central square d5 free of charge. Black did not play Qd5 earlier, because he feared the break f2-f3! After the exchange of pawns at f3, he would have to lose time retreating the queen. But after 16 Rfd1? Qd5!, the break is no longer playable, and Black stands excellently.

The other easy choice, 16 Bc3, is not bad; but it's a shame to close off the c-file that White's rook wants to operate on. White could play this way - if there weren't a stronger continuation.

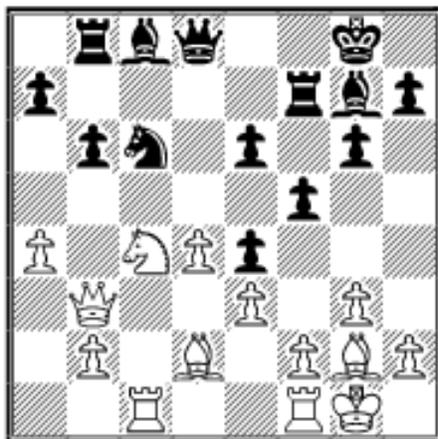
There is a well-known expression: "Tactics serve strategy." Yusupov saw that after the planned developing move he played in the game, the break with e6-e5 would run into a tactical refutation.

16 Ra1-c1!!

Here Timman sank into thought, seeing that on 16...e5 his opponent had prepared 17 Nxe5! Bxe5 (17...Nxe5 18 de Qxd2 19 Rc7) 18 de Qxd2 19 Rxc6, or 18...Nxe5 19 Rc5! Nd3 20 Rd5. So he had to give up his intended plan, and seek out another - always an unpleasant and difficult task. In such situations, errors are quite likely.

We already know that 16...Qd5 is strongly met by 17 f3! On 16...Bd7, the rook looks pretty stupid on f7. Perhaps relatively best was 16...Rc7, with Bd7 to follow. Timman preferred a different way of developing his pieces.

16... b7-b6



And now how does White play? Black wants to develop the bishop on b7, and then establish control over the d5 square. The shortcoming of this plan is the weakening of e6, which Yusupov ably exploits.

17 f2-f3!

When such moves do not involve the win of a tempo, they are usually not too good for White. Artur plays it here anyway, having a concrete tactical operation in mind.

17... e4xf3 18 Bg2xf3 Bc8-b7

Other moves are hardly any better: 18...Ne7 19 Bb4, or 18...Rc7 19 Na3.

19 Bf3xc6!

This unexpected exchange is the whole point.

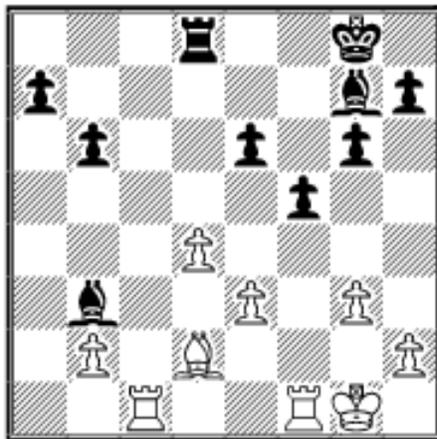
19... Bb7xc6 20 Nc4-e5 Bc6xa4!

The only chance. Completely hopeless was 20...Bxe5 21 Rxc6, when e6 is indefensible. Nor does it help to attempt to confuse matters by 20...Bd5 21 Nxf7 Kxf7, even though it could work out after 22 Qc3?! Rb7 23 Qc8 Qd6 24 Rc3 Re7 25 Rfc1 Bb7 (threatening 26...Qd5) 26 Qc4 h5!?, when Black has decent positional compensation for the exchange. But there is a simple refutation: 22 Qc2! Rb7 (otherwise 23 Qc7+) 23 e4! Bxd4+ 24 Kg2.

21 Ne5xf7 Ba4xb3?

Equivalent to capitulation. Black could have set his opponent far more complex problems after 21...Qd7! (We shall return to this later.)

22 Nf7xd8 Rb8xd8



The concluding phase of the game is an example of the technical realization of a material advantage. Black's only saving chances must come from either a counterattack on the enemy center with e6-e5, or consolidating his position after bringing his king to the center.

However, matters never get that far.

23 Rc1-c3!

Aiming to force matters, White refrains from the natural 23 Rc7. He intends to play 24 Rfc1 and 25 Rc8 instead.

The exchange of one pair of rooks to facilitate the invasion of the remaining rook on the open file is a typical technique for the exploitation of the advantage of the exchange.

23... Bb3-d5 24 Rf1-c1 Bg7-f6 25 Rc1-c8 Bd5-b7 26 Rc8-c7!

On 27 Rxd8+ Bxd8, all the c-file squares would have been covered. So Yusupov drops the idea of the exchange, instead occupying the 7th rank with tempo.

26... Bb7-e4 27 Bd2-b4!

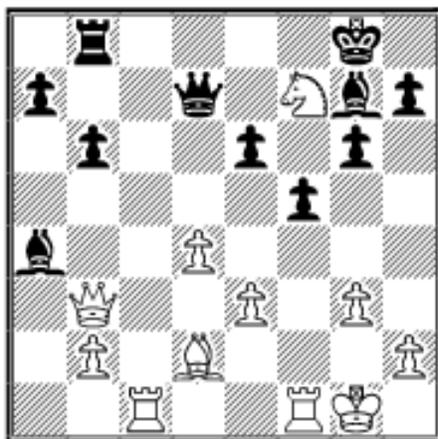
The a7-pawn isn't going anywhere. It's much more important to trade off the bishops, depriving the

opponent of his last hope for counterplay.

27... g6-g5 28 Bb4-e7 Bf6xe7 29 Rc7xe7 f5-f4 30 g3xf4 g5xf4 31 e3xf4 a7-a5 32 Kg1-f2 Be4-f5 33 Re7-b7 b6-b5 34 Rc1-c7 Black resigned.

Let's go back a little, and see what could have happened if Black had played a stronger 21st move:

21... Qd8-d7!



How would you go about exploiting your advantage here?

If you had little time left on your clock, or if you were just too lazy to calculate complex variation, then without any particular thought you might simplify

the position with 22 Qc4 Kxf7 23 Qc7 Rb7 24 Qxd7+ Rxd7 (24...Bxd7 25 Bb4 would be weaker). But this version of the endgame is rather better for Black than what he obtained in the game. After, let's say, 25 Bb4 a5 or 25 Rc8 e5, he retains decent saving chances.

More principled would be **22 Qa2!?** Kxf7. Now White gets nothing out of the primitive 23 Ra1 Bb5 24 Qxa7? Rb7 or 23 Rc3 Bb5 24 Rfc1 Rb7. Sharper play is needed. I see two methods of starting an attack against the Black king: 23 g4 and 23 d5 ed 24 e4. Of course, neither line can be played without lengthy, accurate calculation.

First let's examine 23 g4!?. White's idea becomes clear in the variation 23...Bb5? 24 gf! Bxf1 25 fe+ Qxe6 26 Rxf1+ Bf6 27 Qxa7+, and wins.

On 23...Kg8!? 24 gf gf 25 Rxf5, White gains the upper hand, for example: 25...Bc6 26 Rxc6!? (26 Rg5) 26...Qxc6 27 Qxa7 Ra8 28 Qf7+ Kh8 29 Rg5, or 25...Kh8 26 Rg5 Rg8 (26...Bxd4 27 Qc4, intending 28 Bc3) 27 Qc4.

Black could try a gambit sort of defense: 23...Bc6 24 gf Bd5. After 25 fe+ Kxe6 26 Qb1 Ke7!, the position is double-edged. But 25 fg+ Kg8 26 gh+ Kxh7 27 Qb1+ and 28 Qg6 is stronger.

In my view, however, Black's most promising line is a different way of sacrificing a pawn : 23...Ke8!? 24 Ra1 Bc6 (24...Bb5 25 Qxa7 Rb7 26 Qa8+ Kf7 27 Rfc1 Bxd4 28 Rc8, and White is the one doing the attacking) 25 Qxa7 Rb7 26 Qa8+ Kf7 27 Rfc1 (threatening 28 Rxc6 Qxc6 29 Ra7) 27...Rc7, with unclear play.

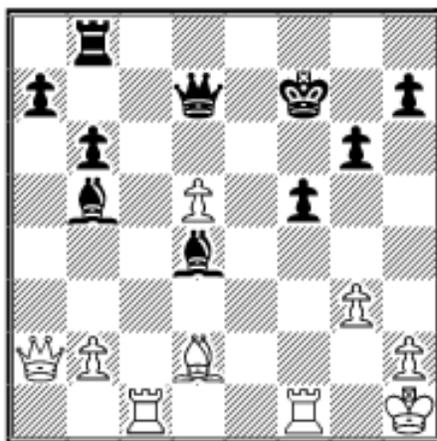
So the consequences of 23 g4 are unclear. The other possibility is a spectacular central break.

23 d5!? **ed** **24 e4!** The cautious 24...Bc6?! leads to a difficult position for Black after 25 ef gf 26 Bc3. He must find something more aggressive.

24...Bb5 Now White gets nothing from 25 Bf4 Rb7 26 Rfd1 fe 27 Rxd5 Qe6; however, the exchange sacrifice, **25 ed!?**, deserves attention. The variations which follow were analyzed by me in conjunction with Grandmasters Joel Lautier, Matthew Sadler and Viswanathan Anand.

25...Bd4+ The immediate 25...Bxf1 makes White's job easier: 26 d6+ Kf8 27 Rc7.

26 Kh1



26...Bxf1 27 d6+ Kf6 28 Qd5! The tempting 28 Rc7? (counting on 28...Bd3? 29 h4! or 28...Qe6? 29 Bg5+ Ke5 30 Re7) is a mistake, because of 28...Qe8!

28...Be5 29 Rc7 Bd3! 30 Bg5+! Kxg5 31 Qxe5 Be4+

On 31...Qe8 there follows 32 Qf4+ Kf6 33 Qd4+ Qe5 (33...Ke6 34 Qxd3, but not 34 Re7+? Qxe7 35 de Be4+ 36 Kg1 Re8) 34 Qh4+ (34 Rf7+ Kxf7 35 Qxe5 is strong too) 34...Ke6 35 Re7+.

32 Kg1 Qa4 33 Qe7+! Kg4 34 Qh4+ Kf3 35 Qf4+ Ke2 36 Qf2+ Kd1 37 Rc3! (threatening 38 Qf1+ Kd2 39 Qc1+ Ke2 40 Re3#) **37...Bc2**, and now the simplest way to win is **38 Ra3! Qe4 39 Re3.**

A pretty story, yes? But alas - it's only a story! When I told it to Vadim Zvjagintsev, he didn't believe it. In the position in the last diagram, he suggested that, instead of taking the rook, Black should play the cold-blooded **26...Rd8!** Now 27 d6+ can be met by either 27...Qe6 (when 28 Rc7+?! meets 28...Rd7), or by Ken Neat's suggestion of 27...Kg7 28 Qd5 (28 Rc7? Bc6+) 28...Bc5. I tried to find a path to advantage for White here, but nothing came of it.

Later, still another defense was discovered. I assessed the sharp variation 28...Qb7! (instead of 28...Be5) 29 Rc6 Bb5!! (29...Qxc6 30 Qxc6 Bd3 31 d7+ Kg7 32 d8Q! Rxd8 33 Qc7+ does not work) 30 Qxb5 Bc5! 31 b4 (31 d7+ Kg7 32 Bg5 a6! 33 Qa4 b5! 34 Qxa6 Qxd7 35 Rxc5 Qd1+, and perpetual check) 31...a6 32 d7+ Kg7 33 Qa4 Bd4 34 Bg5 in White's favor, because I failed to see the elegant drawing line 34...Kh8!! 35 d8Q Rxd8 36 Bxd8 Qd7.

So where has White's apparently obvious advantage disappeared to? Is it possible that our treatment of the events of this game was wrong?

No; in fact, the error was committed by me only at the moment of choosing the plan to exploit the advantage. I was too quickly distracted by the analysis of spectacular variations. *Before plunging into the debris, one must first of all establish whether White has other promising possibilities. The "candidate-moves" principle is a most important technique, allowing you to organize your search and make your decision rationally, both during a tournament game and in analysis!*

GM Christopher Lutz suggested a comparatively simple and quite convincing means of retaining White's advantage.

22 Qb3-b4! Kg8xf7

22...a5? 23 Qd6 or 22..Bf8? 23 Ne5 Bxb4 24 Nxd7 are both bad.

23 d4-d5! e6xd5 24 Bd2-c3

Black may have two pawns for the exchange, but his position is hard. The dark squares are weak, the bishop at a4 has no future, and White's queen may quickly switch to the king's wing to whip up an attack (Qh4 or Qf4).

Many solutions seem simple after they have been discovered. But to make the correct choice at the board, with a speeding clock ticking at your elbow - that's very, very difficult. Had Timman played 21...Qd7!, who knows how the game would have ended?

What caused the Dutch Grandmaster's fatal error ? I think the explanation lies in the fact that, right from the

opening, Yusupov had a tight grip on the psychological initiative. Black allowed himself two slips (15...Rf7?! and 16...b6?!), which might actually have been good for him, if not for Artur's accurate responses. First, by means of his "elementary" 16th move, he prevented the e6-e5 break, and forced his opponent to seek a new plan. Then, by means of an unexpected exchange, he achieved a material advantage. Imagine Timman's psychological state! In such a situation, it's easy to lose faith in a favorable outcome. And when optimism wanes, your will to win is weakened, and the probability of errors grows apace.

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Translated by Jim Marfia

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