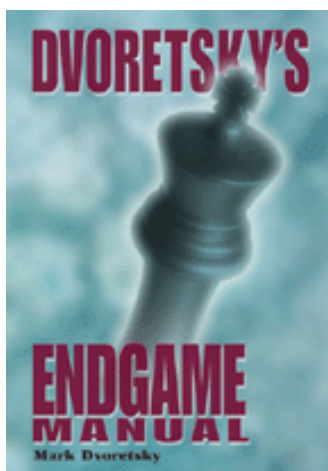




## COLUMNISTS

*The*  
*Instructor*  
Mark Dvoretsky



## An Invitation to Analysis

“Chess is inexhaustible!” is such an overused expression that it has become just another meaningless cliché, and wrongly so! Nowadays, there are many who cast doubt upon our game’s inexhaustibility – under the influence of the progress we have made in computer technology, and the tremendous growth of opening theory (which has become, in my opinion, a deadly tumor growing upon today’s chess, threatening to kill it by degrees, without some sort of radical surgical intervention – but that’s a subject for another column).

All this can be illustrated (although not, of course, proven) by various means. Let us suppose that a very strong grandmaster (Alexei Shirov, for instance) wins a good game. Sitting at the board, he sought tensely after the best moves and calculated lengthy, complex variations. Perhaps, at the end of the game, he analyzed it with his opponent; then, aided by his computer, he checked his conclusions and annotated the game for publication. Afterwards, while preparing his *Fire on Board* book, he returned to the game, found some new ideas, and added those to his commentary.

The outcome of such a process might seem, if not absolute completion (which can never, in principle, be achieved), to be at least something close to absolute. Of course, one can always add insignificant corrections, or maybe add a few lines of computer analysis – but who needs those?

But in fact, careful examination of a grandmaster’s analysis quite often succeeds in painting a very different picture of the struggle, in finding occasionally spectacular and rather instructive resources the commentator never examined, and in casting doubt on some assessments that formerly seemed unassailable. And we are certainly not talking about a computer left running for many hours, but about ideas that an inventive player could find and analyze over the board, even with limited thinking time – these are precisely the sort of ideas that are most interesting to practical players. Many sharp discoveries have been made during my training sessions with grandmasters and talented juniors, trying their own hands at resolving the tasks set before them.

So then, why weren’t these discoveries made by Shirov himself, one of the most inventive players of our time? There are some authors whom we might rightly suspect of hiding something – but Shirov, never! No, the point here is the inexhaustible richness of chess ideas, in the axiomatic possibility of a fresh approach to almost any complex position. And this, too, forms one of the most important sources of the attraction of chess – in its democratic nature. Each of us possesses the right to cast doubt upon, and sometimes even refute, the opinion of

the greatest authorities, offering in exchange our own handling of events – which of course, may in its turn be refuted.

I should also like to mention that even the most interesting and convincing discoveries and refutations still give us no grounds to look condescendingly upon an author or commentator of a game. After all, it is enough for us to be right only on occasion (and those occasions are self-selected!) while he must constantly maintain this high analytical level throughout the game and a myriad of variations that remain off-the-board, which is far more difficult. And besides, as Igor Zaitsev once wittily remarked, “it’s always easier to find treasure where somebody else has already found a pile of money.”

The analysis of the encounter that I offer for your examination is based on Shirov’s notes from the above-cited collection of his games. The authorship of most of the variations presented by the grandmaster will not be cited; the authorship of those variations which were added to his analyses will be. Direct quotes from the book, as in all my publications, will be given in italics.

The game is presented in a form allowing the hardest-working readers, and those possessing the necessary qualifications, to try their hand at resolving the problems that were faced or could have been faced by the players themselves. After some diagrams you will find questions, the answers to which are given following the game. Try not to look at the move in the game that follows the question. It will have neither a mark nor an evaluation – it could be good, it could be bad; but in and of itself, it would give you additional information that could influence your solution of the problem.

*Seirawan – Shirov*  
Buenos Aires 1993

**1.d2-d4 d7-d5 2.c2-c4 c7-c6 3.Nb1-c3 Ng8-f6 4.e2-e3 a7-a6 5.Ng1-f3 b7-b5 6.c4xd5**

A modest move, which probably stems from Yasser Seirawan’s proclivity toward positions with a fixed pawn structure. 6.b3!? would lead to a more complex struggle.

**6...c6xd5 7.Nf3-e5 Nb8-d7 8.f2-f4 e7-e6 9.Bf1-d3 Bc8-b7 10.0-0 Bf8-d6 11.Bc1-d2 0-0 12.Bd2-e1 Nf6-e4!?**

Another good way was 12...Nb6 13.Bh4 Be7 with approximate equality.

**13.Qd1-b1!? Nd7-f6**

On 13...f5, Seirawan had planned 14.a4!. Then, however, Black maintains equality by playing either 14...ba!? or 14...b4 15.Nxe4 fe (but not 15...de? 16.Bc4 Bd5 17.Bxd5 ed 18.Qa2+ – Seirawan) 16.Be2 Nxe5 17.fe Rxf1+ 18.Bxf1 Be7=.

The text move is dubious, allowing White to find a good post for his dark-squared bishop.

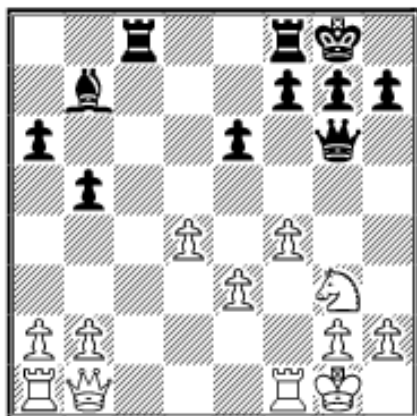
**14.Be1-h4!?**

1) Evaluate 14...Nd2.

**14...Ra8-c8**

2) How should White continue?

The variation **15.Bxe4 de 16.Ng4 Be7 17.Bxf6 Bxf6 (17...gf 18.f5) 18.Nxf6+ (18.Nxe4 Be7 with compensation) 18...Qxf6 19.Nxe4 Qg6 20.Ng3** leads to the following position:



3) How should Black continue?

Having dealt with the cluster of problems on the 14<sup>th</sup> move, it's time to return to our game.

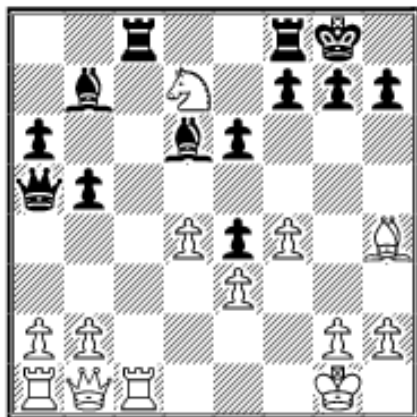
**15.Rf1-c1?! Qd8-a5**

Another possibility was 15...Be7 16.Bxf6 Nxf6 (16...gf 17.Ng4 f5 18.Ne5) 17.b4 Qd6 18.a3 Rc7 (18...Ne4!? – Dvoretsky) 19.Ra2 Rfc8 20.Rac2=.

**16.Bd3xe4**

After the game, Seirawan offered 16.a4!?, to which both 16...ba 17.Bxf6 Nxf6 18.Rxa4 Qb6 19.Qa2 Ra8= and 16...b4 17.Nxe4 Rxc1+ 18.Qxc1 Nxe4 18.Bxe4 de 20.Nc4 Qd5 21.b3 Rc8 22.Ra2 Rc6 23.Rc2 f6= are decent replies.

**16...Nf6xe4 17.Nc4xe4 d5xe4 18.Ne5-d7!?**



4) What should Black play here?

**18...Qa5-d2 19.Nd7xf8 Qd2xe3+ 20.Bh4-f2 Qe3xf4**

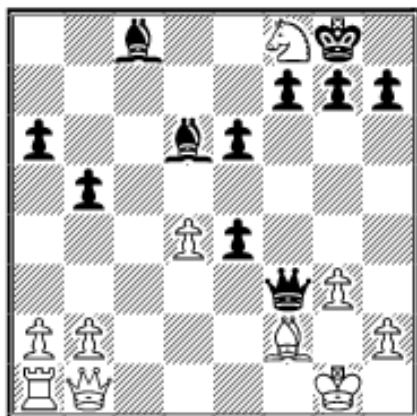
Here, White's proper continuation was **21.Rxc8!**, taking into account that after 21...Qxh2+? 22.Kf1 Bxc8 23.Qxe4 Bxf8 24.Rc1 he has the initiative: 24...Bd7 (24...Qb8!? 25.Qe5 Qa8 26.d5 – Dvoretsky) 25.Qb7 Qh1+ 26.Bg1 Qh6 27.Rc7 Be8 28.Rc8 Qd2 29.g3!+- (but not 29.Rxe8 Qd1+

30.Kf2 Qxd4+ and draws).

Black would have to reply **21...Bxc8!** Now 22.Qc1? Qxh2+ (22...e3?? 23.Bg3) 23.Kf1 Bb7! 24.Nd7 e3 25.Qxe3 Qh1+! 26.Bg1 (26.Ke2 Qxa1) 26...Qxg2+ loses for White (Dvoretsky), so White would have to reply **22.g3**.

Shirov gives the continuation 22...Qf5 23.Nxe6 Bxe6 with good compensation for the exchange. However, instead of 23.Nxe6, White has the unpleasant 23.Qc2!

It's better to retreat the queen to a different square: **22...Qf3** (intending not just to recapture the knight, but also 23...e3).



5) How should White continue?

**21.g2-g3?! Rc8xc1+ 22.Qb1xc1 Qf4-f5**

Shirov gave this move two exclamation marks. It is indeed very strong, especially from a practical viewpoint (which would have become especially clear, had the grandmaster given the correct answer to Question #7). On the other hand, 22...Qf3 isn't bad, either. Black could also have played 21...Qf3 22.Rxc8 Bxc8 (although not, of course,

22...e3?? 23.Qxh7#), obtaining the position we discussed previously in the 21.Rxc8 variation. Evidently, Shirov rejected, on principle, any continuation involving the exchange of queens.



6) What should White play?

**23.Bf2-e3**

7) How should Black recapture on f8?

**23...Bd6xf8 24.Qc1-c7 Qf5-f3 25.Qc7-f4 Qf3-e2 26.Qf4-f2**

26.Rf1!? (Dvoretsky) deserved consideration.

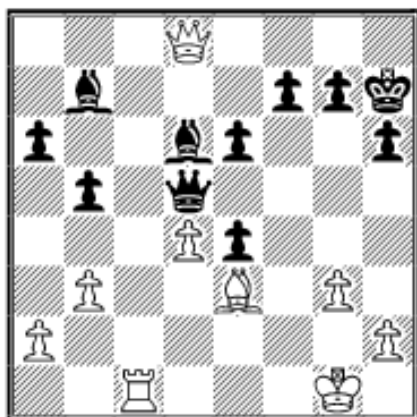
**26...Qe2-d3**

26...Qc4? would have been a mistake in view of 27.Rc1! Qxa2? 28.Rc7.

**27.Qf2-d2**

*After 27.Rc1 Bd5 28.Qd2 f6!, Black keeps a small advantage. [Formally, this is probably correct; but practically speaking, the exchange of queens would probably have put White out of danger.]*

**27...Qd2-c4 28.b2-b3 Qc4-d5 29.Ra1-c1 Bf8-d6 30.Qd2-a5 h7-h6 31.Qa5-d8+ Kg8-h7**



**32.Qd8-d7??**

*A terrible but understandable mistake when his flag was almost ready to fall. After 32.Kg2, White would have retained good drawing chances. [His next move could then have been 33.Qd7.]*

**32...Bd6-f4! White resigned.**

### Answers

**1. 14...Nd2?! 15.Qc2 (15.Bxh7+?? Nxh7) 15...Nxf1 16.Bxh7+**



16...Kh8 is extremely dangerous: after 17.Rxf1, there seems to be no satisfactory defense to White's mating attack. For example: 17...g6 18.Bxg6! fg 19.Qxg6 Qe7 20.Qh6+! Kg8 21.Rf3; or 17...b4 18.Rf3! bc 19.Rh3 (Shirov). And finally, on 17...Be7, 18.Bxf6 (18.Bd3) 18...gf (18...Bxf6 19.Rf3) 19.Qe2! fe 20.Qh5 Kg7 21.fe Bg5 22.Rf3 probably works (Dvoretsky).

So Black must give up the queen: **16...Nxb7 17.Bxd8 Nxe3 18.Qf2! Bxe5** (18...Nxc2?

19.Bb6+-) **19.fe Ng4 20.Qg3 Nxe5 21.Be7 Rfe8+/-**. Black has obtained rook, knight and pawn for the queen, but he still stands worse.

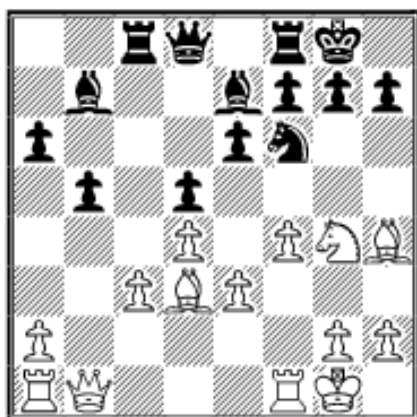
Since the simple 14...Qa5 15.Rc1 Rfc8 maintains the balance, in Shirov's opinion, there was no reason for him to go in for 14...Nd2.

However, the move he actually chose, 14...Rc8?, was poor (see the next question).

**2.** Shirov recommends 15.Bxe4!? de 16.Ng4, intending to win the e4-pawn after trading on f6. But Black would get decent positional compensation for his pawn.

Viorel Bologan's suggested **15.Ng4!** is stronger. If 15...Be7, then 16.Nxf6+ Bxf6 (16...Nxf6 17.Bxf6 and 18.Bxh7+) 17.Nxe4 de (17...Bxh4? 18.Nc5) 18.Bxf6 Qd5!? (18...Qxf6 19.Bxe4, when White wins the pawn without allowing the counterplay on the a8-h1 diagonal that Black obtains in the 15.Bxe4 de 16.Ng4 variation) 19.Bxb5! Qxb5 20.Be7 Rfe8 21.Bc5+.

Nor is 15...Nxc3 16.bc Be7 any better.



17.Bxf6 (17.Nxf6+ gf 18.a4!? or 17...Bxf6 18.Bxh7+ Kh8 19.Bxf6 Qxf6 20.Bd3 Rxc3 21.a4+ are other good lines for White) 17...gf (17...Bxf6 18.Bxh7+ Kh8 19.Rf3) 18.Bxh7+ Kg7 19.Rf3 f5 (19...Rh8!? 20.Rg3 Kf8 21.Nh6 f5 22.Qd1!?) 20.Bxf5 ef 21.Qxf5 with a powerful attack.

**3.** The tempting queen sacrifice is incorrect: 20...Rc2?! 21.Rf2 Rfc8? (21...Rxf2 is better) 22.f5! Rxf2! 23.fg Rxc2+ 24.Kf1. Here's the continuation given by Shirov: 24...fg 25.e4

Rcc2 26.Qe1 h5 27.Rc1 Rxb2 28.h4! (no less strong is 28.d5! ed 29.Rc7 intending 30.Qc3; or 28...h4 29.Ne2 Rxc2 30.Rc7 intending either 31.Rxc7+, 31.Rxb7, or 31.Qc3 – Bologan) 28...g5 29.Qe3 gh 30.Nxh5 Rg4 31.d5+-.

Simplifying the position by 20...Qxb1?! 21.Raxb1 Rc2 22.Rf2 Rfc8 would leave Black with excellent drawing chances, in view of the activity of his pieces. But



after 23.Re1!, White's position is still preferable: 23...Rxf2 (other tries, such as 23...Rc1!?, 23...b4!?, or 23...f5!? are worth considering – Dvoretsky) 24.Kxf2 Rc2+ 25.Re2 Rc1 (Shirov) 26.e4+=/±.

The strongest continuation, **20...f5!**, was pointed out by Alexander Motylev. White now has to think about h7-h5-h4, as well as the doubling of rooks on the c-file. For example: 21.Rf2 h5 with compensation; or 21.Qd1 Rc7:



22.Qd2 (22.Qh5 Qxh5 23.Nxh5 Rfc8; 22.Rc1 Rxc1 23.Qxc1 h5 24.Qc7 Bd5 25.Qe7 Rc8 – in both cases, Black has outstanding compensation for his pawn minus) 22...h5 23.Rfc1 Rfc8 24.Rxc7 Rxc7 25.Rc1 Rxc1+ 26.Qxc1 h4 27.Qc7 hg 28.Qxb7 Qh5! and we end up with a draw.

**4.** If White puts the knight on c5, a quiet, approximately even position results: 18...Rfe8 19.Nc5 Bd5 20.b4 Qb6=; or 18...Rxc1+!? 19.Qxc1 Rc8 20.Nc5 Bd5 (20...b4? fails against 21.Nxb7! Rxc1+ 22.Rxc1) 21.a3 with 22.b4= to follow.

*Here I spent about 20 or 25 minutes, leaving less than half an hour for the following 22 moves. But Seirawan had only 15 minutes, and this fact greatly influenced my decision.*

I have never gotten into time-pressure as a player; and, quite honestly, to this day I find it hard to understand how such a strong player could waste almost his entire time allotment on such a series of not overly complex moves as the ones White made here. But mainly – what's the point? After all, the remaining portion of the game quite possibly could be (and in fact, in the present case, was) considerably more complicated – and here is where he could have used that time. In my view, what we have here is a typical case of “time-pressure sickness”: a dangerous illness, widespread among chessplayers. It can be cured, although with considerable difficulty; and the cure should be started as early as possible – if at all possible, when the player is still young.

The rook sacrifice Shirov offered is objectively no stronger than quiet continuations. From a practical point of view, however, it was justified both because it suits his style of play (it is just such situations that inspire the grandmaster, and render him especially dangerous) and because of his opponent's time shortage. We need only assure ourselves there is no forced refutation.

**18...Qd2!? 19.Nxf8 Qxe3+**

**20.Bf2**

In the line 20.Kh1 Qxf4 21.Bg3 Rxc1+ 22.Qxc1 Qxc1+ 23.Rxc1 Bxg3 24.hg (24.Nxe6!?) 24...Kxf8 25.Kg1 White's position is preferable; however, Black can play better: 20...Rxf8! =/+ (Dvoretsky).

**20...Qxf4**

White's knight must go lost, when Black obtains enough compensation for the sacrificed exchange. Meanwhile, the position remains quite complex, with all three outcomes possible.

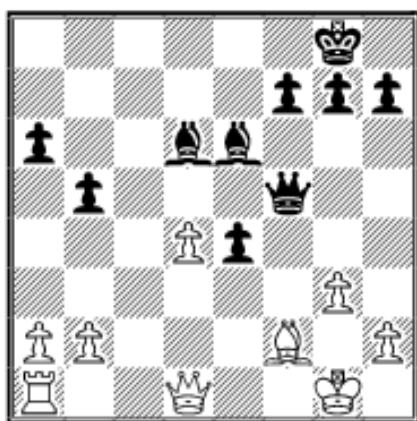
*I still like this sacrifice, but I am not sure I would have done it, had I seen more during the game.*

A curious note. For a considerable part of his creative life, Shirov openly expressed both his distrust of intuitive conclusions, and his tendency to find the solution to any problem on the basis of exact calculation. In fact, several approaches are possible here – I don't doubt that Mikhail Tal would have quickly decided on this combination, caring very little whether or not it was objectively correct.

**5.** 23.Qc1 Bb7 24.Nd7? e3—+ would be a mistake. And 23.Qd1 Qxd1+ (or 23...Kxf8 at once) 24.Rxd1 Kxf8 leads to an excellent endgame for Black.

**23. Nxe6!**

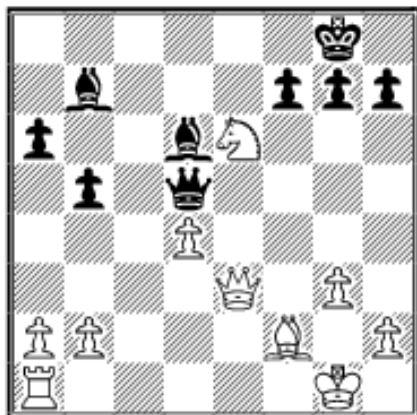
The point of White's move is that the tempting 23...e3? is refuted by 24.Qxh7+!! Kxh7 25.Ng5+ Kg6 26.Nxf3+—.

**23...Bxe6 24.Qd1 Qf5** (analysis by Dvoretsky)

Evidently, the objective assessment of the whole operation begun by 18...Qd2!? hinges on the assessment of this position. Although Black has but one pawn for the exchange (in the actual game, he had two), he can hardly be said to stand worse. And that means that our preliminary conclusion, about 18...Qd2 not involving an excessive amount of risk, and therefore being the most promising continuation, has been borne out.

**6.** Thanks to the terrible threat of e4-e3!, White has no time to bring back the knight. For example: 23.Nxe6? e3!! 24.Qxe3 Qd5:





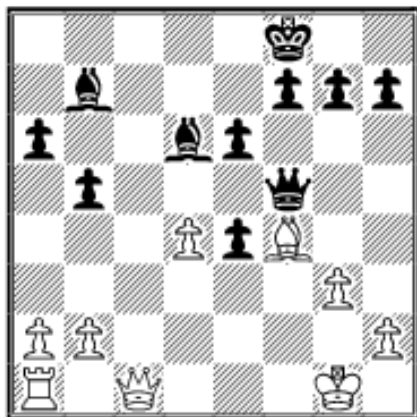
25.Kf1 Qh1+ 26.Bg1 (26.Ke2 Qxa1—+)  
 26...Qg2+ 27.Ke1 Bb4+ 28.Kd1 Bf3+ 29.Kc1  
 Bd2+ (29...Qf1+ is also strong: 30.Kc2 Qc4+  
 31.Kb1 Bd2!—+ Dvoretzky) 30.Qxd2 Qf1+  
 31.Kc2 Be4+ 32.Kb3 Qc4+ 33.Ka3 Qa4#.

**23.Be3!** was necessary, blocking the e-pawn, even if it meant settling for an inferior position.

**7.** In the game, Black played 23...Bxf8=+/, after which only White's tremendous time-pressure prevented him from easily holding the position.

*The text is probably stronger than 23...Kxf8 24.Bf4!*

No, here Shirov was wrong: he missed a chance to lay a cunning trap for his opponent. **23...Kxf8!** was stronger, when **24.Bf4?** is actually a serious error.



As Vadim Zvjagintsev indicated, Black wins here by **24...e3!! 25.Bxd6+ Kg8 26.Qxe3 Qd5 27.Kf2 Qg2+ 28.Ke1 Qh1+** and 29...Qxa1.

And throwing in the moves 24.a4 b4 (25.Bf4? e3!!, etc.) changes nothing.

It might seem strange for a brilliant tactician like Shirov to miss such a chance, especially considering that Black's combination is basically the same as the one he examined when analyzing the move 23.Nxe6? (see the previous answer). Evidently, we all suffer from a predisposition that keeps us from finding certain tactical or positional ideas – among others, it's psychologically much easier actively to sacrifice a piece, than to allow the opponent to capture it with check.