

Chessable Masters Group B

This tournament includes 12 of the best players in the World and lasts for the next two weeks. Two groups of six play in a league and the top four from each group play in a knockout.

This group consists of six very evenly matched players. The American Fabiano Caruana is the World number 2, the Chinese champion Ding Liren is close behind and the Frenchman Maxime Vachier Lagrave is the highest rated. The group is completed by Anish Giri from the Netherlands, Teimour Radjabov from Azerbaijan and Ian Nepomniachtchi from Russia.

Giri and Ding qualified comfortably, Nepo won in the last round to claim third place and Caruana qualified in fourth place.

Tomorrow is a rest day and the quarter finals begin. It is knock-out from here. More next week.

Here is a game won by Fabiano Caruana, the American, against Ian Nepomniachtchi, one of the four Russians in the tournament.

This game illustrates how to play a queenside attack. White restricts black on the queenside and then switches to the centre and ends up attacking the black king.

1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 e5 3 g3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 Bg2 Nb6



The plans are already clear. White will put a rook on c1 and a bishop on g2 and possibly a knight on

c5 and attack the black queenside. Black has more room in the centre and, if he can unravel the queenside, will look to attack on the kingside. Next both sides complete their development.

6 d3 Be7 7 Be3 0-0 8 Rc1 Re8 9 Nf3 Nc6 10 0-0 Bf8 11 Bg5 A wonderfully annoying move. Black could play Be7, where it has just moved from, or f6, which weakens the king, or Qd7 which blocks the bishop. All are fine but none is ideal.

11 ... Qd7 12 a3 h6 13 Bd2 Qd8 14 Ne4



The knight is on its way to c5. White's perfect set up is a rook on c1, a bishop on g2 and a knight on c5. Then black will have trouble defending the b pawn.

a5 15 Nc5 a4 16 Qc2 Ra7 This is a sign of how uncomfortable Nepo is feeling he just cannot move the queens bishop and cannot develop the queenside pieces. The white bishop on g2 looks out of the game but is forcing moves like this.

17 Re1 Nd4 Black tries to swap pieces off. This is good idea when you are being forced on the defensive.

18 Nxd4 exd4 19 e4 This is a bit surprising because it blocks the powerful bishop on g2.

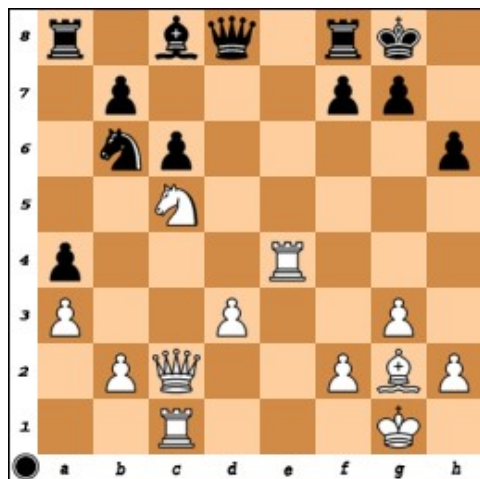
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However, the pawn is not staying on e4. Either black will take it or it will push on to e5.

19 ... dxe3 (en passant) 20 Bxe3 c6 21 Ne4
White does not want to lose the strong knight so spends three moves swapping off the bishops. **21 ... Be6 22 Bc5 Ra8 23 Bxf8 Rxf8 24 Nc5** Back again to threaten the b pawn.

24 ... Bc8 It looked as though black was untangling but the bishop moves back to defend the b pawn. Black is tied up again on the queenside. This is the key theme of the game.

25 Re4 A key moment. White has restricted black on the queenside so now starts to advance in the centre. Black finds it hard to compete because the queenside pieces cannot join in.



25 ... Re8 26 Rce1 Rxe4 27 Rxe4 Ra5 28 h3 Kf8 29 d4 Ra8 30 Re1 A quiet move but it is dripping with poison. The threat is Qh7. **30 ... g6 31 Qd2 Kg7 32 Qf4 Nd7 32 Ne4**



The knight finally moves from c5 because Caruana now controls an even better square. d6

33 ... Ra5 34 Nd6 Nf6



Can you see white's next move?

35 Re8 This wins because 35 ... Nxe8 allows 36 Qxf7+ Kh8 and white can take on e8 with any of three pieces with an easy win.

35 ... Qd7 36 Rxc8 Finally the miserable bishop disappears. It spent the whole game defending the b pawn. **36 ... g5** A resourceful try that looks like it could win the knight on d6 but white can make the most of the undefended rook on a5

37 Qd2 Ra6 38 Qb4 and white is a safe piece up and went on to win.

Summary

We are not going to play like Caruana but there are some ideas we can take from this win.

The combination of the c1 rook, g2 bishop and c5 knight is really effective in tying black down.

It needed a second push to win the game. Black came unstuck when white attacked down the e file because Nepo could not get the queenside pieces across to defend.

Caruana was in no rush. Quiet moves like Qc2, h3 and the bishop exchange on c5 slowly built up the advantage.

Puzzles from HMP Leeds

Thanks to Stephen who runs the chess club at Leeds for these puzzles. Puzzle 5 is tough.

1 Black to play

A black pawn is just one square from queening but the queening square is blocked by the white queen and bishop. How did black crash through?



5 White to play

Material is level and all winning chances will fade if Black is given time to consolidate. How can White act quickly and decisively?



2 Black to play

White has a huge advantage in space and a massive clamp on the d6-square but the king is in the middle of the board. Black's best chance is to try to exploit this before White gets organised. What did black play?



6 White to play

How can White obtain a sizeable advantage?



3 White to play

The two white pawns are strong central ones (on the c- and d-files) and give white good prospects. However, there is a tactical weakness in the white position that black quickly exploited. What is it and what did Black play?



7 White to play

In this battle of the passed pawns, the white c6 pawn is more advanced than black's on d4. How did White now force a way to victory by exploiting this factor to the full?



4 White to play

The White queen is under attack. What is the best way to gain a significant advantage?



8 White to play

White has a huge attack on the h-file and now secured victory with a clever combination. Can you spot the key move and the subsequent draughts-like sequence that led to a decisive material advantage?



Answers

1

The forcing line 1 ... Rxb2 2 Qxb2 Qd4+ 3 Qxd4 c1Q+ 4 Rf1 Qxf1+ 5 Kxf1 cxd4 leaves Black with a decisive material advantage

2

1 ... Qh4 creates insurmountable problems for White. If the knight moves then the f4-pawn is lost and carnage ensues. However, 2 Qe3 runs into 2 ... Qxh3 3 Qxh3 Nxf4+ and Black will emerge a piece ahead.

3

The c3-bishop is vulnerable and Black exploits this with 1 ... R8e3 Now any defence of the bishop, for example 2 Bd4, runs into 2 ... Rxh3+ 3 gxh3 Rh2 checkmate

4

1.Nxe6 gxh5 (if 1..Qxh5 2.Ng7+ Kd8 3.Re8;checkmate) Kd8 3.Re8 checkmate

5

1.Qxf8+ wins: 1...Kxf8 Rd8+ Ke7 3.Re8 checkmate

6

1.Nxd5 Qd8 2.Nxe7+ Qxe7 3.Bxc6

7

1 Qe5+ Kg8 sets up 2 Qxd6 Qxd6 3 c7 winning

8

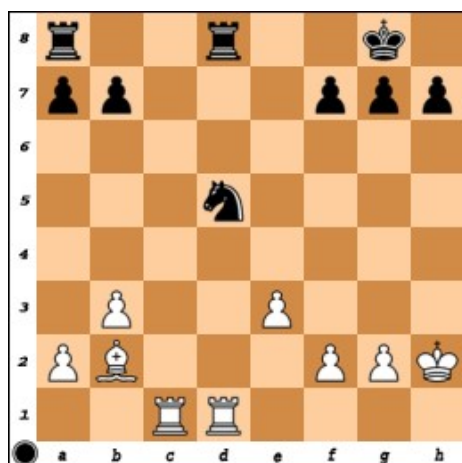
1.Qxh8+ Kxh8 and now the Knight goes on the rampage with...2 Nf6+ Kg7 3 Ne8+ Kg8 4 Nxc7

Chessable Masters Quarter Finals

Last week we looked at the group stages. This week the four quarter final matches have just finished. Here are some key moments. Look at the third diagram for the move of the round.

Magnus Carlsen beat Fabiano Caruana

This was the most impressive performance of the quarter finals. On paper a match between the World's numbers 1 and 2 was going to be close but Caruana just could not pose enough problems for the World Champion.



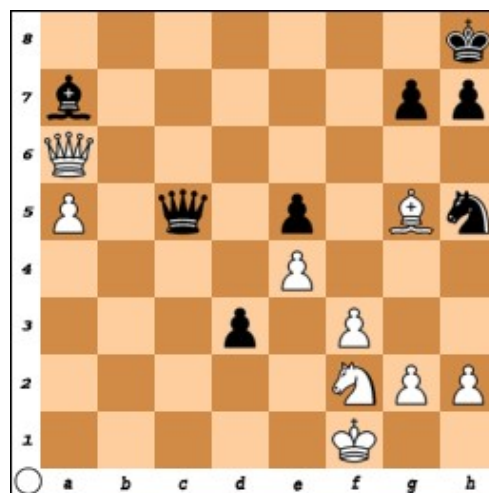
This position looks level but Carlsen, playing white, has a slight lead in development having both rooks on open files. The engines think the best move is 1 ... Nb4 but Caruana played 1 ... f6 to blunt Carlsen's bishop. Carlsen saw an opportunity to establish a rook on the 7th rank, which is a big advantage.

Carlsen played 2 Rd4 threatening Rad1 winning the knight. Caruana cannot stop the rook landing on the 7th rank. 2 ... Nb6 3 Rc7 or 2 ... Rd7 3 e4 Nb6 4 Rxd7 Nxd7 5 Rc7. Caruana played 2 ... Ne7 but this also allows 3 Rc7 taking the 7th rank. Caruana tried 3 ... Nf5 but after 4 Rg4 h5 5 Rg6 Re8 6 Bxf3 Carlsen was clearly better.

Ian Nepomniachtchi beat Vladislav Artemiev

The battle between the Russians was won by the Russian no 1. Here is a nice finish by Nepo.

Artemiev has just played ... d3 threatening Qxf2 checkmate. It looks to be very strong but it loses by force. Can you see what Nepo, playing white, played?



1 Be3 wins because 1 ... Qxe3 loses to 2 Qc8 checkmate. Artemiev tried 1 ... Qc3 hoping for 2 Qxa7 Qa1+ but Nepo played the cool 2 g3 giving the king an escape square and won after 2 ... Bxe3 3 Qa8+ with checkmate next move. Artemiev did not have to take the bishop on e3 but the white a pawn will win the game anyway.

In the next position it turns out that Artemiev, playing white, is a safe pawn up and can unravel with 1 g4 Bg6 2 Ng3 followed by Kg2. However Artemiev played 1 Ng3 allowing Nepo to play a bolt from the blue. Can you see it?



1 ... Bb1 threatens ... Re1 checkmate. 2 Rxb1 loses to 2 ... Qd3+ 3 Ne2 Qxb1+

Anish Giri beat Alexander Grischuk

Anish Giri, the Dutch number 1, proved to be too strong for Alexander Grischuk.

When both sides castle on opposite sides it is important to get an attack going quickly even if you have to give up material. Can you see how Giri playing black set problems for Grischuk?



Giri played 1 ... **Ncb4**. This does not win outright but it sets white some difficult problems after 2 **axb4 Nxb4**. If 3 **Qe2 a3 4 bxa3 Nd5** and white's king will probably not survive after moves like ... **Bc5** and ... **Rxa3**. Grischuk tried 3 **Rxd8 Nxc2 4 Rxa8 Nxe1 5 Nxe1 Qb4** and white can't defend all the pieces. If 6 **Nc3 a3 7 Nd3 axb2+ 8 Kc2 Qb3+** and white will not last long. The engines show that white can survive with 5 **Nfd2 Bf5 6 Kd1** but not many humans are likely to spot this.

Ding Liren beat Hikaru Nakamura

These two are opposites. Ding is very cool and calm but Nakamura shows his emotions during games. Ding won as white in the final game.

1 **d4 g7 2 c4 Bg7 3 e4 d6 4 Nc3 Nf6 5 Nf3 0-0 6 Be2 e5 7 0-0 Nc6 8 d5 Ne7**

This is the Kings Indian Defence. White will attack by pushing the a,b and c pawns and black will attack with ... **f5** and ... **g5**. Nakamura is an expert in this opening and Ding must have known he was likely to play it. The first 12 moves have been played before and I guess Ding had prepared the plan of **exf5, f3, Ra2** and **Rf2**.



9 **b4 Ne8 10 a4 f5 11 a5 Nc6 12 Re1 h6 13 exf5 Bxf5 14 Ra2 g5 15 h3 Qe8 16 Nh2 a6 17 Ng4 Bg6 18 Nxf6 Bxf6 19 Bd3 Nf5 20 Ne4 Bg7** Look how strong the white knight is on e4. It cannot be attacked by a pawn, supports c5 and attacks d6. Ding takes his time and prepares c5 which will put Nakamura under huge pressure. 21 **f3 Qf7 22 Rf2 Rad8 23 Bb1 Kh8 24 Bb2 Nh5 25 b5 Bf5 26 b6 Ng6 27 g3**



Only a superGM would play g3. It looks weakening but 27 ... **Bxh3** would be met by **Rh2** and **Nxg5**.

27 ... **cxh3 28 axb6 Ne7 29 Ba3 Nc8 30 Qb3 Bh7 31 Rd1 Bg8 32 Kg2 Bh7 33 c5 dxc5 34 Nxc5 Bxb1 35 Rxb1 Rfe8 35 ... Rxd5** loses to 36 **Nxb7 36 Ne6 Rd7 37 Rc1 Ne7 38 Bxe7 Qxe7 39 Rc7 Qd6 40 Rfc2 Bf6 41 Qa4 resigns** Black cannot defend. For example, 41 ... **Ree7 42 Rc8+ Kh7 43 Qe4** checkmate. Semi finals next week. Carlsen v Ding and Giri v Neponmiachtchi. Carlsen is the clear favourite but I have a feeling Giri will win it.

Puzzles from HMP Isis

Thanks to Mark who runs the chess club at Isis for these puzzles. The first four involve bishop moves at some point in the answer. On page 2 we look at an example of a great player implementing a plan. There are no tactics in the position so a different approach is needed.

1 White to play and win

The bishop and queen are a deadly attacking force. Can you see how they combine here?



5 Black to play and win

It is often dangerous to leave your king in the centre and here black has done exactly the right thing by putting a rook on the same file as the king. What did black play next?



2 White to play and win

We have seen in the first puzzle that bishops and queens combine well in attack. What did white play here?



6 White to play and win

Another example of the dangers of having your king in the centre, especially when your opponent puts a rook on the same file. How did white win?

3 White to play and win

Bishops and queens again. If you got the last puzzle you might well get this one too.



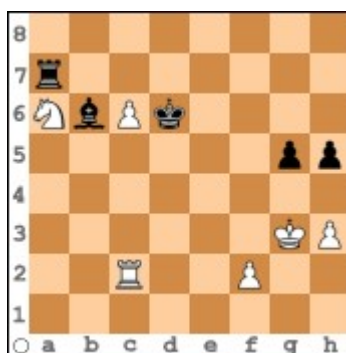
7 Black to play and win

This game was played in the British Championship in 1907. Black looks lost but has a clever winning move. Can you see it?



4 Black to play and win

It is often dangerous to develop your queen too early because it is a target. White has just played Nc3. How can black take advantage of this?



8 White to play and win

This is a win by Ian Nepomniachtchi who is currently playing in the Masters semi finals. How did he win this game?

1 The key to this puzzle is that black's pieces cannot easily get across to the kingside to defend the king. White wins by **1 Bf6 Bxf6**. This is forced because white threatened Qh8 checkmate **2 exf6 Ne4 3 Qg4+ Ng5 4 Qxg5+ Kh8 Qg7 checkmate**

2 White sees the opportunity to threaten checkmate and attack the queen with **1 Bg8**. If **1 ... Qxd2 2 Qxh7 checkmate**. Any other move by black would lose the queen. Note that white's plan would not work if the white rook was on d1 because black would have **1 ... Qxd1+ and 2 ... Kxg8**

3 **1 Bf8** threatens checkmate on g7 and the rook on c8. If **1 ... Rxf8 2 Rxc8** and white should win comfortably. If **1 ... g6 2 Rxc8 Rxf8 3 Rxf8+ Kxf8 4 Qxd4** should be an easy win for white.

4 Black can play **1 ... Bc2** and white has to give up the rook because if **2 Re1 Nb6** wins the queen. ... Bc2 cuts off the queen's escape squares.

5 Black took advantage of the king in the centre by playing **1 ... d4 2 Qxd4 Qa1+ 3 Nd1** (3 Qd1 is no better after **3 ... Qxc3+ 4 Qd2** and white has the pleasant choice between Qxc5 and Qc4 stopping white castling) **3 ... Qxd4** wins the queen.

6 Black's king in the centre allows white to play **1 Qxd8+ Kxd8 2 Bf6+ Kc8 3 Rd8 checkmate** **2 ... Ke8 3 Rd8 checkmate** is no better.

7 After **1 ... h5** white has no good way of stopping **2 ... Qxg4 checkmate**. **2 Qc4** and **2 Ne3** both allow **2 ... Qf3 checkmate**. If **2 gxh5 Qd7** is checkmate

8 The winning plan is to push the passed pawn, divert back's pieces and win on the kingside. **1 c7** (after **1 Nb4 Ra3+ 2 f3 Bc7** it will be tough to break down black's defences.) **1 ... Bxc7 2 Nxc7 Rxc7 3 Rxc7 Kxc7 4 h4** This is a very strong move that allows the white king to take the black pawns before the black king can get back. **4 ... gxh4** (**4 ... g4 5 Kf4 Kd6 6 Kg5 Ke5 7 Kxh5** also wins for white) **5 Kxh4 Kd6 6 Kxh5 Ke5 7 Kg5** and black cannot stop the pawn.

How to implement a plan

In this position white is better but has no immediate win. Black has less space and the light squared bishop can hardly move. Unlike the other positions we have looked at there are no immediate tactics so white needs a plan.

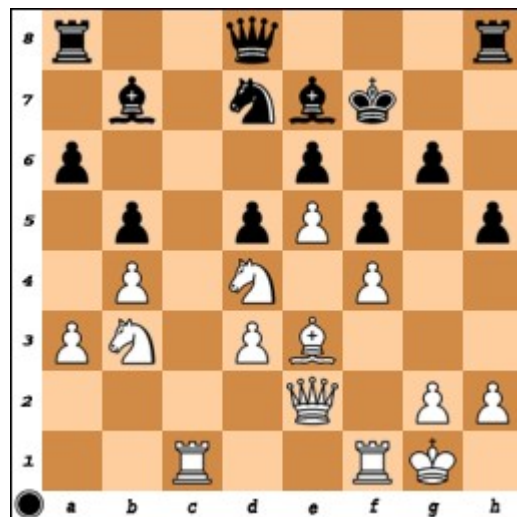
The plan has three stages. 1 Take control of the c file. 2 Establish a rook on the 7th rank. 3 Use the power of the rook to win material. Steinitz, World Chess Champion from 1886 to 1894, certainly knew what to do! Let's watch.

1 ... Rc8 2 Na5 Ba8 3 Rxc8 Qxc8 4 Rc1 Qb8 5 Qc2. Stage 1 complete. White now controls the c file.

5 ... Bd8 6 Nac6 Qb7 (**6 ... Bxc6** allows **7 Qxc6 Nf8 8 Qxa6** with advantage to white) **7 Nxd8+ Rxd8 8 Qc7 Qb8 9 Bf2** threatening Bh4 **9 ... Qb6 10 Nf3 Qxc7 11 Rxc7** Stage 2 complete. Occupation of the 7th rank. Look how weak black's pieces are. The bishop has no squares and the knight and rook cannot move.

11 ... Ke8 12 Ng5 Nf8 13 Bc5 threatening checkmate with Re7 **13 ... Nd7 14 Bd6 resigns**. Stage 3 complete. Black resigned because the e pawn cannot be saved and the whole position will fall apart.

One thing that interested me is that white's play looks quite slow and measured but every white move contained a threat. Steinitz was constantly forcing his opponent to react.



Puzzles from HMP Leeds

Thanks to Stephen who runs the chess club at Leeds for these puzzles. Puzzle 3 is spectacular. I found puzzle 5 tough because I kept wanting to play Rb7 which does not work. Puzzle 8 is also tricky. I saw the correct first move but I couldn't see why it worked.

1 White to play

Here we have two puzzles in one. White is threatened with mate and the obvious 1 Qe4 is actually a blunder that enables black to win with a clever response. Can you see the black answer to 1 Qe4 and also what white actually played to win the game?



5 White to play

What is White's most direct path to a decisive advantage?



2 White to play

Chess problems like this are artificial constructions, not from actual play, but very good for improving your feel for how the pieces interact. How does White co-ordinate the bishop and queen to deliver mate in two? Thanks to the British Chess Problem Society for this puzzle.



6 White to play

The b7-rook seems to be lost as it is trapped after 1 Re7 Ng8. Instead White found a tactical sequence that led to a winning end-game. Can you see it?

3 White to play

Today's puzzle takes us back to the 19th century as White now sacrifices almost every piece to strip the black king of protection and deliver mate. The conclusion is reminiscent of a famous win by the legendary American master Paul Morphy played at an opera house in Paris in 1858. Can you spot the magnificent finish?



7 White to play

This position appears to be overwhelming for white thanks to active pieces, a huge kingside attack and a powerful advanced pawn on g6. However, rapid action is needed as the black rooks are threatening the g6-pawn along the sixth rank. Can you spot White's clever breakthrough?



4 White to play

The white pawn is one square away from queening but queen endgames are tricky to handle at the best of times. Can you spot the move that ended Black's resistance?



8 White to play

White has a strong pin along the h4-d8 diagonal and the pressure is already overwhelming. However, black has planned a trap with 1 Nxf6+ Kh8, which, surprisingly, is fine as the threat against the white queen means that the knight on f6 can be taken next move. Nevertheless, white has a better move than 1 Nf6+. Can you see it?

1

1 Qe4 fails dramatically to 1 ... Re5 2 Qxf3 (2 Qxe5 Qg2 checkmate) 2 ... Rxe1 checkmate.
White actually played 1 c5+ which will force checkmate with a typical line being 1 ... Rxc5 2 Rb4+ Ka7 3 Qa4+ Kb8 4 Re8+ Bc8 5 Rxc8+ Kxc8 6 Qe8 checkmate

2

1.Qa8 b2 2.Kb4 checkmate

3

1 Nxd5 exd5 2 Rxd5+ Kxd5 3Qc4+ Kd6 4 Qc5+ Kd7 5 Qxe7+ Kc8 6 Qe8+ Nd8 and now the final sacrifice 7 Qxd8+ Kxd8 8.Re8 checkmate.

4

1.Qb3 Kc6 (if 1 ... Qxb3 2 b8Q+ Kc5 3 Qxb3 leaves white a queen up) 2.Qxd5 Kxd5 3.b8Q winning.

5

1.Qxf6+ Kxf6 (if 1...Kf8 2.Ng6+ Ke8 3.Ba4+ Nb5 4.Bxb5+ Bd7 5.Qxh8 checkmate) 2.Nd5 Kg7 3.Bd4+ f6 4.Nxc7 Bf5 5.Bxf5 Nxf5 6..Nxa8 Rxa8 with a massive advantage in material.

6

1 Rxb6 Qxb6 2 Qxf6+ Kxf6 3 Nd5+ Ke6 4 Nxb6 leaves White with a winning material advantage.

7

1 d6 lines up a mating idea which is revealed after 1 ... Rbxd6 (the only way to deal with White's threat is 1 ... Be6 but then 2 d7 wins) 2 Qxh6+ gxh6 3.Rh7checkmate

8

After 1 Qxf6 Bxf6 2 Bxf6 the threat of 3 Ne7+ means that White will always emerge a piece up. Play continued 2 ... b5 3 Bxd8 Rfxd8 4 Bd1 and White won easily.

Puzzles from HMP Leeds

Thanks to Stephen who runs the chess club at Leeds for these puzzles. There is a common theme between the last two puzzles.

1 Black to play

A fork is where a knight attacks two pieces at once. Always be on the look out for forks. Can you see how black sets one up here?



5 White to play

The continuation 1 Rxe8+ Bxe8 2 Qh7+ appears attractive but leads nowhere after 2 ... Kf8. How did White improve on this?



2 Black to play

This puzzle is more complicated but also involves a fork. Can you see how black won?



6 Black to play

These next two puzzles involve black taking advantage of weaknesses on the back rank. White is a rook for a knight up but has left the back rank open. Black would like to play Rc1+ but white can block with Rd1. Can you see a better move for black?

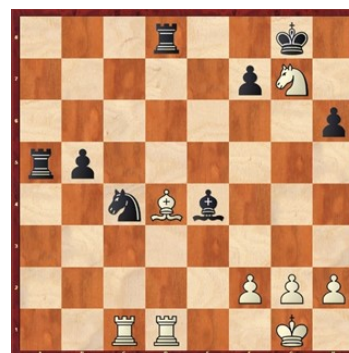
3 White to play

There is a saying in chess that loose pieces drop off (or LPDO). This "rule" cannot be repeated too often. The black d5-knight is loose, being protected only by the vulnerable black queen. How did white dislodge the queen and win a piece?



7 Black to play

White's back rank is vulnerable but it takes great imagination to see how this can be exploited. How did Black continue?



4 White to play

Black's position looks fine at first sight but it has a serious weakness. Can you see how white won?



8 White to play

White has a promising attack on the kingside but a direct attack gets nowhere. Bh6 can be answered by ... g6 and Qe5 by ... f6. Can you see what white played?

1

1...Qxe2+ 2.Kxe2 Nxd4+ forks the king and queen and wins the queen back with an extra two pawns after 3 Kd1 Nxc2 4 Kxc2 Nxe5.

2

After 1 ... Qxe4 2 Qxe4 Nf2+ the knight forks the king and queen. 3 Kg1 Nxe4 and black will emerge a piece ahead. White cannot play 3 Rxf2 as Rd1 is checkmate.

3

1 g4 weakens the protection of the knight at d5. After 1 ... Qe6 (1 ... Qe4+ 2 Bg2 wins) 2 Re2 Ne3 3 Bg2 (to avoid 3 ... Nxf1, counterattacking against the white queen) Black cannot escape the e-file pin and 4 Rbe1 will be decisive

4

The simple 1 Bc7 wins material as the black rook must maintain protection of the knight at d7. Black tried 1 ... Bd5 but after 2 Bxd8 Rxd8 3 Nc3, white won easily.

5

1 Qh7+ leads to the forcing sequence 1 ... Bxh7 2 Rxe8+ Qf8 3 Rxf8+ Kxf8 4 Nxh7+ and white emerges a piece up

6

1 ... Qb4 wins. 2 Qxb4 and 2 Rxb4 are both met by 2 ... Rc1+ with checkmate to follow. White can try 2 Qd1 but 2 ... Qxd4 wins easily because 3 Qxd4 fails to 3 ... Rc1+ with checkmate to follow.

7

1 ... Bc2 is a beautiful exploitation of White's weak back rank. After 2 Rxc2 (there is nothing better) 2 ... Rxd4 the reply 3 Rxd4 leads to checkmate following 3 ... Ra1+. Therefore white must move the rook away with, eg, 3 Re1, when 3 ... Kxg7 leaves Black a piece ahead.

8

The winning move is 1 Bc7. If black does not take the bishop then white wins a rook for a bishop. If black plays 1 ... Rxc7 then 2 Qe5 threatens checkmate on g7 and the rook on c7. Black can try to wriggle with 2 ... Kf8 3 Qxc7 Bd6 but white can play Qd8+ Be8 4 Rh3 and should win.

The common theme is that puzzles 4, 7 and 8 all begin with surprising bishop moves.

The Online Chess Masters

Twelve of the best players in the World are playing next week in the Online Chess Masters. It lasts two weeks and we will print the best games. Players get about 15 minutes each rather than the two hours they usually have and if they run out of time they lose even if they have a better position. This makes it quick and exciting with plenty of upsets. Here are some games of four players we will be able to follow.

Magnus Carlsen

The 29 year old Norwegian World Champion will start as the favourite. He also likes playing 5 a side football, supports Real Madrid and has modelled for G-Star Raw, Hugo Boss and Omega.

Here is a recent win playing white against the very strong Armenian Lev Aronian.

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nxe5 d6 4 Nf3 Nxe4 5 Nc3 the most popular move is d4 but it tends to lead to equal positions. Carlsen wants to mix things up. **5 ... Nxc3 6 dxc3 Be7 7 Be3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nd7 9 0-0-0** castling on opposite sides is a great way to unbalance the game. Now both players have to attack. **9 ... c6 10 h4** Another good way of unbalancing the position. **10 ... d5 11 Bd3 Re8 12 Rde1 Nf6 13 Ng5**



Carlsen is building up pieces on the kingside but doesn't really have anything if black doesn't panic. **30 ... c5 14 c4 h6 15 cxd5 c4** It turns out that this is the losing move. **15 ... hxg5 16 hxg5 Nd7 17 Bh7+ Kf8 18 d6** is hopeless for black but **15 ... Qxd5** holds the balance. **16 Bxc4** Black's idea to lure the bishop away from d3 and take the knight, but white's attack is just too strong. **16 ... hxg5 17 hxg5 Ne4 18 Qd1**

heading for h5 **18 ... Bxg5 19 Qh5** threatening checkmate **Bxe3+ 20 Rxe3 f5** the king needs an escape square **21 d6+ Be6 22 Qxh7+ resigns** White is winning after **22 ... Kf7 23 Qxf5+ Qf6 24 Qxe4**

Two things to take away from this game are the way opposite side castling with 9 0-0-0 and attacking with 10 h4 unbalanced the position and can cause problems for even the best players.

Fabiano Caruana

There will be three Americans in the tournament, all with a good chance of victory. Hikaru Nakamura is a great speed chess player and Fabiano Caruana challenged Carlsen for the World Championship last year. Here is Caruana playing white and smashing Nakamura.

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Bb5+ c6 8 Ba4 b5 9 Bb3 a5 10 Nf3 0-0 11 0-0 c5 White has a big centre and black is trying to challenge it **12 a4 b4 13 cxb4 cxd4 14 b5 Bb7 15 e5 e6** The losing move. It is far from clear why at this point although Caruana has seen it all. **16 Bg5 Qb6 17 Qxd4**



A strong move. It is not obvious because it allows queens to be exchanged and gives up a pawn but Caruana has realised that after the exchanges the black knight will have no squares **17 ... Qxd4 18 Nxd4 Bxe5 19 Rad1 Re8** Nakamura could have tried **19 ... Bg7** but after **20 Rd2 Bd5 21 Bxd5 exd5 22 Be3 Nd7 23 Nc6** the d pawn falls and white has a big plus. **20 Rfe1 Bg7 21 Nxe6 resigns** if **21 ... fxe6 22 Rxe6 Rxe6 (22 ... Rf8 loses to Rf6+)** **23 Bxe6+** and **Rd8** checkmate

Daniil Dubov

The form player. The 24 year old Russian won last month's strongest tournament. Russia has been the strongest chess playing country for over 50 years and will have two or three players in the tournament but Dubov is the rising star. He became a GrandMaster at 14 and is known for playing sharp, aggressive openings. Here is a win against the strongest Chinese player Ding Liren.

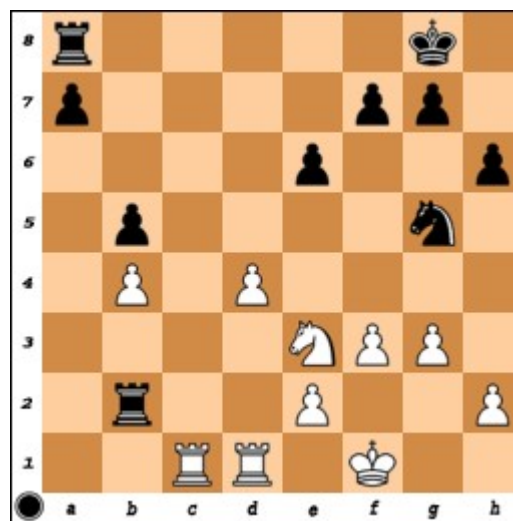
1 c4 Nf6 2 g3 c6 3 Bg2 d5 4 Nf3 dxc4 5 O-O Nbd7 6 Na3 Nb6 7 Qc2 Be6 8 Ne5 h5 As in the last game Dubov pushes the h pawn to unbalance the position **9 Naxc4 Nxc4 10 Nxc4 h4 11 Ne5 hxg3 12 hxg3 Qc8 13 Rd1 Bh3 14 Bf3 g6 15 b4 Bg7 16 Bb2 Kf8** A really ambitious move. White had threats of **Nxc6** winning the rook on a8 if the king stayed on e8 **17 a4 Nh7 18 b5** White goes wrong around here. **18 Qc5** stops **18 ... Ng5** because of **19 Nxg6+** and **Qxg5** **18 ... Ng5 19 bxc6** This turns out to be too slow. Now Dubov has a great finish.



19 ... Bxe5 20 Bxe5 Nxf3+ 21 exf3 Bg2 22 resigns Bg2 is a great move. **23 Kxg2** fails to **23 ... Qh3+** **24 Kg1 Qh1** checkmate and a move such as **23 cxb7** fails to **23 ... Rh1+** **26 Kxg2 Qh3** checkmate

Alireza Firouzja

Firouzja is the ultimate challenger, only 16 and has already been a GrandMaster for two years. He is improving fast and can beat all the top players on his day. Here is one of his wins against the Frenchman Maxime Vachier-Lagrave



Should Firouzja, playing black, take the b pawn? If he does then white can build a dangerous attack. Firouzja must have seen this but still took. **1 ... Rxb4 2 d5 exd5 3 Nxd5 Rb2 4 Nf4 a5 5 Rd7 a4 6 h4 Nh7 6 Rcc7** Firouzja must have seen this position when he took the pawn. White has both rooks in attack and Firouzja cannot defend f7. **6 ... Nf6** very cool. **6 ... Rf8** fails to **7 Ne6 fxe6 8 Rxc7** with mate to follow. **7 Rxf7 Ne8 8 Rce7 a3 9 Ng6 a2 10 Rf8+ Kh7 11 h5 a1(Q)+** Firouzja gets a queen but white is only one move from checkmate. **12 Kg2 Nf6** Good defence. The rook on a8 now prevents **Rh8** checkmate. **13 Rxf6 Rxe2+ 14 resigns**

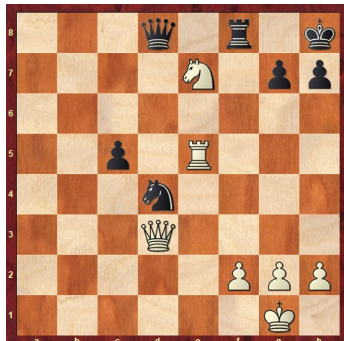
A common theme is that the losers only made small mistakes but they were blown away. The losers are also great players but these top players punish small mistakes and are keen to attack. It should be a great tournament. I'll show some games next week in Inside Chess 34.

Puzzles from HMP Isis

Thanks to Mark who runs the chess club at Isis for these puzzles. The first four puzzles are on the same theme. Number 4 is really tough but if you solve the first three you have a very good chance of seeing it.

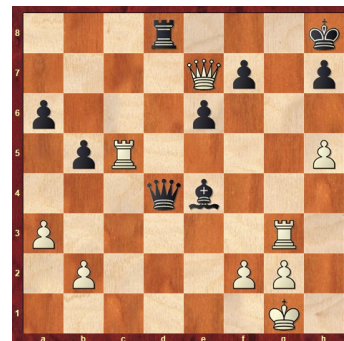
1 White to play and win

The first four puzzles share the same theme. The strong knight restricts the king. If only white could open the h file ...



5 White to play

A change of theme. White has a stunning move that leads to checkmate in two moves in all variations



2 Black to play and win

The details are different but the idea is the same as in the first puzzle.



6 White to play and win

Always watch out for forks, especially when knights are around. How can white set up a fork to win the game?

3 White to play and win

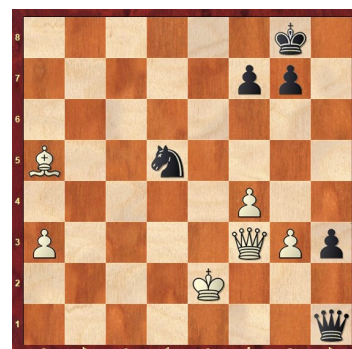
White has to act quickly because black is threatening checkmate in 2 moves.



7 Black to play and win

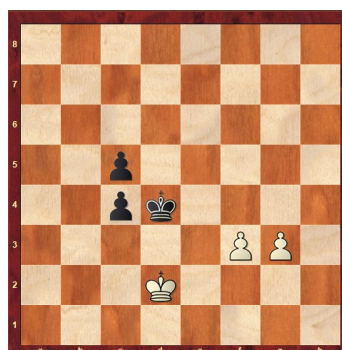
We finish with two end-game puzzles..

At first glance white has a promising position with the passed a pawn. However, black has a way of crashing through with the h pawn. Can you see it?



4 Black to play and win

This is the most spectacular but the idea is the same as in the first three puzzles.



8 White to play and win

Black has doubled pawns. These can be a weakness in an endgame because they cannot defend each other. Can you see how white exploits this?

Answers

1 The white knight is key because it stops the black king escaping to g6 or g8. White can open up the h file by sacrificing the queen.

1 Qxh7+ Kxh7 2 Rh5 checkmate

2 Here is the same idea but black has to see that the knight check on e2 restricts the white king.

1 ... Ne2+ 2 Kh1 Qxh2+ 3 Kxh2 Rh4 checkmate

Again the black knight stops the white king escaping to the g file.

3 This one is a bit different but the strong knight on e7 still plays a key part

1 Rxh7+ Nxh7 (if 1 ... Kxh7 2 Qh5 checkmate) 2 Qc8+ Nf8 3 Qxf8+ Kh7 4 Qg8 checkmate

4 This is more spectacular but contains exactly the same idea. Once the black knight has driven the white king to the edge of the board black sacrifices a queen and a rook to open the h file and deliver checkmate.

1 ... Ne2+ 2 Kh1 Qxg4 3 hxg4 Rh5+ 4 gxh5 Rh4 checkmate

5 White has a real knockout move

1 Rd5 a brilliant move. Black can take the rook four ways and they all lose. 1 ... Qxd5

(if 1 ... Rxd5 2 Qf8 checkmate)

(if 1 ... Bxd5 2 Qxd8 checkmate)

(if 1 ... exd5 2 Qxd8 checkmate)

2 Qf6 checkmate.

6 The strong position of the white knight gives white a strong follow-up.

1 Bxb7 Qxb7 2 Qd5 Qxd5 (Black has to take because if the queen moves then white takes the rook on a8 and if 2... Nc6 3 Qxc6 Qxc6 4 Nxe7+ Kh8 5 Nxc6 and white is a piece up) 3 Nxe7+ Kh8 4 Nxd5 and white is a piece up.

7 Black can force the h pawn through

1 ... Qxf3 2 Kxf3 Ne3 this stops the white king from blocking the pawn. If 3 Kxe3 h2 and the pawn queens. If 3 Kf2 h2 and the pawn still queens.

8 White can force black's king away and win both pawns.

1 g4 remember that it is usually a good idea to push passed pawns. 1 ... c3+ 2 Kc2 Kc4 3g5 Kd5 4 g6 Ke6 5 f4 Kf6 6 f5 and white wins. The black pawns are doubled and cannot defend each other.

Puzzles from HMP Leeds

Thanks to Stephen who runs the chess club at Leeds for these puzzles. Puzzle 5 is tough.

1 Black to play

Black has a promising attack. However, white plans Rh1, when the black initiative will fizzle out. Therefore black needs to act immediately and did so by finding an unexpected weakness in the white camp. How did white continue?



5 White to play

This ending is tough because both kings are exposed to checks. But white has a way to win the black queen. Can you see it?



2 White to play

The black king is exposed but it is not immediately obvious how white's pieces can exploit this. Meanwhile, black has two central passed pawns threatening to advance. White has only one way to conclude the attack successfully what is the correct line?



6 White to play

Here White has two attractive ways to force a quick win. Full marks if you spot both of them.



3 White to play

Black's pieces are misplaced on the opposite side of the board. White has a very strong quiet move. Can you spot it?



7 White to play

What is White's best chance of gaining an advantage?



4 White to play

Black threatens 1 ... Nf3+ so white must act fast. What did white play?



8 White to play

Mate in two How?



1

1 ... Rxf3 2 exf3 Qh2+ 3 Kf1 Ne3+ 4 fxe3 Qxc2 wins the white queen. If 2 Kxf3 Bg5 (other moves also win), 3 ... Ne3+ is threatened, the move ... Rf8+ is coming and the white king is fatally exposed.

2

1 Rf6 opens up a route in for the white queen as 1 ... Nxf6 allows 2 Qg6+ Kh8 3 Qg7 checkmate. The alternative 1 ... Qe7 fails to 2 Qg6+ Kh8 3 Rf7 winning

3

After 1 Qe8 there is no defence to the threat of...Qxf7+ and checkmate follows. If 1 ... Qc7 2.Qxf7+ Kh8 Qg7 checkmate.

4

1 Nf6+ results in a fatal exposure of the black king. For example 1 ... gxf6 2 Re7+ Kg6 3 Qg4 is checkmate. Black could try 1 ... Kg6 but 2 Qg4+ Kf7 (2 ... Kxf6 3 Qe6+ Kg5 4 Re5+ Kf4 5 g3+ Kxg3 6 Qg4 checkmate) 3 Qe6+ Kg6 4 Qe8+ Kg5 5 Re5+ Kf4 6 Nh5 checkmate

5

1.Qh8 Kg5 2.f4+ Kxf4 3.Qh4+ Ke5 4.Qe7+Kd5 (if ...Kf4 5.Qe3 checkmate) 5.Qb7+ winning the Black queen.

6

1.Rh8+ Kxh8 2.Qh6+ Kg8 3.Qxg7 checkmate as is... 1. Qxg6+ fxg6 2. Bd5+ Kf8 3. Rh8 checkmate

7

1.Nxb6 Nxb6 2.Bxa5 Nxc4 3.Bxd8 leaves white a pawn up

8

1.Qd8+ Nxd8 2.Re8 checkmate

Chessable Online Masters Group A

This tournament includes 12 of the best players in the World and lasts for the next two weeks. Two groups of six play in a league and the top four from each group play in a knockout.

Group A is tough. It includes Magnus Carlsen from Norway, the World Champion, Hikaru Nakamura from the US, the king of speed chess, three Russians, the veteran Alexander Grischuk and two rising stars, Daniil Dubov and Vladislav Artemiev, and Pentala Harikrishna from India, an amazing player (he would beat all of us with his eyes shut) but the lowest ranked here, so the other players will target him.

By the last round Carlsen and Artemiev were safe but the others were playing for a place in the quarter finals. Wins by Nakamura and Grishuk, which we show here, saw them through and Dubov and Harikrishna were knocked out. One idea these games teach us is how to sacrifice a rook for a bishop. We will look at that on the next page.

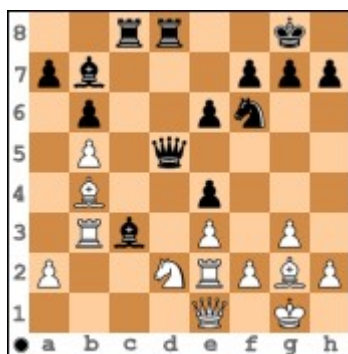
1 White to play

Pentala Harikrishna is the lowest ranked in Group A. He lost his first game and then faced the World Champion. Carlsen, playing black, has a comfortable game with a lovely knight on c5 has just played ... Ba4. Hari is white. What should he play?



5 Black to play

Daniil Dubov —Vladislav Artemiev. A battle between the two young Russians. Dubov has just played h4, so crude and yet so hard to defend. Can Artemiev take the bishop?



2 Black to play

Top players have support teams to analyse, play and find new ideas. Daniil Dubov has helped Magnus Carlsen but is now a challenger and beat Carlsen in their first game. They are friends but this is personal. Carlsen, playing black, wants revenge. How did he get it?



6 White to play

Carlsen, the World Champion, against Nakamura, the king of speed chess. Carlsen, playing white, came up with a neat trick to win at least a pawn. Can you spot it?

3 Black to play

This is from Harikrishna-Artemiev. Material is level but Artemiev, playing black, has a lead in development. How can he take advantage of this?



7 White to play

Hikaru Nakamura—Daniil Dubov. We looked at attacking with the f pawn a few weeks ago and here we see one of the World's best doing it. How did Nakamura wreck Dubov's position to make it into the next round?



4 White to play

Carlsen—Artemiev. Carlsen has played h4, h5 and exchanged the h pawns. Even World Champions do it. This game was drawn but Carlsen missed a winning chance here. Can you do better?



8 White to play

Alexander Grischuk—Pentala Harikrishna. This is also from the final round and both players needed a win to have a chance of qualification. Can you spot Grischuk's move that destroyed Hari's position?

Exchange sacrifices

A rook is worth 5 pawns and a bishop is only worth 3 but sometimes it is worth giving up a rook for a bishop if you get a lot of pawns in return or other advantages. This is called an exchange sacrifice and occurred in two of the games in Group A. If nothing else it provides an unbalanced interesting position.

Carlsen v Grischuk

Grischuk is two pawns up but is in some trouble. White is threatening to win the bishop which cannot move because white could take the queen. Grischuk could play 26 ... Re5 but Carlsen could then win a pawn back with 27 Nxc4 and the bishop cannot retake because it is pinned against the queen.

Grischuk decided to give up a rook for a bishop. 26 ... Rxe3 27 Qxe3 c3 Now Carlsen does not have time to take the bishop because after 28 Rxd5 Rxd5 29 Rxd5 Qxd5 30 Qe2 Qd2 and Carlsen cannot stop Grischuk queening the pawn.



Play continued 28 f3 Qc6 29 Qd3 c2 30 Rc1 Rc3 Grischuk has plenty of compensation for the exchange. The bishop is powerful in the centre of the board and the c pawn is a monster. White's extra rook can do nothing but block the pawn.

31 Qf5 Qe8 Grischuk threatens to win a rook with ... Qe3+ and ... Qxc1.

32 Qf4 Bxa2 33 Qd2 Qc6 and Grischuk has a big advantage because white cannot stop the plan of slowly pushing the queenside pawns.

In fact Carlsen managed to wriggle out with a draw but the exchange sacrifice gave black a big advantage and provided an interesting game.

- 1 The one that got away.** 1 Rxa4 Nxa4 2 Qa7 Rb4 3 Qa5 Rb8 4 Qxa4 gives Hari a winning advantage. The game went 1 h4 h5 and both players missed it again.
- 2 Revenge for Carlsen.** Carlsen played 1 ... Qxb3 2 axb3 Bxb4 3 Bf1 and the white knight is pinned and can be won by black at will by ... Rc7 and ... Rd7. Carlsen saw there is no rush because white can do nothing and played 3 ... a5 4 Qd1 h6 5 resigns.
- 3 Pressure on the queenside.** 1 ... Nxc3 wins because after 2 bxc3 3 Bxc3 white cannot save the rook and prevent ... Re1 checkmate. Play continued 2 Nxb7 Na5 3 Rb1 Ra8 4 a3 Ra7 and queenside pressure won for black.
- 4 Crude but effective.** 1 Ng5 threatening Qf3 and Qh3 is hard to stop. For example, 1 ... Nb6 2 Qf3 Rf8 3 Qg3 c6 4 Qh4 and white is well on top

Carlsen v Dubov

Carlsen has just played exd4, a risky and aggressive move. The first thing to notice is that 15 ... Qxe2 fails to 16 Re1 Qxc2 17 Rxe8+ Nf8 18 Rxc2 and white is a rook for a bishop up. However Dubov saw that after 15 ... Bh6 the white rook cannot move because if 16 Rb1 Qxe2 17 Re1 Qxc2 18 Rxe8+ Nf8 and black is a queen up.

Carlsen decided to give up the rook for the bishop. Play continued 15 ... Bh6 16 Bd3 Bxc1 17 Qxc1.

What has Carlsen got in return for giving up the rook? The answer is black squares on the kingside. The f6, g7 and h6 squares are weak now black has lost the bishop. White wants to play Bf4, Bh6, Qf4, Qf6 and Qg7 checkmate.



Play continued 17 ... Qf6 18 Bf4 Nf8 19 Bg5 Qh8. Dubov stops the checkmate but at the cost of shutting the queen away in the corner. White now switches to the centre.

20 d5 cxd5 21 cxd5 Nd7 Black does not have many moves. 22 Bb5 Qg7 23 Bh6 Qf6 24 Rd4 Carlsen starts to lose his way. This looks tempting because white can attack the black Queen with Rf4 but the engines prefer 24 Qc7 threatening to win the knight. 24 ... Qd8 allows 25 Qxd6 and 24 ... Qe7 allows 25 Qc3 Qf6 26 Qxf6 Nxf6 27 Bxe8 Nxe8 28 Re1 and black cannot prevent 29 Re7.

Play continued 24 ... a6 25 Rf4 Qe7 26 Bxd7 Bxd7 27 Bg5 Rac8 28 Qa1 Hoping to play b3, Bh6 and Qg7 checkmate but white does not have the time. 28 ... Qe2 29 b3 Rc2 Now both sides are threatening checkmate in two moves but black is quicker 30 Bh4 This stops ... Qxf2+ but now white no longer threatens Bh6 and the white attack disappears. Dubov is still a rook for a bishop up and soon won.

- 5 A poisoned bishop.** Black cannot take. 1 ... hxg5 2 hxg5 Ne8 3 Rah3 f5 4 g6 and Rh8 checkmate is coming. Black could give up the knight on move 2 but the open h file is lethal.
- 6 A neat tactic.** 1 Ndc6 wins. 1 ... bxc6 loses to 2 Nxc6 Qf6 3 Bxd6 Nxd6 4 Qxd6 leaving white at least a pawn up. 4 ... Qxb2 loses a piece to 5 Ne7+ Kh8 6 Nxc8 Raxc8 7 Rxc8 Rxc8 Qxd7
- 7 Attacking on the f file.** There is no good answer to 1 f6. Moving the bishop and letting the pawn to stay on f6 will eventually be fatal. 1 ... Ng4 2 Qf3 Nxf6 3 e5 Ne4 4 Nxe4 dxe4 5 Qxf7+ Kh8 6 Qf4 leaves white well on top. Nakamura tried 2 ... Qxf6 but lost a piece to 3 Qxg4.
- 8 A marauding rook.** 1 Rxe6 wins at least a piece. 1 ... fxe6 loses to 2 Qxf7+ Kh8 3 Qe8+ Kg7 4 Rf7 checkmate and 1 ... Qxf4 loses to 2 Re8+ Nf8 3 Rxf4.