



The Advance of the Rook Pawns

There are many cases in which the advance of a rook pawn is unquestionably the obvious plan to choose. I shall quote only a couple of standard situations.

Fischer – Larsen

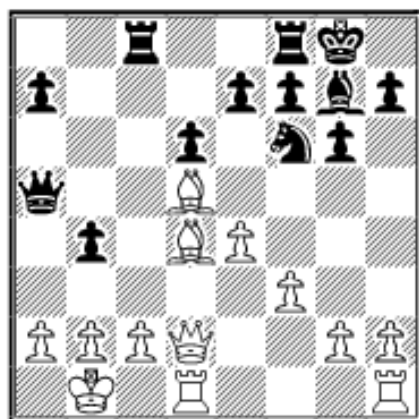
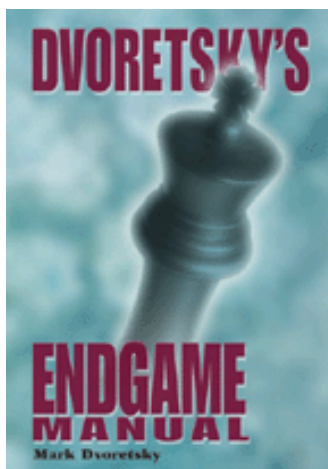
Portoroz izt 1958

(Notes by Robert Fischer *in italics*)

COLUMNISTS

The Instructor

Mark Dvoretsky



16. Bd5-b3!

He won't get a second chance to snap off the bishop! Now I felt the game was in the bag if I didn't botch it. I'd won dozens of skittles games in analogous positions and had it down to a science: pry open the KR-file, sac, sac...mate!

16...Rc8-c7

Black has to lose a tempo: 16...Qb5? 17.

Bxa7.

17. h2-h4 Qa5-b5

17...h5 18. g4! hg 19. h5! gh 20. fg Nxe4 21. Qe3 continues the attack.

18. h4-h5! Rf8-c8

18...gh 19. g4! hg 20. fg Nxe4 21. Qh2 Ng5 22. Bxg7 Kxg7 23. Rd5 wins.

19. h5xg6 h7xg6 20. g2-g4 a7-a5 21. g4-g5 Nf6-h5

21...a4 22. gf ab 23. fg bc+ 24. Qxc2! e5 25. Qh2 wins.

21...Ne8 22. Bxg7 Nxg7 23. Rh6! wins.

22. Rh1xh5!

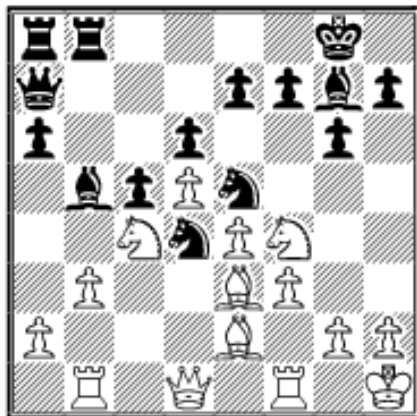
Fine wrote: "In such positions, combinations are as natural as a baby's smile."

22...g6xh5 23. g5-g6

And Black was soon mated.

Sliwa – Petrosian

Goteborg izt 1955



Black should not permit simplification by 23. Bxd4 cd 24. Nxe5.

Exchanging on c4 – 22...Bxc4? costs Black the greater part of his advantage: 23. Bxc4 Nxc4 24. bc Rxb1 25. Qxb1 Rb8 26. Qc1 and 27. Nd3, with only a slight edge to Black.

22...Nd4xe2! 23. Qd1xe2 a6-a5!

The a5-a4 plan, weakening the enemy's pawn structure, is standard in this setup. Besides,

Black's last move also created a still more dangerous threat: 24...Qa6, when White will have a hard time holding c4.

24. Rf1-c1 Qa7-a6 25. Qe2-c2 Bb5xc4 26. b3xc4 Rb8xb1 (26...Rb4!?) 27. Rf1xb1 Ne5xc4 28. Be3-c1 a5-a4

This typical push of the pawn to a3 restricts the opponent, fixes the weakness at a2, and prepares for the invasion of one of Black's pieces at b2.

29. h2-h3 a4-a3 30. Nf4-d3 h7-h5!

A timely pawn move, this one on the opposite flank. The hasty 30...Nb2?! 31. Nxb2 would have forced Black to sacrifice queen for rook, bishop and pawn in one of two ways: 31...ab 32. Bxb2 Qxa2 33. Ra1 Qxa1+, or 31...Qf1+ 32. Kh2 Be5+ 33. f4 ab 34. Be3! Bxf4+ 35. g3 Qxb1 36. Qxb1 Bxe3 37. Qxb2 Bd4 – neither of which is sufficiently convincing.

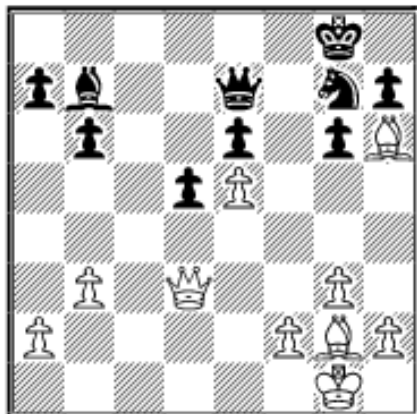
31. Rb1-b3 Nc4-b2 32. Nd3xb2 Qa6-f1+ 33. Kh1-h2 a3xb2 34. Bc1xb2 Ra8xa2 35. Rb3-b8+ Kg8-h7 36. e4-e5 Ra2xb2 White resigned. Of course not 36...Bxe5?? 37. Bxe5 and wins.

One may find excellent examples of less obvious solutions involving rook-pawn advances in the games of Bent Larsen. The analysis of the next few examples is based on his comments (*in italics*).

Polugaevsky has written that I like to push my rook pawns, Gligoric has stated that there are more flank attacks in my games than in those of other contemporary masters. There is probably some truth in this. One charming characteristic of many flank attacks I could mention is that they do not very often lead to simplification: if the attack is parried, there usually are still opportunities

left for initiating action in another sector.

Larsen – Stahlberg
Copenhagen 1958



28. h2-h4!

Almost certainly the best move. The king gets a flight square, and against 28...Nf5 the answer Bg5 is made possible. Later this pawn may be used as a battering ram. It was tempting to play 28. g4 to take the black knight's only good square, but the reply 28...Qh4 is strong.

28...Qe7-c7?

This was a move I had looked at before playing 28. h4, and I had a strong reply ready. Black ought to have tried 28...Nf5, when his position would not have been absolutely hopeless, although the weak black squares around his king might cause him a lot of trouble.

29. Qd3-b5! d5-d4

After more than a quarter of an hour a desperate move; now each of us had seven minutes for eleven moves.

Two nice variations with a small but important difference: 29...Qc6 30. Qb4 Qc5 31. Qa4, or 29...a6 30. Qb4 Qc5 31. Qxc5! bc 32. Be3!, winning a pawn, because the black a6-pawn falls after 32...d4 33. Bxb7. If the white queen cannot be driven away from the diagonals a4-e8 and a3-f8 Black will be completely paralyzed and White can quietly prepare decisive operations.

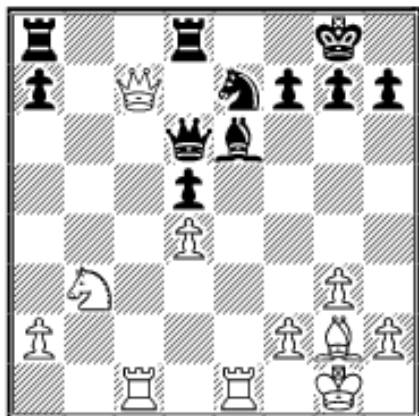
30. Bg2xb7 Qc7xb7 31. Qb5-b4 Qb7-e4

Here Stahlberg consumed a good deal of the time left on his clock, for now he discovered what he had overlooked two moves earlier: 31...Qd7 is answered by 32. Qd6!

The queen ending after 31...Qc8 32. Bxg7 is a difficult one for White to win; but 32. g4! is a killer, for instance: 32...Qc5 33. Qxc5 bc 34. Bc1!, winning the black c5-pawn.

32. Qd6 Qe1+ 33. Kg2 Qe4+ 34. Kh2 Qf5 35. Qd8+ Qf8 36. Qxf8+ Kxf8 37. Kg2 Kf7 38. Bxg7 Kxg7 39. Kf3 g5 40. hg Kg6 41. Ke4 Kxg5, and Black resigned.

Larsen – Donner
Zurich 1959

**25. h2-h4!**

A useful move. See, for instance, the variation 25...Qxc7 26. Rxc7 Nf5 27. Bh3 Nxd4 28. Nxd4 Bxh3 29. Ree7. Here it is important that the White king has the h2-square, otherwise 29...Re8 will probably draw. As it is, White gets very good winning chances after 29...Rf8 30. Rxa7 or 30. Kh2 Bc8 31. Rxa7.

25...Kg8-f8 26. Qc7-c3

Suddenly White does not want to exchange queens. Instead, he wants to play Nc5, with the threat of Nb7, and he thinks that the black king is exposed on f8.

26...Be6-f5 27. Nb3-c5 Rd8-b8

On 27...Rdc8, White's reply would have been the same, only stronger. 27...Rab8 deserved attention, and if 28. Qa3, then 28...Nc6. White would have continued 28. Qf3, or 28. Re5 f6 29. Re3. In either case, Black's position remains difficult.

28. Qc3-f3!

Here, Larsen examines the following variations:

28...Bd7 29. Qh5 h6 30. Qe5! Rb6 31. Nxd7+ Qxd7 32. Rc7 wins;
 28...Bc8 29. Qh5 h6 (29...Kg8 30. Qe5) 30. Rxe7 Qxe7 31. Bxd5 wins;
 28...Bg6 29. h5 wins; or 29. Ne6+ Kg8 30. Nc7 wins (there is also 29. Re6! Qd8 30. Rxc6, winning);

The best defense, or at least the defense that conserves the equilibrium for some time, is 28...g6!?!; but after 29. g4 Bc8 30. Re5, the doubling of rooks on the e-file is a powerful threat, for instance: 30...a5 31. Rce1 Ra7 32. Qe3 (32. Qf4!? Kg7 33. Qe3 wins) 32...Bxg4 33. Qh6+ Kg8 34. Bxd5, with a winning attack.

Less clear is 29. Qe3? because of 29...Nc6! – but not 29...Re8 30. Qh6+ Kg8 31. Re5, as given in the tournament book: then White wins rather easily, for instance, 31...f6 32. Re3 Nc6 33. Qf4.

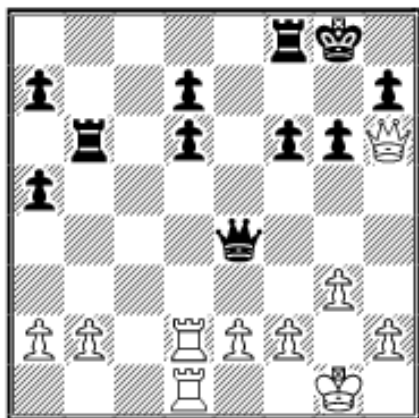
But in fact, this variation needs to be extended: 33...Qxf4 34. Bxd5+ Kf8 35. gf Nxd4 36. Bxa8 Rxe3 37. fe Ne2+ 38. Kf2 Nxc1 39. e4 Bg4. White has the advantage – more active pieces, and the knight on c1 is in trouble – but it's not clear if it's enough to win: material is still even.

However, Donner succumbs to the pressure at once.

28...Rb8-b4? 29. Re1xe7 Qd6xe7 30. Qf3xf5 Kf8-g8 31. Nc5-b3 Black resigned.

Larsen – Gheorghiu

Monaco 1968

**23. h2-h4!**

The threats on the d-file are combined with some stirring on the kingside. Moreover, in case there should be more simplification it is important for the king to have the h2-square available so that the black queen cannot give perpetual checks on b1 and e4.

My opponent was already in time-trouble.

23...Qe4-e5

23...Rfb8 would not have eased Black's position after 24. b3 (24. h5 Rxb2 25. hg Qxg6 26. Qf4 Rxd2 is weaker: if now 27. Rxd2, then 27...Rb1+ 28. Kg2 Qh5) 24...a4 25. Rxd6 Rxd6 26. Rxd6 Qb1+ 27. Kh2 Qf5 28. Qe3± (Dvoretsky).

24. b2-b3 Rf8-c8

Afterwards Gheorghiu was not satisfied with this move. As he had to move rather quickly, he probably overlooked the white attack which follows. As an improvement he gave 24...Rc6. Then White does not get the opportunity to start a direct attack but must play for the ending.

On 25. e3 Rfc8 26. Qf4 (26. Rd5 Rc1 27. Rxe5 Rxd1+ 28. Kg2 fe 29. h5 probably only draws) 26...Qxf4 27. gf Kf7 28. Rxd6 Rxd6 29. Rxd6 Ke7 30. Ra6 White wins easily, but Black can make it more difficult with 25...a4 26. ba (26. Rd5 Rc1!) 26...Rfc8 27. Qf4 Qxf4 28. gf Kf7 29. Rxd6 Rxd6 30. Rxd6 Ke7 31. Ra6. If Black now passively plays 31...Rc7, 32. Ra5 follows, and sooner or later White plays h4-h5. If Black takes on h5, he is left with a sad collection of weak pawns, and, of course, White can use the threat h5-h6 and rook maneuver Rh8. If Black plays h7-h5 himself, White smashes his pawns with f4-f5.

I consider this a won ending but it requires exact play.

Instead of 31...Rc7, Black may play 31...Rc2; but the position after 32. Rxa7 Rxa2 33. a5 is won for White. The a-pawn goes to the seventh, and if the black king stays on the kingside to protect the pawns, the white monarch goes to the queenside...

25. Rd2-d5!

If White takes time to play 25. e3 Black answers 25...Rc5!, after which it is not easy for White to break through anywhere. Among other things Black is ready to play ...Qe6 followed by ...Rh5, answering Qf4 by ...Re5. Later his king may go to e7.

The position is now critical in this sense, that Black gets good drawing chances if

White cannot strike at once. But he can!

25...Qe5 26. h4-h5 Rc8-c2 27. Rd1-f1 Qe2-e4?

In time pressure and in a lost position mistakes come easily, of course, but even the stronger 27...Qe8 would be rather hopeless. After, for instance, 28. Rxa5 a6 29. hg Qxg6 30. Qh3 Rc7 31. Re1, or 29...hg 30. Ra4 (threatening Rh4, Rg4 or Kg2!), nothing can save the Black position.

In the 29...Qxg6 30. Qh3 line, the defense may be strengthened by 30...Rbc6! 31. Qxd7 Qf7 (preparing to exchange rooks by Rc1) – here, Black has saving chances.

28. Rd5xa5 a7-a6 29. Ra5-a4 Qe4-e8

29...Qf5 was more stubborn (keeping the rook from g4); but after 30. Qe3! Rb8 (forced) 31. hg (31. h6!?) 31...hg 32. Rxa6, Black's in bad shape.

30. Ra4-g4 Qe8-f8 31. Qh6-e3

Decisive. However, 31. Rxc6+! hg 32. Qxc6+ Kh8 33. Qxc2 might have decided more simply.

31...Rbc6 32. hg hg 33. Rxc6+ Kf7 34. Rg4 R2c5 35. Qd3 Re5 36. f4 Re8 37. Qd5+

37. Qh7+ Ke6 38. Re1+ (38. f5+! Kd5 39. Qxd7+) 38...Kd5 39. Qh5+ also wins, of course, but there is no quick mate, so I preferred to win the queen.

37...Ke7 38. Re1+ Black resigned, in view of 38...Kd8 39. Rxe8+ Qxe8 40. Rg8.

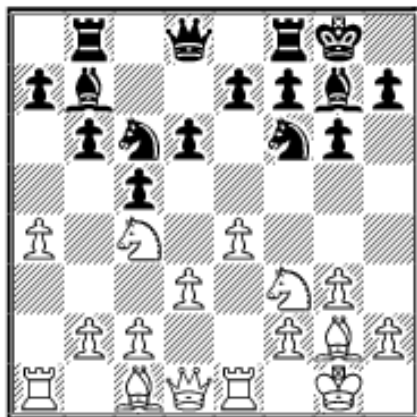
Larsen – Gligoric

Vinkovci 1970

1. g3 g6 2. Bg2 Bg7 3. e4 c5 4. Nf3 Nc6 5. 0-0 Nf6 6. d3 0-0 7. Re1 d6 8. Nbd2 Rb8 9. a4

Two other plans are also worth looking at here – preparing b2-b4 and preparing d3-d4. The knight's position on c4 has only esthetic value.

9...b6 10. Nc4 Bb7=



“I am going to write an article about this tournament, which will have only one diagram,” said Petrosian. Now comes the most unbelievable move of the tournament – even though it’s not a bad move!

11. h2-h4!?

A difficult decision, but quite a successful one. The point is seen in the variation 11...d5 12. ed Nxd5 13. h5. The natural move, generally speaking, would have been 11. e5,

with a great danger of exchanges and a draw.

11. Bf4!?, with Qd2 to follow, was also worth consideration.

11...Qd8-c7 12. Bc1-d2 Rb8-d8 (12...h6!?) 13. Qd1-c1 d6-d5

And here it would have made sense to neutralize White’s planned exchange of dark-squared bishops either by 13...Nd4 13. Nxd4 cd or by 13...Nb4!?

14. Bd2-f4! Qc7-c8 15. e4xd5 Nf6xd5 16. Bf4-h6 Rf8-e8

After the game, 16...f6!? was suggested, when I would have replied 17. h5!?

17.Bh6xg7 Kgxg7 18. h4-h5 Nd5-f6 19. h5-h6+ Kg7-g8 20. Qc1-f4 Nf6-h5

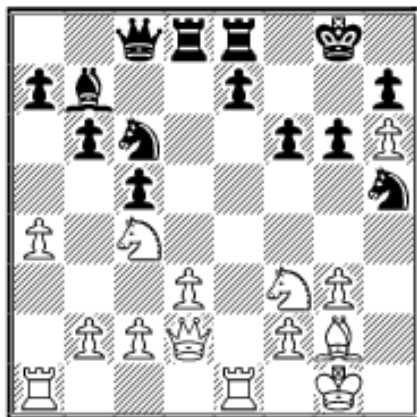
20...Nd4? is met, not by 21. Rxe7? Rxe7 22. Qxf6 Nf5 (Larsen), but by 21. Nxd4 Bxg2 22. Ne6! fe 23. Kxg2, and wins.

20...Qg4? leads to the loss of a pawn, at least, after 21. Rxe7!

20...Qf5? is bad for Black, because of 21. Qxf5 gf 22. Ng5!

Here, Larsen’s conclusion is not obvious, so we must extend the variation: 22...Ng4! 23. a5! b5. Now White gets nothing out of 24. Ne3 Nxe3 (but not 24...Nxb6? 25. Nd5) 25. fe Rd6 =. The proper line is 24. Bxc6 Bxc6 25. Ne5 Nxe5 (25...Bd5 26. c4) 26. Rxe5 Rd6 27. Rxf5 Rxh6 28. f3 Rg6 29. Rxc5±. And besides 22. Ng5, White could also gain the advantage by 22. a5! b5 23. Nce5.

21. Qf4-d2 f7-f6?

**22. a4-a5!**

At the exact moment that Black's knight occupies an unfortunate position on h5, and the setup with e7-e5 and Nc6-d4 is not yet dangerous to White, this delicate little move is especially effective.

22...b6-b5

After 22...Qc7 23. ab ab, as Larsen points out, White's simplest is 24. Qc3!+. In his opinion,

24. Re6 Bc8 would be less convincing, although the continuation 25. Rxc6! Qxc6 26. Nd4 Qc7 27. Nc6 Bb7 28. Ra7 Ra8 29. Nxe7+ Qxe7 30. Rxb7 (with compensation: Dvoretzky) would grant White a most promising position.

23. a5-a6! Bb7-a8?

Gligoric spent over 20 minutes on his 21st move, and then began to play quickly. I think Black's best chance would have been 23...Bxa6. After 24. Na5 Nb4 25. Nb3!, White recovers the pawn advantageously, but Black could play 24...Nb8. After 25. Qc3 e5 26. Nd2, however, Black's pieces would be badly placed, and White would have tremendous play for the pawn.

24. Nc4-a5 e7-e5 25. Qd2-c3! Nc6-d4 26. Na5-b7! Ba8xb7 27. a6xb7 Qc8xb7 28. Nf3xd4 c5xd4 29. Bg2xb7 d4xc3 30. b2xc3 Re8-e7 31. Ra1xa7 Kg8-f8 32. Re1-b1

And White comes out two pawns ahead.

32...f5 33. Rxb5 Nf6 34. Ra8 Rxa8 35. Bxa8 Ng4 36. Rb8+ Kf7

36...Re8 37. Rxe8+ Kxe8 38. Bd5 Nxb6 39. f3 g5 40. Kf2 g4 41. f4 wins.

37. Bd5+ Kf6 38. c4 e4!? 39. Rf8+! Ke5

39...Kg5 40. de fe 41. c5 e3 42. fe Rxe3 43. c4 wins.

40. de fe 41. Bxe4 Nxb6 42. Bd3 Nf7 43. Rg8 Nd6 44. Ra8 Nb7

44...Rc7 45. Ra5+ Kf6 46. Ra6 Ke7 47. Ra4 Kf6 48. f3 Rc6 49. Kf2 h6 50. c5! Rxc5 (50...Nf7 51. Be4 Rxc5 52. Ra6+) 51. Ra6 Rd5?! 52. Be4 Rd4 53. c3 wins.

45. Ra7 Kd6 46. f3 Nc5 47. Rxe7 Kxe7 48. Kf2 Kf6 49. Ke3 h5 50. Kd4 Ne6+ 51. Kd5 g5 52. Kd6 h4 53. gh gh 54. Bf1 Ng5 55. c5 Nf7+ 56. Kd5 Ke7 57. f4 Nh6 58. Bh3 Ng8 59. c6 Nf6+ 60. Ke5 Ne8 61. f5 Black resigned.

Kasparov – Portisch

Brussels 1986

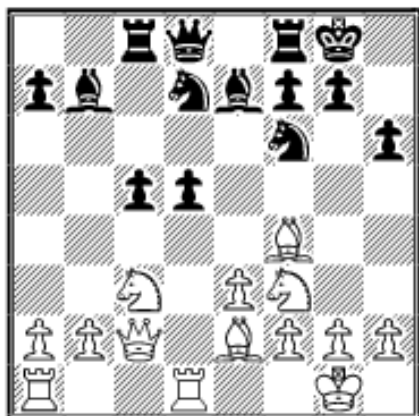
1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 d5 4. Nc3 Be7 5. Bg5 0-0 6. e3 Nbd7 7. Qc2 h6 8. cd!?

The usual continuations have been 8. h4 and 8. Bh4. Now Black could have accepted the sacrificed piece; but in Lajos Portisch's opinion, that would have been too dangerous. He gives the following analysis: 8...hg 9. de fe 10. Nxc5 Nb6 11. h4! (with compensation: not 11. 0-0-0?! Nbd5, with an unclear game) 11...c5 12. h5 cd 13. h6! dc 14. Rd1 Qe8 (forced) 15. hg Kxg7 16. Rh7+ Kg8 17. Rd4! with an attack (18. Rdh4 is threatened). Of course, his line is certainly not forced; and the assessment of the concluding position is not quite clear.

8...ed 9. Bf4!

9. Bh4 is weaker: after 9...c6, Black will continue with Re8 and Ne4; whereas now 9..c6 would be unpleasantly met by 10. 0-0-0, followed by h2-h3 and g2-g4.

9...c5 10. Be2 b6 11. 0-0 Bb7 12. Rfd1 Rc8 13. dc bc (13...Nxc5 14. Qf5+)



14. a2-a4!!

A non-traditional way of treating the hanging-pawns position. White plans to push this pawn to a5, depriving the enemy knight and queen of the important b6 square. On 14...a5!?, he obtains the b5 square for all eternity.

14...Qd8-a5?

On the surface, a completely logical attempt to block White's stratagem; but it holds one little hidden flaw: for just a moment, the bishop on e7 is left unprotected. Garri Kasparov immediately exploits this circumstance, opening active operations on the opposite side of the board.

15. Nf3-h4!

A move earlier, this move was not playable, because of the reply g7-g5. But now, Black can't play 15...g5? because of 16. Nf5. So the knight moves unstoppably into the threatening f5-square.

15...Rf8-d8 16. Nh4-f5 Be7-f8 17. Nc3-b5

Another weakness, the d6-square – and this one in the very center of the board. How does Black defend against the threatened knight incursion? On 17...Ba8, the reply 18. Qc3!, underscoring the vulnerability of the a7-pawn, is very unpleasant.

17...Nf6-e8 18. Bf4-d6! Ne8xd6

This leads to the loss of a pawn, but a satisfactory defense is no longer to be

found:

18...Nef6 19. Ne7+ Bxe7 20. Bxe7 Re8 21. Bxf6 Nxf6 22. Nd6, when White wins the exchange;

18...Ndf6 19. Ne7+ Bxe7 20. Bxe7 Rd7 21. Bxc5 a6 22. b4! Qxb4 23. Bxb4 Rxc2 24. Nd4, with an overwhelming advantage in position.

19. Nf5xd6 Rc8-b8 20. Nd6xb7 Rb8xb7 21. Rd1xd5 Rd8-b8

It looks as though Black has stirred up some counterplay on the b-file, with his threat of 21...a6; however, the exchange of queens which follows dispels all illusions.

22. Qc2-d2! Qa5xd2 23. Rd5xd2

Now after 23...a6 24. Nc3 (or a3), the pawn at a6 is hanging.

23...Nf6 24. Ra2 Ne4 25. Rc2 Rd7 26. g3 a5

On 26...Rbd8 White plays 27. a5, intending to continue 28. a6, without fear of 27...Rd2 28. b3.

27. Kg2 g6 28. Bf3 Nf6 29. Na3 Bd6

Otherwise after 30. Nc4 the a5-pawn would have to be defended by a rook.

30. Bc6 Rdd8 31. Ra1 Be5 32. Bb5 Nd5 33. Rb1 Bd6 34. Rd2

It's tempting to insert 34. Nc4 Bc7 (as otherwise, Black plays 34..Nb6, taking c4 under control). However, White would then always have to be considering Nb6, meeting Nxa5 with Nxa4; additionally, the White knight's position on c4 keeps the White rook from attacking the c5-pawn. Kasparov selects a different plan of attacking the weak pawn.

34...Nb6 35. Rc1!

35. Rbd1?! Be7 was very much inferior – considering the opposite-colored bishops, White should avoid simplification on principle.

35...Be7 36. Re2! Rbc8 37. Nb1 Kg7 38. Nd2 Ra8 39. Nb3 Rdc8 40. Rec2 c4 (40...Ra7 41. Nxc5 Rac7 42. Ne6+) **41. Nd2**

Now a second pawn drops by force. The rest is a matter of uncomplicated technique.

41...Ra7 42. Nxc4 Nxc4 43. Rxc4 Rxc4 44. Rxc4 (threatening a pawn roller by e3-e4, f2-f4 and e4-e5) **44...f5 45. h3! h5 46. g4 hg 47. hg fg 48. Kg3 Bd6+ 49. Kxg4 Rc7 50. Bc6 Rf7** (50...Kf6 51. f4 intending e4-e5 and Kf3-e4-d5) **51. f4**

Kh6 52. Bd5 Rf6 53. Rc1 Kg7 54. b3 Rf8 55. Rd1 Bc5 56. Rd3 Ba3 57. Bc4 Bc1 58. Rd7+ Kh6 59. Re7 Bd2 60. Kf3 Bb4 (60...g5 61. Re6+ Kg7 62. Ke2) 61. Rb7 (threatening 62. Rxb4 ab 63. a5) 61...Bc3 62. Bd3 Rf6 63. Kg4 Bd2 64. f5! Black resigned, in view of 64...Bxe3 65. fg Rf4+ 66. Kg3, followed by 67. Rh7+ and 68. g7.

Lopez Martinez – Khenkin

Andorra 2001

1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 c6 4. Bg5 f6 5. Bd2 Bd6

After 5...dc 6. e4 (or 6. Qc2) White has excellent compensation for the pawn.

6. Qb3 Qe7 7. g3 Nd7

Worth considering was 7...dc!? 8. Qxc4 e5!? 9. de fe 10. Bg2 Nf6 11. 0-0 Be6. For an isolated e-pawn, Black obtains rapid development.

8. Nc3 (threatening 9. e4) 8...f5 9. Bf4 Bxf4 10. gf Ngf6 11. e3 Ne4



12. h2-h4!

A good plan. White will push this pawn to h5 (or even h6), to restrict the enemy kingside.

12...0-0 13. h4-h5 Rf8-f6

Igor Khenkin decided against 13...b6, fearing that after 14. h6 g6 15. Nxe4 fe 16. Ng5 the e6-pawn would be weak.

14. Bf1-e2 Ra8-b8 15. Nf3-e5 Nd7xe5 16. f4xe5 Rf6-f7 17. f2-f4! Ne4-g3

On 17...b6, 18. Nxe4 fe 19. Rc1± is strong.

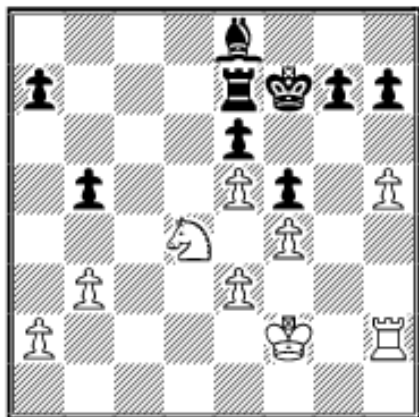
18. Rh1-h2 Ng3xe2 19. Nc3xe2 d5xc4?!

19...b6 20. Qa4! was better, keeping White's advantage to a minimum.

20. Qb3xc4 Bc8-d7 21. Qc4-c5! Qe7xc5 22. d4xc5

In the endgame, White has the advantage, because in a closed position, the knight is stronger than the bishop.

22...b7-b6 23. Ra1-c1 b6xc5 24. b2-b3 Bd7-e8 25. Rc1xc5 Rb8-b5 26. Rc5xb5 c6xb5 27. Ne2-d4 Rf7-e7 28. Ke1-f2 Kg8-f7

**29. Rh2-g2?**

A serious technical error; White wanted to prevent 29...Rc7 (by the threat of 30. Rxc7+!); but he had a number of more pressing problems. He had to place the h-pawn on a dark square – and the b3-pawn as well, at the first opportunity. He would have had a decisive superiority after 29. h6! g6 30. Kg3 Rc7 31. Nf3! Kg8 32. Ng5 Bd7 (32...b4 33. Nxe6 Rc3 34. Rd2! Rxe3+ 35. Kf2 Rc3 36. Rd8 Kf7 37. Ng5+ Ke7 38. Rb8 wins) 33.

b4!, followed by 34. Rd2, winning.

29...h7-h6!

Now, one of White's pieces will always have to defend the h5-pawn.

30. Rg2-g6 b5-b4!

Black has now managed to improve the queenside pawn structure as well.

31. Kf2-g3

This completely kicks away his advantage. He had to try to create a central passed pawn by 31. e4! fe 32. Ke3, followed by 33. Kxe4 and 34. f5.

31...Be8-d7 32. Kg3-h4 Re7-e8 33. Rg6-g2 Re8-c8 34. Rg2-d2 Kf7-e7

Black's position has improved to such a degree that White no longer has anything to work with.

35. Rg2 Kf7 36. Rd2 Ke7 37. Rg2 Kf7 38. Rd2 Be8 39. Ne2 Ke7 40. Rd6 Rc6 41. Rd2 a5 42. Rb2 Rc7 43. Rd2 Bd7 44. Kg3 Rc5 45. Kh4 Be8 46. Rd6 Bc6
Drawn.

Anand – Sadler

Tilburg 1998

(Based on the notes of Matthew Sadler, *in italics*)

1. e2-e4 c7-c5 2. Ng1-f3 d7-d6 3. d2-d4 c5xd4 4. Nf3xd4 Ng8-f6 5. Nb1-c3 a7-a6 6. Bc1-e3 e7-e5 7. Nd4-b3 Bc8-e6 8. f2-f3 Bf8-e7 9. Qd1-d2



9...h7-h5!

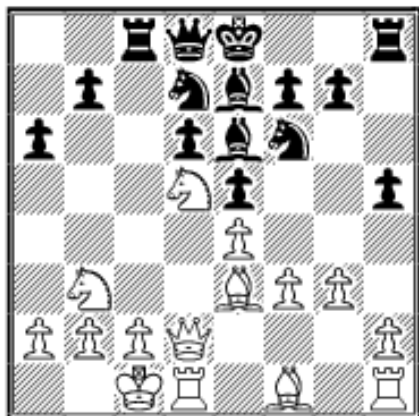
A fantastic move! I believe that Sakaev was the first to try this idea, though I should also mention that a young English IM named Richard Bates is claiming authorship of this move. After a lifetime of trying to make ...h6 work after g4, I can't tell you what a relief it is just to stop the g-pawn from moving there!

At the moment when Sadler was writing his commentary, the move 9...h5!? was just beginning to come into fashion. Since that time a lot of games have now been played with the move. Not being an openings expert (still less in the Sicilian), I am unfamiliar with the details of the verdict contemporary theory offers on this variation. Judging from the information I get from one of my students – a strong grandmaster – it's still playable.

10. 0-0-0 Nb8-d7 11. g2-g3

This flexible move is a novelty in this position. As well as supporting a future f3-f4, it also opens a path to the h3 square for the light-squared bishop.

11...Ra8-c8 (11...b5!?) 12. Nc3-d5



12...Be6xd5!?

Against Leko in Round 3 in a similar position, I had continued with the other plan 12...Nxd5 13. ed Bf5. However, the point of Anand's move order is that after 14. Bd3 Bxd3 15. Qxd3 Bg5 can be met simply by 16. f4! Therefore, I opted for Svidler's plan.

13. e4xd5 Nd7-b6 14. Be3xb6 Qd8xb6 15. Bf1-h3 Rc8-c7!

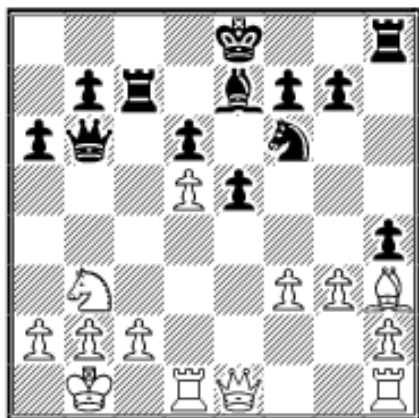
In his game against Shirov at Linares 1998, Svidler had opted for a plan with ...Ra8 and ...a5. Though Shirov had decorated this idea with an exclamation mark in his annotations, I didn't really feel that it made the most of Black's position. I liked the rook on c7: while defending the bishop on e7, it is ready to activate itself via c4 when required.

16. Kc1-b1 h5-h4!

This point of contact is surprisingly annoying for White who cannot move his rook from h1.

17. Qd2-e1

17. f4? Ne4 18. Qe1 Nf2 19. Qg1 e4! and 20...e3 wins.



Here I started to spend oceans of time; but this time, I really got into the position. White's only clear goal is to play f4 and clear the black pawn from e5. This will allow him to activate his knight on b3 via d4 when Black's kingside light squares will become rather sensitive. Whilst considering the ways to prevent f4 altogether, it suddenly struck me how weak White's pawns would become after f4 e4; g4, and how badly developed White was to defend his weak pawns on d5 and f4: his bishop should be on g2, not h3; and his queen has no role on e1. I therefore came up with a quite precise method of exploiting White's positional play. It took me so long to play because I knew that if it all went wrong, I would look like a complete idiot!

has no role on e1. I therefore came up with a quite precise method of exploiting White's positional play. It took me so long to play because I knew that if it all went wrong, I would look like a complete idiot!

17...Ke8-f8! 18. f3-f4 e5xf4 19. g3xf4 Rh8-h5! 20. Bh3-g2 Rc7-c4! 21. Rh1-f1 Rh5-f5 22. Qe1xh4 Nf6-h5 23. Qh4-h3 g7-g6

The f4 pawn is lost, and Black has a gorgeous position that is almost completely invulnerable.

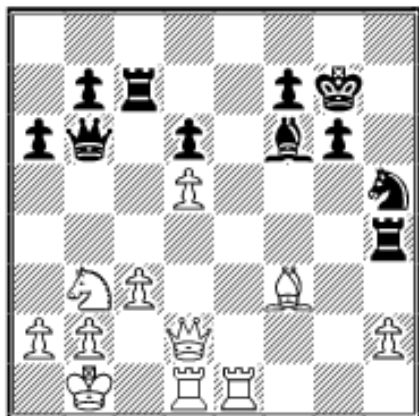
24. Rf1-e1 Be7-f6

Here White must be thinking about a6-a5-a4.

25. Bg2-e4 Rf5xf4 26. Qh3-d3 Rc4-c7 27. Be4-f3

27. Bxg6 fg 28. Qxg6 Ng7 wins.

27...Rf4-h4 28. Qd3-d2 Kf8-g7 29. c2-c3



29...Bf6-e5??

I didn't have much time left, but this is so careless. I wasn't thinking of any danger whatsoever. 29...Rcc4! would have left Black in complete control.

30. Re1xe5!

Vishy played this almost before the bishop had left my hand!

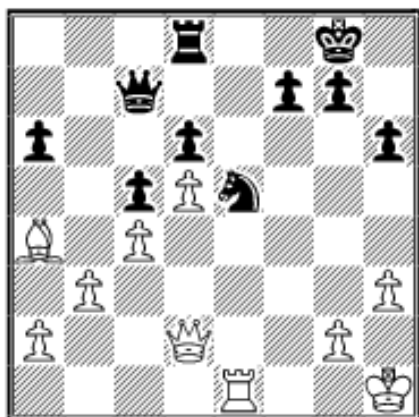
30...d6xe5 31. d5-d6 Rc7-d7 32. Qd2-e1! (32. Qg5 Qf2!) 32...e5-e4 33. Qe1xh4 e4xf3 34. Qh4-d4+ Qb6xd4 35. Nb3xd4 f3-f2

35...Rxd6 36. Nf5+! gf 37. Rxd6 f2 38. Rd1.

36. Rd1-f1 = Drawn.

Shirov – Anand

Wijk aan Zee 1999



Black stands better. However, Viswanathan Anand overlooks a simple exchange sacrifice, completely analogous to the one he had himself played a few months earlier against Sadler.

32...Rd8-f8? 33. Re1xe5! d6xe5 34. d5-d6 Qc7-d8 35. Qd2-d5 Qd8-g5 36. Qd5xc5 Qg5-c1+ 37. Kh1-h2 Qc1-f4+ Drawn.

Sadler played another game on the same theme, right at the end of his professional career – following this game, he moved to Holland to work for a computer company.

Morozevich – Sadler

Reykjavik tt 1999

(Based on notes by Sadler *in italic*)

I felt strangely confident. “Come on Matthew,” I told myself. “You’re not as solid as you used to be, but you must have one more good game inside you.” And, amazingly enough...

1. e2-e4 c7-c5 2. Ng1-f3 d7-d6 3. d2-d4 c5xd4 4. Nf3xd4 Ng8-f6 5. Nb1-c3 a7-a6 6. Bc1-e3 e7-e5 7. Nd4-b3 Bc8-e6 8. f2-f3 Bf8-e7 9. Qd1-d2 h7-h5!

This idea of Sakaev’s is a move I’ve really grown to love...

By playing 8. f3, White aims to follow up with g4 and g5 forcing the knight from f6 and thus its protection of the d5 square. Once this happens, after a future Nd5, Black will not be able to force White to recapture on d5 with a pawn.

Some years ago, I spent a great deal of time with Joel Lautier analysing systems where Black answers g4 with ...h6, preventing g5. We were both quite successful with this, but after a bad experience against Shirov, I decided that the whole line was slightly better for White. It was then that I became attracted to Sakaev’s move. All that analysis I had done, all that suffering I had endured when White played g4: it could all have been avoided by playing ...h5!

10. Bf1-e2

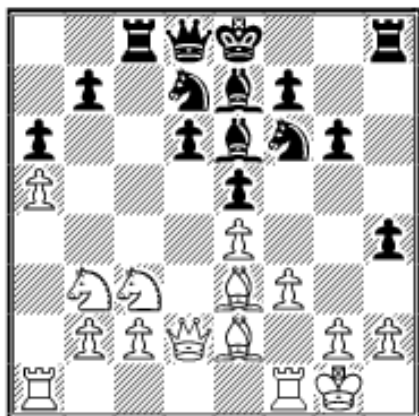
A very sensible approach to the position. White’s quiet play leads to a set-up

reminiscent of the Karpov system of the 6. Be2 Najdorf – 6. Be2 e5 7. Nb3 Be7 8. 0-0 0-0 9. Be3 – where Black, instead of castling, has played the rather strange ...h5.

10...Nb8-d7 11. 0-0 Ra8-c8 12. a2-a4 g7-g6

Black covers the weak square f5 and prepares to walk his king to g7, leaving the rook at h8. On the other hand, 12...0-0 is also possible.

13. a4-a5 h5-h4!



14. Nb3-c1!?

The first new move of the game. 14. Nd5 was played against me by Nijboer in Arnhem 1999. The continuation there was 14...Bxd5 15. ed Kf8 16. c4 Kg7 17. Rfd1 Nh5 18. c5!? dc 19. d6 Bf6 20. Rac1 Nf4 – unclear.

At the moment, there is a strange balance in the position. White has pinned down Black's queenside pawns with a4-a5, and Black has done the same with White's kingside pawns.

You usually try to initiate action with a pawn break, but neither side has a desirable one available.

It appears that 14. f4!? was worth considering anyway.

Consequently both sides must jockey for position by shuffling their pieces. With 14. Nc1, White prepares to transfer this knight to the d5 square via a2-b4-d5 or d3-b4-d5. In the immediate term, the knight cannot go via a2 due to ...Qxa5, while the ...d5 break would follow on Nd3; but if White does achieve it eventually, then Black is in big trouble.

14...Qd8-c7 (14...Kf8) 15. Rf1-d1

Aiming more firepower at the d5 square.

15...Ke8-f8

My favourite plan in this system. The rook on h8 is very handily placed, supporting the pawn on h4.

16. Be2-f1

16. Nd3 is what White wants to play, but after 16...d5! 17. ed Nxd5 18. Nxd5 Bxd5, then 19. Nxe5 fails: 19...Qxe5 leaves both White bishops hanging on the e-file (20. Bd4 Bc5). 19. Nb4 Be6 20. Nd5 Bxd5 21. Qxd5 Nf6 22. Qb3 Bc5 is very pleasant for Black. So White manoeuvres a little more and puts his bishops to

safety.

There is an interesting pawn sacrifice here: 16. Bh6+!? Kg8 17. N1a2!? (if White transposes moves, by 16. N1a2 Qxa5 17. Bh6+, Black replies 17...Ke8!), and if 17...Qxa5, then 18. Nd5 Qd8 19. Nxe7+ Qxe7 20. Nc3, with compensation.

16...Kf8-g7 17. Be3-f2 Rc8-d8!?

In many situations it makes sense to put the rook on the same file as the enemy queen: it can neutralize, and sometimes even threaten her.

18. Qd2-e1

18. Nd5 Bxd5 19. ed e4 20. Re1 h3 leads to double-edged play.

18. Nd3 d5 19. ed Nxd5 20. Nxd5 Bxd5 21. Nxe5?? can now be met by 21...Nxe5, when the bishop on d5 is protected by the rook on d8. In order to achieve Nd3 without allowing ...d5, White decided to increase his pressure on the d5 square by swapping round his queen and rook. This manoeuvre is also commonly seen in the Karpov system.



18...Rd8-e8!?

The same strategy as on the previous move.

I took quite a long time over this phase of the game. I was already starting to weigh up in my head the kind of ideas that occurred in the game. Nothing specific in terms of variations, but just in general where I thought my pieces should be when the explosion occurred. This explains my rather mysterious moves at this point.

It is still not yet possible for Black to force the pace: 18...Qc6 supporting the ...d5 break allows 19. N1a2! d5 20. ed Nxd5 21. Nxd5 Bxd5 22. c4! Be6 23. Nb4 Qc7 (23...Bxb4 24. Qxb4 h3 25. Rd6 Qc7 26. Rxe6!) 24. Nd5, with advantage to White.

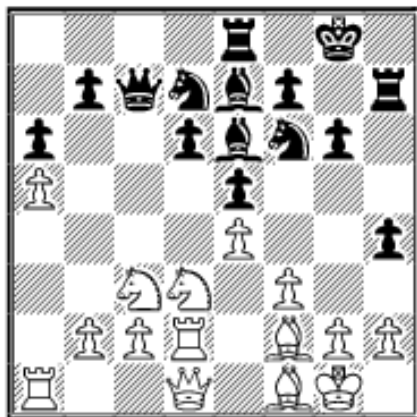
18...h3!? was worth considering.

19. Rd1-d2

19. Bxh4 is met by 19...Nxe4! 20. Bxe7? Qc5+ 21. Kh1 Nf2+.

19...Rh8-h7 (19...Rh5!?) 20. Qe1-d1 Kg7-g8!?

21. Nc1-d3



21...d6-d5! 22. e4xd5 Be6-f5!

Yet another idea borrowed from the Karpov system, but this time for Black. I first came across this idea in the game Barbuлесcu – DeFirmian, Dubai Olympiad 1986. Black's idea is first to free d6 so that he can point his bishop against White's king in combination with the queen on c7, and then to break with ...e4 to open the b8-h2 diagonal. White's pieces are very awkwardly placed, which adds to the strength of the idea. In my game,

this idea is even more dangerous as the pawn on h4 cramps the White kingside.

22...Nxd5 of course allows 23. Nxd5 Bxd5 24. Nxe5 winning a pawn, but my idea was different.

23. Ra1-a4

23. h3!? deserved serious attention, for example: 23...e4 24. fe Nxe4 25. Nxe4 Bxe4 (Black intends 26...Bxd5 or 26...Bg5) 26. Qg4! Nf6 27. Qf4, when neither 27...Qxf4 28. Nxf4 Bd6 29. Ne2!, nor 27...Qd8 28. Bxh4 Nxd5 29. Bxe7 Qxe7 30. Qg3 promises Black real compensation for the pawn.

23...e5-e4!

The key resource: if Black didn't have this, he would just be lost. I think Morozevich had underestimated this because he now started thinking a lot and caught up with me on the clock.

24. Nc3xe4?!

24. fe Ng4! is rather nasty for White.

In the Informant, Sadler analyzes this variation in greater detail: 25. e5 Ndxe5 (25...Nxf2 26. Nxf2 Qxe5? 27. d6! Bg5 28. Re2 Be3 29. Nd5 wins; 25...Bg5!?) 26. Nxe5 (26. Bb6 Nxd3!) 26...Nxf2. In his opinion, Black has the initiative in the concluding position. But after 27. Rxf2 Qxe5 28. Re2, it's hardly possible to demonstrate this. An example would be: 28...Bc5+ (or 28...Qd6 29. Ne4) 29. Kh1 Qb8 30. Ne4 Bxe4 31. Raxe4 Rxe4 32. Rxe4± (Black is hurting, not so much from being a pawn down, as from the unfortunate position of his rook on h7).

24...Bf5xe4 25. f3xe4 Be7-d6!

Attacking h2 and threatening ...Nxe4.

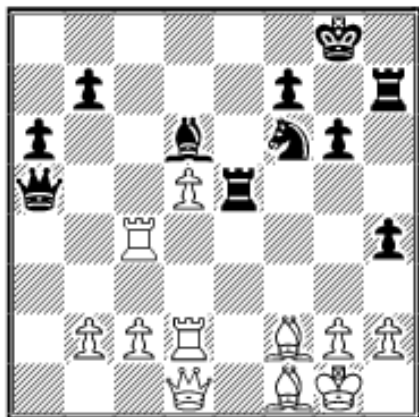
26. e4-e5

26. Qf3 Bxh2+ 27. Kh1 Nh5, and the rook on h7 will come in rather handy after a future ...Ng3+, Bxg3 and ...hg!

26...Nd7xe5 27. Nd3xe5 Re8xe5 28. Ra4-c4

Not 28. Rxh4 Reh5! 29. Rxh5 Bxh2+!

28...Qc7xa5!



After this, I felt really confident: I'd got both my pawns back, and I was crawling all over White's kingside dark squares.

29. Bf2-d4 Re5-f5 (29...Rhh5!?) 30. Rc4-c8+ Kg8-g7

I smiled a little to myself at this point: after all my subtle manoeuvres around move 19 and 20, rearranging my king and rook, it now seems it would have been better to have kept the king on g7. I did it to avoid problems

along the a1-h8 diagonal when I played ...e4 (by getting the king and rook off the a1-h8 diagonal). I'm not sure that it made any difference. Perhaps you can say that it didn't do any harm, and it probably confused my opponent a bit.

31. c2-c3?!

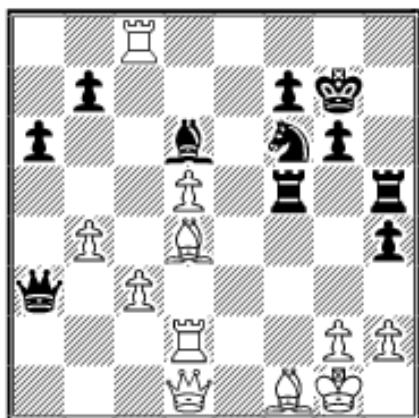
This starts a very evil idea, which I had not seen at all when taking on a5, but it just asks too much of White's position. I think that White had to try 31. c4 and just try to push that d-pawn through with c5 and then d6.

After 31. c4! the position would probably be assessed in White's favor.

31...Rh7-h5!

The rooks are coming.

32. b2-b4 Qa5-a3



33. Bf1-c4?!

(Threatening 34. Ra2) Suddenly the queen is trapped – but I wasn't scared. If there's one thing I've learnt from playing blitz games against computers, it's that the queen never gets trapped.

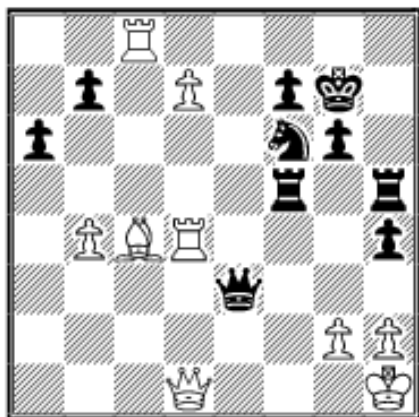
In the Informant, Sadler examines 33. Qb1 Be5 (33...Qa4!?) 34. Bxe5 Rxe5 35. Ra2 Re1 36. Qxe1 Qxa2 37. Qe7 (here I should point out that 37. d6 h3!? 38. Qe8 Nd7!, with

counterplay, is not dangerous to Black) 37...Ng4 38. Qf8+ Kf6 39. Qd8+ Kg7 =. However, White doesn't have to give perpetual check here, since 38. Qe2! wins. Instead of 37...Ng4? Black should play 37...Nh7 38. d6 Rf5 39. Qxh4 Qd2 40. Qd4+ Qxd4 41. cd Rd5, with just a small edge for White.

White would have done better to have given up the over-optimistic idea of catching the queen, and put his bishop on e2 or f3, where it could participate in the defense of the king: 33. Be2!? Rhg5 34. Bf3, and if 34...h3, then 35. Be3.

33...Rf5-f4!

The right way to attack. The tempting try at unpinning the knight by **33...Be5?** would have been justified after 34. d6?! Bxd4+ 35. Rxd4 Qxc3 36. d7 Qe3+ Kh1



– when Black creates terrible threats by 37...h3! 38.g4! Ne4! Now 39. Rg8+? Kxg8 40. d8Q+ Kh7 41. Rd2 Rf2 (or 41...Nc3, winning) 42. Qe7 Rxd2 43. Qxf7+ Kh6 wins for Black. White must first make the defensive move his game cannot live without anyway: 39. Rd2! Only then, depending on his opponent's reaction, can he choose the proper moment to give the rook check:

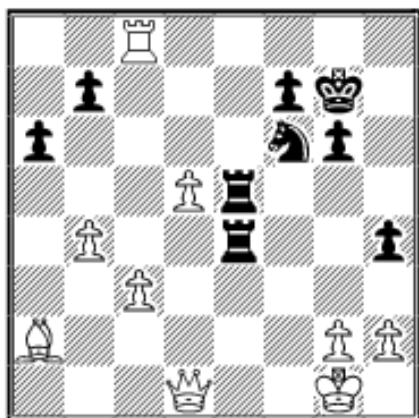
39...Nf2+ 40. Rxf2 Rxf2 41. Rg8+! Kh7 42. Rh8+, and draws;

39...Rf2 40. Qa1+! f6 41. Rg8+! Kh7 42. Rh8+ =;

39...Nc3 40. d8Q =;

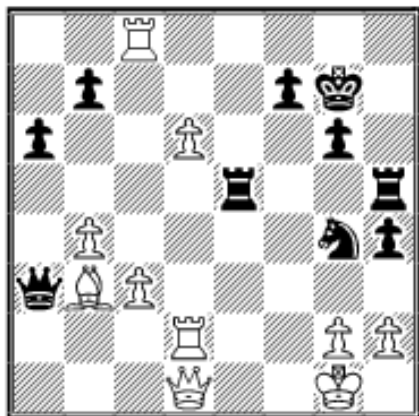
39...Nxd2 40. Rg8+ Kxg8 (40...Kh7 =) 41. d8Q+ Kh7 42. Q8xd2 Qe4+ 43. Kg1 Rhg5 42, Q2e2! is unclear.

But a much stronger choice is **34. Bxe5 Rxe5 35. Bb3**. Now he does threaten to trap the queen by 36. Ra2, while Black must also consider 36. d6. Some more curious variations arise after 35...Re4!? 36. Ra2 Qxa2 37. Bxa2 Rhe5



White gets nothing out of 38. d6?! Re1+ 39. Qxe1 Rxe1+ 40. Kf2 Rd1. On 38. Qf3?! Black plays 38...Ng4! 39. d6 Re1+ 40. Qf1 Rxf1+ 41. Kxf1 Nxh2+ 42. Kf2 Ng4+ 43. Kf3 Nh2+, and White has to take the perpetual by 44. Kf2, since 44. Kf4?? Kf6! loses. But 38. Qf1! Re1 39. d6 secures White the advantage, for example: 39...R5e2!? 40. Bxf7! Rxf1+ 41. Kxf1 Rd2 42. Rc7 Rxd6 43. Rxb7±.

Instead of 35...Re4, **35...Ng4 36. d6** (see diagram) must also be examined here.



Sadler looks at 36...Qxb3 37. d7 Qe6 38. Re8! Qb6+ 39. Rd4, and assesses the concluding position as unclear. But in fact, White wins right off: 39...Qc6 (39...Rd5 40. Qxg4 wins) 40. Rxe5 Rxe5 41. Qd2 (41. d8Q? Qxc3 wins) 41...Qe6 (or 41...h3) 42. Rxc4 and wins.

Black could also try. **36...Ne3**. Now there's only a draw after 37. d7? Nxd1 38. Rxd1 Rd5 (38...Qxb3 39. d8Q Qe6 = is possible also)

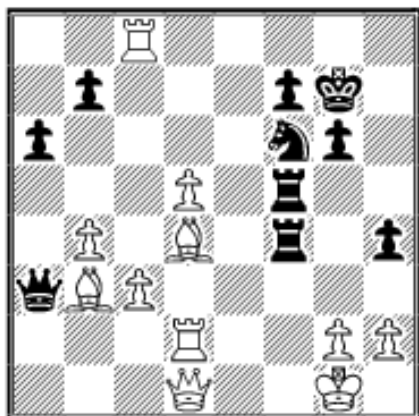
39. Bxd5 Rxd5 40. Rxd5 Qc1+ 41. Kf2 Qf4+.

But after **37. Qb1!**, Black seems unable to generate sufficient counterplay. Events might proceed as follows: 37...Rhf5! 38. Rf2! (38. d7? Qxb3 39. Qa1 Qa4) 38...Rxf2 39. Kxf2 Ng4+ 40. Kf1 Nxh2+ 41. Kg1 Ng4 (threatening 42...Qxb3!) 42. Bxf7! Kxf7 43. d7 Rd5 44. Qf1+ Nf6 45. Rf8+ Kxf8 46. Qxf6+ Kg8 47. Qxg6+ Kh8 48. Qf6+ Kg8 49. Qe6+ Kf8 50. Qxd5 Qc1+ 51. Kf2, and wins.

34. Bc4-b3?

Probably the decisive error. Alexander Morozevich stubbornly continues his efforts to trap the queen (the immediate 34. Ra2? is bad because of 34..Rxd4! 35. Qxd4 Qc1+ 36. Bf1 Rxd4 – Sadler). He had to return the bishop to the d1-h5 diagonal: 34. Be2! Rhf5 is still unclear.

34...Rh5-f5!



35. Bd4-f2

It is not easy to suggest alternatives: Black is too active. For example, 35. Ra2 Qxb3 36. Qxb3 Rf1 mate.

On 35. Bc4, Black would have decided the game by means of a spectacular combinative attack: 35...Rxd4! 36. Rxd4 Qxc3 37. Qd2 Bxh2+!! 38. Kxh2 Qg3+ 39. Kg1 h3 40. d6 h2+ (40...b5!?) 41. Kh1 Rf2 42. Qxf2 Qxf2 43. Rd1 Ne4 44. d7 Qf4! 45. Rg8+ Kxg8 46.

d8Q+ Kh7, and wins.

35...Nf6-e4 36. Bf2-d4+

Alas, here too, the queen cannot be caught: 36. Ra2 Nxf2 37. Qb1 Ng4 38. Rxa3 Rf1+ 39. Qxf1 Bxh2+ 40. Kh1 Rxf1 mate (Sadler).

36...f7-f6 37. Rd2-e2 Qa3xb3! White resigned.

And that was the last move of my professional career.

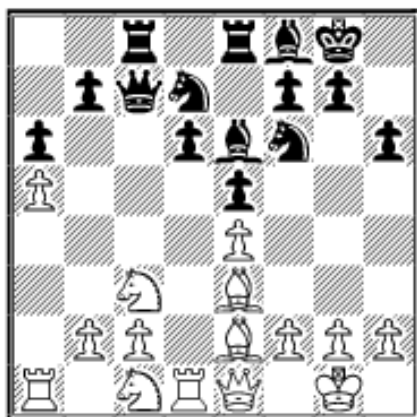
In his commentary, Sadler referred to the following game.

Barbulescu – De Firmian

Dubai ol 1986 42/303

(Based on comments by Nick DeFirmian *in italics*)

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cd 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. Be2 e5 7. Nb3 Be7 8. 0-0 0-0 9. Be3 Be6 10. Qd2 Nbd7 11. a4 Rc8 12. a5 Qc7 13. Rfd1 Rfe8 14. Qe1 Bf8 15. Nc1 h6



16. Be2-f3

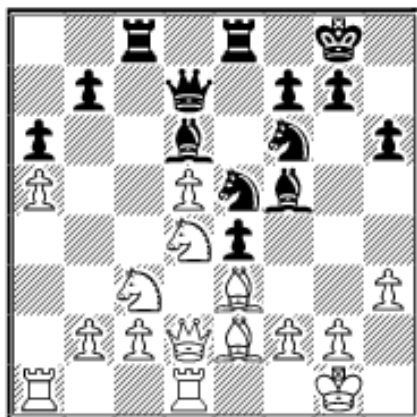
On 16. Nd3 Black plays 16...d5 =.

16. h3!? is a sensible prophylactic move, directed against the pawn sacrifice d6-d5. Rohde – DeFirmian, US Championship 1986, continued: 16...d5 17. ed Bf5 18. Bd3 e4 19. Be2 Bb4 (19...Bd6!?) 20. Nb3 Bxc3 21. Qxc3 Qxc3 22. bc Rxc3 23. Nd4 Bg6 24. d6±.

16...d6-d5! 17. e4xd5 Be6-f5 18. Qe1-d2 Bf8-d6 19. h2-h3 e5-e4 20. Bf3-e2 Nd7-e5 21. Nc1-b3

21. Na4 Qxc2 22. Nb6 Qxe2 23. Bxd2 Rc2 24. b4, with an unclear game, in which Black's position looks pretty good (Bashkov – Injievsky, USSR 1988 47/316).

21...Qc7-d7 22. Nb3-d4



22...Bf5xh3! 23. g2xh3?

23. Bxh6! was safer. On 23...gh?! White continues 24. Qxh6 Bxg2 25. Kxg2 Ng6 26. Ne6! fe 27. Qxg6+ Qg7 28. Qxg7+ Kxg7 29. de Rxe6 30. Ra4, with an edge (Dvoretsky). On 23...Bg4, White has a choice between 24. Bg5 Bxe2 25. Qxe2 Neg4 (with compensation – DeFirmian), or 24. Bxg7!? e3! 25. Qxe3 Nf3+ (25...Bxe2? 26. Qh6) 26. gf (26. Bxf3? Rxe3 27. Bxf6 Bxf3 28. Nxf3 Rxf3 29. gf Qh3 wins) 26...Rxe3 27. fe Kxg7

28. fg Nxc4 (28...Rg8!? is unclear) 29. Ne6+! fe 30. Bxg4 Qe7 31. Bxe6 Qg5+ 32. Kf2 Bc5 33. Bxc8 Qxe3+ 34. Kg2 =.

23...Qd7xh3 24. Be3-f4 Rc8-d8?! And the game was drawn here.

The continuation could have been 25. Qe3 Nf3+ 26. Nxf3 ef 27. Qxf3 Qxf3 28. Bxf3 Bxf4 – unclear. 24...Bc5? doesn't work: 25. Qe3 Bf3+ 26. Bxf3 Bxd4 27. Bg2!±

DeFirmian later demonstrated a complex combination, which he believed would have led to Black's advantage: 24...Nf3+! 25. Nxf3 Qg4+ (25...ef? 26. Bxf3 wins) 26. Bg3 Bxg3 27. Ne1 Bxf2+ 28. Kxf2 Qh4+ 29. Kg1 e3 30. Qd4 Qf2+ 31. Kh1 Rxc3 32. bc Ne4 33. Ng2 Ng3+ 34. Kh2 Re4-/+.



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