KRAMNIK
my life and games

EVERYMAN CHESS
Vladimir Kramnik & Iakov Damsky
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Authors’ Foreword

The great satirists Ilya Ilf and Evgeny Petrov explained in detail how to write a book together. Alas, their experience as well as that of other ‘duets’ – from the Goncourt brothers to the Weiner brothers – was not used this time. There were no quarrels, no arguments, and not even any drawing of lots, except that the author-grandmaster resolutely crossed out the paragraphs in which the author-master tried to praise him excessively...

Iakov Damsky wrote the biographical chapters of the book and the introductions to those selected games where another author is not indicated.

Vladimir Kramnik annotated the selected games, analysed some of the other games included, and the rest will be evident from the text.

The co-authors would like to hope and trust that the book will be enjoyed by chess-loving readers, and that it will be both useful and interesting to them.

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An Unusual Childhood

IT SEEMS TO ME that his birth was foretold long before it actually occurred. In the spring of 1970, Belgrade, full of warmth and light, received all, without exception, the best chess players in the world: in progress was the first match in the history of sport — and not only of chess — between one national team and a team from the entire rest of the world. ‘USSR-World’ — these two words hung above the enormous Trades Union Palace, and cried out from thousands of posters in the streets, in the parks, and on the embankments of the Sava and the Danube. The grandmasters were unable to stick their noses out of their hotel: a solid ring of fans would appear instantly and would grow with every second...

Only, all this was filled with so much love for chess and for chess players, there was such a genuine interest in every approach and every question, that the participants simply could not sweep aside the stream of universal interest and attention. The taciturn Yefim Geller and the introvert Mikhail Botvinnik readily entered into conversations, and even Bobby Fischer gave the first and last interview in his life to a special correspondent of Soviet Television. ‘Your team will be the strongest for a long time, but a future world champion can be born anywhere, and even there, where chess is not played at all.’ — I can hear these words on an old, dried-out, black and white cine-film which is still kept in my archives...

Of course, in the first instance Bobby had himself in mind, although it is difficult to recognise his native New York as that corner of the earth where chess is not played seriously. On the other hand, this definition — and without any stretching — is applicable to Tuapse: quiet, even sleepy in winter, but in summer a flourishing resort; it was one of the most southerly towns on the Black Sea coast of the Soviet Union and is now the most southerly on the territory of the modern Russian state. Even in the high season it lacked the pride, arrogance and noisy bustle of Sochi, which was favoured by the authorities and therefore had become rich; it lived its own life, not for show but for its own sake.

And now imagine an ordinary, quite modern block, in one of the flats of which the father is an artist and sculptor who is well known in his circle and throughout the Krasnodar Region, and whose works are exhibited. The mother is a music teacher, and in tune with studies played by children, in the home there is that special harmony that always lifts you up one step above the everyday existence. There are also two boys in the family, initially small and thin, always ready to jump virtually from the window into the sea that from June till October is warm and soft...

No one in the house, or indeed in the town, played chess professionally. But an intellectual family, naturally, had a chess set, and one day the father showed his younger son the moves, explained a few things, and over the course of several evenings played perhaps a couple of dozen games with him. It must have been providence that urged him to do this — the seeds could not have fallen on more fruitful soil. His son was only four at the time, but something in this magic game suddenly excited him much more than the other games and pursuits of childhood...

Of course, some elements of a child’s perception of the world were stored in Vladimir Kramnik’s memory, but... At the age of five he was already attending the town’s House of Pioneers, where the chess club was run by the only ‘chess
professional’ in Tuapse. He held first category rating, and his understanding of chess corresponded to this level, but he loved his work and he was able to captivate the boys in his group.

When Vladimir was in the third year at school, he won the adult championship of the town and – as a local celebrity – became the centre of attention. No, it did not bring him any indulgences at school, not that he needed them. Incidentally, Vladimir did not receive a gold medal after finishing school, but only because he did not take his final exams: at the time he was playing in the World Junior Championship.

But in chess... The seven-year-old(!) first category player was helped for a year or two by much more experienced mentors: master players Orest Averkin, who in his time had seconded Lev Polugayevsky during his battle for the world crown, and Alexey Osachuk. And he himself was growing rapidly – both physically, and in the figurative sense. He was playing only in the Krasnodar Region, since there was not yet the opportunity to travel further, but at the regional championships he managed to collect all the necessary points like nuts from a tree, and at the age of 11 he left the legion of first category players and was awarded the title of candidate master. And a little later, in the famous school of Mikhail Botvinnik, when he stood by the demonstration board his head already reached the eighth rank; his height, like his play, was becoming extraordinary...

But first try to imagine the chess level of a nine-year-old boy who is not yet familiar with theory – sometimes his knowledge extends only to the initial 6-8 moves, and in by no means all the openings, but who has already learned without assistance to look for – and find! – plans, and to regroup the pieces so that they work towards a common goal.

The signs of a perfect chess pitch are already evident here.

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**No.1**

**Oganian–Kramnik**  
Belorechensk 1984  
Sicilian Defence

This was the Junior Championship of the Krasnodar Region with an age ‘ceiling’ of 16. Kramnik, naturally, was the youngest competitor, a role which he became accustomed to playing for some 10-12 years. Another current grandmaster, Sergey Tiviakov, was two years older, but it was they, the youngest among the young, who won this championship.

However, before this game from the last round it was Oganian who was leading. Only victory over him would change the situation in the tournament table, and this had to be done with the black pieces...

```
1 e4 c5 2 d3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Qxd4 Qe6 5 Qc3 d6 6 Qe3 Qf6 7 Qc4 a6 8 Qb3 Qc7 9 Qe2 Qe7 10 0–0 0–0 11 f3 Qa5 12 g4 Qxb3+ 13 Qxb3 Qc6 14 Qd5 Qd7 15 Qhf1 b5 16 a3 Qb8 17 f4 b4 18 axb4 Qxb4 19 Qd4 a5 20 Qfd1 0–0 21 f5 Qc5 22 f6 Qxb3+ 23 cxb3 Qxf6 24 Qxf6 Qxf6 25 Qh6 Qh8! 26 Qxf8 Qxd4 27 Qg1 Qxe4 28 h4 Qb4 29 Qd2 Qxb3 30 Qxd6 Qb6 31 Qg4 Qxc3+ 0–1
```

This game had been preceded in the penultimate round by the following battle.

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**No.2**

**Kramnik–Serdyukov**  
Belorechensk 1984  
Sicilian Defence

```
1 e4 c5 2 Qf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Qxd4 Qf6 5 Qc3 g6 6 Qe3 Qg7 7 f3 0–0 8 Qe4 Qc6 9 Qd2 Qd7 10 0–0 0–0 Qc8 11 Qb3 Qe5 12 h4 Qh5
```

At this point White’s theoretical knowledge in the Sicilian Dragon Variation was exhausted, and he had to begin thinking at the board.

```
13 Qh6 Qh6 14 Qxh6 Qxc3 15 bxc3 Qa5 16 Qe2 Qc8 17 Qb1 Qb5 18 Qd4 Qa4
```
An unusual childhood

Talking about his first steps in chess and looking through on a computer the games from his childhood - of those that have been retained - Kramnik remembered situations, which at the time seemed to him especially significant. The first tournament when he had to travel from his native town: perhaps not very far, a few dozen kilometres, but even so – not at home, and accompanied by his father. His first win over a grandmaster: even if it was in a simultaneous display (fate determined the victim to be Alexander Panchenko, one of the founders of the Chelyabinsk school of young players, well known throughout the country. and he merely looked in perplexity at his ten-year-old opponent, not attaching, however, any significance to the fact that he had lost). Finally, his first win in a serious tournament game against a master: in Soviet chess it was very rare for a first category player to achieve this...

No.3
Remezov–Kramnik
Krasnodar 1985
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 d3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 cxd4 c6 5 c4 d6 6 e3 e7 7 c4 f6 8 b3 0–0
9 0–0 a6 10 f4 c7 11 f5 dxe4 12 xxe4 d7 13 f3 b5 14 a3 ab8 15 fxe6 fxe6
16 h3 e8 17 g3 h8 18 e5 dxe5 19 xe5 c6 20 a1 d6 21 g5 h6 22
h4 e5! 23 xh5 exf5 24 xex5 g4 25
f1 e5+ 26 h1 f2+ 27 xh2 fxe2
28 xf2 fxe2 29 g1 b8 30 d4 f2f4
31 c5 c8 32 a2 a5 33 d3 f4 34
c4 f5 35 e5 b4 36 axb4 axb4 37 c5
h8 38 g3 g5 39 g2 d8 40 c4 d2+ 41
c3 xh2 42 e3 c2 43 a1 g7 44
a7+ f8 45 d4 c2+ 46 e3 d1 47
e8+ e7 48 a7+ d8 49 c6 c1 50
f4 b3 51 xgb3 d6+ 52 e3 e1+ 0–1

Volodya’ remembered the following game, for the additional reason that... he himself liked it: in particular, without knowing the theory, he found the correct manoeuvre of his bishop from d7 to b7...

No.4
Zaitsev–Kramnik
Team Tournament
Slavynsk 1986
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 d3 f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 cxd4 c6 5
c3 d6 6 e3 d6 7 e2 e7 8 0–0 0–0
9 f4 a6 10 a3 f7 11 d2 d7 12 e3
b8 13 a4 b6 14 ffd1 ffd8 15 e2
c8 16 d4 b7 17 f5 d7?! 18 fxe6
f6 19 xex6 c5 20 e5 21 a5
g5?! 22 h3 xh3+ 23 gxh3 e5 24 d2 e6
25 e2 c5 26 g3 d6 27 c5 c8 26 d5
dxe7 xex7 29 d6 1 dxe4 30 c4
c4 31 d2 xc2 32 ac1 xe4 33 d2 xe8 34
d1 g4! 35 h4 f3 36 axa6 xxd1 37
dx1 f7 38 xex2 wd5 39 xf2 e4 40
xf5 xc1 41 e2 d8 42 xe4 xad1 43
f6+ g7 44 d8+ g8 45 f6 e8 46
f6 5 g3+ 47 e2 e1+ 48 c3 f8+ 49
f4 f1+ 0–1

After this game wins over masters were no longer unusual.

* A diminutive form of Vladimir – (translator’s note).
No.5
Kramnik–Zhukov
Belorechensk 1986
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 e5 2 f3 c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 f4 a6 5
d5 b5 6 c3 b7 7 0–0 d6 8 a3 f6 9
h1 e7 10 w1 w7 11 f4 d7 12
f5 e5 13 d2 0–0 14 fxe5 dxe5 15 h4
h6 16 h6 f5 17 f5 f8 18 w3
h6 19 h6+ g7 20 w5 g8 21 a3
h5 22 f5+ h8 23 h3 h6 24 w6
h5 25 a4 f6 26 w6 h4 27
w6+ g7 28 e2 c6 29 w7+ f6
30 h5+ g7 31 g3 g8 32 f1 a8
33 g6 w6 34 a2 d4 35 g4 f5 36
xh6 e8 37 d1 f2 38 xh6+ 1–0

Victory in his first USSR Boys’ Championship again depended on the final game:

No.6
Shilov–Kramnik
Baku 1987
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 f3 c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 f4 d6 5
f6 6 c3 e5 6 d5 d6 7 g5 a6 8 a3 b5
9 x6 f6 gx6 10 d5 f6 11 a3 fxe4

A well-known mistake, that was as yet… unknown to a 12-year-old youth, who within three hours was to become the champion of the greatest chess country in the world.

12 b5 d7 13 a4 g7 14 c4 0–0
15 c6 a7 16 w7 xd7 w7 17 b4
xh4 18 xd7 d3+ 19 f1 xd7 20
f5

The two pieces cannot compensate for the sacrificed queen, but Black does have some play. In addition, it seems White was already sure that he was winning…

21 d1 d5 22 xd3 exd3 23 w3 d6
24 w2 e4 25 c6 26 f3 g6 27 w1
h8 28 w3 d4 29 cxd4 xh4 30 w4
b8 31 w7 d8 32 w1 xg2+ 33 d1
efx3 34 w7 e3 35 wxe3 fxe3 36 w4+
2g7 37 wxe3 f2 0–1

And one more thing – he learned to work a great deal. Alone. ‘Of course, I was not yet good enough to be a master, but I had sharply improved. Only there was always a lack of purposefulness, given the wide range of positions being examined’ – this was his own admission and self-assessment. From it one can trace that parabola of eternal inner dissatisfaction, along which even now grandmaster Kramnik, one of the best today, and, quite possibly, simply the best – tomorrow, is moving.

Strictly speaking, any skill, including chess, is not dependent on time. It may exist outside of a concrete space and not under the oppressive control of the calendar. In no way can it be urged, pushed to one side, held or accelerated. Only, it is hard to agree with this, and Vladimir’s chess fate is confirmation:

‘In general, it was through a fortunate accident that I ended up at the Botvinnik-Kasparov school. In Tuapse there was a great chess enthusiast, who was not an expert and could not assess my capabilities, but who was a fan of mine. Without informing my parents or, of course, me, he wrote to Botvinnik telling him about me, an 11-year-old candidate master. Botvinnik probably received hundreds of such letters, and 98 out of every 100 would be not worth bothering with. But this one he did not tear up, did not throw in the bin, but he replied and requested that some of my games should be sent. Among them were these…’

No.7
Kramnik–Chumachenko
Gelendzhik 1987
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 f4 b6 3 c4 g7 4 d6 e6 5
b3 d6 6 d4 cxd4 7 xh6 f6 8 g3 d7 9
w2 e7 10 0–0 0–0 11 w1 w7 12 f5
e5 13 g5 w8 14 d5 xg5 15 exd5
a6 16 c3 f6 17 e3 e8 18 w4 e5
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19 \( \texttt{xc5\ bxc5} \) 20 \( \texttt{d2\ b8} \) 21 a3 a5 22 g4 h6

23 h4! \( \texttt{ xd4} \) 24 f6 \( \texttt{ c8} \) 25 \( \texttt{h2\ b3} \) 26 \( \texttt{e2\ xb2} \) 27 \( \texttt{h4\ xc2} \) 28 g5 \( \texttt{d7} \) 29 fxg7 \( \texttt{h3+} \) 30 \( \texttt{xb3}\ h3 31 \texttt{xf8}\ f8 32 \texttt{f2\ 1–0} \)

Botvinnik looked through about five games from the eleven that had been sent to him, and said: “We must definitely admit this boy.” His colleagues objected: “Why hurry, Mikhail Moiseevich, let’s have a look at the other games too.” “Of course we’ll look at them,” answered Botvinnik, “but all the same we will take Kramnik.” That is the version in which I heard this pleasant “legend.” I don’t know what it was that made an impression on him, perhaps it was my readiness at such an early age to play any positions, even very quiet ones, or to transpose into equal or even slightly inferior endings. Most of the books that came my way at that time were on the endgame, and my very first book was a games collection of Anatoly Karpov. On the whole I was attracted by positional play with some tactics, and already then I was aiming for universality.

At that time the Botvinnik-Kasparov school was something special. The most talented pupils from all over the country were invited there. Among the trainees were Svidler, Rublevsky, Shirov, Akopian... During my very first session in Druskininkai in 1987 I felt shy, I was afraid of being left outside the circle of other pupils, and that I would be weaker than the others. In fact I was somewhere in the middle of that group. Did I sense contradictions in the perception of chess at the sessions led by Kasparov, after reading Karpov’s book? Yes, of course. They played in a completely different manner then, but both were extremely strong. At that time I was only beginning to understand, or rather even to sense, why this happened. This contradiction taught me to look at many chess problems in as broad a way as possible.

During the session Kramnik played a compulsory mini-match with an experienced and strong master – today he is a grandmaster from... Israel!
English Opening

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 c3 cxd4 4 cxd4 e6 5 \(\text{\underline{d}e}3\) c5 6 g3 \(\text{\underline{c}c7}\) 7 \(\text{\underline{e}3}\) d6 8 \(\text{\underline{d}d}3\) \(\text{\underline{e}7}\) 9 \(\text{\underline{c}c}2\) 0–0 0–0 10 h3 \(\text{\underline{e}8}\) 11 \(\text{\underline{e}1}\) \(\text{\underline{c}6}\) 12 \(\text{\underline{b}b}5\) \(\text{\underline{a}6}\) 13 \(\text{\underline{d}d}7\) 14 \(\text{\underline{f}3}\) \(\text{\underline{c}8}\) 15 \(\text{\underline{e}2}\) \(\text{\underline{b}b}5\) 16 \(\text{\underline{e}4}\) \(\text{\underline{e}5}\) 17 \(\text{\underline{f}4}\) \(\text{\underline{e}6}\) 18 \(\text{\underline{g}2}\) \(\text{\underline{h}4}\) 19 \(\text{\underline{h}3}\) \(\text{\underline{g}6}\) 20 \(\text{\underline{f}5}\) \(\text{\underline{g}4}\) 21 \(\text{\underline{e}3}\) \(\text{\underline{c}5}\) 22 \(\text{\underline{d}d}1\) \(\text{\underline{e}6}\) 23 \(\text{\underline{g}2}\) \(\text{\underline{d}8}\) 24 \(\text{\underline{h}3}\) \(\text{\underline{h}5}\) 25 \(\text{\underline{f}4}\) \(\text{\underline{e}7}\) 26 \(\text{\underline{g}3}\) \(\text{\underline{h}7}\) 27 \(\text{\underline{f}5}\) \(\text{\underline{g}6}\) 28 \(\text{\underline{e}2}\) \(\text{\underline{e}8}\) 29 \(\text{\underline{c}c}4\) \(\text{\underline{d}d}8\) 30 \(\text{\underline{a}a}1\) \(\text{\underline{a}a}8\) 31 \(\text{\underline{d}d}1\) \(\text{\underline{b}b}8\) 32 \(\text{\underline{f}f}1\) \(\text{\underline{a}a}7\) 33 \(\text{\underline{g}g}1\) \(\text{\underline{g}g}6\) 34 \(\text{\underline{b}b}5\) \(\text{\underline{g}g}8\) 35 \(\text{\underline{d}d}8\) \(\text{\underline{e}e}7\) 36 \(\text{\underline{a}a}4\) \(\text{\underline{d}d}8\) 37 \(\text{\underline{f}f}6\) \(\text{\underline{g}g}5\) 38 \(\text{\underline{e}e}2\) \(\text{\underline{h}4}\) 39 \(\text{\underline{f}f}4\) \(\text{\underline{e}e}8\) 40 \(\text{\underline{d}d}1\) \(\text{\underline{d}d}8\) 41 \(\text{\underline{e}e}1\) \(\text{\underline{e}e}8\) 42 \(\text{\underline{f}f}1\) \(\text{\underline{d}d}1\) 0–1

As you will understand, all this (and his principled unwillingness to comment on his early games, also) is Kramnik. Only not today’s `wise 24-year-old’, but the 18-year-old Kramnik! He may have been an Olympiad champion in the Russian national team and a much sought-after participant in the most prestigious tournaments in the world, but he was still only a youth, who had not yet even reached the official age when one can vote. A youth who was able to think well in advance of his years. In truth, he did not have a childhood: when he was eight or nine years old, while not even realising the power of his talent, he already definitely knew that his whole life would be devoted to professional chess. And this despite the fact that, out of all the components of the game, unlike his great teachers, Botvinnik and Kasparov, he was least attracted by the struggle. Except perhaps in certain games and with quite specific opponents...

A person who has found his strength in something always has aspirations, which sometimes appear like an avalanche. He can aspire to different things: to power, to adventures, to stormy passions, to research. Finally, to discover his real self. To work out that code of unwritten laws by which he wants to live and by which it is worth living. This is not granted to everyone. But it is my deep conviction that Kramnik, with his absolute abhorrence of dictatorship and with his slight lack of strong competitive ambition, derives enormous pleasure from trying to discover his real
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self. What about other things? 'When I learned that I had become number one in the rating list, I was happy. For about 15 minutes. Then the TV news started and... when you watch the news in Russia, happiness disappears. And then you realise that there are higher goals than to be No. 1 in the Elo list.' To this quotation by Kramnik I can only add that I know some very, very famous grandmasters. for whom a place in the top ten in the rating list intoxicated them for six whole months...

And a few more confessions that directly or indirectly give you an idea of Kramnik...

'Relations with people with whom you compete depend on how each individual perceives that sphere of activity in which we are engaged. For me personally, it is very much separated – chess and life itself. I have many friends in the chess world, but it is very difficult to be really friendly with those for whom the two are combined and for whom competition at the chess board is impossible without competition in life. For me this is possible, and I separate these notions very clearly. And there are a number of players who think the same as I do.'

'I simply have no time for any particular interests apart from chess. I am the sort of person who wants more than he can manage, and this is why I will always be short of time.'

'I cannot work on chess in the metro or the trolley-bus, or when the telephone is ringing every half an hour. I need complete solitude. That is way I stay up late after midnight. At about one o'clock my head becomes very clear and I can think especially well. But I also usually get up late. In the chess world I think that they are all "night owls". Or nearly all.'

'When I was a child I liked the games of Capablanca, and later I was captivated by Alekhine's play. For a long time my favourite player was Fischer, who was twenty years ahead of his time. He played in the 70s as they play now, at the end of the century. That impressed me most of all. Nowadays I enjoy analysing the games of Vasily Smyslov. Priorities in life are constantly changing, and at different levels of chess development new interests arise.'

'In the current FIDE World Championship, on the knock-out system, weaker players have good chances. Those, who in a long match would practically have no chance, here may creep through.'

'When I have the chance, I like to play tennis. or in winter to go skiing. But in spring or autumn, when I can't find a court or a football pitch and suitable company, I go running. Although I don't enjoy it and it is very hard work. I must somehow keep in shape. On the whole, the life of a chess professional is not as easy as it appears at first sight. One needs to devote some ten hours a day to chess and to everything connected with it – physical and psychological preparation. Lately I have had great difficulty in forcing myself outside and running for about 20 minutes.'

'Psychological training mainly means conditioning myself before a tournament for at least two weeks of combat. These are weeks of constant, intense pressure, day and night. Because of this all chess players have problems in sleeping. When you sleep for only 3-4 hours a night, your results deteriorate immediately. And when I was younger it often happened that by the end of a tournament I was exhausted.'

'There are also other aspects, such as special preparations for each individual opponent.'

'As regards "computer preparation"... Unfortunately, things have become much harder. Now, along with creative work, one has to do work that is purely technical. Every month I have to look through some ten thousand games, so as not to miss any new ideas and trends. It is very hard technical work, and I spend 3-4 days a month on it. I much prefer creating new ideas.'
It is important in life to retain some sort of balance. Perhaps, in order to achieve the goal of becoming world champion, it is better to devote oneself entirely to chess. But I am a different kind of person. I like life in all its manifestations, and it is very hard for me to restrict myself to chess alone.

When I am at a tournament I do practically nothing apart from chess. But between tournaments I rest. Although lately the life of a chess player has intensified, and therefore one has to be more professional. To rest less and to restrict oneself more. I have many “diversions”, however. I like simply to go out into the town, walk about, and visit a bar or restaurant.

There was a period in my life when for a couple of years I moved from one place to another. I lived on my own, and used to cook for myself. It is clear that in this my standard is not very high. I lived mostly on sandwiches and on what I cooked myself. Now at last I have an opportunity to eat normally! I like delicacies, but on the whole I am not fussy about what I eat.

(Here, I think, it is absolutely necessary to mention one more small, but rather colourful detail. From that period, when he was living away from his family and had very little money, there originated a phrase which is still in the vocabulary of Vladimir and his chess friends who sometimes keep him company – “Kramnik’s soup”. When it got to the point that it was unbearable to live on sandwiches and he wanted terribly to have something hot, anything that came to hand would be thrown into a pan: tinned meat, sausages, and even… cheese! On one occasion, sitting at a table with good food, Kramnik even mentioned that to this day he remembers the special taste of that soup…)

Well, now we have a reason for returning to that time when, as a very gifted teenager, who displayed great promise and was rather gentle, Kramnik step by step, but extremely swiftly, began his ascent into the chess elite. He easily passed though the master stage, which becomes the final achievement for many talented players, and soon acquired a high Elo rating that was the envy of many grandmasters. He played a great deal: in junior tournaments, and more rarely with adults. But the young players he met – who were 2, 3, 4, and sometimes 5-6 years his senior – were so skilled that he couldn’t want for more: he could learn much from them and by playing against them! Today every chess fan knows their names, but then… By the time he was 18, Alexey Shirov, a pupil – though not always an obedient one – of the great Mikhail Tal, had become a grandmaster, known throughout the world. Clearly heading for this title were the Leningrad masters Peter Svidler and Konstantin Sakaev (the latter, having an age advantage, which is especially perceptible during the period of growth, once blocked ‘little’ Kramnik’s way to the World Under-16 Championship), Vladimir Akopian from Yerevan, Kramnik’s neighbour from the Krasnodar Region Sergey Tiviakov, etc. etc. He had to fight to break though their lines, because the seemingly never-ending well of the Soviet Chess School had not yet dried up, and there were plenty of candidates for every place “in the sun”…

No. 11
Kramnik – Rublevsky
USSR Junior Championship
Pinsk 1989
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 f4 g6 3 f3 g7 4 c3 c6 5 b5 d4 6 0–0 b5 7 a5 d5 8 c3 d6 9 d3 0–0 10 e1 e6 11 h1 b6 12 h4 d7 13 g3 f5 14 d2 f6 15 e5 h5 16 f2 b7 17 a1 xg3 18 xg3 d5 19 b5 h8 20 d6 g7 21 c4 dxc4 22 dxc4 e8 23 e3 x d6 24 d1
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had also played in the World Under-14 Championship: the time control there was unusual — two hours for 48 moves. Vladimir was unable to adjust to it quickly, and as a result he brought back 'only' the silver medal. Perhaps that is why the State Sport Official Anatoly Bykhovsky, the senior trainer of the USSR junior national team, summing up a qualifying stage, said this about the boy who had already become champion of the country, and had demonstrated a level of play that was not at all 'childish':

‘Kramnik deserves to go to the European Championship. He is only 15, he is improving rapidly, and the lessons that he has begun having with grandmaster Tseshkovsky are undoubtedly having an effect. But today he is not our strongest player...’

How could he be the strongest, if his rivals in those ‘extra’ years had learned so much: in youth, as in wartime. each day can well count as three. and every game that you play adds not just a grain, but a whole lump of experience, and before one’s eyes a ‘boy’ at the chess board turns into a ‘man’. It is only later that it will be all the same: whether you are 30, 32, or 35...”

However, occasionally inter-junior competitions were replaced by a kind of protuberance: a switch to a different environment. The following game, for example, made an impression on Vladimir, not so much by the chess content. as by the colourful personality of his opponent. International master Samuel Zhukovitsky twice won the Championship of the Russian Republic, and once sensationally left behind both Boris Spassky, who had already played his first match for the world crown, and Lev Polugayevsky, as well as all the other Russian grandmasters. But the main thing was that, at the age of nearly 70, he was our living chess history, and also he had maintained a very worthy level of play.

No.12
Kramnik-Tiviakov
Qualifying Tournament for the European Junior Ch. Sochi 1990
Nimzo-Indian Defence

1 d4 ¼f6 2 c4 e6 3 ¼c3 ¼b4 4 ½e2 0–0 5 a3 ¼xc3+ 6 ½xc3 b6 7 ¼g5 ¼b7 8 ½h3 d6 9 f3 ½bd7 10 e4 e5 11 d5 a5 12 b3 h6 13 ¼e3 c5 14 ½f2 ½h5 15 g3 ¼e8 16 ¼e2 ½a7 17 ¼d2 ½f6 18 a4 ½e8 19 0–0–0 ½f8 20 ½b1 ½g6 21 ½hf1 ½e7 22 ½d3 ½f6 23 ½de1 ½e8 24 f4 ½fxe4 25 gx4 ½g6 26 f5 ½e5 27 ½e2 ½h4 28 ½xh6 ½g3 29 hxg3 ½xh6 30 ½f4 g5 31 fxg6 ½xg6 32 ½h1 ½g7 33 ½h5 f6 34 ½eh1 ½f7 35 ½h4 ½e5 36 ½d3 ½g5 37 ½h5 ½xh5 38 ½xh5 ½e7 39 ½h7+ ½g8 40 ½h4 1–0

It was this victory that enabled Vladimir to finish one point ahead of his rivals (6 out of 8, with no defeats), and to secure the only qualifying place for the European Under-20 Championship. Before this he
No. 13
Kramnik–Zhukovitsky
Rostov-on-Don 1988
Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ∆d2 dxe4 4 ∆xe4 f6 5 ∆xf6+ gxf6 6 c3 f5 7 ∆f3 e6 8 g3 ∆d6 9 ∆g2 ∆d7 10 ∆h4 ∆g6 11 0-0 ∆c7 12 b4 0-0 13 f4 f5 14 ∆b3 ∆e7 15 ∆f3 a5 16 bxa5 bxa5 17 c4 fxa8 18 a2 h5 19 e5 f6 20 ∆xd7 ∆xd7 21 a4 a7 22 a3 a6 23 h1 h8 24 d2 w8 25 w1 a8 26 ∆h5 e6 27 ∆d5 f8 28 w5 a8 38 b4 1-0

But here it was the play that he liked.

No. 14
Kramnik–Yakovich
GMA Grand Prix Qualifying Tournament, Belgrade 1989
Giucco Piano

1 e4 e5 2 ∆f3 c6 3 ∆c4 c6 4 d3 a6 5 c3 d6 6 ∆b3 b5 7 ∆bd2 d7 8 ∆c4 g6 9 h3 e6 10 0-0 0-0 11 w1 h6 12 d4 ∆xc4 13 ∆xc4 e8 14 w3 w7 15 a4 a5

16 w3 e4 17 b5 c6 18 w3 d5 exd4 19 ∆xd4 ∆xd4 20 wxe4 ∆xe4 21 ∆xe4 w6 22 w1 d1 e5 23 ∆d8 24 w8 b6 a8 25 d1 e7 26 e5 w8 27 w2 h5 28 d1 a6 29 w5 w7 30 w3 g6 31 w8+ w7 32 w3 f4 33 w5 w5 34 w3 w6 35 g3 1-0

Soon Kramnik again had to go through the selection process, and again almost at home – in Sochi. To this town, in a single group, were sent six juniors of each age category, to dispute the qualifying places for the World Under-18 and Under-20 titles. Volodya shared overall third place, those level with and ahead of him were all from the senior group, so he went forward to the World Under-18 Championship, which he won.

No. 15
Kramnik–Vesovi
World Junior Championship Guarapuava 1991
Benko Gambit

1 d4 w6 2 c4 c5 3 d5 b5 4 cxb5 a6 5 e3 w7 6 w3 w5 7 bxa5 exd5 8 w2 w6 9 w3 w3 w7 10 w6 11 d4 w7 12 w1 w7 13 w1 w7 14 w4 w8 15 a3 w7 16 b1 w7 17 w2 d5 18 w8 w7 19 w7 w7 20 b5 w8 21 w6 w6 22 w1 w1 23 w4 w4 24 w1 w1 25 w1 w1 26 w1 w1 27 w3 w3 28 w6 w6 29 w6 w6 30 w4 w4 w4 31 w6 w6, and Black lost on time in this hopeless position.

But for all the significance and importance of his success – whether they liked it or not, this title changed the attitude of Soviet chess officials to the young man – much more important for Kramnik was the adult championship of the Russian Federation, then the biggest republic of the USSR. And although that chess ‘epoch’ had long since gone, when Vasily Smyslov and David Bronstein were happy to become champions of Moscow, Viktor Korchnoi and Boris Spassky of Leningrad, and Isaak Boleslavsky and Lev Polugayevsky of the Russian Federation, all of these championships still represented a barrier of increased height and difficulty. On that occasion, in Kuibyshev, a city on
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the middle Volga (now it is again called Samara), the tone of the tournament was set by young and ambitious masters, who within 2-3 years all without exception – naturally, we are talking here about the winners – became grandmasters. The Republic Sports Committee, understandably, was not generous enough to award five gold medals, ‘overtime’ was prescribed, and, allowing only one rival ahead of himself, Vladimir Kramnik became the youngest silver medal winner in the entire history of the Russian Championship...

No.16
Kramnik–Meister
Russian Federation Championship
Kuibyshev 1990
Two Knights Defence

1 e4 e5 2 Bb5 a6 3 Bxe8 4 d3 e7 5
0-0 0-0 6 Be2 d6 7 c3 0-0 8 Be3 Be5 9
Bxc5 dxc5 10 Bd5 B6 11 Bxc6 Bxc6
12 Bb2 a6 13 e4 Be6 14 Bd1 Bc6
15 Bf6 g6 16 f5 f6 17 g4 f5 18
h6 f6 19 h5 Bxh5 20 g4 h4 21 Bg2
Bxg3+ 22 fxg3 g6 23 Bh1 Bb8 24 g2
Bd7 25 h4 Bc6 26 Bc5 27 Bxe2 Bc8
28 Bh2 Bc6 29 Bxh5 Bxh6 30 Bxe2 Bg6
h5 Bg6 32 Bg1 Bxh6 33 Bxg4 Bxg4
34 Bxg4 Bxe5 35 Bf3 Bg5 36 Bd1 f6 37 Bf2
Bxf7 38 Bxe3 Bxh6 39 Bxe1 Bxe6 40 Bc2
Bxe6 41 g4 Bxg7 42 fxg5 Bxg5
34 Bxg5 f5 45 Bg1 Bxe7 46 Bgxe5
Bxe6 47 Bh8 Bxh8 48 Bg8 Bxh6 49 Bf3
Bxf7 50 Bg4 Bxf4+ 51 Bg3 Bf7 52 Bg6+
Bxg6+ 53 hxg6 Bf1 54 Bxe7 Bd1 55 Bg4
Bgl+ 56 Bc3 a5 57 Bxe6 58 Bc2 Bc1
59 Bf8 1-0

No.17
Kramnik–Isupov
Russian Federation Championship
Kuibyshev 1990
King’s Indian Defence

1 c4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 e4 d6 4 Bc3 Bf6 5 f3
B-0-0 6 Bxe3 Bc6 7 Bge2 a6 8 Bd2 Bd8
h4 e5 10 d5 Bc5 11 Bg3 c5 12 Bd1 Bb6 13
h5 Bxd7 14 B4! cxb4 15 Bxb4 Bc7 16 h6
Bh8 17 Bb2 Bb5 18 cxb5 Bxf8

For this success all five winners were allowed into the so-called all-union tournament of young masters – the traditional ‘forging’ ground of Soviet grandmasters. Over a period of more than 20 years ‘heat treatment’ was received there by Anatoly Karpov and Garry Kasparov, as well as all the ‘chess princes’– world and European junior champions, and many candidates for the ‘adult’ world crown. In a word, the ‘visiting card’ of the winner could be presented with casual pride in the most refined chess society. In January 1991, in the quiet Ukrainian town of Kherson, cosily situated on the Black Sea coast, the best of the competitors were Ildar Ibragimov from Kazan, Andrey Kharlov from Siberia, and the youngest player in the tournament – Vladimir Kramnik...

No.18
Brodsky–Kramnik
Kherson 1991
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 Bf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Bxd4 Bf6
5 Bc3 e5 6 Bb5 B6 7 Bg5 a6 8 Bc3 B5
9 Bxf6 gxf6 10 Bxd5 f5 11 Bd3 Bc6 12
Bh5
In this theoretical position from the Sveshnikov Variation of the Sicilian, rather than the usual 12...\texttt{g8}, Black preferred 12...\texttt{g8}, which, however, had also been played before.

13 \texttt{0-0-0}

A rare continuation. 13 c3 or 13 g3 is more usual.

13...\texttt{Bxg2} 14 f4

Conceding the initiative: the black rook begins operating very powerfully on the second rank. 14 \texttt{Wf3} was essential.

14...\texttt{d4}! 15 \texttt{c3} \texttt{Bf2} 16 \texttt{exf5}

It was time to get rid of the ‘guest’ by 16 \texttt{Bf1}, although here too Black is better.

16...\texttt{xal} 17 \texttt{fxe5}

If 17 \texttt{c4} Black has the very strong 17...\texttt{c8}!, threatening 18...\texttt{b3} mate!

17...\texttt{dxex5}

If 17...\texttt{c8} 18 \texttt{xb5}+ \texttt{xb5} 19 \texttt{xb5} axb5 20 \texttt{exd6} with some counterplay.

18 \texttt{xb5}

18...\texttt{h6}! 19 \texttt{he1}

The only defence. If 19 \texttt{Wxh6} there follows 19...\texttt{Bxc2+}! with mate by the knight on e2 or b3, depending on the piece with which White takes the rook.

19...\texttt{xb5} 20 \texttt{Bxd4} \texttt{exd4} 21 \texttt{Wb4} \texttt{Bb8}!

also came seriously into consideration.

20 \texttt{xb5+}

Or 20 \texttt{Wxh6} \texttt{c4} with a mating attack.

20...\texttt{e7} 21 \texttt{Wh4+} \texttt{f6} 22 \texttt{Bxf2} \texttt{Bf7} 23 \texttt{d3} \texttt{Bb6} 24 \texttt{e4} \texttt{a2} 25 \texttt{c4} \texttt{Bc4} 26 \texttt{Bb1} \texttt{wa5}

Black could have mated by 26...\texttt{Aa1}+ 27 \texttt{xAa1} \texttt{wa6}+ 28 \texttt{Bb1} \texttt{Aa2}+ 29 \texttt{Ac1} \texttt{wc4}+ 30 \texttt{Bb2} \texttt{Bb3} mate.

27 \texttt{d5+} (desperation) 27...\texttt{Bxd5} 28 \texttt{Bxd4} \texttt{Aa1}+ 29 \texttt{Be2} \texttt{Bxd1} 30 \texttt{Wxd1} (30...\texttt{exd4} was now possible) 30...\texttt{wa4}+ 31 \texttt{Bb3}, and without waiting for the mate by the queen at c4, White managed to resign.

The amusing thing was that this was regarded as a qualifying tournament for the ‘open’ championship of New York, at that time a highly prestigious event. Its image was supported by the $20,000 first prize; the remaining prizes – by American tradition – were much more modest. But none of the young players went to North America. According to the regulations, in the city of the Big Apple they would have had to play two games a day, and the directors of what was still the Soviet Chess Federation or the Sports Committee – it is no longer possible to establish who exactly – announced that such a workload was ‘damaging for young, growing people’. Instead the boys were sent to South American, and in Brazil... they won that year’s World Student Team Championship.

Kramnik, who was a schoolboy – and he was not the only one – received a fake student card from the state; however, playing for the other teams were some who were by no means students, but very much bearded adults. Perhaps that is why this
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competition, which had been so popular between the sixties and the eighties, in the end vanished... The Soviet team – they did not yet know that they were playing under the national red flag for the last time – drove through their rivals with the inevitable might of the heaviest tank. They finished 8 points ahead of their pursuers – and this out of a total of 36 possible points! Kramnik, it will be remembered, won all his games on boards two and one...

No. 19
Kramnik–Costa
World Student Team Championship
Maringa 1991
Queen’s Gambit

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 c3 c6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 g5 c6 e3 b6 7 c2 e4 8 f4 f5
9 d3 a6 10 a3 a5 11 a4 xa4 12 xa4 b8 13 e7 d7 14 c1 b6 15 c5 c5 16 f4 f4 17 c3 a5 18 f3 a4 19 b1 a5 20 d3 e7 21 d2 xd2 22 xd2 g6 23 f3 d7 24 e4 e8 25 b4 axb4 26 axb4 c8 27 e3 dxe4 28 fxe4 f5

29 d5 fxe4 30 dxc6+ bxc6 31 xb6 exd3 32 xd3+ c8 33 e1 f8 34 a3 f7 35 a7 b8 36 c5 d8+ 37 c3 d7 38 a8+ d8 39 a6 d7 40 c6 d8 41 b6+ 1–0

So, everything was proceeding along a rising trajectory. It became possible to play in foreign tournaments, over and above the directives of the previously unshakeable and insurmountable USSR Sports Committee – Kramnik made use of the opportunity to take part in a few Brazilian and European opens, and in each he invariably added a good number of points to his rating. And even so, in the international arena Kramnik was not yet mounting a purposeful fight for first, and only first place: primarily because his inner orientation was completely different. But the games he was creating were increasingly interesting. I had never previously come across anything similar to this:

No. 20
Kramnik–Renet
Gausdal 1992
King’s Indian Defence

1 d4 f6 2 c4 g6 3 d3 c6 4 e4 d6 5 f3 e5 6 e3 g4 7 d2 d5 8 d2 dxe4 9 c3 c7 10 d3 d7 21 d2 xd2 22 xd2 g6 23 f3 d7 24 e4 e8 25 b4 axb4 26 axb4 c8 27 e3 dxe4 28 fxe4 f5

This position is one of almost complete zugzwang! Black’s pawns cannot move (17...g5 18 g3), while if 17...d8 18 a7 or 17...c8 18 c7. There only remain useless moves with the king and dark-square bishop...

17...h8 18 a4 b8
Or 18...xa4 19 c7 b8 20 xa7.
19 xa7 1–0
It is curious that this game began with 1 \( b3 \), but by the fifteenth move, against his strong and experienced opponent, Kramnik had gained a big advantage. Now White only needs to suppress the counterplay, unwillingly begun by Black.

27 \( \text{a}1 \! \text{ed} \! \text{e}1 \! \text{d} \)!

27 \( \text{w}x\text{f}4 \text{w}x\text{f}4 \) 28 \( \text{g}x\text{f}4 \text{c}8\text{e}3 \) was much less convincing.

27 ... \( \text{c}5 \)

Black loses after 27 ... \( \text{x}e \text{l} 28 \text{h}x\text{e} \text{l} \text{h}8 \text{f}6 \) 30 \( \text{w}x\text{f}7+ \text{g}6 \text{g}4+ \text{g}5 \text{f}3+ \). Also 27 ... \( \text{c}x\text{d}2 \) 28 \( \text{c}x\text{d}2 \) \( \text{f}3+ \) 29 \( \text{h}1 \text{w}3 \) does not work – 30 \( \text{d}3 \). Therefore he finds a more original resource.

28 \( \text{d}3+ \) \( \text{f}5 \) 29 \( \text{x}e\text{e} \text{c}2 \) \( \text{c}2 \text{e} \text{c} \) 30 \( \text{bxc}5 \) \( \text{c}5 \) \( \text{f}3 \) (it is clear that Black’s counterplay has become bogged down).

31 \( \text{e}e4 \) 32 \( \text{d}6! \) \( \text{d}7 \) 33 \( \text{w}d5 \) \( \text{w}g6 \) 34 \( \text{w}e7 \) \( \text{w}d6 \) 35 \( \text{e}e5! \) \( \text{d}3 \) 36 \( \text{e}f4 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 37 \( \text{w}c6 \)

In the time scramble White prefers to tie down the opponent’s forces, although the simple 37 \( \text{w}x\text{a}7 \) was also possible.

37 ... \( \text{e}7 \) 38 \( \text{c}1 \) \( \text{e}4 \)

38 ... \( \text{g}g7 \) would have opened the way for the knight – 39 \( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{e}4+ \) 40 \( \text{x}e4 \) \( \text{f}xe4 \) 41 \( \text{f}5 \), winning.

39 \( \text{d}6 \) \( \text{b}7 \) 40 \( \text{d}1! \) (aiming at \( c5 \)), and in this hopeless position Black lost on time.

Kramnik’s performance in 1992 in Dortmund was quite special, and in its way symbolic: as it was once said by professor Max Euwe, former world champion, at the time when he was President of FIDE: ‘an intellectual city welcomed an intellectual game’. As usual, almost the entire cream of the chess world had been invited to the main tournament: Kasparov and Ivanchuk, Anand and Kamsky, Shirov, who was still representing Latvia, and Salov, who was already living in Spain, Bareev, Hübner... Of course, even in his sweetest dreams Vladimir could not imagine that Dortmund was destined to become his chess ‘promised land’ or that very point on the planet where he would suddenly experience a wonderful harmony of the desirable and the possible. Where, either easily or in a hard fight, he would in point of fact take only first place, and during those years he would not once have to stop his clock as a sign of capitulation. All this was in the future. But for the moment... For the moment, already No.24 in the rating list, although still with the modest title of ‘FIDE Master’ (nowadays they give this title to ten-year-olds who cannot be seen above the chess board), in the Open Tournament of the Dortmund Festival he so dealt with a number of vigorous and highly experienced grandmasters, that he put them completely to rout!

‘The most talented of all the players I have seen here is Vladimir Kramnik’ – this was said later in an interview for the serious Dutch magazine *New in Chess* by Garry Kasparov, whose authority at that time was indisputable. ‘In terms of talent he is definitely No.1. I have never said this before, but I think he is the only one who plays as well as I did at the same age. I have always smiled regarding the talent of Judit Polgar, and laughed regarding Gata Kamsky, and I do not believe (in a bright future for – I.D.) the other players of the Dortmund Festival. But 16-year-old Kramnik is already playing big-time chess.
His is a genuine chess talent. There are many players, but they don’t play chess, they move the pieces. Whereas Kramnik plays chess.

Moreover, he handled both complex and relatively simple positions with equal pleasure and skill.

No. 22
Kramnik–Knaak
Dortmund 1992
King’s Indian Defence

1...f3 d6 2 d4 g6 3 c4 d6 4 c3 Bbd7 5 e4 e5 6 Be2 Ag7 7 0–0 0–0 8 A xe3 c6 9 d5
10...Ce1 Ce8 11 g4
11...f5!
At that time this was a new move. After wandering around with his queen:
11...Ac1! Bh8 12 Bg1 Ad6 13 Ag1 Ae7 14 a3 Axf6 15 b4 b6 16 Axd3 Ac8 17 a4 f5
18 Bg5 Af7 19 a5 Black stood clearly worse in Gelfand–Ivanchuk, Kramatorsk 1989.

12 exf5
If 12 f3 Black can reply 12...f4 13 Axf2 h5, with the idea of countering 14 h4 with 14...g5!?

12...gx f5 13 gxf5 Ae6
The obvious 13...Axf6? would have left Black with problems over regaining the f5 pawn after 14 Bxe2.

14 Afx3
If White loses time on occupying the open g-file by 14 Bh1 Axf5 15 Ag1 Bh8 16 Afx3, he has to reckon with 16...e4!? 17 Ag5 Axc3! (excuse me, grandmaster Gufeld!) 18 bxc3 Ae7, and the black knight at b6 is ready to go via d7 to e5.

14.Axf5 15 Ag5 Ae7
Or 15...h6 16 Ae6 Axe6 17 dxe6 with the initiative for White.

16 Bh1 Af6
Black could have considered 16...e4!? 17 Ag1 h6 18 Ce6 Axe6 19 dxe6 Axe6 with a complicated game.

17 Aeg1 Ah8
Here after 17...h6 18 Ce6 Axe6 19 dxe6 Axe6 20 Ahx6 Ag4 21 Axf4 Axe4 22 Ce4 White would have gained control of e4, the key square in the King’s Indian Defence, gaining a great advantage.

18 Awd2 Ag6?
For some reason Black lifts his control of e6. For the moment it was not possible for Black once and for all to cut the Gordian knot – 18...h6? 19 Ce6 Axe6 20 dxe6 Axe6 21 Ahx6 with a very strong attack on the king, and he plans to occupy the f4 square. 18...Ag8 was better, when White has a choice between 19 Ag3 and 19 Ad1?!, in order to answer 19...Axd7 with 20 Ce6.

19 Axf1
19 Ce6 was premature in view of 19...Axe4! 20 Aexe4 Aexe4+ 21 f3 Axe3.

19...Ah5
Consistent, but... After the game my opponent suggested 19...Ah6! 20 b3 Axd5 21 Axe5 Axd7, when Black is still able to defend.

20 Ce6 Ad7 21 b3 Axd7?!
Now 21...Af4 was the only move: 22 Axf4 exf4 23 Ad3 Ah5 24 f3 Ae4 25 Ac4 Ac5, and for the time being Black still holds on.

22 Ad3 Af8 23 Ag5

23...Axd3 24 Axe6
The hasty 24 Axf7+? Axe7 25 Axe6 Axe3+ 26 Ag2 Af4 27 Ae4 Axe2+ would have let slip part of White’s gains.
24...\textit{xf}6 25 \textit{We}2! \textit{c}f4 26 \textit{x}xf4 \textit{x}xf4 27 \textit{wh}5! \textit{h}6

The attempt to breathe more freely with 27...\textit{c}4 would have been justified only after the reckless 28 \textit{C}cxe4? \textit{fxe}4 29 \textit{g}f7+ \textit{g}g8 30 \textit{h}6+ \textit{h}8, when White has nothing better than perpetual check, since 31 \textit{f}5 is parried by 31...\textit{e}5! 32 \textit{x}g7 \textit{xf}5! But the simple 28 \textit{c}c2! \textit{f}5 29 \textit{g}4 \textit{e}5 30 \textit{f}4 would have left Black without any defence. He would also have lost after 27...\textit{e}8 28 \textit{w}xe8 \textit{xe}8 29 \textit{b}b5.

28 \textit{wh}3

Preparing the invasion at \textit{e}6.

28...\textit{e}8 29 \textit{g}3 \textit{g}8

Or 29...\textit{e}e4 30 \textit{f}f1! \textit{x}xf2 31 \textit{c}cxe4 \textit{e}2 32 \textit{g}xd6.

30 \textit{ge}4

In addition to his big positional advantage, White has a mating attack.

30...\textit{h}7 31 \textit{f}f1! \textit{f}6 32 \textit{e}2!

With material completely equal, Black resigns. After 32...\textit{h}4 there is, of course, the simple 33 \textit{w}f5+, but also possible is 33 \textit{c}xf6+ \textit{xf}6 34 \textit{h}h4 \textit{h}h4 35 \textit{g}g7+ \textit{h}8 36 \textit{g}g8+ \textit{h}7 37 \textit{g}g7 mate. (Notes by Kramnik)

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{no23.png}
\caption{No.23 Kramnik – Lputian Dortmunder 1992 Grünfeld Defence}
\end{figure}

1 \textit{d}4 \textit{c}f6 2 \textit{c}c4 \textit{g}6 3 \textit{c}c3 \textit{d}5 4 \textit{cxd}5 \textit{cxd}5 5 \textit{e}4 \textit{xc}3 6 \textit{bxc}3 \textit{a}5 7 \textit{a}b5+

A continuation which came into fashion a couple of years before this game and provoked a crisis in the main lines of this opening. White is prepared for a double-edged game after 7...\textit{c}6 8 \textit{a}a4 \textit{b}5 9 \textit{a}b3 in which he has frequently been successful, and therefore the restrained reaction of the Yerevan grandmaster is understandable.

7...\textit{a}d7 8 \textit{f}2

In the event of 8 \textit{xc}d7+ \textit{f}d7 9 \textit{f}f3 \textit{c}5 10 0–0 0–0 11 \textit{e}e3 \textit{cxd}4 12 \textit{cxd}4 \textit{c}c6 13 \textit{w}d2 \textit{e}6 Black has no serious problems.

8...\textit{c}5 9 \textit{f}f3 \textit{cxd}4 10 \textit{cxd}4 \textit{e}5+

A ‘conflict’ would have arisen more quickly in the lines 10...\textit{c}6 11 \textit{w}d3 \textit{f}5 12 \textit{exf}5 \textit{a}5+ 13 \textit{d}d2 \textit{xf}5 14 \textit{xf}5 \textit{gxf}5 15 \textit{c}c1 \textit{d}d5 16 \textit{c}c4 \textit{xf}3 17 \textit{gxf}3 \textit{d}c6 or 11...\textit{a}6! 12 \textit{b}b1 \textit{f}5 13 \textit{exf}5 \textit{a}5+ etc. In the game Black wants to exchange queens, without breaking up his pawns.

11 \textit{d}d2 \textit{a}4 12 0–0 0–0 13 \textit{a}a4 \textit{a}a4 14 \textit{b}b1 \textit{e}6?

Proceeding on the basis of certain abstractions, exchanging a flank pawn for a central one is advantageous. Nevertheless, 14...\textit{b}6 was stronger, with a subsequent battle for equality, albeit a difficult one. 15 \textit{xb}7 \textit{c}6 16 \textit{c}c7 \textit{xe}4 17 \textit{g}g5 \textit{d}d5 18 \textit{b}b4 \textit{d}d8 19 \textit{b}b5!

Creating a genuine domination of the white pieces. Now there is no way for Black to develop his queenside – the outcome is effectively decided.

19...\textit{a}a6 20 \textit{a}a4

Of course, not 20 \textit{c}c7? \textit{xb}5 21 \textit{xd}8 \textit{c}6, which would have led to an advantage for Black.

20...\textit{a}a5 21 \textit{c}c7 \textit{a}6 22 \textit{xd}8 \textit{xd}8 23 \textit{a}a7 \textit{c}4 24 \textit{f}f7 \textit{xd}4 25 \textit{c}d8 \textit{a}a7 26 \textit{c}c1 \textit{xa}2 27 \textit{c}e8

With the black pieces so huddled together, further losses are inevitable.

27...\textit{b}b6 28 \textit{b}7+

Black resigned in view of the inevitable 29 \textit{c}c6.
A Vertical Take-Off

IN EVERY SPECIFIC FIELD and in every specific case, talents develop differently. One person reaches a quite high plateau of skill and knowledge by degrees, another conquers this height in one leap, making himself instantly famous. True, for this to be possible, the stars must have an unusual arrangement in the sky...

Precisely such an unusual situation arose in the chess world before the start of the 1992 Olympiad. Prior to that all the ‘Tournaments of Nations’, starting in Helsinki 1950, had followed the same scenario ‘prescribed from above’. The Hamilton-Russell Cup had been won again and again by the Soviet team, easily or with difficulty, outright or by tie-break. Even if it had to be brought up to strength somewhat under the pressure of the authorities. Even if someone was in such poor form that they practically had to rely on only five players. The only ‘silver’ exception came in Buenos Aires 1978, when several of the strongest players could not be enlisted, and the team lacked the willpower to oppose its virtual leader, who was serving simultaneously on two state committees of the Soviet Union. However, that does not count, but merely confirms what has been said.

This time, however, things did not look so optimistic. ‘The indestructible union of free republics’ (I wonder if anyone still remembers this ‘starting’ line of the former national anthem?) turned out to be very ‘destructible’ indeed. having instantly disintegrated into fragments of the superpower (this applies to chess as well). It immediately became clear: Russia would not win the Women’s Olympiad. After all, the USSR team had in fact been represented by the team of Georgia. More precisely, by the team of Tbilisi, and even more precisely – of one of the districts of the Georgian capital, where by the will of fate Nona and Nana, and Maya and Nino were neighbours.

With the men’s team, the question remained open. Politics had suddenly made rivals of those who just before had been playing on the same side of the board, and in Manila the Russians were liable to face very serious opposition – besides the traditional Anglo-Americans and the rest – from the teams of the Ukraine, Armenia and Latvia, who had developed in the tough and productive competition inside the same chess school. Who had the same great teachers – Botvinnik, Smyslov, Petrosian and Tal. And finally, who professed the same high principles of aggressive play at the board, based on a foundation of first-class training and, generally speaking, a fairly extensive exchange of fresh ideas.

The anxiety of the Russian Chess Federation, when they were discussing the Olympiad team, is therefore understandable. And the proposal of the team leader Garry Kasparov and one of the trainers, grandmaster Yuri Razuvaev, sounded for many like a clap of thunder: to include a youth in the Olympiad team. Virtually a boy. Who still had the right to play four times (!) in the world junior championship in two different age groups! Who had yet to appear, not only in the star tournaments such as Reggio Emilia (in those years), Linares, Tilburg and Dortmund, but even in hardly any international competitions. And in the FIDE rating list he was a long way away even from the top ten! True, he was highly valued by Botvinnik, who had singled him out even among the bright contingent of his chess school, but, firstly, the young grow unevenly, and secondly, there had been so many child prodigies in history, and that
was where so many of them remained – in history…

And besides, in Russia the holders of the highest chess title run into dozens, and he was not even a grandmaster!

This proposal really contradicted all the laws of logic, at least, school logic. That is why, after a stormy and lengthy discussion, part of the ‘tribunal’ voted against. However, that brilliant saying of Niels Bohr, one of the fathers of modern physics, ‘The hypothesis is not crazy enough to be right’ – was either pronounced when the members of the federation were absent, or was lost somewhere at the back of their memory. The candidature of the youth was narrowly accepted, and needless to say all this argument was about Vladimir Kramnik…

In Manila the fuss died away. Although inferior to all his rivals in experience and probably in knowledge too, he dealt with them without any problem.

Eight and a half out of nine! Absolutely the best result both in the Russian team, and at the Olympiad in general! He received his gold Olympiad medal on the day of his 17th birthday – the first time this had happened in chess. and most probably, the last. Needless to say, Kramnik’s rating jumped swiftly, and he went to the tournament of young stars in Greece as the favourite (the oldest participant there, aged 33 and in his prime, was Lev Psakhis, twice USSR Champion and now an Israeli grandmaster), while at the European Team Championship Vladimir again became the ‘central striker’ of the Russian team – 5 wins and 2 draws! Again – the best overall result. And what was surprising: he felt equally confident – at least, that is how it seemed from the side – both in situations when he needed to calculate far ahead and to use his imagination generously, and where he needed the purely technical mastery that usually comes only with the years. And even in the situations where not everything turned out successfully…

\[
\begin{array}{c}
1 \text{d4} \text{d5} 2 \text{\underline{\text{d3}}} \text{c6} 3 \text{c4} \text{\underline{\text{f6}}} 4 \text{\underline{\text{c3}}} \text{e6} 5 \\
\text{\underline{\text{g5}}} \text{dxc4} 6 \text{e4} b5 7 \text{a4} \text{\underline{\text{b7}}} 8 \text{e5} h6 9 \\
\text{\underline{\text{h4}}}
\end{array}
\]

Winning a pawn by 9 \text{\underline{\text{xf6}}} \text{gxf6} 10 \text{axb5} \text{cxb5} 11 \text{\underline{\text{xb5}}} gives Black a dangerous initiative: 11…\text{\underline{\text{b4}}}+ 12 \text{\underline{\text{c3}}} \text{f5x5} 13 \\
\text{\underline{\text{xc5}}} \text{\underline{\text{c6}}} 14 \text{\underline{\text{xc6}}} \text{\underline{\text{xc6}}} 15 \text{\underline{\text{xc4}}} \text{\underline{\text{g8}}} ! 16 \text{\underline{\text{g1}}} \text{\underline{\text{h4}}}.

9...\text{g5} 10 \text{\underline{\text{xf6}}} \text{gxf6} 11 \text{\underline{\text{e5}}} \text{d7} 12 \\
\text{\underline{\text{h5}}} \text{\underline{\text{f6}}} 13 \text{\underline{\text{d7}}} \text{\underline{\text{xd7}}} 14 \text{\underline{\text{xb5}}} \text{\underline{\text{xb5}}} 15 \\
\text{\underline{\text{xb5+}}} \text{\underline{\text{c6}}} 16 \text{\underline{\text{xc4}}} \text{\underline{\text{d6}}}
\]

A sharp ‘Meran’ skirmish in the opening has led to Black’s king losing its shelter, but he is not without compensation, in the form of his harmonious bishops and his complete mobilisation; the latter, however, is a temporary factor, and one which must be exploited in good time.

\[
17 \text{\underline{\text{a6}}}
\]

A tempting continuation, but preferable was 17 \underline{\text{\underline{\text{b5}}} \underline{\text{\underline{\text{f4}}}}}! (17…\underline{\text{\underline{\text{xb5}}}}? ! 18 \text{\underline{\text{xb5+}}} \text{\underline{\text{d8}}} ) 18 \text{\underline{\text{xd6}}} \text{\underline{\text{xd6}}} with a slight advantage to Black.

17...\underline{\text{\underline{\text{c8}}}} 18 \text{\underline{\text{xc6}}} \text{\underline{\text{xc6}}} 19 \text{\underline{\text{a4}}} \text{\underline{\text{g5}}}

The only defence, and in addition – an active one. And since 20 \text{\underline{\text{d3}}} \text{\underline{\text{c1+}}} 21 \\
\text{\underline{\text{d1}}} \text{\underline{\text{b8}}}! 22 \text{\underline{\text{c4}}} \text{\underline{\text{b4}}} 23 \text{\underline{\text{xc6+}}} \text{\underline{\text{xc6}}} 24 \\
\text{\underline{\text{xa7+}}} \text{\underline{\text{b7}}} favours Black, White has to swim with the tide.

20 \text{\underline{\text{b5}}} \text{\underline{\text{xb2}}} 21 \text{\underline{\text{d5}}}!
The best chance. The ‘normal’ 21 $f1$ would have given Black a tempo – 21...a6 22 d5 axb5 23 $xa8$ exd5, when in principle White can resign.

21...$xh1$+ 22 $e2$ $d8$!

Exploiting the fact that his bishop is immune, Black brings his queen into the game, which in fact decides matters.

22 ... $xh4$+ $e7$ 23 $xh4$+ $f6$ 24 $g4$! would have led to an unclear game.

23 $xc6$ $b8$ 24 $b5$ exd5!

Exploiting the fact that his bishop is immune, Black brings his queen into the game, which in fact decides matters.

25 $wa5$+ $e7$ 26 $xa7$+ $f8$ 27 $e3$ $g8$!

The simplifying 27...$e4$ would have allowed White, at the least, to prolong his resistance: 28 $xe4$ dxe4 29 $xd6$ $xb2$+ 30 $e3$ $b6$ 31 $xf7$! $xc6$ 32 $xe5$.

28 h3 $f8$ 29 $f4$ $e4$+ (now is the time) 30 $xe4$ dxe4 31 $e3$ $b6$ 32 $d7$ $f6$ 33 b3 $c5$+ 34 $xe4$ $xf2$ 35 $d5$ $b4$ 36 $d4$ $g7$ 37 $c4$ $f4$ 38 $d5$

A loss of a tempo in time trouble. 38 $g4$ was more tenacious, but it would not have changed the outcome.

38...$f6$ 39 $e8$ $f1$ 40 $g4$ $c3$ 41 $f3$ $g6$ 42 $xh4$+ $g5$ 43 $f3$+ $f4$ 44 $h4$ $f2$

The knight has been arrested, and the game is decided.

45 $c8$ $g5$ 0–1

---

Although this game did not change the situation in the tournament table (Lautier still led Kramnik and the Spanish grandmaster Miguel Illescas by half a point), it was nevertheless a turning point: normally players are affected not so much by the end result of a game, as by its course...

In order to understand better some of the turns of fortune, those underwater currents that pulled along one of the participants, let’s take account of the admissions of Kramnik himself:

‘For me this tournament turned out to be very unusual: firstly, it was my first all-play-all for two years, and I noticed that when playing in open tournaments I had acquired the “bad habit” of playing for a win in any position. In two or three games in an equal position I overstepped the mark and was obliged to switch to defence. Secondly, although I have never particularly liked parting with material, here I sacrificed four pawns and two pieces!’

But more about that a little later. For the moment: commentary by Kramnik.
After achieving a slightly inferior position from the opening, I decided to complicate matters, and wrongly so. After 17...h5 Black would have been quite satisfactorily placed.

17...h5?! 18 w2d e3

It was not in order to play 18...exf3 19 exf3 f4 20 g4 2f f6 21 2f e1 that the preceding move was made.

19 2f e3 f4 20 gxf4!

After 20 w2f f2 xg3 21 hxd3 Black has a strong initiative (if 22 2f c4 there follows 22...2f5).

20...xf4 21 2f h1

Here I realised that I had miscalculated. When I made my 17th move I had planned 21...2f6, and after 22 2f e8 Black stands at least equal, but I had overlooked the obvious 22 wxf4 2f xg4 23 2f c1!, when White is simply a pawn up. I had to play 21...2f2, reconciling myself to the fact that my compensation for the pawn was clearly insufficient. In addition I had only some 15 minutes left for 20 moves...

22 2f 2f6+ 23 2f h1 2f6 24 2f d2 2f f5 (otherwise 2e4) 25 2g1 2f f7 26 dxc6

26 2a4 b5 27 2f xg6 wxf6 28 exb5 2f5 29 2f c3 came into consideration, with the idea of 29...b4 30 2f b5!

26...bx6 27 2a4 2a e8 28 2g3 (the immediate 28 2g2 was better) 28...2f6 29 2g2 2f3 2f4 2f 6 2f3 2f 3 2f1 2f2 2f2 2f2 e1 2f+ 44 2f e1 2f f4+ 41 2f e8! (if he wishes, Black can force a draw:
41...2f1+ 42 2f f1 2f f3+ 43 2g2 2f f1+ 42 2f e1 (what else?) 42...2f e3 43 2g 5 2f e4 44 2f g7 2f d4! and there is no defence. The only move that would have saved White was 41 2f d5!, when Black has nothing better than perpetual check.

41...2f f1+??

In the time scramble I imagined that I would give perpetual check from f1 and f3, 'forgetting' that White could block the check from f3 with his knight. The simple 40...2f 8! would have put White in an almost hopeless position, e.g. 41 2f d5 (no better is 41 h4 2f h3+ 42 2f g 2f d1+ 43 2f f2 2f 1 2f+ 44 2f e1 2f xh4+ 41...2f e8! (if he wishes, Black can force a draw:
41...2f f1+ 42 2f g1 2f f3+ 43 2h g2 2f f1+ 42 2f e1 (what else?) 42...2f e3 43 2g 5 2f e4 44 2f g7 2f d4! and there is no defence. The only move that would have saved White was 41 2f d5!, when Black has nothing better than perpetual check.

41 2f g1

Here my first thought was to resign. By 'will-power' I forced myself to make a few more moves.

41...2f f2 42 2f e1 2f f3+ 43 2f g2??
Careless. After 43 \( \text{Qg}2 \text{ e}4 \) 44 \( \text{Wg}3 \text{ Wf}1 \) 45 \( \text{h}5 \) \( \text{e}1 \text{W} \) 46 \( \text{Wxe}1 \text{ A}xg2+ \) 47 \( \text{h}2 \) it is all over for Black.

43... \( \text{A}d3 \)

Joel had not seen this simple move. Here he became noticeably nervous and thought for half an hour. Despite White’s extra rook and the lack of any immediate threats by Black, the win is already difficult. An original position!

44 \( \text{e}7? \)

After 44 \( \text{a}4 \), apart from 44... \( \text{h}6 \), Black also has the cunning move 44... \( \text{a}6! ? \), with the threat of 45... \( \text{Wxe}3 \) 46 \( \text{Axe}3 \text{ f}1+ \) 47 \( \text{g}1 \text{ b}7+ \). But 44 \( \text{h}4! \) leaves White with winning chances: 44... \( \text{h}6 \) (44... \( \text{wh}3+ \) 45 \( \text{g}1) 45 \( \text{g}1 \). Black should not force matters, since if he plays 45... \( \text{Wf}1+ \) 46 \( \text{Axf1} \text{ Wxf}1+ \) 47 \( \text{h}2 \text{ Wxe}1 \) 48 \( \text{Ae}8+ \text{h}7 \) 49 \( \text{e}7 \text{ h}8 \) (mate in three was threatened) 50 \( \text{g}1 \) White wins without difficulty.

44... \( \text{Wh}6! \)

The most clear-cut way to draw. Other variations are either worse, or bad, e.g.:

(a) 44... \( \text{h}6 \) 45 \( \text{Wc}3! \text{ Whf}6 \) (45... \( \text{Wf}1+ \) 46 \( \text{g}1 \text{ Wf}3+ \) 47 \( \text{A}g2; \) 45... \( \text{Wh}6 \) 46 \( \text{Ae}8+ \text{h}7 \) 47 \( \text{Wxd}3+ \) 46 \( \text{Wxf}6 \) \( \text{e}1 \text{W}+ \) 47 \( \text{A}f1! ; \)

(b) 44... \( \text{b}5 \) 45 \( \text{Wc}3 \text{ Whf}6 \) (45... \( \text{Wf}1+ \) 46 \( \text{Axf1} \text{ exf}1 \text{ Wh}+ \) 47 \( \text{g}1) 46 \( \text{Wxf}6 \) \( \text{e}1 \text{W}+ \) 47 \( \text{A}g1 \text{ Wgl}+ \) 48 \( \text{A}xg1 \text{ gx}f6 \) 49 \( \text{a}4 ; \)

(c) 44... \( \text{a}8! ? \) 45 \( \text{A}f5 \) (45 \( \text{g}1 \text{ f}1+ \) 46 \( \text{Axf1} \text{ exf}1 \text{ Wh}+ \) 47 \( \text{Wxf}1 \text{ Axf}1 \) 48 \( \text{A}f2!! \), and it appears that Black cannot save the bishop in view of the threat of \( \text{Ae}f7 \), but this is carried by a move that was overlooked at the time – we had been playing for nearly six hours – 48... \( \text{A}d3 \) 49 \( \text{Ae}f7 \text{ xg}8 ! ) 45... \( \text{xf}5 \) 46 \( \text{Ae}2 \text{ A}xe2 \) 47 \( \text{Wxe}2 \), and the game should probably end in a draw, since although White is a pawn up, his king’s defences are rather weak.

45 \( \text{Exg}7 \)

It was not yet too late to be mated: 45 \( \text{d}7?? \) \( \text{Wf}1+ \) 46 \( \text{A}xh1 \text{ Wxf}1+ \) 47 \( \text{g}1 \text{ A}e4 \), while after 45 \( \text{Xgx}7 \) Black would have given perpetual check: 45... \( \text{Wc}6+ \) 46 \( \text{g}1 \text{ f}1+ \) 47 \( \text{A}xh1 \text{ exf}1 \text{ Wh}+ \) 48 \( \text{Wxf}1 \text{ Axf}1 \) 49 \( \text{Xhx}7+ \text{g}8 \) 50 \( \text{Wxf}1 \text{ Wc}1+ \) etc.

... \( \text{Wh}+ \) 47 \( \text{Wxf}1 \) 48 \( \text{g}1 \text{ A}e4+ \) 49 \( \text{Wgf7} \) 50 \( \text{h}3 \)

52... \( \text{A}a5 \) was dangerous in view of 53 \( \text{g}1 \).

53 \( \text{b}2 \)

Black also saves the game after 53 \( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{Aa}2+ \) 54 \( \text{g}1 \text{ A}b2 \) 55 \( \text{f}1 \text{ h}5 \) 56 \( \text{e}1 \text{ h}4 \)

57 \( \text{A}f3 \text{ gh}7 \) 58 \( \text{A}d1 \text{ A}e6 \) 59 \( \text{c}1 \text{ A}g2 \)

53... \( \text{A}a5 \) 54 \( \text{b}4 \text{ b}5 \)

The rest does not require any comment.

55 \( \text{A}g3 \text{ gh}7 \) 56 \( \text{A}f4 \text{ A}f6 \) 57 \( \text{A}e4 \text{ e}6 \)

58 \( \text{A}d4 \text{ A}d6 \) 59 \( \text{A}e4 \text{ h}5 \) 60 \( \text{b}3 \text{ A}c6 \) 61 \( \text{A}f3 \text{ h}4+ \) 1/2-1/2

This clash strongly affected the young and impressionable Frenchman. In the second half of the tournament he played significantly worse...

As regards the ‘secondly’ part of Kramnik’s admission, it is fully characterised by the following example.

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**No.27**

**Kotronias–Kramnik**

_Chalkidiki 1992_

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After proceeding through the initial, ‘defensive part’ of the French Defence, Black seizes the initiative.

18... \( \text{Wh}8!? \) 19 \( \text{A}xh7 \)

Otherwise in the middlegame type of endgame White would have to suffer ‘for free’.

19... \( \text{f}5 \) 20 \( \text{A}f3 \) \( \text{A}h8 \) 21 \( \text{Wg}7 \) \( \text{f}4 \) 22 \( \text{A}b3 \)

\( \text{A}c7 \) 23 \( \text{A}e2 \) \( \text{fxg}3 \) 24 \( \text{fxg}3 \) \( \text{Afg}8 \) 25 \( \text{Wf}6 \)

---
\( \text{xg3} \) 26 \( \text{hxg3} \) \( \text{wxg3}+ \) 27 \( \text{eg2} \) \( \text{wh2}+ \) 28 \( \text{xf2} \) \( \text{hxg2}+ \) 29 \( \text{xg2} \) \( \text{eg8} \) 30 \( \text{eg1} \) \( \text{eg4}! \) 31 \( \text{we7} \)

On an open board the queen has no other shelter.

31...\( \text{fxe4}+ \) 32 \( \text{we2} \) \( \text{wxg1} \) 33 \( \text{xb7}+ \) \( \text{ce7} \), and a few moves later White resigned.

And now another encounter under the same "creative banner".

21 \( \text{xe5} \)

The bishop comes into play, and this is logical. After 21 \( \text{wxg5} \) the direct 21...\( \text{dxe4} \) allows White to maintain the balance: 22 \( \text{fxe4} \) \( \text{wa1}+ \) 23 \( \text{db2} \) \( \text{a6} \) 24 \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{d4}+ \) 25 \( \text{we2} \) \( \text{xd1}+ \) 26 \( \text{xd1} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 27 \( \text{xe5} \). Much more dangerous is 21...\( \text{b4}! \), and if 22 \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{ce8} \) (22...\( \text{d7} \) 23 \( \text{d4} \) \( \text{c5} \) appears to win, but White has 24 \( \text{b1}! \) \( \text{wa1} \) 25 \( \text{d3} \) when it is now he who has the chances) 23 \( \text{b1} \) (23...\( \text{xc3} \) ! was threatened) 23...\( \text{wa1} \) with a dangerous initiative for Black. For example, if 24 \( \text{dxe5}?! \) \( \text{xd5} \) 25 \( \text{xd5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 26 \( \text{xd5} \) he has 26...\( \text{xc3}! \) 27 \( \text{bxc3} \) \( \text{xc3}+ \) 28 \( \text{d1} \) \( \text{xb1}+ \) 29 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{wxh1} \) with a decisive advantage.

21...\( \text{dxe4} \)

An alternative was 21...\( \text{cc8} \)!? 22 \( \text{we1} \) (22 \( \text{d4}?! \) \( \text{c5} \) 23 \( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{gxf6} \) and wins) 22...\( \text{dxe4} \) 23 \( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{wa1}+ \) 24 \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{b4}+ \) 25 \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{a5} \) with a strong attack.

22 \( \text{xe4} \) \( \text{xe4} \) 23 \( \text{fxe4} \) \( \text{cc8} \) 24 \( \text{g3} \)

24 \( \text{d3} \), with the idea after 24...\( \text{b8} \) of giving up the queen by 25 \( \text{xd8} \) and parrying the attack, would also not have saved White. After the stronger 24...\( \text{g4}! \) 25 \( \text{g3}?! \) \( \text{a1}+ \) 26 \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{d8}+ \) 27 \( \text{e3} \) (27 \( \text{c3?} \) \( \text{xd1} \) 28 \( \text{wxc4} \) \( \text{a5}+ \) 29 \( \text{b3} \) \( \text{b4}+ \) leaves the king in a mating net) 27...\( \text{xd1} \) 28 \( \text{wxc4} \) \( \text{c1}+ \) 29 \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{f8}! \) 30 \( \text{xd1} \) \( \text{xd1}+ \) 31 \( \text{g3} \) \( \text{xc2} \) Black must win.

24...\( \text{f6} \) 25 \( \text{d4} \)

25...\( \text{b3} \)! 26 \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{a1}+ \) 27 \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{d8}+ \) 28 \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{xd3}+ \) 29 \( \text{xd3} \) \( \text{xc2}+ \) 30 \( \text{xc2} \) \( \text{wa4}+ \) 31 \( \text{d3} \)
The forcing operation has led to Black winning the queen in the optimal situation and also continuing his attack.

31...b5 32 ♘e3
If 32 ♘h1 there would follow 32...♕c5 with the threats of 33...♖c4+ and 33...b4.

32...♕c5+ 33 ♕f4 ♖c4 34 ♕d8+ ♘h7 35 ♕hd1 ♚e2! (intending 36...♖h5) 36 ♕f5 b4 37 ♘e1 ♖xg2 38 e5 ♖g6+ 39 ♘e6 ♖g4+ 40 ♘f7 ♖h5+ 0–1

Other wins by him also did not go unnoticed. "The most entertaining game was that between Kramnik and Psakhis. While still in the opening Vladimir forced his opponent to rack his brains over whether to continue along the main theoretical lines, or to agree to certain concessions by deviating. Psakhis’s decision proved not altogether successful – on the 13th move the decisive breakthrough c4-c5 came, after which Black’s position began to creak. As occurred several times in the European Championship, after gaining a big advantage by strong play after the opening, Kramnik would then relax somewhere and in technically winning positions would allow his opponent to create counter-chances. But, fortunately he would nearly always have sufficient time left, and when difficulties arose, he would begin thinking and delving deeply into the position... Here too, in an ending where the win for White could no longer be achieved by purely technical means, Kramnik played excellently and confidently converted his advantage" – these lines are from the review by the team’s trainer, grandmaster Sergey Makarychev.

No.29
Kramnik–Psakhis
European Team Championship
Debrecen 1992
Queen’s Indian Defence

1 d4 ♗f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♕f3 b6 4 a3 ♘a6 5 ♕c2 ♗b7 6 ♘c3 c5 7 e4 cxd4 8 ♕xd4 ♘c5 9 ♘b3 ♘c6 10 ♗f4 ♘e7 11 ♘e2 d6

A vertical take-off 27
Greece should not have belonged to Kramnik... It was not difficult to find a prize fund in France, and in the match Lautier... lost 4 games out of 6!

Here, for example, is another ending where the winner showed very good technique.

In a well-known variation of the Slav Defence Black gave up a piece for three pawns, then picked up a fourth, within some 20 moves was forced to part with it, and...

40 \textit{c}4 \textit{b}4 41 \textit{c}c3 e5 42 g5 f4 43 b3 d6 44 f6+ d7 45 f5 d5+ 46 d3 e3 47 f6 e7 48 f3 g4 49 f8 d6 50 e4 e7 51 e1 f2+ 52 f3 d1 53 f6+ c5 54 d3+ d4 55 d6+ c3 56 xc6 e3 57 e4 xc4 58 bxc4 f3 59 xe5 d2 60 xb6 f2 61 b2+ e1 62 c5 f1 63 b1+ f2 64 xf1+ xf1 65 c6 e2 66 d5 d2 67 d6 e8 68 e7 c3 69 d7 b3 70 b6 h8 71 c6 g8 72 b5 1–0

I have no doubt that Mikhail Botvinnik, who behind his back was called the 'Patriarch of Soviet Chess', would have categorically and irrevocably condemned even this more than convincing victory. Because the young grandmasters fought desperately in immediate proximity – I mean in time, of course – to the super-tournament in Linares, where Kramnik had been invited for the first time on account of his swift vertical rise. To fire his cannon, not even at sparrows, on the eve of a major battle – how reckless! In principle, Vladimir understood this, but somehow remotely, 'with a cold mind', if we use this 200-year-old poetic formula. His feelings, however, demanded that he pick up the gauntlet, and the moral satisfaction of what he had done exceeded all the losses that followed: he did not have enough energy for the whole of the super-tournament...

Kramnik realised this very soon. In one of his interviews after coming back to Moscow from Spain, he said:

'I understood that sometime, sooner or later, I would be successful here, in Linares. That is why I was not too worried, although I did not know how I would immediately fare with this elite, since I had never played in such a tournament before. What if at the start I was severely beaten? It was important not to fail, to keep face. A fifty per cent score would have reduced my Elo rating by... one point. And generally speaking "half marks" is a normal, "respectable" result. I was playing as I usually do, I was not in a special mood, but I always remembered about the points and from the very beginning I estimated that my place would most likely be somewhere in the middle.

'Now I know exactly my level, the strength of my play. And if tomorrow a second Linares were to start, I would go with the intention of fighting for a place in the top three (for the moment first place is not very realistic). At the last tournament I could have played better. But I did not know this beforehand, and besides, following the match with Lautier, by the end of the tournament I was terribly tired. Next time I will have a rest and prepare properly. But here I missed more opportunities than any other participant...'

Indeed, what a single game is worth! The first game. It is well known that it
often defines the mood of a player for the whole tournament. It is fantastically important: to feel the wind of fortune in one’s sails, and to believe in the favour of Caissa, in the famous ‘wheel of fortune’. It is no accident, they say, that Napoleon – not the worst of military leaders – when someone recommended a certain general to him as being a very competent commander and even a strategist, interrupted and asked: ‘All this is very well. But tell me, is he lucky?’

‘I got into serious time trouble, which at the moment does not happen often with me. In the opening Alexey had employed a new move, and I thought for too long. My opponent had some definite, purely positional compensation for the rook... And even so, in my place any player of grandmaster standard had no right to lose, and therefore I regard it as bad luck.’ said Vladimir later about this failure.

17 a7xe7 wxe7 18 d6?! 18 wd2 would have given definite compensation.
18...wh4 19 wd5 zb8 20 xf5 gxf5 21 zel wg4!

After this White’s storm essentially abates. The threat of 22...zb7 forces him to block his own rook’s path to the g-file, and siege-like actions begin, but with him a rook down!

22 f3 wg6 23 ze7 zb7 24 wd3 zb6 25 al xc4 26 wc3 f6 27 wc4+ wh8 28 f2 zh6?

What for? After 28...wh8!? 29 g3 and now 29...zh6 it is the white king that would have been in danger.

29 xc3 wg6?

Yes, the movements of the black queen do not impress, to put it mildly.

To some extent these errors can be explained by the rising flag on the clock, but... By that time Kramnik had already revealed to the world his ability to find his bearings instantly on the board. And although he had not shown himself to be a blitz fanatic, like, for example, Tal, in five-minute games, which often concluded rapidplay events, he played quite confidently. So that here it was not time trouble that interfered, or at least not only time trouble. That about which Vladimir spoke – a certain chess vagueness, the role of debutant in higher chess society, the latent underestimation of his own chess might – all this came together that evening of the first round in Linares. Vengeance was not long in coming.

30 d7 zbd8 31 xc5 zg8

Interposing 31...f4 was much sharper.

32 g3 f4 33 g4 zdf8 34 wd4 wh6 35 h3 za6 36 zg1 wh4 37 xf4 1-0

Now imagine how it feels: to fail at your first attempt, and on your debut, and when you are only 17 years old. Am I a boy who is here to be beaten? – such a subconscious question could well have occurred, and on the reply to this question depended completely and entirely both Kramnik’s
In the tournament and the coming years of his life in chess. It is one thing to feel yourself a stepson of Caissa, and quite different its chosen one...

Besides, experienced players always expect one more answer from their first game. 'I try to determine from it what form I am in at the tournament, and what I can demand from myself,' Anatoly Karpov once said, and the then world champion had more than enough of sound judgement and competitive pragmatism. Thank goodness, at that moment Kramnik was too young to come to such a conclusion, otherwise he might have lost heart...

However, he managed to put things right very quickly. Playing Black, Kramnik defeated in good style one of the favourites – Vasily Ivanchuk, who had twice been a winner of Linares and was rated No.3 in the world (see game No.138). Moreover, Vladimir won in an opening that was new for him – the Sozin Attack in the Sicilian Defence. One more win, and by the middle of the tournament Kramnik was only half a point behind the leaders; true, there were four of them. On the whole, rivers of blood were shed in Linares that year – in some rounds only one or two games ended in draws, so that isolated failures were not felt very acutely. And if he hadn’t let slip the victories in his games with Yusupov and Karpov...

Such a low efficiency in the realisation of advantages by Kramnik, who has a very good technique, has reasons lying outside of chess, and it is something to think about,' ascertained Vitaly Tseshkovsky, twice USSR Champion, who was Kramnik’s second at that event.

Now, years later, it is difficult to diagnose correctly, but it is very likely that in this super-tournament against super-grandmasters a weak spot of Kramnik’s chess character revealed itself: he was not born ‘a cold killer at the chess board’, unlike Korchnoi and Larsen, Fischer, Karpov and Kasparov. 'I don’t like the fight as such in chess' – this from the Kramnik of that time. And generally, in Linares it was nearly the first time in his life that he had been constantly thinking about the points in the table: before they resulted from the quality of his play, and it was the quality that concerned Vladimir in the first instance.

He, with the sixth highest rating, finished the tournament in fifth place, with four wins and two defeats. He did not yield to the top prize-winners – Kasparov, Karpov and Anand, and here is what he had to say later about his first serious encounter with the world champion. For which, incidentally, the tournament organiser Senor Luis Rentero tried to... fine them $1000 each: in the game they did not make the 40 moves stipulated in the contract...

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No.32
Kramnik–Kasparov
Linares 1993
King’s Indian Defence
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'It wasn’t my intention to get through the opening and aim for a draw. My opponent employed a new move, which I myself had found earlier. However, Kasparov’s preparations proved to be seemingly fresher, and perhaps slightly deeper. He knew perfectly well that I played this variation as White, and I was sure that my opponent would play this as Black. He would not switch to the Grünfeld Defence – in rapid-play chess he had once tried it with me and ended up in an inferior position. I realised that in the King’s Indian Sämisch Variation I would most probably have to deal with the critical continuation 6...e5. And that is what happened.

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♘g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0–0 6 ♘e3 e5 7 ♗ge2 c6 8 ♗d2 ♘bd7 9 0–0–0 a6 10 ♘b1 b5 11 ♘c1 exd4 12 ♘xd4 b4 13 ♙a4 c5

Strictly speaking, I once examined this possibility with a different move order
of this was his entirely adult, extremely unfashionable decision – to refuse to waste
time for the sake of an institute diploma. ‘I
am not at all interested, for example, in the
laws of higher mathematics, and for self-
education I will turn to the classics, to
books…’ Earlier, out of all the top players,
only Robert James Fischer had the courage
to do the same. Though he was more for­
tunate: American procedure did not force
him to become a student, as our native
Russian procedure did with Kramnik…

Naturally, Kramnik’s attitude even to
the most prestigious competitions had
changed. For example, in an interview
before one of the recent tournaments in
which the first seven(!) on the New Year
rating list were playing, he evaluated the
forthcoming battle only as an overture to
an analogous battle six weeks later, in
other words – just a rehearsal, and not even
da dress rehearsal.

That is why, in our account of
Kramnik’s career, ‘lengthy stops’ will be
made only where the status of the tourna­
ment or his personal attitude to it take it
into the category of extraordinary, or at
least very memorable. Though I can tes­
tify: Kramnik, who is seemingly not very
happy with his memory, can instantly and
in every detail describe his every (!) game
in every (!) one of his now endless compe­
titi ons. I am not talking about the order of
moves in the opening, but about more
important things: mood, the turning points
in the play, the course of his thinking…

And so, the next important milestone for
Kramnik was the tournament in Biel, about
six months after Linares. Because this
small Swiss town again hosted not jus t a
tournament, but an Interzon al. Aim ed,
naturally, at deciding the candi dates for the
title of world champion – of FIDE.

Kramnik again began the Interzonal
with a defeat, which, as is known, in the
Swiss system is not compensated by one
win: a whole series of successes is needed.
And he did just this – 4½ out of 5, and it
was no accident that after the tournament
its winner Boris Gelfand admitted that he
‘remembered best the striking individual­
ism of Kramnik’. There was nothing
surprising about this…

No.33
Kramnik–Speelman
Biel Interzonal 1993

\[
34 \text{xc}5 \text{xc}5 35 \text{xc}7 \text{xa}5 36 \text{b}4
\]
An original position!

36…\text{xa}4+?!
It would have been better to force a
draw by 36...\text{a}6+ 37 \text{xa}5 \text{xc}7 38 \text{b}6
\text{e}6 39 c7 \text{c}8 40 \text{c}1 \text{e}7 41 \text{b}7 \text{d}7
42 \text{d}1+ \text{d}4 43 \text{c}1 \text{c}6 (otherwise
there follows a4-a5) 44 \text{d}1+, but in time
trouble Black incorrectly evaluated the
resulting position.

37 \text{xc}5 \text{a}2 38 \text{d}5+ \text{e}6 39 \text{c}7+
\text{f}6 40 \text{d}5+ \text{e}6 41 \text{c}1!

The time control has been reached, and
White is no longer agreeable to a draw.

41...\text{c}8?
This natural move proves to be the
decisive mistake. 41...\text{xg}2? would also
have lost in view of the unexpected 42 f4!!
f6 (42...g6 43 f5+) 43 f5+ \text{f}7 44 c7 \text{c}8
45 \text{d}6, but 41...g6! (a difficult move to
find in a practical game) with the idea of
...\text{xg}2 would have left Black with good
drawing chances.

42 c7 \text{xg}2 43 \text{c}6 \text{xh}2 44 \text{b}7
\text{xc}7+ 45 \text{xc}7 f5 46 \text{c}6+ \text{f}7 47 \text{exf}5
\text{f}2
In view of the limited material, accuracy is required of White, despite his extra piece.

48 \textit{c7+ g8}

Or 48...\textit{f8} 49 \textit{c6 xf3} 50 \textit{d6! xf5} 51 \textit{c6}.

49 \textit{c6 xf3} 50 \textit{d6 e4} 51 \textit{f6! e3}

After 51...\textit{xf6} 52 \textit{c6} the black king unexpectedly ends up in a mating net.

52 \textit{xg7+ f8} 53 \textit{e7 h5} 54 \textit{xe3}

Black resigns (Notes by Kramnik)

No.34

Kramnik–Hübner

Biel Interzonal 1993

Queen's Gambit

1 d3 d5 2 d4 c6 3 c4 dxc4 4 e3 b5 5 a4 c6 6 axb5 cxb5 7 b3 \textit{e6} 8 bxc4 xc4 9 \textit{xc4 e7} 10 \textit{c5} 0-0 11 \textit{f3} \textit{d5} 12
\textit{c3} \textit{b4} 13 \textit{d2} \textit{b7} 14 \textit{xd5} \textit{xd2+} 15 \textit{xd2} \textit{xd5} 16 \textit{xd5} \textit{exd5} 17 \textit{hbl} \textit{d7} 18 \textit{xd5} \textit{xe5} 19 \textit{xe5} a5 20 \textit{e2} \textit{e8} 21 \textit{xf4} a4 22 \textit{f1} a3 23 \textit{b7} \textit{e7} 24 \textit{b3} \textit{e7} 25 \textit{a2} g6 26 \textit{we4} h5 27 g3 \textit{wd6} 28 h4 \textit{a4} 29 \textit{wd3} \textit{a5} 30 \textit{g1} \textit{a7} 31 \textit{b5} \textit{g7} 32 \textit{we8} \textit{a8} 33 \textit{we4} \textit{a8} 34 \textit{c3} \textit{b4} 35 \textit{c8} \textit{e7} 36 \textit{c2} \textit{b7} 37 \textit{g2} \textit{a6} 38 \textit{c8} \textit{e7} 39 d5+ f6 40 \textit{we4} \textit{ba7} 41 \textit{h2} \textit{we5} 42 e4 g5 43 d6 \textit{xd6} 44 \textit{we8+} \textit{h6} 45 \textit{ed8} \textit{wb4} 46 hgx5+ fxg5 47 \textit{mad2} \textit{mg6} 48 \textit{wh8+} \textit{h7}

49 \textit{2d7} 1-0

No.35

Portisch–Kramnik

Biel Interzonal 1993

Queen’s Gambit

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 cxd5 cxd5 4 \textit{f3} \textit{f6} 5 \textit{c3} \textit{c6} 6 \textit{f4} \textit{e4}

In choosing the exchange variation of the Slav, White was clearly aiming for a draw, and Black takes the risk of disturbing the symmetry.

7 e3 \textit{xc3} 8 bxc3 g6 9 \textit{e2} \textit{g7} 10 0-0 0-0 11 c4 dxc4 12 \textit{xc4} \textit{f5} 13 \textit{c1} \textit{c8} 14 \textit{we2} a6 15 h3 \textit{a5} 16 \textit{d3} \textit{xd3} 17 \textit{xd3} \textit{wd7} 18 \textit{c3} b5 19 \textit{wc1} \textit{e4} 20 \textit{we2} \textit{b6} 21 \textit{c7} \textit{we6} 22 \textit{g5} \textit{d5} 23 \textit{d7} h6 24 \textit{h4} b4 25 \textit{wb2}

25...\textit{c3} 26 \textit{xc8} \textit{xc8} 27 \textit{h1} \textit{h7} 28 \textit{a1} a5 29 \textit{wb3} \textit{xb3} 30 axb3 \textit{g5} 31 \textit{g3} a4 32 \textit{d2} a3 33 \textit{c1} e5 34 d5 a2 35 \textit{a1} e4 36 d6 \textit{a8} 37 \textit{c4} \textit{b5} 38 \textit{e5} \textit{xd6} 39 \textit{xa2} \textit{xa2} 40 \textit{xd6} \textit{xf2} 41 \textit{xb4} \textit{fl+} 42 \textit{h2} \textit{b1} 0-1

However, things did not go without some complications. In the eighth round, attacking over the entire board (five of his pawns reached the demarcation line), he lost to the Englishman Mickey Adams. And then – he finished strongly and easily.

Strangely enough, a similar course was also taken by Kramnik’s second qualifying ‘Swiss’ – on the way to the new PCA World Championship.

The Groningen PCA – the tournament was well organised. At any event, in those
aspects which depended on the PCA itself. The atmosphere at the tournament and around it? I did not pay any attention to it, but concentrated completely on the play. Initially it was not easy: as White I lost a nervy game against Belyavsky (in which we both in turn missed chances), and ended up on 50%. But I steeled myself and won three games. I did not notice any particular distinctions in the PCA and FIDE competitions. There was no time for that – I had to qualify...

‘The pairings for the candidates matches in the PCA cycle had not yet been made. As for FIDE, the formula there had changed slightly: first six pairs, then three, and after this Karpov was to be included (at the semi-final stage). Very democratic!

‘What if the FIDE and PCA cycles should clash? This is unlikely! At least, both have promised that this will not happen. It is in no-one’s interests to have a conflict. For the moment a “friendly neutrality” has to be maintained by the organisers!,’ said Kramnik just before departing for his first candidates match. But it can be added: those who had carefully followed his performance in Groningen, gained the impression that however many games he needed to win, that was the number he won.

No.36
Kramnik–Ribli
Groningen PCA 1993
Queen’s Indian Defence

1 c4 e5 2 d4 c6 3 Qf3 c5 4 g3 b6 5 d3 6 e4 c7 7 e5

White avoids the usual Queen’s Indian lines with 7 d4. and tries to provoke his opponent into a ‘hedgehog’ set-up after 7...0-0 8 e4 d6 9 d4.

7...Qd5 8 exd5 exd5

What to recapture with on d5 is a matter of taste, but 8...exd5 9 e4 Qxe3 10 bxc3 0-0 is also logical.

9 d4 0-0 10 e5 Qf4 11 dxc5 bxc5?
Black had a difficult choice in determining his pawn structure in the centre. What is better: an isolated pawn or hanging pawns? It would seem that 11...Qxc5 was the correct decision.

12 Qh4! g6
The only defence against 13 Qxd5.

13 Qf5 e8 14 h5!

A very interesting plan – White rejects the standard attack on the hanging pawns and chooses the d6 square as his target.

14...Qd7 15 Qbd6 Qxd6 16 Qd6 e6

This exchange sacrifice is practically forced – after 16...Qe8 17 Qc1 White would have gained a big advantage.

17 Qh3 Qe6 18 Qc1 e4 19 Qe5!

Before winning the exchange it is useful for White to strengthen his control of the dark squares.

19...Qg8 20 Qf4 Qh5 21 Qxe6 fxe6
21...wx6 22 Qf5 would have forced the exchange of queens.

22 Qd4 Qf6 23 b3! (breaking up the black pawns) 23...Qa8 24 f3!

Important prophylaxis – blocking the diagonal and reducing the effectiveness of the bishop at a8.

24...Qc6 25 Qac1 Qfd7 26 bc4 dx4
27 Qxg7
Or 27 Qxc4 Qxf3 28 e4!

27...Qxf3 28 exf3 Qxf3 29 Qe4 Qd5 1-0
1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Qf3 Qf6 4 Qc3 e6 5 Qg5 h6 6 Qxf6 Qxf6 7 e3 Qd7 8 a3
A well known prophylactic move, but perhaps 8 Wc2 or 8 Qd3 is better.
8...Wd8 9 e4 dxe4 10 Qxe4 Qe7 11 Wd2 c5 12 0–0 0–0 0–0
After 12...exd4 13 Qxd4 0–0 14 Qb5 White establishes control over the important central squares.
13 dxc5
If 13 d5 exd5 14 cxd5 Qf6, and Black has an excellent game.
13...Wc7 14 Qb1
Korchnoi quite reasonably avoids 14 b4 a5!, when the exposed position of the white king more than compensates Black for the sacrificed pawn.
14...Qxc5 15 Wb3 b6! 16 Qc3 Qb7 17 Qxe5
Black gains control of the a-file with strong initiative.
17...Qxe5 18 Qf4 Qd8 19...Qad8 19
was more logical – it can hardly be for Black to take the g2 pawn.
19...Qb7 20 Qb5 Wc8 19...Qd6 Qxd6
19...Qc7 21 Qd2 a5!
21...Qc5 22 Qa5 Qc8 23 Qe3 Qb5 24...Qb6
Kramnik's favourite variation. In the sixth round he had this position against Kamsky, who employed a new move – 11 Qb5!? After 11...h6 12 Qh4 Qd8 13 e5 dxe5 14 Wxe5 Qg4 (interesting is 14...a6!)
with an unclear game) 15 \( \text{xd8+ } \text{xd8} \) 16 \( \text{xe7 } \text{xe7} \) 17 \( \text{d4} b6 \) 18 \( \text{e2 } \text{f6} \) 19 \( \text{d1 } \text{b7} \) 20 \( g3 \) 21 \( \text{d6 } \text{xd6} \) 22 \( \text{xd6 } \text{f8} \) 23 \( \text{b5 } \text{e7} \) Black succeeded in defending this slightly inferior ending.

11 \( \text{c4 } \text{d7} \) 12 \( \text{d3}?! \)

A sharp attacking move, instead of 12 \( e5 \) which had been played in hundreds of previous games. The rook makes for the kingside.

12...\( \text{ad8} \)

The rooks could also have been arranged differently: 12...\( \text{fd8} \) followed by \( \text{ac8} \).

13 \( \text{g3 } \text{h8} \)

After 13...\( \text{e5} \) 14 \( \text{f5} \) 15 \( \text{f2} \) White’s position looks very menacing.

14 \( \text{f1} \) \( \text{h6}?! \)

A highly risky move, but by now White was threatening to advance his pawns: \( f4-f5 \) or \( e4-e5 \).

15 \( \text{e5}! \)

If 15 \( \text{h4} \) Kramnik had prepared 15...\( \text{h5} \) 16 \( \text{h3} \) \( e5! \).

15...\( \text{dxe5} \) 16 \( \text{fxe5 } \text{e8}! \)

In many variations it is important that the \( f7 \) square should be well defended. Shirov’s attack looks very menacing, but Black does not lose his composure.

17 \( \text{f4} \)

After 17 \( \text{h4 } \text{xe5} \) 18 \( \text{xh6 } \text{gxh6} \) 19 \( \text{hxh6+ } \text{h7} \) the mating threats would have been parried.

17...\( \text{h5}! \)

White has calculated a long variation with the sacrifice of his queen, which, however, does not look necessary; the simple 18 \( \text{h4} \) would have maintained all the threats:

(a) 18...\( \text{xg5+} \) 19 \( \text{xg5 } \text{hxg5} \) 20 \( \text{xh5+ } \text{g8} \) 21 \( \text{e4} \) \( f6 \) 22 \( \text{xe6+ } \text{f7} \) 23 \( \text{xf6+} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 24 \( \text{g6+ } \text{h8} \) 25 \( \text{xf6+} \) \( \text{h7} \) (25...\( \text{g8} \) 26 \( \text{xf7+} \) 26 \( \text{f5+ } \text{g8} \) 27 \( \text{xf5+ } \text{h8} \) 28 \( \text{h6+} ; \)

(b) 18...\( \text{xg3} \) 19 \( \text{xe7 } \text{xf1} \) 20 \( \text{xd8 } \text{xe5} \) 21 \( \text{xf1} \).

18...\( \text{xf4} \) 19 \( \text{xf7+ } \text{h8} \) 20 \( \text{xf4 } \text{g8} \) 21 \( \text{g4} \)

21...\( \text{xg7}?! \)

Kramnik, in turn, misses an opportunity to conclude the game in spectacular fashion. He could have won by 21...\( \text{xc3}!! \) 22 \( \text{bxc3} \) (after 22 \( \text{xc3 } \text{xg7} \) 23 \( \text{h3+ } \text{g8} \) Black is simply a piece up) 22...\( \text{a3+} \) 23 \( \text{b1 } \text{d1} \) mate!

22 \( \text{g7+ } \text{h6} \) 23 \( \text{g8+ } \text{h7} \) 24 \( \text{g7+} \)

And the players agreed a draw: Black cannot escape perpetual check. (Notes by Grandmaster Adrian Mikhalchishin)

Then it came, the time for the matches. Having become a double candidate, like it or not Kramnik had to step from his dear creative chess onto a different level. Of course, in any tournament there is the most honoured first place, but one can well finish third of even fifth, and feel neither hurt nor depressed. The fight for the chess crown is a fundamentally different thing. Finish second, and you are out. So there is
one. and only one way – start carving a victorious path. The experience of big-time chess has shown that talent plus knowledge is not sufficient. Character is needed. The inborn character of a champion, strengthened by upbringing, by environment, and finally, by close and distant contacts. Giants, gentle in character, either did not manage to go the whole way, or, having done so once, never repeated it. It is not by chance that both Anatoly Karpov and Garry Kasparov confessed that they sensed their champion’s destiny from far away.

And Kramnik... Although the 13th world champion had several times named him as his successor, not long before the start of the candidates matches, Kramnik said:

‘Karpov and Kasparov passionately wanted to be first, and were constantly thinking about it. I am moved by different motives. Naturally, I too want to become the champion, but as yet I haven’t thought about it, and am only just beginning to. By nature I am not ambitious.

‘I do not have any special system of preparation. I go in for sports (mainly volleyball – after all, my height is 1.95 m.), but not for the sake of achievements in chess, but for pleasure. And in general I try not to deny myself pleasures. However, I don’t think that I lead an irregular way of life, which would prevent me from becoming world champion. And on a serious note – time will tell, and I will certainly manage to cast away my habits when they seem harmful to me.’

I think you will agree: a particular urge for victory, when the eyes are burning and sparks flying, is not noticeable in this interview with Kramnik...

Anyway, Vladimir set off for the small Dutch town of Wijk aan Zee for his encounter with Leonid Yudasin, a former citizen of Leningrad and now an Israeli grandmaster, wearing, so to speak, the yellow jersey of leader: this was the opinion held both by the entire chess society, and by Kramnik himself. The match was preceded by a friendly encounter with the Spaniard Miguel Illescas, which was won ‘on class’ without particular difficulty: 4½-1½.

After the exchange of knights it would appear that White has nothing to fear, and that it is Black who is more likely have to have problems with his ‘strong-weak’ d4 pawn, but...

33...d3! 34 cxd3 Qd4 35 Wf1 Qf5 36 e1 Qxd3+ 37 Qxd3 Qxd3 38 c6 Qe3 39 a2 g2 40 Qe5 Qxe1 41 Qxe1 Qd2 42 a4 bxa4 43 Qe4 Wh2 44 Qxf7 Qxb2 45 Qxa4 Qg7+ 46 b3 Qxh4 47 c2 Qg4 48 d3 h4 49 Qe4 h3 50 Qa2 Qg8 51 Qe5 Qg2 52 Qa3 Qe2+ 53 Qd5 h2 54 Qh3 Qxe5 55 fxe5 a5 56 e6 a4 57 Qd6 a3 58 b3 h1 W 0–1

The first game in the candidates cycle also went seemingly as planned and confirmed the general prognosis. It is described frankly, with details accessible only to an eye-witness and to some extent a co-participant in the events, by Kramnik’s second at the time, the highly experienced grandmaster Vitaly Tseshkovsky.

(Tseshkovsky’s comments have been corrected slightly by Kramnik for this book – translator’s note).
1 e4 c5 2 Qf3 Qc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Qxd4 Qf6 5 Qc3 e5 6 Qdb5 d6 7 Qd5 Qxd5 8 exd5

Up till now – as expected, since Yudasin did not usually play the main lines in the Sveshnikov Variation.

8...Qe7 9 c3 Qf5 10 a4 g6

This way of playing the opening has to be deemed unfavourable for Black, as the position he obtains is too sterile.

11 Qxe2

An inaccuracy; in the third game White played more actively – 11 Qd3 and gained an advantage.

11...Qg7 12 0–0 0–0 13 Qb3 Qe8 14 Qb4 e4

There was no particular need for this move, since there were less committing continuations.

15 Qf4 Qe5 16 Qxe5 Qxe5 17 Qad1 Qh4

After spending much time in the opening, Kramnik takes a bold decision. Again, 17...a5 would have been less committing.

18 Qh1 Qg5

Black must stake everything on his attack, since there is no way back.

19 Qg1 Qg4 20 Qxg4 (20 Qd1 came into consideration) 20...Qxg4 21 Qd1 Qf4?!

All the changes in fortune were usually observed and discussed by the seconds in the small but cosy press centre. It can be said that my long-standing friend, who for a time had become the “enemy” – Mark Tseitlin, who was helping Yudasin, was the life and soul of the press centre, and he enlivened even the simplest of positions with his suggestions and comments. A lover of attacking play, at this point he nevertheless judged White’s position to be quite normal. I shared this point of view and, moreover, thought that Black had to continue playing in the same spirit with 21...Qae8?!, or else 21...Qf3 22 Qxf3 Qxf3+ 23 Qg2 e4! with the variations:

(a) 24 Qc4 exf2 25 Qf1 Qe1 26 Qd4 Qxd5! and wins;

(b) 24 Qxe3 Qg5 25 Qeg1 Qxg2 26 Qxg2 Qf1+ 27 Qg1 Qf3+ with a draw;

(b) 24 Qh4 exf2 25 Qf1 Qe1 26 Qxe1 Qf1+ 27 Qxf1 Qxf1+ 28 Qg1 Qf1+ with a draw;

(d) 24 Qd4!? (the main line) 24...Qxf2 25 Qf1 (25 Qxf3? Qe1+ 26 Qg1 Qxe1+ 27 Qxg1 Qf1) 25...Qxd5 26 Qc2 (26 Qb5? Qe1!) 26...Qe2 27 Qd4 Qxd4 28 Qxd4 Qxb2 29 Qgx2 30 Qxf4 with a slight advantage to White in the ending.

Vladimir’s last move, to put it mildly, came as an unpleasant surprise to me. I thought that from a practical viewpoint Black ought to force a draw, in view of the fact that he also had less than half an hour left on his clock.

22 Qxd6?!

Surprisingly, this fatal decision was taken by Leonid after prolonged thought. Before this he had made his last few moves like an automaton and he had a great deal of time in hand. The simple 22 Qxd6 would have caused Black some anxiety, as in the main variation planned by him a ‘hole’ was discovered: 22...Qh5 23 Qxe4 Qf3 24 Qe8+! Qxe8 25 Qxf4 and wins. But since this does not work, in the absence of any good alternative he would have had to find 22...a5 23 Qxe4 (23 Qd4
A vertical take-off

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\[ \text{\( \text{H}5 24 \text{H}xe4 \text{W}xd6 25 \text{H}ge1 \text{W}d8! \)} \]

\[ \text{23...\text{H}xe4 24 \text{W}xe4 \text{W}xd6 25 \text{W}xh4 \text{W}xd5 with good drawing chances.} \]

\[ \text{22...\text{H}f5 23 \text{W}c7?!} \]

Without thinking, White heads straight for his doom. 23 \text{W}b4 would have given grounds for optimism.

\[ \text{23...e3 24 \text{H}xe3} \]

I cannot attach a question mark to this move, since there is no defence. More probably it deserves an exclamation mark for co-authorship. 24 \text{\LSTS}d4 would have lost to 24...\text{exf}2 25 \text{H}xe5 (25 \text{H}xe5) 25...\text{g}+ 26 \text{hxg}3 \text{W}h6+.

\[ \text{24...\text{W}xe3!} \]

This problem-like move was, of course, overlooked by White.

\[ \text{25 \text{\LSTS}d6} \]

Naturally, he did not want to be spectacularly mated: 25 fxe3 \text{g}+ 26 \text{hxg}3 \text{H}h5 mate.

\[ \text{25...\text{H}e7 26 \text{\LSTS}xf5 \text{gxf}5 27 \text{W}d6 \text{W}e5 28 \text{W}b4 \text{M}ae8 29 \text{Wh}4 \text{f}6 30 \text{h}3 \text{W}xd5 0–1} \]

All the same, it is not obligatory to agree completely with even such an authority as a two-time champion of the Soviet Union. The variations cited by Tseshkovsky are quite correct from the viewpoint of the search for chess truth. But during the game, at the board, only the first approach to this truth takes place, and other, purely fighting circumstances play an enormous role. Yes, Kramnik, who in principle recognises only ‘correct’ chess, without any bluff, at that moment simply could not think about ‘keeping the draw in hand’. Moreover, instinctively, with all his soul, he did not want it! Remember the immortal ‘There is a thrill in fighting...’ Some players are always or nearly always possessed by it – like Mikhail Tal, others more rarely, but I personally have not known and do not know of a single grandmaster who could completely extinguish this entrancing feeling of creative excitement, in any circumstances subordinate it to reason, and in every game use algebra to check harmony. And Kramnik, in his soul, with all his professionalism, is much closer to the former than the latter. It is another matter that the severe realities of the struggle often dictate to the actors on the chess stage something completely different...

But the last phrase does not apply at all to the subsequent strategy of the match. It seems to me that Kramnik simply made a mistake, which to some degree even became ingrained later in his tournament play. He had caught a slight cold and was not feeling well (we should not forget that, even with a height of 1.95 m., the body does not complete its forming by the age of eighteen), but in this short match he won his first black game, and he decided to give himself a respite and to reduce the remaining battle to the minimum, effectively only to his remaining three black games. And with the white pieces... If a grandmaster of his class and level wants a draw playing White, only a madman can refuse.

And so the second game lasted only 17 moves, the fourth a little longer, and the sixth – only 11. From the viewpoint of formal logic, it was, so to speak, the right decision, but nevertheless it broke one of the important rules of combat, as had already happened on many occasions in chess history, but which is not always known to the young on account of its former secrecy.

Now we can recall openly how, after one of the Interzonal tournaments, its
Kramnik: my life and games

Kramnik, Mikhail Tal and Lajos Portisch had to play four extra rounds to decide which of them was ‘the odd one out’. Objectively, in playing strength and on the basis of their previous successes, the two former world champions were markedly superior to the Hungarian grandmaster. Moreover, they were friends and... they decided not to bother to fight between themselves. This turned out alright only for Petrosian: Tal was left overboard the candidates ship and he regretted, oh how he regretted, his superficial decision. When the distance shortens from eight steps to four, it is so easy to stumble on any one of them. And the main thing is that one’s constant fighting mood is replaced by a warlike-peaceful alternation, in which it is not an easy and pleasant task ‘to arouse the beast within oneself’ every time...

Kramnik remained ‘unpunished’, although in the third game with Black he was close to defeat, and he scored one more black victory, not without the help of his opponent. And – he came to believe in the competence of such a method, although in its mirror reflection. Hence the appearance of the Petroff Defence in his subsequent opening repertoire, and his aiming for a draw with Black and for obtaining a ‘whole point’ only with White. And yet, with his active positional style, tremendous combinative vision, and, so to speak, perfect chess pitch, he was initially a veritable master of seizing the initiative, a master of playing not for equality, but for a counterattack. However, we will talk in more detail about this in due course.

After the candidates match, the second super-tournament in his career – Linares 1994 – turned out to be one that Kramnik somehow ‘passed by’. Perhaps because the battle for first place there simply did not and could not exist: it was taken by Anatoly Karpov with a fantastic result and with an enormous lead over his rivals. ‘It was something phenomenal, comparable with Fischer’s victories over Taimanov and Larsen (do you remember, 6-0 in the candidates matches? – I.D). He played at a rating level of somewhere around 3000’ – if Viktor Korchnoi, his ‘historic enemy’ said this about Karpov, it means that in Linares he did indeed display something out of the ordinary. It was another matter, that all those who went into raptures either did not know, or had forgotten about one peculiarity that has never been explained but which was noticed long ago: a prominent player, before starting his more or less swift or gradual, but irretrievable descent, always makes a last triumphal splash – and what a splash!...

Kramnik too lost to Karpov, failing to make his fortieth move, the last before the time control. But even so he should have finished third, had it not been for his surprising carelessness in his game from the penultimate round, when a fat ‘one’ turned in a few moves into an equally fat ‘zero’. On the other hand, his first win over the world champion (game No.160) was memorable, and immediately established special, absolutely equal chess relations between Kramnik and Kasparov, who soon afterwards in the press – and not just once – named Vladimir as his probable successor on the chess throne.

A mini-match against Kasparov was also won – but this was ‘rapid chess’ in Moscow; however this can be read about in the next chapter. The time had now come for the next candidates matches – of both organisations. In the FIDE cycle Kramnik was faced by Boris Gelfand from Minsk. To his fair collection of first places in ‘Swiss’ competitions (including the Interzonal) he had just added the jewel of Dos Hermanas, where he finished ahead of the recently triumphant Karpov, which, however, did not prevent him from finishing only in the middle of the table in Munich. Friends in life, Kramnik and Gelfand often got together to work and to share fresh chess
A vertical take-off  

ideas, and in general they did not keep any secrets from each other. At the same time, each naturally maintained his own identity both in chess and off the board, which was subtly noticed by the ‘more grown-up’ and more experienced player from Minsk:

‘The course of the match showed that we managed to discover Kramnik’s weak points. To some extent this was helped by the difference in our opinions on the competitive process. I am a firm supporter of observing a definite regularity in participating in tournaments. I will not talk about the necessity for fresh perception and appetite for the game. Another thing is also important – one needs to prepare for tournaments regularly, and not to play everywhere possible, in several in succession. I try to follow this rule. It allows me to limit myself to taking part only in FIDE competitions. At the moment Volodya sticks to different rules. Perhaps he is still captivated by a youthful and excessive passion for the game, and it is beyond his powers to say no. But, apart from a few games in team competitions, during the last six months the chess Kramnik has been playing has been rapidplay, not serious. However, this is a different type of game, which leaves its imprint...

‘Playing rapid chess, one can lose the habit of concentrating for several hours in serious chess. That is why, if a player has big aims, he should limit his rapidplay in favour of serious chess. Since, as Seneca used to say, he who is everywhere is nowhere.

‘If we return to the preparations for the match, when analysing Kramnik’s serious games, in some we observed a susceptibility to changes in mood, and, as a result, an inexplicable rejection of critical and full-blooded battles, even at the cost of not using the right of the first move, which is surprising for a grandmaster who is full of strength and possesses a powerful arsenal of the most modern systems. These shortcomings also appeared in some of the games of our match, in particular in the voluntary devaluation of the white pieces, which could not but improve my chances. For my part, I try to use the advantage of White as efficiently as I can, and I had no reason to be unhappy with my positions after the opening, as I almost always had an advantage.’

Nevertheless, after the third game it was Kramnik who was leading.

After sacrificing his pawn on d6, Black, in Gelfand’s opinion, should have been prepared to make further offerings – 20...\(\text{d8!}\) 21 \(\text{x}d8\) \(\text{xd8}\) 22 \(\text{g3}\) \(\text{d3}\) with powerful counterplay. By restoring material equality – 20...\(\text{e5}\) 21 \(\text{d2}\) \(\text{xb3}\) he completely conceded the initiative.

22 \(\text{b2}\) \(\text{ca5}\) 23 \(\text{d5!}\)

Essentially decisive, since without his dark-square bishop Black stands badly.

23...\(\text{exd5}\) 24 \(\text{xe5}\) \(\text{xc4}\) 25 \(\text{xd5}\) \(\text{e3}\) 26 \(\text{e1}\) \(\text{bd2}\) 27 \(\text{xb7}\) \(\text{xb7}\) 28 \(\text{xb7}\) \(\text{e8}\) 29 \(\text{d7}\) \(\text{b8}\) 30 \(\text{g3}\) \(\text{xf3}\) 31 \(\text{xb8}\) \(\text{xe4}\)

After 31...\(\text{xe1}\) 32 \(\text{c8+}\) followed by the capture on c4, White has a decisive material advantage.

32 \(\text{gx f3}\) \(\text{xf3+}\) 33 \(\text{g1}\) \(\text{e3+}\) 34 \(\text{g2}\) \(\text{e4+}\) 35 \(\text{h3}\) 1–0
The following day in the fourth game, which, as Kramnik’s opponent put it, ‘contained a mass of mistakes and adventures’, Gelfand levelled the scores. Here is the conclusion to another of the games, with independent commentaries by the two friends and rivals.

No.42  
Gelfand–Kramnik  
FIDE Candidates Match (game 6)  
Sanghi Nagar 1994

‘The game was adjourned and, as it later transpired, the opinions of myself and Boris diverged. He thought that Black would retain good practical saving chances, by sacrificing his central pawn and trying to exploit the open position of the white king. A definitive verdict, as to whether or not White has a win, was not established either before the resumption of the game, or after it. I assessed the situation as completely hopeless. I even toyed with the idea of resigning without playing on, but the match was after all of considerable importance, and I decided to chance my luck. Things turned out amusingly and well. Of course, in this position Black only has a few ideas, but during the resumption they all came into play: a pawn sacrifice to activate the pieces, stalemate, and also something else…’ (Kramnik)

61 \textit{h}3  

White could have tried the more forcing 61 \textit{b}6, but he did not want to seal a committing move. Besides, this threat remains in force.

61...\textit{f}6!  

Towards morning, after a sleepless night of analysis, the decision was taken to sacrifice a second pawn. The alternatives are totally bad:

(a) 61...\textit{f}8 62 \textit{exd}5 \textit{b}8 63 \textit{c}4;  
(b) 61...\textit{h}7 62 \textit{b}6! \textit{xb}6 (or 62...\textit{g}8 63 \textit{xd}6 \textit{xd}6 64 \textit{c}7 \textit{f}6 65 \textit{g}4 \textit{g}6 66 \textit{hxg}6 \textit{fxg}6 67 \textit{e}6 \textit{df}8 68 \textit{ee}7 etc.) 63 \textit{axb}6 \textit{b}7 64 \textit{c}7 \textit{d}7 65 \textit{c}8 \textit{xb}6 66 \textit{e}8 \textit{g}6 67 \textit{h}8+ \textit{g}7 68 \textit{e}g8+ \textit{f}6 69 \textit{fxg}6;  
(c) 61...\textit{f}8 62 \textit{c}3, with the branches:  
(c1) 62...\textit{f}6 63 \textit{c}6 \textit{g}5 (or 63...\textit{d}6 64 \textit{xd}6 \textit{xd}6 65 \textit{c}5 etc.) 64 f6;  
(c2) 62...\textit{b}8 63 \textit{c}6 \textit{b}1 64 \textit{c}5+ \textit{g}8 65 \textit{e}8 \textit{h}7 66 \textit{xd}8 \textit{xd}8 67 \textit{d}5.  
62 \textit{exd}5  

‘After the game Kramnik admitted that, in his opinion, 62 f4 would have set Black very difficult problems, taking play into a queen ending after 62...\textit{d}6 63 \textit{cxd}5 \textit{xd}5 64 \textit{xd}5 65 \textit{xd}5 65 \textit{xd}5. During our adjournment analysis we were also inclined towards playing this, but, despite the two extra pawns, we nevertheless decided to avoid the queen ending, where it is very difficult for White to resolve the “problem of his king”, which with the given pawn formation is constantly under threat, like the Sword of Damocles, of perpetual check.’ (Gelfand)

I find it hard to believe this evaluation of the queen ending, which in my opinion is completely hopeless for Black. Apparently Boris wanted to win in a more clear-cut way and ‘with every comfort’.

‘Instead of the move played White could also have tried 62 \textit{exd}5!? After 62...\textit{g}5 63 \textit{g}4 Black can choose between 63...\textit{xd}5 64 \textit{xd}5 \textit{f}8, with a situation similar to the game, and the immediate 63...\textit{f}4!? 64 \textit{xd}7 \textit{xd}7. Now White can play 65 \textit{c}8+ \textit{h}7 66 \textit{c}4, hoping to convert his advantage in the queen ending after 66...\textit{xd}4 67 \textit{xd}4 \textit{xd}4 68 \textit{xf}7, and
also provoking Black into 66...\text{\texttt{e}}c7 67 d5 \text{\texttt{w}}d2 when there is a quick win after 68 \text{\texttt{w}}e2! In passing, it should be mentioned that the tempting 68 \text{\texttt{e}}e4, with the idea of 68...\text{\texttt{e}}c7 69 \text{\texttt{b}}b6! \text{\texttt{e}}c2? 70 \text{\texttt{g}}g6+!, is refuted by 68...\text{\texttt{x}}xe4 69 fxe4 \text{\texttt{w}}e2, when the open position of White’s king makes his chances of success highly problematic. (Gelfand)

62...\text{\texttt{w}}c6!

‘An unpleasant surprise. In our adjournment analysis we devoted our main attention to 62...\text{\texttt{g}}g5, and were able to find a convincing way to convert the advantage: 63 \text{\texttt{x}}xd7 \text{\texttt{x}}xd7 (63...\text{\texttt{x}}xh5+ loses more quickly after 64 \text{\texttt{g}}g2 \text{\texttt{x}}xd7 65 \text{\texttt{g}}g4 \text{\texttt{w}}g5 66 \text{\texttt{e}}e8+ \text{\texttt{h}}h7 67 \text{\texttt{b}}b8 g6 68 \text{\texttt{w}}e5) 64 f6! \text{\texttt{x}}xf6 (Black also fails to save the game by 64...\text{\texttt{c}}c1 65 \text{\texttt{e}}e8+ \text{\texttt{h}}h7 66 \text{\texttt{d}}d3+ g6 67 hxg6+ \text{\texttt{x}}xg6 68 \text{\texttt{g}}g2! \text{\texttt{w}}g5 69 \text{\texttt{b}}b3) 65 \text{\texttt{b}}b8+ \text{\texttt{h}}h7 (or 65...\text{\texttt{x}}xd8 66 \text{\texttt{e}}e8+ \text{\texttt{x}}xe8 67 \text{\texttt{x}}xe8+ \text{\texttt{h}}h7 68 \text{\texttt{c}}c4+ \text{\texttt{g}}g8 69 \text{\texttt{d}}d5 \text{\texttt{w}}d8 70 \text{\texttt{e}}e5 \text{\texttt{x}}xax5 71 \text{\texttt{e}}e8+ \text{\texttt{h}}h7 72 \text{\texttt{w}}f7 \text{\texttt{d}}d2 73 \text{\texttt{w}}e6 \text{\texttt{d}}d1 74 \text{\texttt{g}}g4!) 66 \text{\texttt{b}}b1+ g6 67 \text{\texttt{w}}e4 \text{\texttt{g}}g7 68 hxg6 \text{\texttt{x}}xg6 69 \text{\texttt{d}}d5! \text{\texttt{x}}xd5 70 \text{\texttt{w}}xd5 \text{\texttt{d}}d3 71 \text{\texttt{g}}g4 and the queen ending is won for White.

‘We also thoroughly analysed 62...\text{\texttt{x}}xd5 63 \text{\texttt{x}}xd5 \text{\texttt{e}}e8 64 \text{\texttt{c}}c5 \text{\texttt{d}}d8, which significantly complicates the conversion of the advantage. White can choose here between 65 \text{\texttt{w}}c3 with the idea if 65...\text{\texttt{w}}c6 of continuing 66 \text{\texttt{w}}e4 \text{\texttt{a}}4 67 \text{\texttt{c}}c5 \text{\texttt{e}}e8 68 \text{\texttt{f}}f4 \text{\texttt{d}}d1 69 f6, and the more subtle 65 \text{\texttt{a}}4!? \text{\texttt{f}}f8 (if 65...\text{\texttt{h}}h7 there follows an attack on f7 – 66 \text{\texttt{w}}c4) 66 \text{\texttt{w}}c2!?, and 66...\text{\texttt{g}}g5? fails to 67 f6! \text{\texttt{x}}xf6 68 \text{\texttt{h}}h7 g5 69 hxg6. The move played also leads to the material balance that is most unpleasant for White, but here I had to play “on spec”.’ (Gelfand)

But even this leaves Black with only some illusory chances.

63 \text{\texttt{x}}xd7 \text{\texttt{x}}xd7 64 \text{\texttt{b}}b6! \text{\texttt{h}}h7 65 g4

An undesirable, but forced weakening of the king’s position.

65...f6

The pawn capture 65...\text{\texttt{w}}xd4 would have led to a lost rook ending.

66 \text{\texttt{e}}e4 \text{\texttt{w}}c8

‘The best defence, found by Kramnik after 40 minutes’ thought. After 66...\text{\texttt{g}}g5 67 \text{\texttt{w}}xa6 \text{\texttt{a}}8 68 \text{\texttt{e}}e6 \text{\texttt{w}}xa5 69 \text{\texttt{f}}f7 \text{\texttt{a}}1 70 \text{\texttt{g}}g6+ \text{\texttt{h}}h8 71 \text{\texttt{c}}c8+ White has every chance of winning.’ (Gelfand)

67 \text{\texttt{e}}e7

Only this move deprives White of a deserved victory, or, at least, makes it infinitely difficult.

‘The most natural continuation, creating the illusion of an easy win for White. Probably the best practical chance was the non-trivial 67 d5!? By sacrificing the pawn, White takes control of the highly important g1-a7 diagonal and launches an attack on the black king. After 67...\text{\texttt{x}}xd5 68 \text{\texttt{e}}e7 it is very hard for Black to defend.

(a) 68...\text{\texttt{c}}c1 69 \text{\texttt{x}}xg7+ \text{\texttt{x}}xg7 70 \text{\texttt{b}}b7+ \text{\texttt{g}}g8 71 \text{\texttt{x}}xd5 \text{\texttt{h}}h1+ 72 \text{\texttt{g}}g3 \text{\texttt{g}}g1+ 73 \text{\texttt{d}}d4 \text{\texttt{x}}d4+ 74 \text{\texttt{c}}c1+ \text{\texttt{e}}e1+ 75 \text{\texttt{d}}d4 \text{\texttt{x}}d2+ 76 \text{\texttt{c}}c5 \text{\texttt{x}}xa5+ 77 \text{\texttt{w}}c6, and the king escapes from the checks;

(b) 68...\text{\texttt{x}}xf5? 69 gx5 \text{\texttt{x}}xf5+ 70 \text{\texttt{g}}g3 \text{\texttt{g}}g5+ 71 \text{\texttt{f}}f2 \text{\texttt{h}}h4+ 72 \text{\texttt{c}}c2 etc.;

(c) 68...\text{\texttt{f}}f8 69 \text{\texttt{b}}b7 or 69...\text{\texttt{c}}c7!? with very dangerous pressure for White;

(d) 68...\text{\texttt{c}}c4 69 \text{\texttt{g}}g3 (69 \text{\texttt{a}}a7 \text{\texttt{h}}h8 70 \text{\texttt{g}}g3 also wins) 69...\text{\texttt{c}}c5 70 \text{\texttt{e}}e7 \text{\texttt{x}}xb6 (70...\text{\texttt{d}}d6+ does not save the game after 71 \text{\texttt{x}}xd6 \text{\texttt{x}}xd6 72 \text{\texttt{c}}c7 followed by playing the king to e4 and rook to b6) 71 axb6 \text{\texttt{b}}b5 72 b7 a5 73 f4 a4 74 g5 and White wins;

(e) 68...\text{\texttt{d}}d3 69 \text{\texttt{x}}xf6 \text{\texttt{x}}x3+ 70 \text{\texttt{h}}h4 winning the queen.'
‘Even so, here too Black has a saving line. He should decline the “Greek gift” and play 67...\(\texttt{We}c3\)! 68 \(\texttt{Fe}3\) \(\texttt{Wc}1\), when after the best move 69 \(\texttt{Fe}7\) a position from the game is reached.’ (Gelfand)

67...\(\texttt{Wc}1\)!!

‘A brilliant decision, enabling Kramnik to save the half-point. Now if 68 \(\texttt{Wxd}8\) he has a “desperado” queen: 68...\(\texttt{Wh}1+ 69 \texttt{Gg}3\) \(\texttt{Wxf}3+!\) 70 \(\texttt{Kh}4\) \(\texttt{Wxg}4+!\) with stalemate, while after 68 \(\texttt{Gxg}7+\) \(\texttt{Wxg}7\) 69 \(\texttt{Wxd}8\) \(\texttt{Wh}1+ 70 \texttt{Gg}3\) \(\texttt{Gg}1+ 71 \texttt{Ff}4 \texttt{Wc}1+ 72 \texttt{Fe}4 \texttt{Wc}6+ 73 \texttt{Fd}5 \texttt{Wc}2+ the game ends in perpetual check.’ (Gelfand)

68 d5!

Even in time trouble Gelfand finds the best continuation, but if Black is not tempted by this Greek gift he should nevertheless save the game.

68...\(\texttt{Wf}4\)

Bad is 68...\(\texttt{Jx}d5\) 69 \(\texttt{Gxg}7+!\) \(\texttt{Gxg}7\) (69...\(\texttt{Gh}8\) 70 \(\texttt{Gh}7+) 70 \(\texttt{Gb}7+\) \(\texttt{Gh}8\) 71 \(\texttt{Wxd}5\), and the white king hides from the pursuit.

69 \(\texttt{Gg}2\)

69...\(\texttt{Gb}3!\)? came into consideration, when 69...\(\texttt{Wc}1\) was possible.

69...\(\texttt{Wc}8!\)

‘The final stroke. Sacrificing a third pawn, Kramnik imparts to his pieces an amazing coordination, and despite White’s enormous material advantage he has to be content with a draw.’ (Gelfand)

70 \(\texttt{Wxa}6\) \(\texttt{He}3\) 71 \(\texttt{We}2\) \(\texttt{Wc}1\) 72 \(\texttt{Wf}2\) \(\texttt{Wd}1\) 73 \(\texttt{Fe}1\) \(\texttt{Wxd}5\) 74 \(\texttt{Fa}1\)

Or 74 a6 \(\texttt{Fa}3\) 75 a7 \(\texttt{Fa}5\).

74...\(\texttt{Gd}3\) 75 \(\texttt{Ha}2\) \(\texttt{Jxf}3\) 76 \(\texttt{Wxf}3 \frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}\)

‘A grand finish!’ (Gelfand)

And then... Then, with the scores equal, in the final game Kramnik made an incomprehensible mistake on the fifth(!) move. He had played this position countless times, he knew all the ins and outs, and... he mixed up the obligatory order of moves, verified over decades. Gelfand won a pawn, and accurately converted it in the third time control...

It is difficult to say whether or not this was the reason, but since that time Kramnik has had a purely psychological problem in these so-called ‘games of one’s life’, that is, those games from the final round, on which either everything, or – at the least – very, very much depends. To this day, Vladimir does not succeed in the overwhelming majority of them. I will never forget, for example, how he concluded his game with the same Gelfand on a completely empty stage at the Novgorod super-tournament of 1997. True, there is a saying that it is most difficult of all to win a won game, but not for a grandmaster of such class as Kramnik. But even so – he did not win! And yet this extra half point would have allowed him to catch Kasparov, who was like a cat on hot bricks at that moment, and to overtake him on the tie-break!...

It is highly probable that the match with Gelfand would have followed a different strategic pattern, had it not been preceded by another quarter-final match, in the PCA cycle – with Gata Kamsky. This encounter had the following prologue:

‘The problems began with something strange,’ – Vladimir later said in perplexity, ‘when for some reason I was refused an American visa. Instead of having a rest before the game and relaxing, I was obliged to fly urgently to Moscow from Berlin, where I was preparing for the match. And every day from early morning I had to go to the embassy, trying to show
that I was indeed a chess player, and that I had no intention of staying in the USA as some kind of refugee. And as for the PCA, in the cycle of which I was a participant, it demonstrated a complete indifference to the question of “visa support”. So I arrived in New York completely exhausted with all these troubles and unexpected stress. However, I would not like to use it as an explanation for my defeat in the match... I could not put my mind to anything. Every experienced player can confirm that sometimes you are found out, despite all your efforts. Fate was against me. Well, and the score in the match does not matter — it was not difficult to improve it, but in such a state one cannot win..."

But it is probable that there was a different, more concrete reason for this failure. Here is what was seen ‘from the side’ by grandmaster Igor Zaitsev, who, as a second, had endured the burden of not one, and not even five matches for the chess crown.

‘Let us be frank and honest – no one expected a wounding defeat, such as Gata Kamsky inflicted on his opponent. Moreover, most of the experts almost unanimously predicted success for Kramnik in the forthcoming match, regarding him as clear favourite. And Vladimir himself, judging by what he said, did not reject such a role... And this was his first psychological mistake, because, as has been shown in various sports, it is more inconvenient to be the favourite – it is more difficult for him to play and it brings special demands.

The wise Mikhail Botvinnik was so right, warning back in the mid-seventies that, of all the types of trials — by fire, water and brass trumpets — the latter present the greatest danger to young players. Those who instilled in Vladimir the thought that he was clearly superior in his match with the “Russian-speaking” American grandmaster, did the talented young man a bad service, in consciously underestimating Kamsky’s enormous practical strength. And it had its effect.

How else can one explain the fact that, when the lots were drawn, Kramnik voluntarily chose the black pieces in the first game (no doubt thinking, but then I will have White in the last game). This, to my mind, was his second mistake. It makes sense to do this only in that rare case when a guaranteed number of games is played (for example, in a competition consisting of two games). In all other cases the match can end early, say, after the seventh game, and the one who played the first game with White will thus manage to play White four times, and his opponent only three times (things won’t get as far as the last, eighth game). Given the role of the opening nowadays, such a difference, especially in a short match, is very important. That is why any experienced trainer will, without the least hesitation, recommend playing White in the first game. Moreover, as regards the opening, towards the end of the match the importance of the white pieces begins to diminish. If we take into consideration the biological adaptation of the body to time zones, then, if I had in my way, I would make it a rule always to give the guest the white pieces in the first game, if, of course, he did not object, and to keep the drawing of lots only for matches on neutral territory."

After all these ‘eastern’ (India), middle ‘Holland’ and ‘western’ (USA) encounters, Kramnik was not seen playing ‘serious’ chess until the 1994 Olympiad in Moscow. He successfully completed the first major action of the PCA — the rapidplay Grand Prix (see the next chapter), and again appeared as central striker for the Russian Olympiad team, which achieved its traditional gold only with great difficulty. In the middle of the tournament the President of the Russian Chess Federation Andrey Makarov even said something to the effect that it is all the same for us: let the Russian junior team win. The juniors
were indeed 'champing at the bit', and they even drew with their senior compatriots, but they nevertheless fell behind. Before the last round no one any longer had any doubts...

Kramnik has selected several of his Olympiad games for this book – Nos. 146, 162 and 175.

And also these:

**No.43**

Apicella–Kramnik

Olympiad, Moscow 1994

If this position had been seen by the great Nimzowitsch, then, firstly, he would have been happy to see the triumph of his ideas. and secondly, he would probably have suggested a new term – something like ‘attacking blockade’. Despite his extra pawn, things are very, very difficult for White, and the threat of ...f5-f4 is highly dangerous.

32 \( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{h}8 \) 33 \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 34 \( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{c}8 \) 35 \( \text{e}6 \) \( \text{x}a4 \) 36 \( \text{x}a4 \) \( \text{xa}4 \) 37 \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{w}a1 \) 38 \( \text{g}2 \) \( \text{b}8 \) 39 \( \text{f}4 \) \( \text{b}1 \) 40 \( \text{w}e2 \) \( \text{e}1 \) 41 \( \text{e}a2 \) \( \text{xe}2 \) 42 \( \text{x}a1 \) \( \text{xf}2 \) 43 \( \text{xf}2 \) \( \text{xa}1 \) 44 \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{g}8 \) 45 \( \text{e}6 \) \( \text{g}6 \) 46 \( \text{c}5 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 47 \( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{xe}6 \) 48 \( \text{dxe}6 \) \( \text{d}5 \) 49 \( \text{fxe}5 \) \( \text{gxf}5 \) 50 \( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 51 \( \text{c}6 \) \( \text{d}4+ \) 52 \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{f}4+ \) 53 \( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{d}3+ \) 54 \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{e}3 \) 55 \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 56 \( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{xc}5 \) 57 \( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{d}6 \) 58 \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 59 \( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 60 \( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{g}3 \) 61 \( \text{h}5 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 0–1

**No.44**

Kupreichik–Kramnik

Olympiad, Moscow 1994

Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 \( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 3 \( \text{c}3 \) e5 4 \( \text{c}4 \) d6 5 d3 \( \text{e}7 \) 6 \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{g}5 \)!

In one of the Gelfand-Kramnik games from the Candidates Match in Sanghi Nagar, Black played 6 ... \( \text{f}6 \) and ran into difficulties.

Here practically any 'modern' grandmaster would have played 7 \( \text{f}1 \), but you have to know the explosive Kupreichik.

7 h4 \( \text{h}6 \) 8 g4?! \( \text{f}4 \) 9 \( \text{d}5 \)

9... \( \text{g}7 \)!

A cold shower on a hot head! White had apparently reckoned only on 9 ... \( \text{f}6 \) 10 \( \text{xf}4 \) \( \text{exf}4 \) 11 \( g5 \) with the initiative. Now he should have agreed to 10 \( \text{f}1 \), but then, you may well ask, what was the point of weakening the kingside?

10 \( \text{xf}4 \) \( \text{exf}4 \) 11 \( \text{b}5 \) 0–0 12 \( \text{xc}6 \) \( \text{xc}6 \) 13 \( \text{b}3 \) d5! 14 \( \text{xf}4 \) dxe4 15 dxe4 \( \text{f}6 \)!

Now White's hopes are dashed.

16 \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{xb}2 \) 17 \( \text{xc}5 \)

It was time to castle, but then Black would have supported his c5 pawn.

17... \( \text{d}8 \) 18 \( \text{e}2 \) b6 19 \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 20 \( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{xc}2 \) 21 \( \text{xc}2 \) \( \text{xc}2 \) 22 \( \text{c}1 \) \( \text{xe}3+ \) 23 \( \text{f}e3 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 24 \( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{e}8 \) 25 \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{e}6 \) 26 \( \text{a}4 \) a5 27 \( \text{b}1 \) g6 28 \( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{d}7 \) 29 \( \text{e}4 \)
A vertical take-off

What was Kramnik doing during his post-Olympiad six-month break from classical chess? To a great extent this is a rhetorical question: working, working and working. He was studying new openings, as he naturally was not satisfied only with what had already been discovered and tried. His knowledge broadened, deepened: middlegame positions were becoming familiar, fresh ideas were appearing... At the same time Vladimir had to answer the banal questions of the dilettante journalists: 'You are handsome, tall, and clever: do girls like you?'; 'They say that you spend nights in the casino'...

The latter resulted from the fact that at the tournament in Linares, Kramnik and Shirov were seen walking in the town early one morning, and they were immediately compared with Gata Kamsky who lived according to 'the rules' and at the same hour would have been methodically jogging his five or ten kilometres. I witnessed a few of these interviews and was surprised by the amazing outward composure of the young man: had it been someone else, he would have been ranting and raving...

By that time, apart from the rapidplay Grand Prix, the Professional Chess Association had announced a series of PCA Super Classics, the first of which was the Mikhail Tal Memorial Tournament.

'We are all, in a sense, Tal's children; I grew up on his games and in my childhood I played in such a style' – this is Kramnik, who came to Riga in April 1995 in a fighting mood. He won the brilliancy prize (game No.131), but did not take a serious part in the battle for first place. It is likely that his mood was deflated by the following game.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{lxe4} & \text{ 30 } \text{xb6} \text{ xh4} \text{ 31 } \text{c7} \text{ e8} \text{ 32} \\
\text{bb7} & \text{ h2+} \text{ 33 } \text{g3} \text{ xa2} \text{ 34 } \text{f3} \text{ e2} \text{ 35} \\
\text{f4} & \text{ a4} \text{ 36 } \text{xg5} \text{ a3} \text{ 37 } \text{a7} \text{ xa7} \text{ 38 } \text{xa7} \\
\text{a2} & \text{ 39 } \text{e4} \text{ e6} \text{ 40 } \text{c3} \text{ e2} \text{ 41 } \text{xa2} \\
\text{d5} & \text{ 42 } \text{b4} \text{ e4+} \text{ 0–1}
\end{align*}
\]

After playing the first half of the game very subtly, in one breath, Vladimir carried out a decisive combination.

\[
25 \text{ dxf7!} \text{ xf7} \text{ 26 } \text{xf7} \text{ xf7} \text{ 27} \\
\text{d7+} \text{ f8} \text{ 28 } \text{e1?!}
\]

Incomprehensible, since 28 c5 would have won, so to speak, on auto-pilot. Perhaps even after this not all the chances were lost, but White was upset by what had happened.

\[
28...\text{a5} \text{ 29 } \text{a3} \text{ axb4} \text{ 30 } \text{axb4} \text{ b2} \text{ 31 } \text{g5} \\
\text{a3+} \text{ 32 } \text{g4} \text{ xc4} \text{ 33 } \text{xe6} \text{ e3+} \text{ 34} \\
\text{f3} \text{ d5+} \text{ 35 } \text{f4} \text{ ec7} \text{ 36 } \text{c6} \text{ e3+} \text{ 37} \\
\text{d4} \text{ b3} \text{ 38 } \text{dxc7} \frac{1}{2}–\frac{1}{2}
\]

Kramnik nevertheless went through the tournament undefeated, and in general it was from Riga that his record sequence began: meeting the strongest players in the world, the 20-year-old grandmaster did not once have to stop the clocks and – jumping ahead slightly – he concluded the year in first place on both the FIDE and the PCA rating lists. For the first time in ten years, world champion Garry Kasparov was forced to give way to the player, who – you remember? – a couple of years earlier he had ‘appointed’ as his successor on the chess throne. It is clear that merely ‘keeping afloat’ in such company would have been insufficient for Kramnik to make such an upward leap. Hence the brilliant games Nos.139, 176 and 178, and also...
As shown by subsequent events, this is a not very successful attempt to improve Black’s play in a position that had already been seen before. At the preceding super-tournament in the same PCA series – the Tal Memorial, Vishwanathan Anand, for whom this fashionable and sharp variation was part of his main opening arsenal, preferred 19...\textit{b}ae8 against Kramnik (see also game No. 55), but after 20 \textit{e}3! (‘the rotatory movement of the white pieces creates a strong impression’ – grandmaster Yuri Razuvaev once remarked about this) 20...\textit{c}3 21 \textit{a}4 \textit{b}2 22 \textit{d}3 b5 23 \textit{c}1! he was forced to part with his queen – 23...\textit{b}xa4 (23. \textit{b}3 24 \textit{a}3) 24 \textit{x}b2 \textit{x}b2, and if instead of 25 d6 White had simply picked up a piece – 25 \textit{c}2 \textit{c}8 27 \textit{e}2, the game would have been over, and the tournament in Riga could have turned out differently.

But Timman too was unlucky.

\textbf{No. 47}

Ljubojevic – Kramnik

Belgrade 1995

Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 \textit{f}3 \textit{c}6 3 d4 cxd4 4 \textit{xd}4 \textit{f}6 5 \textit{c}3 e5 6 \textit{db}5 d6 7 \textit{g}5 a6 8 \textit{a}3 b5 9 \textit{x}f6 gxf6 10 \textit{d}5 \textit{g}7 11 g3 \textit{f}5 12 \textit{ex}f5 \textit{e}4 13 \textit{f}6

In this way White gets rid of the dangerous bishop, but its place on the long dark-square diagonal will be occupied with strong effect by the queen. 13 c3 \textit{e}5!? was more logical, with very sharp play.

13...\textit{x}f6 14 \textit{xf}6+ \textit{xf}6 15 \textit{d}5

Now 15 c3 \textit{e}5 clearly hands the initiative to Black (there is no longer that fine knight at d5!), and the Yugoslav grandmaster (‘Ljubojevic is an unusual player, his ideas are always original’ – Kramnik) throws caution to the wind.

\textit{xe}7 26 \textit{xa}7 \textit{b}8 27 \textit{e}1! \textit{d}8 28 \textit{e}8 b5 29 \textit{a}8! (all forced and pretty) 29...\textit{xa}8 30 \textit{xa}8 b4 31 \textit{d}5 \textit{g}7 32 \textit{f}1 and Black resigned. He is powerless to prevent the white king from making its victorious march to c8.

On this demonstration of his analytical power, at the board Kramnik required only 50 minutes... The following, however, was pure improvisation.

\textbf{No. 46}

Kramnik – Timman

Novgorod 1995

Grünfeld Defence

1 \textit{f}3 g6 2 d4 \textit{f}6 3 c4 \textit{g}7 4 \textit{c}3 d5 5 cxd5 \textit{x}d5 6 e4 \textit{xe}3 7 bxc3 c5 8 \textit{b}1 0–0 9 \textit{e}2 \textit{cxd}4 10 \textit{cxd}4 \textit{a}5+ 11 \textit{d}2 \textit{xa}2 12 0–0 \textit{g}4 13 \textit{g}5 h6 14 \textit{e}3 \textit{x}e6 15 d5 \textit{a}5 16 \textit{c}5 \textit{f}6 17 e5 \textit{xe}5 18 \textit{b}4! \textit{xf}3 19 \textit{xf}3 \textit{f}6?!

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{chess_board.png}
\caption{Position after 19...\textit{f}6?}
\end{figure}

As shown by subsequent events, this is a not very successful attempt to improve Black’s play in a position that had already been seen before. At the preceding super-tournament in the same PCA series – the Tal Memorial, Vishwanathan Anand, for whom this fashionable and sharp variation was part of his main opening arsenal, preferred 19...\textit{b}ae8 against Kramnik (see also game No. 55), but after 20 \textit{e}3! (‘the rotatory movement of the white pieces creates a strong impression’ – grandmaster Yuri Razuvaev once remarked about this) 20...\textit{c}3 21 \textit{a}4 \textit{b}2 22 \textit{d}3 b5 23 \textit{c}1! he was forced to part with his queen – 23...\textit{b}xa4 (23. \textit{b}3 24 \textit{a}3) 24 \textit{x}b2 \textit{x}b2, and if instead of 25 d6 White had simply picked up a piece – 25 \textit{c}2 \textit{c}8 27 \textit{e}2, the game would have been over, and the tournament in Riga could have turned out differently.

But Timman too was unlucky.

20 \textit{a}4 \textit{b}3 21 \textit{xa}5 \textit{xd}1 22 \textit{xd}1 b6 23 d6! \textit{ac}8 24 d7 \textit{cd}8 25 \textit{xe}7!

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.8\textwidth]{chess_board2.png}
\caption{Position after 25 \textit{xe}7}
\end{figure}

15...0–0! 16 c3?

16 0–0–0 \textit{g}4 is unpleasant for White. After 16 \textit{xc}6 \textit{xb}2 17 \textit{b}1 \textit{xa}3 the
A vertical take-off

rook at a8 is immune and Black remains a pawn up after 18...g2 f5 19 0-0 ac8, but even so this is what White should have played.

16...b4! 17 e4

White would have lost immediately after 17...xc6 bxa3 18...xa8 axb2 19...b1 xc3+.

17...xc3 18...xd6

Black also wins after 18...xc6 cxb2 19...b1 c3+

18...e6!

Completing the mobilisation of all the pieces.

19...f4 g7 20 0-0-0...b4! 21...e5 xa2+ 22...b1...e5 23...xe5...b3! 0-1

An excellent, sustained attack.

No.48
Kramnik—Short
Horgen 1995

Getting through to c5 will take a very long time. Putting pressure on the c6 pawn is pointless... But the b5 pawn can be made weak after Kramnik’s trademark breakthrough, which he senses literally with the tips of his fingers.

27 d5! exd5 28 exd5 f5 29...f2 c5

Avoiding, even if at the cost of a pawn, the complete opening up of the position. Black is hoping to securely blockade the passed d5 pawn.

30...xb5...d6

After 30...xb4 31...c6 followed by g3-g4 White has an undisputed and great advantage.

31...xc5!

One of those ‘little combinations’, the effectiveness of which was demonstrated long ago by Capablanca. Black cannot keep his extra piece.

31...xb5 32 c6...d6 33...xd7...c1 34...xd7...d3 35...f7 36...c6...b3 37...f3...b7 38...e3...e7 39...b6...xb6+ 40...xb6...d7 41...f2...c8 42...c6...d6 43...c6...c8 44...c6...c7 45...c4!, and White gradually converted his minimal material advantage.

No.49
Kramnik—Rene
t
European Club Championship
Clichy 1995

Black has erected all conceivable defensive lines, but nevertheless...

22 h4 h6 23...h2...e8 24...g3...h7 25...g2...g8 26...xg5 hxg5 27...h6...b6 28...e2...d8 29...h3...g7 30...e4!...xe4 31...xe4...xd4 (forced) 32...xd4...xd4 33...f1...f7 34...h3...c7 35...d2...d5 36...e4...c5 37...c4...c3+ 38...xe3...xc4+ 39...g1...g8 40 b3 a5 41...e8...d7 42...h3

Black resigned in view of the variation 42...d6 43...g6...g7 44...xh7+...xh7 45...xg8 (or 45...xg8) mate.

But at the same time, a quite incomprehensible finish from that tournament in Novgorod.
Instead of the normal, in all senses of the word, 14 exd7+ \(\textsf{wx}d7\) 15 \(\textsf{tx}d3\), and if 15...\(\textsf{g}4\) 16 \(\textsf{g}5\)!? with complications, in all probability favourable to White, the e6 pawn suddenly ‘turned right’ – 14 exf7+? ‘Games like this happen, in which it is impossible to explain a single move... I do not know how I made the moves that I made,’ Kramnik said the following day. And, as a result of this chess black-out: instead of a share of second place even after a draw, and clear second place in the event of a win – only sixth place...

True, this was again the last round. It would be too much to list it as a ‘decisive’ one, but even so, even so... In Belgrade 1993 too, in his penultimate game Vladimir failed to convert a healthy extra pawn that he had acquired almost in the opening: yet if he had won, he would have caught the leader, his opponent Alexander Belyavsky, and could well have counted on first prize. However, from the list of Vladimir’s main competitions, it is clear that he had begun exchanging high places in tournaments for first or second. He needed to make only one more half a step: forwards and up.

He managed to do this surprisingly quickly. Two months later. In the town where for some reason Kramnik has always played and plays amazingly easily and successfully, though he himself simultaneously both recognises and denies this phenomenon. ‘I can’t say that in Dortmund I played more strongly than in Riga or Novgorod. The only difference was that here I made use of all my opportunities, did not blunder, and did not get into severe time trouble. I have come to realise: if you do not miss anything, you can achieve very good results’ – this is the appraisal of Kramnik himself, who gave a few further ‘grounds’ for his success. ‘I gave up smoking literally 2-3 days before the tournament in Dortmund. It was probably an award from above – usually a change of routine immediately before a competition does not do you any good... During the tournament, of course, I was dying to smoke. It was impossible to imagine that I would not have a smoke immediately after the time control. But I contained myself.

‘In general I did not consider this tournament as being very important for me; I just wanted to play. Such a relaxed state even helped at the beginning. But somewhere in the middle, when real chances of first place appeared, I began to grow nervous. At last I wanted to win the tournament! The tension became strong, I began sleeping worse, and by the end of the tournament I was pretty tired...’

Even so, Dortmund is indeed a unique place for him. Judge for yourself: for a start – a shared victory in the open tournament accompanying the main grandmaster event, which led to that sensational invitation to the Russian Olympiad team in 1992. The next year, having just joined the grandmaster ‘family’, he allowed only Anatoly Karpov to finish ahead of him. Now – for the first time a ‘clear’ first place in a super-tournament of FIDE category 17. And, running ahead, year in, year out – success after success, without a single loss! It came to the point when in 1998, during the drawing of lots, the organisers jokingly, but nevertheless aloud, expressed...
the desire to hear a different name when awarding the main prize two weeks later. Alas, Kramnik again failed to justify their hopes...

Vladimir’s excellent wins – his game with Short was named the best creative achievement of the tournament – are given in the selected games as Nos. 140 and 147. But the tally of ‘ones’ in the table was opened in the first game.

21 \textit{\textbf{h}3!}

‘An elegant move, inviting the opponent into an ending with unbalanced material,’ grandmaster Mikhalkchishin commented on White’s unusual decision. ‘What can Black do? Thus 21\ldots f7 is not possible in view of 22 \textit{\textbf{xf}7 xf7} 23 e4 \textit{\textbf{xe}7} 24 d5. After 21\ldots f5 the knight at e5 is clearly dominant, and White has a choice between the central breakthrough 22 e4 \textit{\textbf{xe}7} 23 d5 and the methodical pressure of 22 \textit{\textbf{dc}1} with the threats of e3-e4 and g2xd5, after which the play becomes a matter of technique.’

21...fxe5 22 \textit{\textbf{xe}6+ f7} 23 \textit{\textbf{xc}8 xc8} 24 dxex5 \textit{\textbf{xb}6} 25 \textit{\textbf{d}4 xe6} 26 f4 \textit{\textbf{f}7} 27 e4 g6 28 \textit{\textbf{f}2 e7} 29 \textit{\textbf{c}1} a5 30 \textit{\textbf{c}5} a4 31 \textit{\textbf{b}4} d7 32 \textit{\textbf{c}1} c6 33 \textit{\textbf{e}3} d7 34 \textit{\textbf{bc}4} b8 35 h5 36 \textit{\textbf{g}1} h8 37 \textit{\textbf{c}2} e6 38 \textit{\textbf{g}c1} db8 39 \textit{\textbf{c}5} e7 40 \textit{\textbf{1c}2} d7 41 \textit{\textbf{xc}6}

With this exchange sacrifice White clears the way for the advance of his kingside pawns.

41...bxc6 42 \textit{\textbf{xc}6 b8} 43 \textit{\textbf{xg}6 xb2} 44 f5 \textit{\textbf{b}3+} 45 \textit{\textbf{f}4 xa3} 46 \textit{\textbf{g}7+ e8} 47 \textit{\textbf{f}6} 48 g4!

The winning move. 48 e5 would have been hasty – 48...\textit{\textbf{d}5+} 49 \textit{\textbf{e}4 d3+}.

48...\textit{\textbf{a}1}

If 48...\textit{\textbf{xg}4} there would have followed 49 e5.

49 e5 \textit{\textbf{d}5+} 50 \textit{\textbf{e}4} 1–0

And then Kramnik made a move that was both unexpected and puzzling. He accepted Garry Kasparov’s invitation to work with him during the match for the chess crown in New York, where the world champion’s opponent was the player who had passed through the entire qualification process of the Professional Chess Association, Viswanathan Anand. In principle, there was nothing surprising in this, and from a symbiosis of the strongest, even if only temporary, both sides gain. New ideas emerge, you are able to look at your own play from a slightly different angle, to feel your weaknesses with the tips of someone else’s very sensitive fingers, and to outline the direction of your future work. All this is for the best, but... In the rich history of chess it had never previously happened that a participant in a match for the world championship was seconded by another grandmaster, who himself was a real candidate for the champion’s title. And Kramnik himself did not conceal the fact that this is how things were. Since the universal interest in the 20-year-old youth, who was climbing like a rocket, was growing from day to day, journalists literally would not leave him in peace, and in numerous interviews – Kramnik, sincere and very tactful, even to this day has not learned say ‘no’ – Vladimir did not hide his growing thoughts about becoming champion. And suddenly – to disclose himself completely in front of the person, with whom he might well have to play a
match for the crown... The experts, who understood the psychology of sport in general and of big-time sport in particular, shook their heads – not clear, not clear...

But Kramnik would not be Kramnik if everything in his life were orthodox and could be arithmetically calculated. For all the complete outward clarity and transparency, in his soul existed the most complicated feelings, complexes, and aspirations, that sometimes fought with one another. Among them you would definitely not find anything black or malevolent, but all the rest – and in all colours and shades – had their place. Today there is probably no point in studying seriously what it was that urged Kramnik to collaborate with a very probable future opponent, but I would venture to suggest that a year later he would have declined such a proposal...

During the New York match, however, Kramnik managed to fly to France for a week, led his Bundesliga club into the final of the European Club Championship, and with this modest tournament experience set off for Switzerland. There, in the small and quiet town of Horgen – and, naturally, in a building of one of the banks – took place the final event of the first (and, alas, as it turned out, the last) series of ‘full-length’ super-classic tournaments under the aegis of that same Professional Chess Association. After starting with the Tal Memorial in Riga and continuing in Novgorod, this final stage was due to determine both the winner of this category 17 super-tournament, and the best score in the three tournaments combined, and also effectively the leaders of the next New Year world rating list.

One of these questions seemingly did not need an answer. Garry Kasparov, who had won the first two stages of the series, was far ahead of his rivals, and for overall success, second, third or even fourth place for him would suffice. But after exhausting himself in his match with Anand, he finished only fifth – and with a very modest score! As a result, it was only by a miracle that Kasparov remained winner of the series, and it was Kramnik who brilliantly ‘answered’ the other two questions. ‘I had an irrepressible thirst for fighting, and I also felt that I was in good form’ – these words were confirmed by his first place (on tie-break), by the outstandingly delicate game No.177, and also, among others, by the following one:

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No.52
Kramnik-Vaganian
Horgen 1995
Queen's Indian Defence

1 d4 f5 2 d4 e6 3 c4 b6 4 a3 b7 5 c3 d5 6 exd5 cxd5 7 e4 a6 8 d4 exd4 9 exd4 f5 10 e5 0-0 11 td2 f4 12 e3 d6 13 f2 fxe4 14 fxe4 f6 15 c5!
```

A pawn sacrifice for the initiative – this, according to Tarrasch, is a much more
difficult matter than the sacrifice of a piece, and especially the queen: there concrete calculation practically always prevails.

15...bxc5 16 c4 e7 17 dxc5 axc5 18 b4 d6 19 b2

Of course, not 19 b6 axb6 20 xa8 e5 with fine play for Black.

19...c7 20 f1 c5 21 bxc5 xc5 22 a1 e7 23 b5!

Of course, not 19...b6 axb6 20 xa8 e5 with fine play for Black.

19...c7 20 f1 c5 21 bxc5 xc5 22 a1 e7 23 b5!

With the more than unpleasant threat of 24 b7.

23...b6 24 a4! c5 25 d4xd4

Again the queenside cannot be developed – 25...d7 26 a5 g7 f8d8 27 a1, when the threat of 28 b2 is terrible, and 27...b8 does not work in view of 28 a1d7.

26 xd4 a6 27 b6 a7 28 d6 d7 29 c8!!

Exchanges ease the defence – this is one of the postulates of chess. Here, however, the exchange intensifies the pressure: the finding of such paradoxes is a touchstone of genuine mastery.

29...xc8 (there is nothing else) 30 cxc8 a3

Or 30...h4 31 g5 h5 32 xb8 and wins (32...xd4 33 d6+).

31 xe6 f6 32 xf5+ e8 33 e6+ d8 34 b6+ e8 35 d6+

And in view of the variation 35...c7 36 xe4+ f6 37 c4+ Black resigned.

As regards the rating list, here the tournament in Horgen became the basis of the main chess sensation of many a long year. Since the time of his accession to the throne, Garry Kasparov had not conceded to anyone the first slot in that ranking table, by which – as there is nothing better – the chess world is accustomed to defining the strongest. The world champion had succeeded even in conquering a seemingly unreachable height: to surpass the rating record held since 1972 by Robert James Fischer, established, as you will remember, after his ‘clean’ scores in the candidates matches and his more than convincing victory over the tenth king in chess history, Boris Spassky. Nevertheless, on 1st January 1996 the list of chess high society opened with the name of Kramnik: among the elite he had achieved the greatest addition to his rating and, moreover, he had played more serious games than any of his main rivals during the previous six months. For all that, Kramnik remained the youngest of the top thirty players – he was only 20! He was the only one not to lose a single game in battles against the elite. All this taken together both impressed, and inspired, and also allowed him to dream of much...

True, to achieve this ‘happy end’ Kramnik had to continue his traverse of the chess heights in Belgrade, where he succeeded with both his trademark breakthrough in the selected games chapter. (No.125), the measured games Nos.148 and 163, and with much else...

Black’s only move here was the subtle 26...a4!, in order to lure the white pawn to a3 and subsequently create more quickly a passed pawn on the queenside. But the artless 26...xd4+ 27 xd3 xd3+ 28 xd3 f6 29 c4 a6 allowed White to break through to the key d5 square with a pawn sacrifice and to accurately convert his advantage into a win.
At precisely that time, the International Chess Federation, FIDE, which had grown tired of the two championships and felt that it was no longer possible to afford the former qualifying system, proposed, through its President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, a new formula for the world championship: a single, grandiose, mass tournament held on a knock-out system. The prize find announced was a stunning one for chess, and was quite comparable with that of the richest tennis tournament in the world – the US Open. And though many spoke against such a revolution in the ancient chess kingdom (with a single, forced exception – after Alekhine’s death – the throne had always been ascended after a match), the sum of five million dollars was stunning. In the first, second and third instance, those who could not seriously hope for a triumphant ascent, and to whom the noble but apparently decrepit Olympic slogan of Baron Pierre de Coubertin was applicable: “The main thing is not victory, but taking part,” it simply promised good earnings. Grandmasters of the first rank (generally it is absurd to divide the possessors of the highest chess title into certain invisible but real ‘categories’, but the title was excessively devalued a long time ago) said that fortune would play too great a part in these short matches, consisting of only two serious games.

It was something else that more concerned Kramnik. In an attempt to gain peace and quiet, the champions ‘of different versions’, Garry Kasparov and Anatoly Karpov, were invited straight to the semi-finals, and after Kasparov’s categorical refusal, Karpov received the green light directly into the final! Fresh and rested, he would face an opponent who had knocked out roughly five opponents, who had played not less than 15 ‘normal’ and rapid games, and who had possibly shredded his nerves in blitz games. All this left the ‘candidate’ with such slim chances of success that, in Kramnik’s opinion, it was turning a quite democratic reform into a kind of sacrifice to one player, for the sake of escaping from a dead end.

Incidentally, other top players thought the same. But only Kramnik supported his word by his action; he was the only one of the ‘dissidents’ to make a principled statement at the FIDE Congress, and when the injustice remained uncorrected – to refuse to take part.

Meanwhile, his sequence of first places in prestigious tournaments continued. And what play! For example, it would seem that no one had ever beaten Kasparov in such style as Vladimir did in game No.141. In general there were many creative successes in 1996. The majority have been annotated by Kramnik himself, but here are two that he disregarded – undeservedly, in my opinion...

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No.54
Kramnik–Seirawan
Amsterdam 1996
Sicilian Defence

1  ♕f3  c5  2  e4  ♕f6  3  ♕c3  d5  4  exd5  ♕xd5 5  ♖b5+  ♕d7  6  ♕e5!

This unexpected thrust sets Black certain problems – he is obliged to part with his bishop.

6...♕f6

Problems awaited Black in the event of the optimistic 6...♗xb5 7 ♕f3! f6 (7...♕f6 8 ♕xb7) 8 ♕xb5 fxe5 9 ♕xd5 ♕xd5 10 ♕c7+ ♕d7 11 ♕xd5.

7 ♕xd7 ♘xd7 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♕xd4 a6 10 ♕e2 e6?

In Kramnik’s opinion, 10...e5! 11 ♕d3 ♕c7 would have promised Black more.

11 ♕f4 ♕c5 12 ♕d3 0–0 13 0–0 b5 14 ♕f3 ♕a7 15 ♕ad1 ♕a5 16 a3 b4

With the most natural moves White has gained a serious positional advantage.
Black’s attempt to create at least some counterplay encounters a brilliant tactical refutation.

17 ɑa2!  bxa3 18 b4!  ðxb4

If 18...  w a4 White had prepared 19  bxb1! with the murderous threat of 20  c3.

19  ðxb4  wxb4 20  ðd6  wa5 21  ðxf8  wxf8 22  ma1  c5 23  w d6+  ɵe7 24  m b1

Exploiting fully the energy of his heavy pieces.

24...  ðe8 25  ðb8  ðd7 26  ma8  w c5 27  wxc5  ðxc5 28  ðc6  f6 29  ðxa3  ðf7 30  ðxe8+  ðxe8 31  ðxe8  ðxe8 32  m a5 1-0

Against one of his main rivals Kramnik again employed the fashionable – and deeply analysed by him – variation of the Grünfeld Defence with a pawn sacrifice.

16 ðc5!  ðf6 17  e5  ðxe5 18  b4  ðxf3 19  ðxf3  ðae8 20  ðe3!  ðe4 21  ðxh6  ðd6 22  ðxf8  ðxf8 23  h4  ðc8 24  ðe4  ða5 25  ða4  ðb5 26  ðb1  ðc5 27  ðd3  ðd7 28  ðxa7  ðxd5 29  ða8+  ðg7 30  h5  ðd4 31  ðe2  ðf6 32  hxg6  fxg6 33  ðb1, and White won... on the 101st move!

‘For a long time the position oscillated between a win for me and a draw. We were approaching the third and final time control, and I had about five minutes left, while with Vishy it was just the opposite – he had a mass of time, about an hour and a half. At this point Anand suddenly began looking as if bewitched at the rising flag on my clock. But I played quickly and successfully, and finished Vishy off after all’ – this was how Kramnik himself described the further course of the game.

33...  w g4 34  w a2  ðc4 35  w b3  b5 36  m e1  ðd2 37  m a2  ðd5 38  m e4  ðe5 39  m e2  w h4 40  g3  w h6 41  w d3  ðd6 42  ðd5  ðxe2 43  ðxe2  w h3 44  ðe6  w h8 45  w f3  w b8 46  ðg2  b4 47  ðh1  w b7 48  ðd5  w b5 49  g4  ðf7 50  ðb3  ðh6 51  m e1  w g5 52  m e4  ðf5 53  m d1  ðh4+ 54  ðh3  ðc5 55  w e2  g5 56  w c4  w x c4 57  w x c4  ðc3 58  ðc5  ðf3 59  ðg3  ðe5 60  ðb5  ðd2 61  f3  ðc3-62  f4  gxf4+ 63  ðxf4  ðf7 64  ðd5  ðb2 65  ðf5  ðf6 66  ðd1  ðg5 67  ðd3  ðf7 68  ðd7  ðd6+ 69  ðf4  ðf7 70  ðb7  ðe5+ 71  ðe3  ðd6 72  ðe4  ðg5+ 73  ðf5  ðf3 74  ðd5  ðh4+ 75  ðg5  ðg6 76  ða7  ðf8 77  ðf5  ðc5 78  ðb7  ðd6 79  g5  ðg6 80  ða7  ðf8 81  ðb3  ðg6 82  ða8  ðf8 83  ðg4  ðc7 84  ðh5  ðd6 85  ðe8  ðe5 86  ðc5  ðg6 87  ðc8  ðf8

88 ðc1!  ðc3 89  ðf1  e6 90  ðd1  ðf7 91  ðd8  ðg6 92  ðd7+  ðe8 93  ða4  ðe5 94  ðb7+  ðf8 95  g6  ðd3 96  ðh6  ðc5 97  ðb8+  ðe7 98  ðc2  ðd7 99  ðb7  ðd6 100  g7  ðxg7+ 101  ðxg7 1-0
Incidentally, in this same tournament, Kramnik also won against Ivanchuk (game No.142).

Black should go into the knight ending, with drawing chances. Now Kramnik demonstrates very fine technique.

45...b4 46 c5 a7 47 e2 g5 48 e3 gxh4 49 gxh4 b2 50 d7+ e6 51 f8+ f6 52 h7+ g6 53 g5! (an excellent place for the knight) 53...f6 54 d5 b6 55 f4 xa6 56 xf5+ g6 57 xe4 c8 58 g5+ h6 59 e5 g6 60 e8 c6 61 e5 b6 62 e7

The knight ending after 62 c6+ xe6+ 63 xe6 c4 64 f4 c3 may be drawn.

62...c4+ 63 d5 c8 64 e6+ g7 65 g3 f7 66 h6 d2 67 h5 a8 68 f5+ g7 69 f4 a5+ 70 e6 a6+ 71 c5 c6 72 g5 c4 73 f5+ h7 74 e7 e5+ 75 f5 e5 76 h5 g7 77 g5+ f6 78 g8+ e6 79 f4 d3 80 xc5 xc5 81 g6 d3 82 f5+ e5 83 f6 f4+ 84 f7 f5 85 e7+ g4 86 g6 h5 87 e7 1–0

33...f6!

Boldly weakening all the light squares for the sake of neutralising the lurking central attacker – the bishop at b2. Now, among others, the following variations were possible: 34 b1 dx4 35 xh6 f7 (35...xb2? 36 h7+ f8 37 h8+ f7 38 xg7 mate) 36 xe5 xe5 (36...xe5 37 h7+ f8 38 g6 gives White a decisive advantage) 37 xf6, and now:

(a) 37 xf6 38 h7+ f8 39 h8+ e7 40 xg7+ f7 41 xe5+ d8 42 b8+ c8 43 d6+ d7! with a draw;
(b) 37...g6! 38 xg6 e1+ 39 f2 xb1 (or 39...xf6+ 40 xf6 xb1) 40 xf7 xf7+ 41 xf7+ f7, with a slight advantage in the rook ending.

But these were just a few of the branches of a whole tree of variations, with widely spreading shoots. And although, objectively speaking, the position did not contain any continuations favourable to Black, Kramnik evidently decided to give even Korchnoi, a ‘calculating’ player, an opportunity to calculate deeply.

In the line given above his opponent did not like something, and played...

34 xe5?

By ‘winning’ a tempo, White loses everything.
34...fxe5 35 \( \text{fxe5} \) e4
After this the bishop is 'hanging', and also 36...\( \text{Qxf5} \) is threatened.
36 \( \text{Wh5} \) \( \text{Me5!} \)
Preparing a secure barrier in the variation 37 \( \text{Wh4} \) exd3 38 \( \text{h3} \) \( \text{Qf5} \).
37 \( \text{g6} \) exd3 38 \( \text{h3} \) \( \text{Qf5} \) 39 \( \text{Wh7+} \) \( \text{Qf8} \)
40 \( \text{Qxf5+} \) \( \text{Qxf5} \) 41 \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{Me5} \) 42 g4
After receiving in reply 42...d2, White resigned.

No.58
Kramnik–J.Polgar
Novgorod 1996

Black has just attacked the advanced enemy rook, and intends after 19 \( \text{g4} \) \( \text{Me6!} \)
to gain quite adequate counterplay, while after the exchange of minor pieces a draw looks distinctly likely. Only here Kramnik finds a third way.
19 \( \text{h5!!} \) \( \text{Qxd4} \)
The more cautious 19...\( \text{Qad8} \) 20 \( \text{d1} \) \( \text{Me6} \) 21 \( \text{Qf5} \) \( \text{Qf6} \) 22 \( \text{b1} \) \( \text{Me6} \) 23 \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{Qf8} \)
would have left White with a gradually increasing initiative.
20 \( \text{d1!} \) \( \text{Qad8} \) (20...\( \text{Qf8}?! \) 21 \( \text{c2} \) \( \text{Mc8} \))
22 \( \text{b3} \) 21 \( \text{Qxg6} \) \( \text{Qxd2} \) 22 \( \text{xf7+} \) \( \text{xf7} \)
23 \( \text{Qxd2} \) d4
The pawn would also have fallen after
23...\( \text{Qe6} \) 24 f4!
24 \( \text{Qh4!} \) d3 25 \( \text{f4!} \) \( \text{Qg6} \) 26 \( \text{Qe4} \) h5?!
A serious weakening, which is brilliantly exploited by Kramnik. Much more tenacious was 26...\( \text{f6!} \) 27 \( \text{xe8} \) \( \text{xe8} \) 28 \( \text{xd3} \) \( \text{Me2} \) 29 \( \text{b3} \) b6 30 f4.

27 \( \text{xe8} \) \( \text{xe8} \) 28 \( \text{xd3} \) \( \text{Me2} \) 29 \( \text{b3} \) b6
30 \( \text{b5} \) \( \text{h6} \) 31 g4!
After 31 f4 it would have been very difficult to convert the advantage.

31...g6
Insufficient was 31...h4 32 \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{g6} \) (32...h3+ 33 \( \text{g3} \) h2 34 \( \text{g4} \) \( \text{g6} \) 35 f5+ \( \text{f6} \) 36 \( \text{xfh2} \) \( \text{xf2} \) 37 \( \text{f4!} \) \( \text{b5} \) 38 \( \text{c2} \) \( \text{a5} \) .39 \( \text{h4} \) \( \text{a3} \) 40 \( \text{Qc+6} \) \( \text{Qf7} \) 41 \( \text{g5} \) \( \text{Qxa2} \) 42 \( \text{Qc7+} \) \( \text{Qf8} \) 43 \( \text{f6} \) 33 a4 h3+ 34 \( \text{g3} \) h2 35 \( \text{Qh5} \) \( \text{xf2} \) 36 \( \text{Qxh2} \) \( \text{Ma2} \) 37 f5+ \( \text{f6} \) 38 \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{xa4} \) 39 \( \text{c2} \) b5 40 \( \text{Qc6+} \) \( \text{Qf7} \) 41 \( \text{Qc7+} \) \( \text{Qf6} \) 42 \( \text{b7!} \) b4 43 \( \text{h4} \) a5 44 \( \text{b6}+ \) \( \text{Qf7} \) 45 \( \text{g5} \) \( \text{a1} \) 46 \( \text{b7}+ \) \( \text{Qf8} \)
47 \( \text{g6} \) \( \text{f1} \) 48 \( \text{b8}+ \) \( \text{Qe7} \) 49 \( \text{Qg7} \) \( \text{xf3} \) 50 f6! But now too the two connected passed pawns do their work.
32 \( \text{g5+} \) \( \text{Qg7} \) 33 \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{a2} \) 34 \( \text{g3} \) \( \text{d2} \) 35 \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{c2} \) 36 \( \text{b3!} \) \( \text{Qf7} \) 37 \( \text{a3} \) \( \text{xb2} \) (37...a5 38 \( \text{b3} \) \( \text{c6} \) 39 \( \text{b5} \) 38 \( \text{xa7+} \) \( \text{g8} \) (38...\( \text{Qe6} \) 39 \( \text{Qg7} \) 39 f5 \( \text{b5?!} \) )
39...gx5?! (with the idea of 40 g6 \( \text{b4} \) 40 \( \text{xf4!} \) h4 41 \( \text{xf5} \) \( \text{f2} \) (41...h3? 42 \( \text{g6} \) \( \text{Qf8} \) 43 \( \text{f6} \) \( \text{c8} \) 44 \( \text{f4; 41...e2} \) 42 \( \text{g4} \) \( \text{c4+} \) 43 \( \text{f4} \) h3 44 \( \text{a3} \) h2 45 \( \text{h3} \) \( \text{c2} \) 46 \( \text{a4!} \) 42 \( \text{f4} \) h3 was a tougher defence, although here too White should win.
40 \( \text{a8+} \) \( \text{Qf7} \) 41 \( \text{xf6+} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 42 \( \text{Qb1} \) 43 \( \text{g8+} \) \( \text{Qf5} \) 44 \( \text{Qf8} \) 45 \( \text{Q4} \)
46 \( \text{Me5+} \) \( \text{Qf5} \) 48 \( \text{f6+} \) \( \text{Qe4} \)
49 \( \text{g6} \) b5 50 \( \text{h4} \) \( \text{h1+} \) 51 \( \text{g5} \) h4 52 \( \text{Me6+} \) \( \text{f3} \) 53 g7 \( \text{Qg1+} \) 54 \( \text{f6} \) h3 55 \( \text{b8} \)
Black resigns (55...\( \text{xf4} \) 56 \( \text{h8} \) ).
Along with such 'production line' successes, there was a great, I would even
say, excessive number of draws, granted to opponents who had been totally outplayed. True, Kramnik himself related calmly to this phenomenon: he even gave one of his articles the philosophical title ‘Some you win, some you lose’. This postulate was supported by an instance when the Bulgarian-Spanish grandmaster Topalov, at the height of a very sharp battle, suddenly offered Kramnik a draw, though objectively he could have aspired to more. But that was an accident, and a quite understandable one. The extreme tension demanded of Veselin that he spare his brain: players of the older generation know very well this protective reaction of the organism...

It is hard to say what was the reason for Kramnik’s ‘amnesties’: premature placidity, or tiredness, or – and I don’t exclude it – his lack of fervent striving for victory and only victory. What was regrettable here was not so much the lost half points in the tournament table – if anything, Kramnik, having joined the elite, was not too concerned about his tournament scores – so much as the unfinished, from the point of view of formal logic, games that were good enough for another chapter of this book...

By subtle manoeuvring in an opening rather alien to him (the Ruy Lopez), White has gained a serious advantage and in the next few moves he further increases it.

19 \( \text{e}4! \)

The tempting 19 \( \text{fxd6}\+ \text{xd6} \) 20 c4 with the threat of 21 b4 runs into 21...c6! with counterplay. For the moment White delays the pawn advance ...f7-f5, and, more important, from the side he supports his own thematic breakthrough.

19...\( \text{xd7}! \) (19...\( \text{d7}?! 20 \text{e}3\) 20 b4! (of course, White is not tempted by the h7 pawn) 20...\( \text{cxb4} \) 21 \( \text{xd6}\+ \text{xd6} \) 22 \( \text{xb4} \) \( \text{g6}! \)

For the moment attack and defence are worthy of each other. After 22...f5 23 \( \text{xf5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) the h7 pawn could have been taken...

23 \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{b}8 \) 24 c4 f5

The critical position. Black appears to have repaired his pawns somewhat, whereas in reality he has no way of opposing White’s pressure on the b-file. Especially after the obvious 25 \( \text{b2!} \) f4 (bad is 25...e4?! 26 d4 f4 27 \( \text{b3} \) with an irresistible attack) 26 \( \text{e4!} \) f6 27 \( \text{xd6} \) hgx6 28 \( \text{f6!} \). Instead of this White complicates the situation, advancing (and simultaneously destroying) his pawn centre.

25 c5 \( \text{d6} \) 26 d6 \( \text{d5} \) 27 \( \text{d2} \)

It would seem that 27 \( \text{e1} \) was rather more accurate, in order after the best defence 27...c6!? 28 \( \text{a5} \) \( \text{d7} \) to have the possibility of 29 \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{a7} \) (29...\( \text{a8} \) 30...
31 \( \Box x b 7 \) \( \Box x b 7 \) 32 \( \Box x b 7 \) \( \Box g 7 \) 33 \( \Box f 1 \) 
\( \Box b 8 \) 34 \( \Box d 6 \) \( \Box d 8 \) 35 \( \Box b 5 \) \( \Box x d 1 + \) 36 
\( \Box x d 1 \) \( a 6 \), and the players soon agreed a draw.

I will conclude this in general rather sad topic with two citations from ... myself. Reporting from the tournament ‘Lord Novgorod the Great’, I had this to say, in particular, about the games played by the hero of this book.

The most dramatic game at the start was the meeting of the two brilliant young grandmasters, who have been most often victorious in recent battles – Vladimir Kramnik and Veselin Topalov. Both arrived in Novgorod directly from Dortmund, which was also not a weak tournament, and from Novgorod both will set off to yet another ‘super’ – in Vienna. Of course, the strength of the young is boundless (at the opening ceremony Kramnik even admitted that a week free of playing was sufficient for him to feel completely restored), but their encounter somehow forced one to doubt this...

He continues the battle for the key e4 square with 25 \( \Box d 2 \). However, to many 25 \( \Box h 4 \)!? seemed more attractive, and – importantly, more resolute, when the tempting 25...e4 26 \( \Box x e 4 \) \( \Box x h 4 \) 27 \( \Box f 5 \) \( \Box d 4 \), with an apparently strong counterattack against f2, runs into the calm reply 28 \( \Box d 2 \) (stronger than 28 g3 \( \Box x f 2 + \) 29 \( \Box g 2 \) \( \Box f 6 \) - 30 \( \Box x g 6 \) \( \Box f 3 + \) 31 \( \Box h 3 \))
\( \Box h 4 \)...\( \Box x f 2 + \) 29 \( \Box f 2 \) \( \Box f 2 + \) 30 \( \Box x f 2 \) \( \Box x f 5 + \) 31 \( \Box e 3 \) \( \Box e 7 \) 32 \( \Box c 7 \) \( \Box x d 5 + \) 33 
\( \Box x d 5 \) \( \Box x d 5 \) 34 \( \Box x b 7 \), and in particular because his king is cut off on the back rank, but also in view of the threat of 35 b5, the ending is absolutely hopeless for Black.

25...\( \Box f 8 \) 26 \( h 3 \) \( \Box g 7 \) 27 \( \Box e 4 \)

And here the double-edged 27 g4 came into consideration. The quiet continuation in the game allowed Black to stabilise the position – 27...\( \Box x f 6 \) 28 \( \Box g 3 \) \( \Box x d 3 \) 29 
\( \Box x d 3 \) \( h 5 \) 30 \( \Box e 4 \) \( \Box e 4 \) 31 \( \Box x e 4 \) \( \Box h 7 \) 32 
\( \Box c 2 \) \( \Box h 6 \) 33 \( \Box a 4 \) \( \Box f 6 \) 34 \( \Box c 7 \) \( \Box c 7 \) 35 
\( \Box x c 7 + \) \( \Box g 7 \), and after 36 \( \Box c 3 \) \( \Box f 4 \) 37 g3 
\( \Box c 1 + \) 38 \( \Box g 2 \) \( \Box c 2 \) 39 \( h 4 \) to obtain every chance of winning by 39...\( \Box d 3 \), when against the deadly 40...e4 there is no satisfactory defence.

But Topalov carried out immediately the desired 39...e4, which allowed White to disentangle himself with a little tactical ‘trick’: 40 \( \Box b 5 \). True, when he had not yet cooled down from the heat of battle, Veselin named no less than four(!) continuations that he claimed would have won – 40...\( \Box b 3 \), 40...\( \Box d 3 \), 40...\( \Box d 1 \) and

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No 61
Kramnik–Topalov
Novgorod 1996

White’s position is strategically won (grandmaster Makarychev’s personal computer, operating at the classical rate of two hours for 40 moves, evaluated his advantage as being worth more than a pawn).
40...\textit{e}2, but as sober analysis showed, all this was no threat to White in view of 41 \textit{\textit{c}}xd6 \textit{\textit{w}}f3+ 42 \textit{\textit{g}}1 \textit{e}3 43 \textit{\textit{c}}e8! (the capture 43 fxe3 does indeed lose, since with checks Black picks up no less than three pawns, including the one at d5) 43...\textit{w}xf2+ 44 \textit{\textit{h}}1 \textit{w}f8 45 \textit{\textit{c}}xg7, when both the queen ending and the knight ending are drawn.

The game reached the same conclusion in a different way after 40...\textit{d}2 41 \textit{\textit{c}}xd6 \textit{e}3 42 \textit{\textit{f}}7 \textit{e}xf2 43 \textit{\textit{c}}e8 f1\textit{\textit{w}}+ 44 \textit{\textit{f}}xf1 \textit{\textit{d}}1+ 45 \textit{\textit{f}}2, although the aforementioned computer recommended for White the more ‘gluttonous’ 43 \textit{\textit{c}}xb7.

That evening, over dinner, it was simply painful to look at Kramnik: he was so upset at what had happened. No, of course, it was not the loss of a half point, and most probably not even the fact that he had been close to defeat. But the loss of the guiding thread during play – yes, and the failure to realise his idea, which had been close to fruition – also. In short, it was the ‘pangs of conscience’ of an artist, who had not completed his work...

And – I have no doubt – this invisible train of dissatisfaction followed Kramnik during his game from the second round: Vladimir conducted it without a hint of inspiration, and in time trouble one mistake followed after another...

Towards the finish, the tournament situation would have become altogether unpredictable, had Kramnik taken his game against Short to its logical end.

Here White had available the forcing 27 \textit{\textit{c}}c8 \textit{\textit{c}}6 28 \textit{\textit{c}}xc6 \textit{\textit{c}}xc6 29 \textit{\textit{d}}2 \textit{\textit{b}}6 30 \textit{\textit{b}}7 \textit{\textit{d}}7 31 \textit{\textit{e}}3 \textit{\textit{c}}8 32 \textit{\textit{c}}5, cutting off the black king and taking his own across to the queenside. Unfortunately, this way of winning is not the only one!

27 \textit{\textit{c}}c7 \textit{\textit{d}}6 28 \textit{\textit{c}}c8 \textit{\textit{b}}5 29 \textit{\textit{c}}xa7 \textit{g}5 30 \textit{\textit{b}}7 \textit{\textit{g}}7 31 \textit{\textit{c}}7

What for? Was it really not enough for White to have an extra queen in the variation which he saw perfectly well at the board – 31 \textit{\textit{a}}8 \textit{\textit{c}}5 32 \textit{\textit{a}}7 \textit{\textit{c}}xb7 33 \textit{\textit{g}}8+ \textit{\textit{c}}xg8 34 \textit{\textit{a}}8\textit{\textit{w}}+, when Black does not have even a hint of a fortress? It was nothing other than some evil force that took possession of Kramnik’s hand that evening. 31...\textit{\textit{d}}1+ 32 \textit{\textit{g}}2 \textit{\textit{c}}5 33 \textit{\textit{c}}xe5+ \textit{\textit{w}}6

White is two pawns up, but the possibility of counterplay against his king has arisen, and so the decision to part immediately with his beautiful passed pawn, while perhaps not essential, is to some extent justified.

34 \textit{\textit{f}}3 \textit{\textit{c}}xa6 35 \textit{\textit{c}}7 \textit{\textit{e}}6 (an ideal position, especially compared with the knight’s recent ‘stall’ at a5) 36 \textit{\textit{c}}6 \textit{\textit{b}}5 37 \textit{\textit{b}}6 \textit{\textit{c}}4 38 \textit{\textit{h}}4 \textit{\textit{g}}xh4 39 \textit{\textit{g}}xh4 \textit{\textit{d}}2 40 \textit{\textit{e}}4??

Of course, White was somewhat pressed for time, but not to the extent of rejecting the natural 40 \textit{\textit{e}}3, retaining both bishops. Indeed, if 40...\textit{\textit{e}}2 he now has 41 \textit{\textit{c}}e4+, while after 40...\textit{\textit{c}}d5 41 \textit{\textit{e}}4! \textit{\textit{c}}c4 42 \textit{\textit{b}}8 Black’s problems pile up – 42...\textit{f}6 is refuted by 43 \textit{\textit{h}}5+.  

\begin{tabular}{|c|}
\hline
\textbf{No.62} \\
\textbf{Kramnik–Short} \\
\textbf{Novgorod 1996} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
But in the game Black exploited the gift of fate and exchanged bishops – 40...\( \text{\textit{\textbf{A}}e2} \) 41 \( \text{\textit{\textbf{A}}xe2} \text{\textit{\textbf{A}}xe2} \), and although later Vladimir could have played more strongly on one or two occasions, he was not in any state to seek a study-like way to win, if, of course, such a way in fact existed.

Yes, it was no accident that after the tournament Kramnik admitted that for the moment he was tired of chess. This is a difficult matter: to find that golden mean, when in equal measure you keep in training and also retain your appetite for the game. Especially when you are only 21...

In the vivid, constantly changing kaleidoscope of 1996, two events stand out for Kramnik: the World Olympiad in Yerevan, and a unique tournament in Las Palmas.

In the Russian Olympiad team Vladimir played on board two, and from time to time on board one, and for the first time in his life concluded all his games... with absolutely identical results! Well, a flu' virus with complications is a very serious opponent, and no one has ever successfully waged war on two fronts. But in addition, in the words of the trainer, 'Volodya helped his colleagues a great deal: he gave advice, and discussed opening problems with them: in short, he was a very important and necessary "link" in the team'.

And then came a high point in the tournament form of chess. The Canary Islands and their capital Las Palmas decided to surprise the world and to hold a tournament, the like of which had not been seen before. In the 20th century there had been some exceptional 'gatherings' of the strongest: the AVRO-Tournament of 1938, the Match-Tournament for the World Championship in 1948... All the rest – only by stretching a point: among the best from time to time there would be just very good grandmasters. Las Palmas was aiming at the absolute record – to raise the rating of the tournament to the FIDE category 21! And this when only two years previously, it had been possible for the first time to assemble the participants for a category 19 tournament, and a category 20 tournament had never taken place! Here the average individual rating of the grandmasters had to exceed 2750(!), and at that time only seven in the world had a rating higher than 2700. The 'problem', as should be the case, had only one solution: to invite the six who were at the top of the official FIDE list on 1st July 1996. And that is what the organisers did.

The opponents, naturally, were worthy of one another. Out of 57 important tournaments between 1980-1996, they had won 40, and in tournaments of categories 17, 18 and 19 only three times had they let some 'upstarts' finish ahead. Between them their chess relations remained rather difficult and double-edged: of course, we are talking only about battles on the board, not away from it...

The results of these meetings up till that time are given on the following page.

As you see, the youngest of the participants, Vladimir Kramnik, began the record-breaking tournament with the second highest percentage of points after Garry Kasparov. At that moment the picture was spoiled somewhat by his 'minus two' score against the highly experienced Anatoly Karpov, who became world champion almost on the day when Kramnik... was born. But not everything here is reflected in the dry figures. Vladimir himself has described the unusual reason for one defeat in his foreword to game No.149. And one more thing: up till then not once had Kramnik had the white pieces against Karpov...

The battle of Las Palmas began with... prognoses. One of them belonged to Vladimir himself, and stated that no one would cover the short tournament distance without defeat! Bearing in mind the 'armour-plated' qualities of Kasparov and Karpov, as well as himself, the reality of such a prediction was doubtful, and it
A vertical take-off

turned out to be only five-sixths true: Kasparov avoided defeat, played better than the others, and as he seized the lead at the start, so he did not let it slip. Kasparov was also helped by Kramnik, who at the start of the second half halted Anand’s challenge for the lead. It would appear to have been the best game of the tournament (No. 133), and for this reason Kramnik had the full moral right to say at the closing ceremony: ‘I am satisfied with my play, more than with my result.’

<table>
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This game from the second round seems to have greatly affected him.

No. 63
Kramnik—Topalov
Las Palmas 1996
King’s Indian Defence

1 d4 f6 2 c4 g6 3 d3 g7 4 e4 d6 5 d4 0-0 6 a3 e5 7 0-0 d6 8 d5 c7 9 b4 a5 10 a3 axb4 11 axb4 d7 12 a4 h6 13 a3 f5 14 d2 h8 15 d3 d6 16 a4 f7

This fashionable line of the King’s Indian Defence had been chosen by the same two players six months earlier in Novgorod. Here, however, Black has wasted a tempo (... f8-f6-f7), and White carries out his thematic advance with every comfort.

17 c5 dxc5

And here, for some reason, Kramnik thought for 20 minutes. Then came the paradoxical 18 c3!!, and in the tournament press centre the many watching grandmasters and masters suddenly began to realise that they were witnessing a profound penetration into the secret of the position. Tying Black to the defence of his key e5 pawn, White prevents him from properly coordinating his pieces.

18...fxe4 19 xe4 d5 20 c4 g7 21 xf5!

Again non-routinely, White parts with the controller of the key e4 square. He reckoned that, in such an undeveloped state, Black simply had no right to make the ‘King’s Indian’ recapture 21...gxf5.

21...xf5 22 d6! b8 23 dxc7
Otherwise Black plays ...b7-b5.

23...\(\text{w}x\text{c7}\) 24 \(\text{w}d6!\) \(\text{w}d6\) 25 \(\text{c}xd6\) 

26 \(\text{f}d1\)

26 \(\text{f}b1\) came into consideration, preventing ...b7-b5.

26...b5!?

The only possibility of escaping from the vice.

27 \(\text{x}b6\)

White is not tempted by the forcing 27 \(\text{c}xc8\) \(\text{f}xc8\) 28 \(\text{c}d7\) \(\text{bxa4}\) 29 \(\text{x}g7\) \(\text{xc7}\) 30 \(\text{xe5}\) + \(\text{f}7\) 31 \(\text{xb8}\) \(\text{xc8}\) 32 \(\text{f}f1\) c4 33 \(\text{xa4}\) c3 34 \(\text{e}2\) \(\text{d}8\) 35 a6 c2 36 \(\text{a}1\) \(\text{d}7\), when it is a good time to remember the aphorism about rook endings always being drawn. White wants to obtain the same extra pawn, but with different material on the board.

27...\(\text{b}x\text{b6}\) 28 \(\text{c}x\text{c5}\) \(\text{g}4!\) 29 \(\text{f}3\) \(\text{d}7!\)

30 \(\text{a}6!\) \(\text{b}3\) 31 \(\text{a}c1\) \(\text{e}6\) 32 \(\text{c}7\) \(\text{f}7\)

33 \(\text{e}4\)

Black defends with uncommon resourcefulness, and yet things are very, very difficult for him. White begins invading not only with his cavalry.

33...\(\text{b}8\) 34 \(\text{g}5\) \(\text{c}6\) 35 \(\text{d}7\) \(\text{e}8\)

After 35...\(\text{g}8?\) 36 \(\text{ce}6\) \(\text{xe}6\) 37 \(\text{xe}6\) \(\text{g}8\) the simple 38 \(\text{a}1\) \(\text{d}4\) 39 \(\text{xd}4\) exd4 40 \(\text{c}x\text{g}7\) \(\text{c}x\text{g}7\) 41 \(\text{c}8+\) \(\text{g}8\) 42 \(\text{c}c7\) is possible, and this rook ending is won without any problems.

36 \(\text{x}g7?!\) \(\text{x}g7\) 37 \(\text{c}e6+\) \(\text{g}8\) 38 \(\text{xf}8\) \(\text{xf}8\) 39 \(\text{c}h7+\) \(\text{e}7\) 40 \(\text{g}5\) \(\text{d}7\)

41 \(\text{d}2\) \(\text{c}2\) 42 \(\text{e}4\) \(\text{d}4\) 43 \(\text{e}1\) \(\text{c}6\) 44 \(\text{g}5+\) \(\text{e}6\) 45 \(\text{d}2\) \(\text{c}2\) 46 \(\text{c}1\) \(\text{d}4\) 47 \(\text{e}1\) \(\text{c}2\) 48 \(\text{d}1\) \(\text{d}4\) 49 \(\text{h}4\) \(\text{e}2+\) 50 \(\text{c}h2\) \(\text{d}4\) 51 \(\text{c}h3\) \(\text{d}5\) 52 \(\text{e}1\) \(\text{a}2\) 53 \(\text{c}4\) \(\text{e}2\) 54 \(\text{c}1\) \(\text{d}7+\) 55 \(\text{g}3\) \(\text{b}5\) 56 \(\text{x}a8\) \(\text{f}1\) 57 \(\text{c}d8+\) \(\text{e}6\) 58 \(\text{d}2\) \(\text{d}3\) 59 \(\text{e}8+\) \(\text{f}7\) 60 \(\text{d}6+\) \(\text{g}7\)

Here the two players each added 30 minutes onto their clocks, and the third time control began – practically rapidplay chess.

61 \(\text{e}7+\) \(\text{f}8\) 62 \(\text{g}5\) \(\text{f}1\) 63 \(\text{c}xe5\) 

\(\text{c}xg2+\) 64 \(\text{f}4\) \(\text{e}2\) 65 \(\text{e}4\) \(\text{g}2\)

It is easy to guess why Black did not take his king to the queenside – he was afraid of losing his last pawn. But now he could have lost everything. Because even the computer of one of the journalists, equipped with the playing program \textit{Fritz}, showed that White has a forced win. Alas...

66 \(\text{g}7+?!\)

The winning variation given by \textit{Fritz} was 66 \(\text{h}6\) + \(\text{f}7\) (66 ... \(\text{g}8\) 67 \(\text{e}7\) 67 \(\text{d}5\)!! (67 \(\text{g}5+\) \(\text{g}8\) 68 \(\text{a}2\) \(\text{xe}2+\) 69 \(\text{e}3\) \(\text{c}3\) 70 \(\text{f}2\) \(\text{f}5\)) 67...\(\text{c}e6+\) (67...\(\text{c}f3\) 68 \(\text{d}7\) leads to mate: 68...\(\text{c}e6\) 69 \(\text{c}c5+\) \(\text{f}6\) 70 \(\text{g}7\) 68 \(\text{g}3\)), and in view of the threat of 69 \(\text{c}f2\) \(\text{f}1\) 70 \(\text{d}1\) (here the bishop is caught) or mate, Black would be obliged to go into a theoretically lost ending – 68...\(\text{a}4\) 69 \(\text{c}e4\) \(\text{e}4\).

66...\(\text{f}7\) 67 \(\text{c}5\) \(\text{e}6+\) 68 \(\text{g}3\) \(\text{f}1\) 69 \(\text{f}2\) \(\text{g}7\) 70 \(\text{g}4\) \(\text{e}6\) 71 \(\text{d}5\) \(\text{c}2\) 72 \(\text{d}7+\) \(\text{e}8\) 73 \(\text{f}6+\) \(\text{f}8\) 74 \(\text{g}3\)

By now Black has managed to set up an impenetrable barrier. If 74 \(\text{c}1\) there would have followed 74...\(\text{g}2+\) 75 \(\text{g}3\) \(\text{g}1\).

74...\(\text{c}4+!\)

But not 74...\(\text{g}2\) – 75 h5 gxh5 + 76 \(\text{h}4\) and wins.

75 \(\text{d}4\) \(\text{e}8\) 76 \(\text{a}7\) \(\text{d}3\) 77 \(\text{d}6\) \(\text{c}e4\) 78 \(\text{f}e4\) \(\text{c}e4+\) 79 \(\text{c}3\) \(\text{e}1\) 80 \(\text{f}2\) \(\text{f}4\)

Here a draw was agreed, and for Kramnik there began the countdown to the time when, in the words of the blitzkrieg theoretician Field Marshall Alfred Von
Schlieffen (who, it must be said, was not a chess player), one has to 'cope with a defeat, even if there was not one'. But this is, oh, so difficult: it interferes both with your sleep, and your thinking... Most probably this was why he did not take his game with Kasparov to its most logical end, which as regards the tournament battle could have changed much...

No. 64
Kramnik-Kasparov
Las Palmas 1996
Queen's Gambit

1 d4 f6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 d5 4 d4 e7 5 Nf5 0-0 6 e3 h6 7 Nh4 Ng4 8 xe7 xe7 9 c5 c6 10 a3 dxe3 11 dx e3 dxc4 12 xe4 d7 13 0-0 b6 14 a3 d5 15 Be4!

The main line in this variation of the Lasker Defence is 15...b5.

15...b8
15...a6?! looks dubious: a probable line is 16 e1!? (if 16 a8x8 xf1 17 c6 a6 18 a4, then 18...cxd4, now White is unable to force a superior ending by 19 a3?! in view of 19...dxc3! 20 xc7 c2, while 19 exd4 a8b8 20 a4 gives merely an insignificant advantage) 16...ad8 17 a4 cxd4 (neither 17...a6 18 dxc5, nor especially 17...a6 promises an easy life) 18 exd4 a6b8 19 d5 and White seizes the initiative.

16 a4 a7

After 16...bf6 17 c6 (not 17 dxc5? bxc5, when the rook is extremely annoying to White) Black no longer has the neutralising 17...b8 on account of 18 a7x7.

17 xb7 xb7 18 a2 c8 19 e1 bc7 20 b4 e5

The pieces of the two sides have gone into a 'clinch'. After 20...c4 21 a4 the breakaway black pawn would be cut off and in time eliminated.

21 dxc5?!

When after the tournament Kasparov admitted that he had been in a dangerous situation against Kramnik, it was probably this position that he had in mind. This moment was very much regretted by Dolmatov, whom Kramnik very soon informed of the error he had made. Correct, as it turns out, was 21 bxc5! bxc5 22 e4, and Black inevitably loses his c-pawn, and White has every chance of winning.

21...bxc5 22 e4!

A timely tactical counter, enabling Black to pave the way to equality. If now 23 exe4 (23 d2?! e5 24 dxex5 exe5 25 bxc5 ed3), then 23...exb4! 24 exe7 exe2 25 d1 (25 dxc2 dxc2 26 h3 c5 27 exa7 ed3) 25...f6 26 exa7 e4, and the activity of his pieces compensate for the pawn deficit.

23 exa4 exa4 24 exa4 cxb4 25 e8+ xe8 26 xa7 xe7 xe5

Despite some technical difficulties, Black accurately reduces the rook ending to a draw.

27 exa5 xe5 28 xa7 h5 29 h3 b5 30 g4 hxg4 31 hxg4 g6 32 a4 b3 33 axb3 xb3 34 g5 a7 35 a3 c3 36 xe7 a3 37 h7 g8 38 c7 g7 39 c8 h7 40 c7 g7 41 c7 h8 42 e5 g7 43 f4 d3 44 c3 d2 45 e4 d1 46 e5 c1 47 c3 f8 48 e5 g7 49 e4 c2 50 d7 c1 51 d7 c2 52 a7 e1 53 a4 e2 54 d6 d2+ 55 e7 f2 56 e5 f1 57 a6?!

Before this the TV monitor had been frequently displaying the discontented face
of Kasparov, walking about offstage on his own. He was expressively condemning his opponent for pointlessly dragging things out in an absolutely drawn position. And, reluctantly returning to the stage, he would almost demonstratively ‘fall asleep’ in his chair. Suddenly he arrived abruptly, arranged himself squarely opposite his opponent, and, no longer reproachfully shaking his head, seized it with both hands. In the press centre they immediately ceased making jokes such as ‘Of course it is a draw, but it is pleasant for Kramnik to play on, being a pawn up against the champion.’ In his stubborn desire somehow to complicate Kasparov’s task, White had overstepped the mark! In the intended variation 57...\text{xf4} 58 \text{f6} a pretty counter-measure had been discovered – 58...\text{f5}! And arguments began about whether there was a draw... now for White: 59 e6 (the only move) 59...\text{fxe6} 60 \text{xe6} \text{xe5} 61 \text{f1} \text{a5}! But did Kasparov frighten his opponent with his changed appearance? On noticing his error, Kramnik immediately forced a draw, to which he could have agreed without this fleeting anxiety.

57...\text{xf4} 58 e6 ½-½

One more outcome of Las Palmas came in a confession by Kramnik himself: ‘I now feel that I have made a big mistake by signing contracts to take part in a number of tournaments. I would now refuse to play in at least half of them, because I do not feel any interest in chess...’

However... Although he felt this way, Kramnik played superbly in his two next and very important tournaments in 1997. At least, as regards the quality of his play, since he appraised his own results rather sceptically. However, we will talk about that later, but for now...

Now, at the very beginning of February, the strongest again assembled in Linares, and in the highest chess circles there prevailed the opinion, which rapidly circulated throughout the world, that this battle should confirm – or change – the situation at the top, which had formed after the ‘super-super’ in Las Palmas.

Kramnik had a different attitude to these events. There, in Las Palmas, Viswanathan Anand finished second (after Kasparov) – so he was second in that tournament, but by no means in the world. He, Kramnik, had shared third and fourth places – that was then, on the Canary Islands. But now... ‘For me there are no such gradations; I normally play every tournament, without thinking what is said about it...’

And before we continue our account of these tournaments, which at that time really were important, here are a few creative fragments. As usual, the most successful games have been specially annotated (Nos. 152, 153 and 165).

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|}
\hline
\textbf{No.65} \textbf{Kramnik–J.Polgar} \\
Linares 1997 \\
King’s Indian Defence
\hline
1 \text{f3} \text{f6} 2 c4 \text{g6} 3 \text{c3} \text{g7} 4 \text{d4} \text{d6} 5 \\
e4 0–0 6 \text{e2} \text{e5} 7 0–0 \text{c6} 8 \text{d5} \text{e7} 9 \\
b4 \text{h5} 10 \text{e1} \text{f5} 11 \text{g5} \text{f6} 12 \text{f3} \text{c6}
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

In this well-known position from the King’s Indian Defence, instead of the approved development of his bishop at b2 White tried a fresh idea, being guided, in my opinion, not so much by its purely chess sense, but also by his good feeling for the play of his opponent; the
phenomenally talented Judit, who always preferred complications on the board with the initiative for herself – even if not for free. That is in fact what happened.

13...cxd5 14 cxd5 h6 15...e6...xe6 16...e6...xe4 17...xe4...xe4 18...xe4 d5 19...c2 e4

Having begun, Black must continue in similar vein: otherwise her fine pawns will come under immediate attack –...b3 with the threat of...c5 etc.

20...c1 d4 21...d2

All the white pieces have retreated into their camp, like Kutuzov to Moscow, but Black will soon have to pay for this.

21...e3!? 22 fxe3 d3 23...b3...d6 24...g4...e5 25...f1!

'We are not playing pawns, we are playing chess,' as one of the grandmasters of the older generation liked to repeat. Indeed, after 25...g3?!...h5 the queen becomes cramped, and also the activity of the black pieces increases.

25...xh2+ 26...h1...g3

26...h5 suggests itself, but then 27...d4! with the idea of 28...xd6...xd6 29...c4 emphasises a certain lack of harmony in Black’s pieces and the weakness of the breakaway pawn. And 26...e5 can be met by 27...e5...h5 28...g5 with the paradoxical threat of 29...f5!, and after the bishop moves – 30...f7. However, now too a similar idea succeeds brilliantly.

27...d4...e5

If 28...xd4, then 29 exd4...d6 30...xh6.

29 exf7+...h7 30...xe5...xe5 31...c5...d6 32...c4

Beginning – or concluding? – the pursuit of the d3 pawn.

32...c6 33...b5...e5 34...d4...f8 35...e4...g7 (35...d7 36...e8) 36...b4 d2 37...xe5!...d8 38...e8 1–0

No.66
Piket–Kramnik
Linares 1997

Here Black sensed the opponent’s unwillingness to spend time saving his only bishop, and he immediately began thematic counterplay on the d-file.

14...d8 15 a5

If 15...b3, then 15...cxd5 16...xd5 (16 exd5, although tempting, is very committing: Black’s two bishops and pawn mass are serious factors) 16...xd5 17...xd5...e6, and since the knight has no real prospect of reaching d5, the initiative passes to Black. Although, perhaps, White should have chosen this, which was the lesser evil.

15...xc4 16...xc4...g5 17...b3...h3 18...e3...ab8 19...c1...f8 20...h1...d7 21...e2 cxd5 22...xd5...e6 23...c7...dc8! 24...xc8

It was unfavourable for White to accept the pawn sacrifice: 24...xb7...xb7 25...xb7...c2 26...g3...c5 27...f3...d4 would have given Black more than sufficient
compensation, especially after the advance of his h-pawn.

24...\texttt{hxg8} 25 \texttt{dxe3} \texttt{xe7} 26 \texttt{h3} \texttt{g7} 27
\texttt{b5} \texttt{d7} 28 \texttt{a6} \texttt{bxa6} 29 \texttt{xa6} \texttt{c5} 30
\texttt{c6} \texttt{d4} 31 \texttt{b5}

The offer of the b2 pawn must be considered a pseudo-sacrifice: after
31...\texttt{AXB} 32 \texttt{c7} \texttt{xe4} 33 \texttt{h3} \texttt{e} 34
\texttt{b2} \texttt{c6} \texttt{c} 35 \texttt{xe6} 36 \texttt{xe6} \texttt{e} 36 \texttt{xf6} \texttt{xf6} 37
\texttt{e} 3 \texttt{g6} 38 \texttt{d2} \texttt{e} 39 \texttt{c1} \texttt{g} 40
\texttt{c3} \texttt{f1} 41 \texttt{h6} \texttt{g} 42 \texttt{f4} \texttt{f1} 43
\texttt{xb2} \texttt{c7} 44 \texttt{d1} \texttt{g} 45 \texttt{e} 3 \texttt{e} 46
\texttt{h} 6 \texttt{e} 47 \texttt{d2} \texttt{e} 48 \texttt{e} 2 \texttt{e} 49
\texttt{f2} \texttt{c7} 50 \texttt{g} 3 \texttt{d3} 51 \texttt{g} 4 \texttt{e} 52
\texttt{f4} \texttt{b1} 53 \texttt{f5} 54 \texttt{d8} 54 \texttt{f} 5 \texttt{d3} 55
\texttt{e} 7 \texttt{c} 7 56 \texttt{e} 3 \texttt{c8} 57 \texttt{g} 4 \texttt{e} 7 58
\texttt{h} 5 \texttt{g} 7 59 \texttt{h} 6 \texttt{e} 6 60 \texttt{h} 4 \texttt{c} 8 61 \texttt{h} 5
\texttt{e} 7 62 \texttt{g} 2 \texttt{e} 8 63 \texttt{f} 4 \texttt{c} 2

31...\texttt{d8}! 32 \texttt{xd4} \texttt{xd5}!

This is what Black had planned long in advance. Now 33 \texttt{exd5} \texttt{exd4}
leaves him a pawn up with a winning heavy piece ending.

33 \texttt{c5} \texttt{b6}!

After which in the ending the rook and bishop will be much stronger than the rook
and knight.

34 \texttt{xb6} \texttt{xb6} 35 \texttt{f3} \texttt{xe4} 36 \texttt{xe5}
\texttt{d5} 37 \texttt{c4} \texttt{b5} 38 \texttt{b6} \texttt{d2} 39 \texttt{b4} \texttt{d3}
40 \texttt{e} 1 \texttt{xf2} 41 \texttt{e} 3 \texttt{b1} 42 \texttt{c8}

Or 42 \texttt{e} 5 \texttt{b} 2 43 \texttt{xb} 5 \texttt{e} 4.

42...\texttt{b2} 43 \texttt{d6} \texttt{xb4} 44 \texttt{e} 7 \texttt{a} 2 45
\texttt{b7} \texttt{b1} 46 \texttt{h2} \texttt{b4} 47 \texttt{e} 8 \texttt{f8} 48
\texttt{f6} \texttt{h5} 49 \texttt{g4} \texttt{h4} 50 \texttt{g} 2 \texttt{e} 6 0–1

**No 67**

**Kramnik–Illescas**

*Dos Hermanas 1997*

Can you imagine that such a position can be won against a grandmaster, and quite a
strong one at that? If not, then see how Kramnik did this.
The only defence.

69...g6 e8 70...f8 e2 71...xh6 xe4 72...g6 xd5?!

Black had to find 72...d3+?! 73...f7 c4 74...xe8 c3 75...f7...xb5 76 h6 c2 77 h7 c1...78...h8...f4+ 79...f6...c8+, when he still has saving chances.

73 h6 c4 74 h7...e4+ 75...f7...xh7 76...xe8...g8 77...d7 c3 1–0

No.68
Shirov–Kramnik
Linares 1997
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2...f3 d6 3 d4...xd4 4...xd4...f6 5...c3...e6 6...g5 e7 7...d2 a6 8 0–0–0 h6 9...e3...e7 10 f4...xd4 11...xd4 b5 12...b1...b7 13...d3 0–0 14...e5 dxe5 15 fxe5...d7 16...e4...xe4 17...xe4

This position was reached in a game with the Chinese player Ye Jiangchuan at the Moscow Olympiad roughly six months earlier. There Kramnik played 17...c8 and encountered difficult problems. Not surprisingly, Vladimir’s personal friend and implacable opponent Alexey Shirov was not averse to repeating this highly promising opening. And he himself awarded two exclamation marks to the reply that he encountered!

17...b8(!!)

And White sank into thought for almost an hour. The short step by the rook calls into question his attacking plans on the kingside, since 18...c5 is already prepared and the bishop cannot be preserved from exchange: 19...c3 b4. And the exchange can be won only at the cost of the e5 pawn, after which the black pieces really come alive.

18...a7...xe5 19...c3!

Luring the black bishop to d6, since its ideal place is at f6.

19...d6 20...d4!

The immediate 20...xb8...xb8 would have given Black excellent counterplay: 21...c4 and 22...e5 is threatened.

20...c7 21...c5!...c8 22...h1!

White has strengthened his position to the maximum, but the spring compressed by Black on move 17 begins to uncoil.

22...c4 23...xb8...xb8 24...g3

In the hope of still fighting for an advantage. Switching to defence – 24...d3 would have allowed Black to gain complete equality in two ways:

(a) 24...d6 25...d4...e5 26...e4 f5 27...c6...xb2 28...xe6+...h8 29...xe5...xe5 30...xe5...xd1 31...xf5...e3;

(b) 24...c8 25...xc4 (after 25...h5...xh2 26...xc4 bxc4 27...d7...f4 it is now Black who has the advantage) 25...a5 26...h5...xe1 27...xe6...xe6 28...xe1...d6.

24...e5 25 c3...c8 26...e7

26...b4!

A deeply calculated and pretty decision. In addition, it follows from the idea begun with 17...b8!! Other continuations are significantly worse:
(a) 26...\(\text{f6}\) 27 \(\text{w7}\) b4 28 cxb4 \(\text{cxb2}\)
29 \(\text{h}1\) c4 30 a4 \(\text{g5}\)! 31 \(\text{wxb8}\) \(\text{xd2}\)+
32 \(\text{a2}\) \(\text{xb8}\) 33 \(\text{c7}\) with a clear plus;
(b) 26...\(\text{cxb2}\) 27 \(\text{cxb2}\) (this is if White
does not want to go in for complications:
27 \(\text{d7}\)!? \(\text{a4}\) 28 \(\text{xf7}\)+ \(\text{h8}\) 29 \(\text{c1}\), and
now Black must resist temptations such as
29...\(\text{wb6}\) 30 \(\text{w}\) \(\text{g6}\) \(\text{xc3}\)+ 31 \(\text{xc3}\) \(\text{g1}\)+
32 \(\text{b2}\) \(\text{w}xh2\)+ 33 \(\text{c2}\) \(\text{xc3}\)+ 34 \(\text{b3}\)
and wins, and find 29...\(\text{c5}\)! 30 \(\text{g6}\)
\(\text{xe4}\) 31 \(\text{w}x\text{e4}\) \(\text{c4}\)+ 32 \(\text{d3}\) \(\text{f6}\))
27...\(\text{xc3}\)+ 28 \(\text{a1}\) \(\text{xc1}\) 29 \(\text{xe1}\), when
although material is nominally equal,
White's bishop seems more important.

27 \(\text{wb4}\) \(\text{c7}\)!
No tactics such as 27...\(\text{wb4}\) 28 \(\text{cxb4}\)
\(\text{cxb2}\) 29 \(\text{b7}\) \(\text{b8}\) 30 \(\text{d7}\) \(\text{c4}\) 31 \(\text{a6}\)
\(\text{xb4}\)+ 32 \(\text{c2}\), when White has a
powerful passed pawn.

28 \(\text{wb7}\) \(\text{a3}\)+!
Now if 29 \(\text{a1}\) there follows 29...\(\text{c2}\)+
30 \(\text{b1}\) \(\text{a3}\)+, while 29 \(\text{xb3}\) \(\text{b8}\)! (but
not 29...\(\text{xc3}\)? 30 \(\text{h7}\)!?) 30 \(\text{xb8}\)+
\(\text{xb8}\)+ leads to an advantage for Black.

29 \(\text{c1}\) \(\text{f4}\)+! 30 \(\text{gf4}\) \(\text{xf4}\)+ 31 \(\text{d2}\)
\(\text{d8}\) 32 \(\text{ed1}\)
The trap 32 \(\text{h7}\)+ would merely have
improved Black's chances – 32...\(\text{h8}\)
(32...\(\text{xf7}\)? 33 \(\text{e4}\)+) 33 \(\text{d3}\) \(\text{d4}\)
(33...\(\text{xd3}\)? 34 \(\text{a8}\)+ \(\text{h7}\) 35 \(\text{e4}\)+).

32...\(\text{xd2}\)
It was not yet too late to lose –
32...\(\text{c4}\)? 33 \(\text{c7}\)!

33 \(\text{xd2}\)
White too could have lost: 33 \(\text{c8}\)+??
\(\text{d8}\)+. But now it is a draw: 33...\(\text{f1}\)+ 34
\(\text{d1}\) \(\text{f4}\)+.

Alas (in fact – fortunately, but in
the given specific instance for Kramnik –
alas), chess thinking does not stand still.
Observing this game there, in Linares,
Kasparov thought up and developed a truly
'atomic' improvement in the critical
position, and wanted to employ this
innovation immediately against Kramnik,
but then he decided to keep it for a
competitively more important encounter
between them.

The bomb exploded a few months later
in Novgorod, where in the second half of
the tournament Kasparov was thirsting for
revenge, and a sharp battle for the lead was
in progress.

No.69
Kasparov–Kramnik
Novgorod 1997
Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 \(\text{c3}\) \(\text{c6}\) 3 \(\text{ge2}\) \(\text{f6}\) 4 d4 \(\text{xd4}\)
5 \(\text{xd4}\) d6 6 \(\text{g5}\) e5 7 \(\text{d2}\) a6 8 0–0–0
h6 9 \(\text{e3}\) \(\text{e7}\) 10 f4 \(\text{xd4}\) 11 \(\text{xd4}\) b5
12 \(\text{b1}\) \(\text{b7}\) 13 \(\text{d3}\) 0–0 14 e5 \(\text{dxe5}\) 15
\(\text{xe5}\) \(\text{d7}\) 16 \(\text{e4}\) \(\text{xe4}\) 17 \(\text{xe4}\) \(\text{b8}\) 18
\(\text{c3}\)!!

With the unequivocal threat of giving
mate after \(\text{c2}\) and \(\text{d3}\). Now Black's
counterplay on the b-file is too late.

18...\(\text{xe7}\) 19 \(\text{e2}\) \(\text{fd8}\) 20 \(\text{f4}\) \(\text{f8}\) 21
\(\text{h1}\) \(\text{g5}\) 22 \(\text{w2}\) \(\text{d7}\) 23 \(\text{c5}\)! \(\text{c8}\) 24
\(\text{d6}\) \(\text{d8}\)

Here White could have won by 25 g3 \(\text{h5}\)
26 \(\text{h4}\) \(\text{h6}\) 27 \(\text{d4}\) (threatening 28 g4)
27...f5 28 exf6! \(\text{xf6}\) 29 \(\text{f7}+\) \(\text{h8}\) 30
\(\text{xf7}+\) \(\text{h8}\) 31 \(\text{d5}\)+ \(\text{g8}\) 32 \(\text{xf8}\)!
\(\text{xf8}\) (or 32...\(\text{xf8}\) 33 \(\text{d7}+\) \(\text{h8}\) 34
\(\text{g6}+\) \(\text{h6}\) 35 \(\text{d6}\)) \(\text{d4}+\), and Black
loses his queen – 33...\(\text{f6}\) 34 \(\text{wh6}+\) \(\text{e8}\)
35 \(\text{xf6}\) \(\text{c7}\) 36 \(\text{g6}+\) \(\text{d8}\) 37 \(\text{f8}+\) \(\text{d7}\)
38 \(\text{f7}\).

The immediate 25 \(\text{d4}\)?! with the threat
of 26 h4 lost White the greater part of his
advantage, since the black queen was not
obliged to guard the invasion square b6,
but was able, by defending the f7 pawn,
to clear the way for the bishop to return
home.

25...\(\text{we8}\) 26 \(\text{h4}\) \(\text{e7}\) 27 \(\text{g4}\) \(\text{xd6}\) 28
\(\text{exd6}\) \(\text{c6}\) 29 \(\text{g5}\) e5 30 \(\text{d5}\) \(\text{xd6}\)
31 \(\text{xd6}\) \(\text{d3}\) \(\text{b3}\) \(\text{d6}\)

It is probable that here too after 33 \(\text{gxh6}\)
\(\text{f4}\) White has some initiative, although it
is all no longer so clear: the knight is
excellently placed, and the rook on the 6th
rank is an ideal defender. But Kasparov
played differently. 'Why I decided that
Black, as in draughts, was obliged to capture, was incomprehensible!” he said with genuine horror after the game.

Indeed, following 33 g6? the capture 33...fxg6 would have been good for White after 34 \( \text{wc5} \), but 33...f6 immediately gave Black nothing more and nothing less than a won position.

34 h5 (a forced loss of tempo) 34...\( \text{wd7} \) 35 \( \text{wf3} \) \( \text{f8} \) 36 \( \text{wa8}+ \) \( \text{d8} \) 37 \( \text{we4} \) \( \text{e7} \) 38 a3

Black’s advantage lies not so much in his extra pawn, as in his domination of the d-file and the potential advance of his f- and e-pawns. This could be achieved both by 38...\( \text{dc6} \) and then 38...\( \text{d2} \) with the threat of 39...\( \text{d3}+ \), and by 38...\( \text{e6} \) with the idea of ...\( \text{dc5} \) or ...\( \text{g5} \), ...e5-c4 and ...f6-f5. But the inexplicable 38...\( \text{wh3}? \) followed, and after 39 \( \text{d1} \) \( \text{xd1}+ \) (39...\( \text{wh5} \) 40 \( \text{xd6} \) obviously will not do) 40 \( \text{xd1} \) \( \text{we6} \) 41 \( \text{g4} \) \( \text{wc6} \) Black himself offered a draw, since it is hardly possible for him to convert his pawn advantage in the variation 42 \( \text{wb4+} \) \( \text{wd6} \) 43 \( \text{we4} \). So that in this opening variation the ball is now in Black’s court – i.e. Kramnik’s.

If we go back to the purely competitive battle, in Linares it boiled down to a race between Kramnik and Kasparov. Grandmaster Yuri Dokhoian, the World Champion’s trainer for many years, said later that ‘immediately after the drawing of lots, it could be assumed that the game with Kramnik in the last round would be of decisive significance. True, for this to be really so, both Kasparov and Kramnik had to demonstrate their superiority over all the other participants. They came to the last round with the same very high score of “+5” from ten games, the nearest pursuers were some 1½ points behind, which in itself is extraordinary for such a short (and representative) tournament.’

And to the forefront once again came the problems that Kramnik had faced before in so-called ‘games of one’s life’. Decisive games! Which were excellently played by Lasker, Botvinnik, Tal and Bronstein, and which Chigorin, Petrosian, Geller and Larsen were totally unable to play. Everyone had his own ‘secrets’ of his victories and… defeats, but now we are not talking about them, nor, however, about an exact diagnosis for Kramnik. He sees a concrete reason every time, appraisals from the side are different, and the truth… As always, the truth is hidden somewhere in the middle…

![Diagram](image_url)
21...\(\text{\&}e8\)!? 22 \(\text{\&}g3\)
Perhaps not the most precise.
22...\(\text{\&}b6\) 23 \(\text{\&}b5\)
'At the board I thought that White should retreat 23 \(\text{\&}f1\), in order after a later \(...\text{c5-\text{c4}}\) to maintain control of \(d3\), followed by \(\text{\&}e3\), \(\text{\&}f2\)-\(f3\) and \(\text{\&}f2\), retaining an advantage. Now, however, the position becomes completely equal.' (Kramnik)

'An important moment. White goes in for complications, since now, after \(...\text{c5-\text{c4}}\), his light-square bishop risks being cut off from the main army. 23 \(\text{\&}e2\) should have been considered, aiming to maintain the status quo: White has the two bishops and the opponent has no real counterplay. After 23...\(\text{\&}d2\) (23...\(\text{\&}e6\) 24 \(\text{\&}e3\) and White stands slightly better) 24 \(\text{\&}f5\) (24 \(\text{\&}h4\) \(\text{\&}d6\) 25 \(\text{\&}e3\) \(\text{\&}a2\) 26 \(\text{\&}a1\) is also possible) 24...\(\text{\&}bd7\) (White's position is also preferable after 24...\(\text{\&}d7\) 25 \(\text{\&}bd1\) \(\text{\&}d6\) 26 \(\text{\&}f3\) \(\text{\&}xe2\) \(\text{\&}xe2\) 28 \(\text{\&}d1\)) 25 \(\text{\&}c4\) (if 25 \(\text{\&}bd1\) \(\text{\&}c2\) with counterplay) 25...\(\text{\&}c2\) 26 \(\text{\&}e3\) \(\text{\&}a5\) 27 \(\text{\&}xe5\) \(\text{\&}xe5\) 28 \(\text{\&}xe5\) White stands better.' (Dokhoian)

23...\(\text{\&}e6\) 24 a4 \(\text{\&}c4\) 25 \(\text{\&}e2\)
'25 \(\text{\&}b4\) was interesting, trying to secure the position of the bishop at \(b5\). In the event of 25...\(\text{\&}e5\) 26 a5 \(\text{\&}a6\) (26...\(\text{\&}d3\) 27 \(\text{\&}e3\) \(\text{\&}xe3\) 28 \(\text{\&}xe3\) \(\text{\&}xe3\) 29 \(\text{\&}xe3\) \(\text{\&}xe4\) 30 \(\text{\&}xe4\)) 27 \(\text{\&}xe6\) \(\text{\&}xa5\) 28 \(\text{\&}xe4\) \(\text{\&}xe4\) 29 \(\text{\&}xe4\) Black loses a pawn, but after 25...\(\text{\&}a5\)! 26 \(\text{\&}bb1\) \(\text{\&}d3\) 27 \(\text{\&}e3\) \(\text{\&}d2\) each side has his trumps.' (Dokhoian)

25...\(\text{\&}d3\) 26 a5 \(\text{\&}c8\)?
'Fortunately, Black is not threatening 27...\(\text{\&}d6\), when all the white pawns will be under attack, but I totally forgot that in the variation 27 \(\text{\&}b4\) \(\text{\&}d6\) 28 \(\text{\&}xe4\) the rook at \(d3\) would be hanging! After 26...\(\text{\&}bd7\) it would all have gone as in the game, except for the enormous difference that Black would not have a knight under attack at \(c8\), and White's pawn at \(a5\) would be attacked. So this game was lost literally in one move!

'If instead White resorts to 27 \(\text{\&}e1\), then after 27...\(\text{\&}ed6\) it is not clear why Black should stand any worse. His knights are now no weaker than the white bishops, the \(a5\) pawn is attacked, he has complete control of the \(d6\)-file, and in some cases \(...\text{a7-\text{a6}}\) is threatened.' (Kramnik)

26...\(\text{\&}bd7\) came into consideration. Now after 27 \(\text{\&}b4\) \(\text{\&}xc3\) (27...\(\text{\&}xa5\) ? 28 \(\text{\&}xc4\) \(\text{\&}xc3\) loses to 29 \(\text{\&}b5\)) 28 \(\text{\&}a2\) \(\text{\&}xe4\) 29 \(\text{\&}xe4\) \(\text{\&}xa5\) 31 \(\text{\&}d1\) \(\text{\&}e7\) 32 \(\text{\&}xd7\) \(\text{\&}xd7\) 33 \(\text{\&}c8\) \(\text{\&}h7\) 34 \(\text{\&}c7\) \(\text{\&}d6\) 35 \(\text{\&}g4\) leads to the loss of a piece) 29 \(\text{\&}xc4\) \(\text{\&}b7\) 30 \(\text{\&}xd7\) \(\text{\&}xe2\) 29...\(\text{\&}g4\) 28 \(\text{\&}xd7\) \(\text{\&}xd7\) Black would have gained compensation for the sacrificed exchange.' (Dokhoian)

27 \(\text{\&}b4\)
Objectively speaking, Black could resign.

27...\(\text{\&}xc4\) 28 \(\text{\&}xc4\) \(\text{\&}xc4\) 29 \(\text{\&}xc4\) \(\text{\&}b8\)

'White advanced his pawn to \(a6\) and, "fastening on" to the \(a7\) pawn, converted his clear advantage into a win.' (Kramnik)

'At the elite level – the decisive mistake. The last real saving chance was 29...\(\text{\&}xa5\), and after 30 \(\text{\&}xc8+\) \(\text{\&}h7\) 31 \(\text{\&}b1\) \(\text{\&}b6\) White, a piece up, is unable to exploit this factor to his advantage. After the further 32 \(\text{\&}f5+\) \(\text{\&}g8\) 33 \(\text{\&}xe5\) (if 33 \(\text{\&}c1\) \(\text{\&}xb5\) 34 \(\text{\&}c8+\) \(\text{\&}e8\) 35 \(\text{\&}xe5\) \(\text{\&}xe5\) 36 \(\text{\&}xe5\) \(\text{\&}e6\) the position is equal) 33...\(\text{\&}a6\) 34 \(\text{\&}h4\) (nothing is achieved by 34 \(\text{\&}c7\) \(\text{\&}xb5\) 35 \(\text{\&}xa5\) \(\text{\&}xa5\) 36...\(\text{\&}xf6\) \(\text{\&}xf6\) 37 \(\text{\&}xf6\) \(\text{\&}e1+\) 38 \(\text{\&}h2\) \(\text{\&}xe4\) with dangerous threats) 35 \(\text{\&}xb5\) \(\text{\&}xb5\) 36 \(\text{\&}xf6\) \(\text{\&}xf6\) 37 \(\text{\&}xf6\) \(\text{\&}e1+\) 38 \(\text{\&}h2\) \(\text{\&}xe4\)
39 \( \text{ hx6} \) b4 the passed b-pawn gives Black counter-chances sufficient for a draw. Now, however, Black's position begins to deteriorate rapidly: without any counterplay it becomes impossible for him to defend his sole, but very serious weakness at a7. (Dokhoian)

30 \( \text{ wCf5 d6} \) 31 \( \text{ a3 f7} \) 32 \( \text{ wA3 f8} \) 33 \( \text{ bR1} \) \( \text{ wC7} \) 34 \( \text{ cC1} \) \( \text{ wD8} \) 35 \( \text{ a6} \) \( \text{ g6} \) 36 \( \text{ wC5 f6} \) 37 \( \text{ f3} \) \( \text{ e6} \) 38 \( \text{ f1} \) \( \text{ c7} \) 39 \( \text{ wC3} \) \( \text{ wD7} \) 40 \( \text{ wH2} \) \( \text{ wE7} \) 41 \( \text{ wC6} \)

41 \( \text{ bB1} \), immediately aiming at b7, was possibly more accurate. However, this is not enough to change the assessment of the position.

41...\( \text{ wH7} \) 42 \( \text{ wC1} \) \( \text{ wC7} \) 43 \( \text{ wC3} \) \( \text{ wD7} \) 44 \( \text{ wC5} \) \( \text{ wD6} \) 45 \( \text{ f2} \) \( \text{ e6} \) 46 \( \text{ wD5} \) \( \text{ wB8} \) 47 \( \text{ wB5} \) \( \text{ wD6} \) 48 \( \text{ bB7} \) \( \text{ d4} \)

Black is bound to lose material.

49 \( \text{ wB4} \) \( \text{ wF6} \) 50 \( \text{ wC5} \) \( \text{ wC6} \) 51 \( \text{ wE3} \) \( \text{ wE6} \) 52 \( \text{ wC4} \) \( \text{ wE7} \) 53 \( \text{ wD5} \) \( \text{ wD4} \) 54 \( \text{ wA7} \) \( \text{ wA7} \) 55 \( \text{ wA7} \) \( \text{ wE7} \) 56 \( \text{ wC4} \) \( \text{ h5} \) 57 \( \text{ wC5} \) 1–0

Garry Kasparov, always reserved in his praise, drew the following conclusion: 'I think that today Kramnik is the second player in the world in playing strength and scale of talent.' Vladimir himself, even if he made some comparisons, kept his conclusions to himself, but regarding the last two tournaments he spoke 'to the whole world' in fully concrete and open terms:

'I feel that I have become stronger and under certain circumstances I can achieve more... In Linares I played actively and openly, in Dos Hermanas (I don't know why) very dryly, in an extremely practical style, in the traditions of the Soviet Chess School, positionally and safely. I am happy, however, that by playing in quite different styles, I achieved good results in both tournaments. What am I lacking? If I myself can understand it, if I am able to work successfully on it, then perhaps I will start winning tournaments and won't be, like Keres, permanently second. But for the moment I am very upset by Dos Hermanas, even more than Linares, because I believe that I deserved first place. When you don't win one tournament - alright, but two tournaments running - in this there is something mystical...

However, some general tendency can be recognised. At a certain point my strength wanes, or perhaps the burden of leading is something that I still find hard to endure in such strong tournaments. But it is a fact that towards the end my drive disappears, and draws follow. I don't insist that in a different situation I would have won the games that finished in a draw, but towards the finish I did not really manage to create anything. I did not play badly, but inertly. On the other hand, there were no serious mistakes in my games. I feel tired, but I don't lose in one move. Why do others blunder so often?

One of the reasons is that chess has become more practical. Earlier, it seems to me, the scientific, classic approach to chess dominated, whereas now many act in this... practical manner.

'Yes, there were only nine rounds in Dos Hermanas. But tiredness accumulates from tournament to tournament. Before, firstly they used to play less in general, perhaps 2-3 tournaments a year; secondly, there were many free days, and thirdly, frankly, many games were 'fixed'. Otherwise they would not have been able to last 17 rounds...'

On the whole, practically all the other super-tournaments of the year reduced to a kind of horse race, between Kramnik and Kasparov, if both of them took part, or of Kramnik and someone else from the group of the strongest, if Kasparov was absent. For example - Novgorod 1997. Six grandmasters, two rounds, i.e. practically equal conditions for all, and... I will turn to an extract from my report from the old Russian city, which, incidentally, on this occasion had prepared a truly unique prize for the future winner: among everything else - two chess pieces from the 14th(!) century which had been found by archaeologists during excavations...
Almost immediately two broke away, and again it was the “two Ks”. Kasparov and Kramnik each had 2½ out of 3, then the world champion moved half a step ahead, but after the game between them they exchanged places. But it would appear that the victory over Kasparov took so much effort from his young opponent – although their score is 3-3 with 7 or 8 draws – that suddenly Kramnik’s play completely fell apart. Or are we to believe the theory, according to which a person who reaches his birthday is inwardly drained? Whatever the reason, after having 3½ out of 4, in the next 4 games Kramnik gained only 1½ points by draws. By the penultimate round Kasparov was again ahead, and their repeat “crunch” game turned out to be exciting – both(!) missed a win, first Garry, then Vladimir – but indeterminate. And the last day, as is known, has its own laws. Perpetual check was announced by Short to Kasparov’s king with the help of the immortal “windmill”, after which the king of chess himself anxiously awaited the outcome of the last game of the tournament between Kramnik and Gelfand.

And it dragged on. The first time control passed, then the second… This was not surprising. Victory promised Kramnik – with equal points and prize money – first place on the time break; a draw or a defeat were the same for him. But for the player from Minsk a half point would enable him to avoid finishing last on his own. Kramnik was closer to his goal, but it was Gelfand who reached his. And some ten minutes before the theoretical end of the tournament, Kasparov began receiving congratulations…

Yes, again Kramnik did not succeed with a ‘game of his life’ – we have already talked about this. It evidently also left its mark on the appraisal of grandmaster Sergey Dolmatov, then Kramnik’s second, who in his time was also a world junior champion:

Kramnik has an enormous unrealised potential. He still does a lot of things that take his energy and do not allow him to concentrate fully on a tournament. His main problem is insufficient ambition, though it does save on nervous energy. I believe that the time of Kramnik has come or is coming, and he should declare himself more loudly. Volodya played the tournament quite well, professionally: moreover, he beat Garry 1½-½ and was closer to victory in their second game (of course, Kasparov has his own opinion on this; they both missed chances). Had it not been for the very serious breakdown in the last three rounds, where in every game Kramnik lost half a point, I as his second would have been very pleased. Second place is not a bad result, and we accepted it calmly, but it is time that Kramnik won such tournaments. His chess drawbacks are clearly seen, and there are things to work on. I hope he will also not ignore other, no less important problems.

Or – Tilburg. The organisers again used their approved scheme: they invited young players up to the age of 25, and in the role of ‘professor’ – Kasparov. Only, all the young players were mature! The best of them gave battle to their ‘examiner’, and Kramnik and Peter Svidler, three-times Russian Champion, shared first place with him. Moreover, according to Svidler, Vladimir failed to gather his fully ripened harvest of points and his final result, which as it is looks good, could have been even better. In the course of four rounds (from the 4th-7th) he had two absolutely winning positions and two where he stood much better, but he made four draws…

No. 71

Kramnik–Leko

Tilburg 1997

Here in particular, after outplaying his opponent ‘on class’, he allowed him to escape with a pretty combination:
Black appears to be in a sorry plight: 51 $\text{h}7$ is threatened, in the event of 50...$\text{d}1$ or 50...$\text{b}4$ he has the additional 51 $\text{d}7$, while 50...$\text{b}4$ is parried by 51 $\text{h}3$! But, fortunately for Black, his king does not have a single move. This is the theme of the combination, and here is its rendition.

50...$\text{h}b5!!$ 51 $\text{b}xb5$ $\text{d}2$ 52 $\text{b}d5$ $\text{d}1$ $\text{w}$

53 $\text{xd}1$ $\text{d}6+$! 54 $\text{xd}6$

Stalemate! Of course, after 54 $\text{g}5$ $\text{xd}1$ the ending is drawn.

But by no means all of Kramik’s opponents were so fortunate – see games Nos.154, 155 and 167.

Preventing an invasion at $g2$ (or $g1$ if the white rook switches to guarding the second rank). Passive defence is unpromising, and Lautier seeks at least some counterplay.

38 a5 $\text{bxa}5$ 39 $\text{c}5$ $\text{g}7$ 40 $\text{a}3$ $\text{h}3$ 41 $\text{b}5$ a4 42 $\text{c}5$ $\text{b}8$ 43 $\text{a}5$ a6 44 $\text{xa}4$ $\text{g}2$ 45 $\text{b}4$ $\text{xh}2$ 46 $\text{g}3$ $\text{e}2$ 47 $\text{g}xh3$ $\text{xe}3+$ 48 $\text{g}2$ $\text{c}6$ 49 $\text{xa}6$

Each rook is in the enemy rear, but with what different effects. And all because the knight is a head ‘taller’ and stronger than the bishop.

49...$\text{d}7$ 50 $\text{f}2$ $\text{d}3$ 51 $\text{c}5$ $\text{xc}3$ 52 $\text{b}6$ $\text{b}3$ 53 $\text{a}6$ $\text{d}3$

The d4 pawn is doomed, and so White resigned.

After this, at the tournament in Dortmund, the press compared Kramnik with an English double-decker bus, from which on the streets of London all the other cars try to keep at a respectful distance: so powerfully and inevitably does it move.

Kramnik himself had this to say:

‘It is the third time running that I have taken first place here, and I haven’t suffered a single defeat for five years. Dortmund is obviously “my” city. Why? It is hard to explain. These things happen with chess players – your talisman, a place where you always play freely and well. Perhaps it is something to do with bio-rhythms... Anyway, it is not for me to judge: I do not consider myself an expert in this field. Only, I heard that usually after your birthday you experience a burst of energy. It was something like this that I experienced in Dortmund.

‘Compared with last year’s tournament, I gained half a point less. But the field was stronger: all the best players, except Kasparov and Shirov, took part. And “+4” was enough for victory. True, none of my rivals pressed me too much. At any event, this success came more easily than I expected.

‘Of course, tension was there. At some point I felt – by my play, by my general state – that I had excellent chances of success. And I very much did not want to
throw them away. After all, it is no secret that in the last few tournaments fortune has deserted me literally at the very end, and I had to overcome the resulting complex. Effectively I secured victory 2-3 rounds before the finish. Even so, I experienced some psychological discomfort. I was afraid of once again throwing away clear first place. In the final rounds I decided to play very solidly, to avoid the slightest risk. And I succeeded.

‘In Dortmund, we, the participants, lived in a calm, quiet place. There were all the conditions for complete relaxation – a park, and very few correspondents, who were not too tiresome. Recently I have somewhat over-burdened myself in the emotional sphere, and so it was a pleasure to have a change of scene. Of course, I met the other players outside the playing hall… We were able to chat, and have dinner together. But I did not mix a lot. I preferred to be on my own, and, to be honest, I enjoyed this. Evidently this way of life to a great extent helped me to win the tournament.’

Of importance for his overall victory was the meeting in the very first round with Karpov – game No. 134.

And this, despite that the following incident:

In this clearly superior position Kramnik suddenly offered a draw. ‘That day I felt a complete lack of fervour, otherwise I would have made Visby suffer for quite a while. But something non-chess, extraneous affected me’ – Vladimir explained his decision. Yes, that is the main trump of any computer over a grandmaster: lacking nerves and a subconscious, when a machine has the better chances it does not offer a draw...

However, by the law of energy conservation, when it is lost in one place, it is gained in another. Vladimir himself was slightly amused by a game which, strictly speaking, he had won… almost a year earlier, in his home preparation.

No.74
Kramnik–Ivanchuk
Dortmund 1997
Queen’s Gambit

1 d3 f6 2 c4 c6 3 c3 d5 4 d4 e6 5 e3
b7 6 +c2 b6!? 6... d6 is more usual, but Ivanchuk follows his own recommendation made roughly six years earlier, approved both by himself, and then also by others.

7 +d3 +b7 8 0–0 +e7 9 b3 +c8 10
b2 c5 11 exd5

After 11 +e2 0–0 12 +fd1 +c7 13 +e5
dxc4 14 bxc4 exd4 15 exd4 +xe5 16 dxe5
+e6 17 +f1 +g4 the game is unclear. 11
+fe1!? is an interesting try, but for the moment Kramnik follows a path that is well known to him.

Now let us turn to an eyewitness of this interesting story throughout its development – grandmaster Adrian Mikhalchishin.

‘Budapest, November 1996. In the final of the European Club Championship Khalifman was playing Dreev. To 11 exd5 Black replied 11...exd5, and after 12 +fd1
0–0 13 +ac1 +c8 14 +f5 g6 15 +h3 +f8
16 +bl +e7 a draw was soon agreed. During the analysis Kramnik, who was playing in the same event, asked Dreev:
“Why not play 11...cxd4 here?” And the three of them began moving the pieces.

11...cxd4? 12 dxe6 dxc3 13 exd7+ 2xd7
14 2xc3 2b4
‘If 13...2xd7 there would have followed 14 2f5.

14 2xc3 2b4
‘After 14...2f6 15 2xf6 2xc2 16 2xd8 2c3 17 2f1 2d8 18 2f5 2c7 19 2c5
Black suffers enormous loss of material.

15 2c4 2xf3 16 gxf3 2xc3 17 2xc3 2g5+ 18 2hl b5 19 2a5!

Ivanchuk decided to resign (others would have suffered for a couple more moves), but according to his second, international master Sulipa, this position had been reached in Budapest...

On the other hand, it would have been sensible altogether to miss the next tournament in Belgrade, although well in advance Kramnik had prepared for it two new openings – the Petroff Defence and the Tartakower Variation in the Queen’s Gambit. Only, why did he need to supplement his chess arsenal, if, when he set off for this contest with six representatives of the world top ten, he already had in his pocket a prepared written refusal to participate in the world championship? Which had at last been organised, even though on the unusual knock-out system, with a grandiose prize fund of five million dollars. All this would have been splendid, had not FIDE allowed its world champion straight into the final. Sport in general and chess in particular had never seen such an excessive privilege. Just imagine: one finalist, fresh and full of strength, waits, preparing for only one or two realistic challengers, and his opponent arrives for the ‘reception’ after a month of trial, after 6-7 nerve-wracking mini-matches, in which the outcome may have been decided in rapidplay chess or even blitz.

‘This is a nonsense! The challenger, having reached the final, will be exhausted both physically and mentally – after all, before that he will have been playing very intensive chess for nearly a whole month. And he will have literally a couple of days’ rest before the final match. To my mind, this is all absolutely intolerable.

‘Under such conditions there is no question about the winner of the championship: he has already been announced. Only if Anatoly Karpov should be in completely bad form or should fall seriously ill during the final, only then is there a chance that he won’t win with such an unthinkable advantage.’ – all this was said by Kramnik to the delegates of the FIDE Congress in Kishinev, to where he flew specially, and they – did not listen to him! It suited those grandmasters from the top thirty, fifty, or even eighty in the rating list, who had been given, or earned, the right to play in the championship: they had no realistic dreams about the crown, and participation itself plus victory in a couple of matches promised a ‘living wage’ for several months ahead. But Kramnik had his sights set on everything! ‘Strike at something small, and you will only hurt your fist’ – I don’t know whether he had heard such a saying, but he acted in full accordance with it. And – the only one in the world! – he refused to play under such regulations. In the middle of the Belgrade tournament the letter was sent to the FIDE Headquarters, and I have to say that it provoked something of a panic there. In the eyes of the chess world, a championship without Kasparov, who had not recognised the knockout system at all,
A vertical take-off

37...\( \text{\textalpha} \text{xe6} \) 38 \( \text{d5} \) \( \text{\textalpha} \text{xf3}! \) 39 \( \text{gxf3} \) \( \text{\textalpha} \text{h3} \) 40 \( \text{\textomega} \text{c4} \) \( \text{\textalpha} \text{xf1} \) 41 \( \text{\textomega} \text{g4+} \) \( \text{\textalpha} \text{h7} \) 42 \( \text{e6} \) \( \text{\textomega} \text{g6} \) 0–1

Of course, there were some creative successes, but even so the next tournament – in January 1998 in Wijk aan Zee – suddenly stood out for Kramnik himself, even above the ranks of customary major events. This is what he had to say:

‘I wanted to perform as well as possible: for me the tournament had acquired definite significance. To some extent it should have demonstrated who’s who in chess at the present day, after the conclusion of the so-called world championship.

‘It is remarkable that the Hoogovens tournament has been held now for sixty successive years, and even the Second World War did not interrupt it. In stability of tradition this event is inferior perhaps only to Hastings, but in reliability of organisation and the strength of its participants it has long been superior. This time too everything was precisely done and not the slightest problem arose. Moreover, the metallurgical plant sponsoring the tournament has announced that the festivals in Wijk aan Zee will continue for at least another four years – definitely until the chess jubilee number of 64.

‘At the opening of the present jubilee tournament the Crown Prince of the Netherlands was present. He made a welcoming speech and gave the impression of being a pleasant, courteous, approachable man of about 30, without any hint of snobbery.

‘Despite the fact that I, seemingly, started the tournament simply brilliantly – 4 points out of 4 – I felt that I was not in my best form. A lack of proper preparation and a certain lack of training showed. My mind was not working very well, and, in contrast to the result, I was not happy with my play in general. In the first four games, in the opening everything turned out well for me, and my opponents did not pose any great problems. From this part of the tournament I would single out my game with Adams. The English grandmaster played unpretentiously in the opening, and I immediately gained the initiative. I started to press, and he defended resourcefully. But on the 22nd move Adams cracked under the tension and blundered. Instead of 22 \( \text{\textomega} \text{f1} ? \) (he apparently overlooked the reply 22...\( \text{\textomega} \text{c1}! \)) he should have played 22 \( \text{\textomega} \text{e3} \), and although I would still have had the advantage, White would have retained good drawing chances.

No.76
Adams–Kramnik
Wijk aan Zee 1998
Sicilian Defence

1 \( \text{e4} \) \( \text{c5} \) 2 \( \text{\textomega} \text{f3} \) \( \text{\textomega} \text{c6} \) 3 \( \text{\textomega} \text{c3} \) \( \text{d6} \) 4 \( \text{d4} \) \( \text{cxd4} \) 5 \( \text{\textomega} \text{xd4} \) \( \text{\textomega} \text{f6} \) 6 \( \text{\textomega} \text{g2} \) \( \text{\textomega} \text{g6} \) 7 \( \text{\textomega} \text{g3} \) \( \text{\textomega} \text{g7} \) 8 \( \text{0-0} \) \( \text{0-0} \) 9 \( \text{\textomega} \text{b4} \) \( \text{\textomega} \text{a6} \) 10 \( \text{\textomega} \text{b3} \) \( \text{\textomega} \text{e5} \) 11 \( \text{\textomega} \text{b5} \) \( \text{\textomega} \text{d7} \) 12 \( \text{\textomega} \text{d5} \) 12...

22 \( \text{\textomega} \text{f1} \) \( \text{\textomega} \text{c1} \) 23 \( \text{\textomega} \text{xcl} \) \( \text{\textomega} \text{xcl} \) 24 \( \text{\textomega} \text{f6} \) \( \text{\textomega} \text{a8} \) 25 \( \text{\textomega} \text{c4} \) \( \text{\textomega} \text{a3} \) 26 \( \text{\textomega} \text{d4} \) \( \text{\textomega} \text{c5} \) 27 \( \text{\textomega} \text{c5} \) \( \text{\textomega} \text{xc5} \) \( \text{dxc5} \) 28 \( \text{\textomega} \text{xcl} \) \( \text{a3} \) 29 \( \text{\textomega} \text{cl} \) 0–1

‘In the middle of the tournament there was a sharp decline in my play and hence also in my results. I picked up only two points, with four draws and two defeats! A
complete slump… Then I somehow managed to steel myself, and I played the games with Anand (No. 168) and Topalov at a normal level. Here are some other episodes from the tournament.

No. 77
Kramnik–Piket
Wijk aan Zee 1998
Queen’s Gambit

1 d4 d5 2 d4 c6 3 c4 e6 4 \textit{c}2 \textit{f}6 5 e3 \textit{d}6 6 \textit{d}6 7 \textit{d}3 0–0 8 0–0 dxc4
9 \textit{xc}4 a6 10 \textit{d}1 b5 11 \textit{e}2 \textit{w}c7 12 \textit{e}4 \textit{xe}4 13 \textit{xe}4 e5 14 \textit{wh}4 h6 15 \textit{d}2 \textit{e}8 16 dxe5 \textit{xe}5

17 \textit{a}5 \textit{wb}8 18 \textit{ac}1 \textit{e}6 19 \textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5 20 \textit{w}x6 \textit{xb}2 21 \textit{c}7 \textit{wb}7 22 \textit{f}3 \textit{ac}8 23 \textit{wb}4!

Slamming shut with gain of tempo the cage around the black queen. After 23…\textit{f}6 (23…\textit{xe}6 is not possible in view of 24 \textit{xe}6) 24 \textit{a}5 the threat of 25 \textit{xe}6 places Black in a hopeless position. But the queen sacrifice that he makes merely delays his capitulation.

23…\textit{e}5 24 \textit{cc}1 \textit{xc}7 25 \textit{xc}7 \textit{xc}7 26 \textit{wa}5 \textit{ec}2 27 \textit{xa}6 \textit{wb}8 28 \textit{e}4!

A nuance, which retains for White his pawn on the queenside. Now 28…\textit{xa}2 is bad on account of 29 \textit{xb}5 with an immediate win.

28…\textit{xc}4 29 \textit{d}3 \textit{a}4 30 \textit{wc}6 \textit{g}6
The a2 pawn is again taboo. 30…\textit{xa}2? 31 \textit{we}4.

No. 78
Kramnik–Gelfand
Wijk aan Zee 1998
Queen’s Gambit

1 d4 d5 2 d4 \textit{f}5 3 c4 e6 4 \textit{c}3 c6 5 \textit{b}3 \textit{b}6 6 c5 \textit{w}c7 7 \textit{f}4 \textit{w}c8 8 \textit{h}4 \textit{g}6 9 \textit{xe}6 h\textit{g}6 10 e4

Energetically opening up the position, otherwise behind his pawn chain Black will set up a permanent defence.

10…\textit{f}6 11 exd5 \textit{xd}5 12 \textit{xd}5 cxd5 13 \textit{b}5+ \textit{d}5 14 0–0–0 \textit{e}7 15 \textit{h}4!

In any case the pawn is immune, and kingside castling is now practically ruled out.

15…\textit{f}8 16 \textit{b}1 a6 17 \textit{a}4 \textit{a}5 18 \textit{f}3 b6 19 cxb6 \textit{wb}7 20 \textit{cc}1 \textit{xb}6 21 \textit{cc}7 \textit{wb}8 22 \textit{cc}4 \textit{cc}4 23 \textit{cc}6!

Proceeding to win material.

23…\textit{xb}2+ 24 \textit{xb}2 \textit{xb}2+ 25 \textit{a}1 \textit{g}8 26 \textit{xc}4 \textit{xe}2 27 \textit{e}8+ \textit{h}7 28 \textit{xh}8+ \textit{xh}8 29 g3 \textit{a}3 30 \textit{d}1 \textit{g}8 31 \textit{d}3 \textit{e}7 32 \textit{c}7 g5 33 \textit{hx}g5 \textit{xd}5 g1 34 \textit{b}1 \textit{e}7 35 \textit{c}2 g5 36 a4 \textit{f}5 37 a5 \textit{f}6 38 \textit{b}6 \textit{f}4 39 \textit{gf}f 40 \textit{d}1

The a6 pawn is doomed, and so Black resigned.

No. 79
J. Polgar–Kramnik
Wijk aan Zee 1998

The position overleaf bears obvious signs of a draw, and with correct play by both sides a peaceful outcome is practically inevitable. But the tournament situation obliged me to play for a win, and so,
avoiding further simplification, I tried by all means possible to maintain the tension.

29...\texttt{b5}!
If 29...\texttt{xb3}, then 30 \texttt{xa5}, eliminating Black's last trump.

30 \texttt{xg6 hxb6} 31 \texttt{f3}
After 31 \texttt{xf4 \texttt{g8!} 32 \texttt{g6} (or 32 \texttt{d5} \texttt{xf1+ 33 \texttt{xf1 a4}) 32...\texttt{xf1+ 33 \texttt{xf1 a4} 34 \texttt{c7+ \texttt{h7} the neutralisation of the a-pawn would have cost White too high a price.

Also bad was 31 \texttt{xf4 \texttt{xf4} 32 \texttt{xf4}, when 32...\texttt{a4} is interesting, but 32...\texttt{xc4 33 bxc4 \texttt{xc3} seems simpler and stronger. White can pick up the g6 pawn with check, but the black passed pawn will cost a rook.

31...\texttt{e5}
In accordance with the principle - as little simplification as possible (and this despite the inevitable exchange of pieces!). In the variation 31...\texttt{xc4?!} 32 bxc4 \texttt{e5 33 a1} Black has the advantage and... an obvious draw in prospect.

32 \texttt{xe5 dxe5}
Objectively the evaluation has not changed. White has a draw, and yet Black's changed pawn structure demands of the opposing side a certain accuracy.

33 \texttt{c4 \texttt{c6} 34 \texttt{e1 \texttt{e8} 35 g3}
An imperceptible. but significant inaccuracy. The preparatory 35 \texttt{h4?!}, stopping the g6 pawn, would apparently have led White to the cherished goal.

35...g5 36 xf4 \texttt{xf4} 37 \texttt{xe8+ \texttt{xe8} 38 h4?!}

This encounters a far from obvious refutation. Of course, 38 \texttt{g1} should have been played, although even here the battle is not yet over: 38...\texttt{e4!} 39 \texttt{f2} (if 39 \texttt{h4?} there follows 39...\texttt{g4} 39...\texttt{g7}, and White still has a little work to do, although the drawing haven is close. Nevertheless, her desire to eliminate the material remaining on the board as soon as possible is quite understandable.

38...a4!
An interesting tactical solution, which I managed to find in a slight time scramble. When I glanced at Judit at this moment, I saw that she was rattled. She evidently considered the draw to be obvious, and this 'jab' had escaped her attention.

39 \texttt{bxad}?
Now the game concludes quickly. Some chances of resisting were offered by 39 hxg5 a3 40 \texttt{f2 \texttt{b8} 41 \texttt{a2 \texttt{xb3} 42 \texttt{a1}.

We later spent a long time analysing this position with Anatoly Karpov, who had joined us, and we came to the conclusion that it stands on the boundary between a win (for Black) and a draw. Almost always things can reduce to the ending with rook and bishop against rook, e.g. 42...\texttt{c3 43 \texttt{g1 \texttt{xc4} 44 \texttt{xf4. Black can consider placing his pawn at f3 followed by the advance of his king.

39...\texttt{e4}!
The threat of 40...\texttt{xc4} does not leave White time to take on g5, and Black retains his powerful pawn duo.
40 ♗g1
Also bad is 40 ♗c3 ♘xc4 41 ♘xc4 ♘xd5+ 42 ♗g1 ♘xc4 43 hxg5 ♝f3 44 ♗f2 ♗d5, and the only black pawn that remains 'alive' is quite sufficient.

40...♘xc4 41 ♖d3 ♖g4 42 a5
If 42 ♖c3 Black had prepared 42...♖g3 43 ♖e2 ♗c2, when White is unable to give up the knight for both the enemy pawns: 44 ♖xg3 ♗g2+ or 44 ♖xf4 ♗c1+, mating.

42...♖g3 43 ♖d1 ♖f3 44 ♖e7 ♖f2+ 45 ♗f1 ♖b5 46 ♗g2 ♗c2 0–1 (Notes by Kramnik)

Whether or not Kramnik felt in good form, it had become evident long ago that the chess pieces, which sometimes live their own lives, obey him, as – according to the ancient legend – the animals obeyed Orpheus. Using his invisible magic chess pipe, he forced them to add to their 'rightful' power that additional strength that always accompanies any harmonious concord: be it in art, in life, or in chess.

True, sometimes Kramnik simply did not allow his inspiration to overflow, especially if a tournament was accompanied by certain attendant circumstances, and his pleasure from the game of chess itself had to be diluted, or even replaced, by concern about an obligatory good competitive result. This comes easily when you are young, when you are storming purposefully to the next title, the next rating mark, or simply a place under the chess sun. But when the ascent of the high mountain plateau has been achieved, a true artist is, naturally, not averse to winning, but he values more and is more won over by the performance of the mind, and a freshly found idea gives him more pleasure than an extra ‘half’ in the tournament table...

Such ‘attendant circumstances’ were awaiting Kramnik in the most ultra-strong tournament of our time – Linares 1998. Performing there was practically the same ‘troupe’ as in other super-events, and yet the seven grandmasters, for the second and last time in the 20th century, raised the average rating to the level of category 21!

However, it was not this that imposed unusual additional obligations on the participants. Judging from statements made by Kasparov before the tournament, it was Linares that should name the candidates for the match with him. The World Champion, who had broken away from FIDE, had not defended his title for four years; he himself recognised this abnormality and the somewhat delicate nature of the situation, and that is why he was seeking a match, even if it were within the framework of the newly created – and, alas, destined to exist for only six months – 'World Chess Council'...

True, Kramnik, as well as Anand, had already been named as a candidate, and for them the battle of giants could in principle be regarded ‘only’ as a grandiose warming-up session. A firing range, so to speak, for testing their home preparation, the effectiveness of their own chess clairvoyance, and nothing more. However, this is in theory. In practice, any contestant is not devoid of human nature: hence, according to Kramnik’s second, Sergey Dolmatov, Vladimir showed uncharacteristic constraint, and as a consequence – so many missed opportunities...

Nevertheless, in No.156, which has been included in the selected games chapter, and in other games, there was much that was unusual, from the opening to deep into the endgame. And it started from the very first round...

**No.80**

**Kramnik–Ivanchuk**

**Linares 1998**

**Queen's Pawn Opening**

1 ♕f3 ♗c6 2 ♖d4 ♗d5 3 ♘f4 ♗g4 4 e3 ♖e6 5 ♖c4 ♘b4+ 6 ♘c3 ♖f6 7 ♖c1 0–0 8 ♖h3

A new move. Here 8 a3 ♘xc3+ 9 ♕xc3 was normally played.

8...♗xf3 9 ♕xf3 ♙e7

While up to this point Black has played well, his last move looks questionable.
Curiously, Anand suggested here 13 \( \text{Wg4!} \) After 13...\( \text{Wxc3+} \) 14 ...\( \text{Wd1} \) it is not so easy for Black to parry the opponent’s threats. He has to play 14...g6 15 \( \text{Wg5} \), and now after the plausible 15...\( \text{Wa1+} \) 16 \( \text{Wxe2} \) \( \text{Wxa2+} \) 17 \( \text{Wf3} \) \( \text{Wc2} \) (planning a saving check at f5) White can maintain his fading attack with 18 g4! (18...\( \text{Wd7} \) 19 \( \text{Wh6?!} \) \( \text{Wf5} \), but 19 \( \text{Wg3!} \) retains all the threats). It is probable that only 15...\( \text{Wb4!} \) removes all doubts: after 16 \( \text{Wh6} \) \( \text{Wc2+} \) 17 \( \text{Wc1} \) \( \text{Wb1+} \) 18 \( \text{Wd2} \) (18 \( \text{Wc2?} \) \( \text{Wd3+} \) leads to a loss for White, since his king has no good move) things end in perpetual check.

13 \( \text{Wb3!} \)

By Ivanchuk’s admission, he had overlooked this strong reply. This makes it all the more surprising that, by a happy accident, Black finds sufficient counterplay.

13...\( \text{Wc1+} \) 14 \( \text{Wd1} \) \( \text{Wxd1+} \) 15 \( \text{Wxd1} \) \( \text{dxc4)!} \)

Were it not for this \textit{zwischenzug}, things would be completely bad for Black.

16 \( \text{Wxb7} \) \( \text{gxf6} \) 17 \( \text{Wd2?!} \)

During the game I thought that 17 \( \text{Wc2!} \) looked stronger and more natural, but Vladimir probably over-estimated Black’s defensive resources in the variation 17...\( \text{Wab8} \) 18 \( \text{Wxb8} \) \( \text{Wxb8} \) 19 \( \text{Wxc4} \) \( \text{Wxa5} \) 20 \( \text{Wd3} \) c5?! 21 \( \text{dxc5} \) \( \text{Wxe8} \). Now White can try 22 \( \text{Wd2} \) (22 \( \text{Wc3} \) \( \text{Wxc5+} \) 23 \( \text{Wb4} \) \( \text{Wb7} \) 24 \( \text{Wxa6} \) \( \text{Wxc6} \)), hoping after 22...\( \text{Wxc5} \) 23 \( \text{Wc1} \) to gain an obvious advantage (the white king is closer to the queenside, whereas Black still has to worry about his h7 pawn). But the capture on c5 with the rook is over-hasty, and Black should defend more subtly – 22...\( \text{Wb7} \)!

Nevertheless, Igor Zaitsev considers that the aim here to transpose into the ending with bishop against knight is objectively the right course; in his opinion, White can try to achieve his aim by playing 20 \( \text{Wxa6?!} \), with the idea after 20...\( \text{Wb6} \) 21 \( \text{Wd3} \) c5 (21...\( \text{Wb7} \) 22 \( \text{Wb1} \) 22 \( \text{dxc5} \) \( \text{Wc6} \) of forcing the exchange of rooks by 23 \( \text{Wd2} \) (23...\( \text{Wb7} \) 24 \( \text{Wc4} \)).

17...\( \text{Wab8}! \)

17...\( \text{Wb8?!} \) suggests itself, but then after 18 \( \text{Wxe7} \) \( \text{Wxa5} \) 19 \( \text{Wc3} \) \( \text{Wb1} \) 20 g4! the black rook at a8 is within range of the light-square bishop, which allows White to win an important tempo, whereas now Black is able to create counterplay.

18 \( \text{Wxe7} \) \( \text{Wxa5} \) 19 \( \text{Wc2} \)

If 19 \( \text{Wc3} \) \( \text{Wb1} \) 20 g4, then 20...\( \text{Wc1+} \) 21 \( \text{Wb2} \) \( \text{Wd1} \), and Black is quite alright.

19...\( \text{Wb4} \) 20 \( \text{Wxa7} \)

If 20 a3 Vladimir did not like the reply 20...\( \text{Wb5} \) (by contrast, 20...\( \text{Wd4} \) 21 \( \text{Wc2} \) \( \text{Wxa3} \) 22 \( \text{Wb1} \) enables the activity of Black’s pieces to be suppressed, after which the ending may again prove difficult for him) 21 \( \text{Wxc4} \) \( \text{Wxa3} \), and Black cannot complain of any lack of counterplay.

20...\( \text{Wd4} \) 21 \( \text{Wxa5}?! \)

This exchange sacrifice safeguards White against any surprises and retains the initiative, although objectively things are inclined towards a draw.

21...\( \text{Wxa5} \) 22 \( \text{Wxc4} \) \( \text{h5} \)

A subjective decision. It was also possible to play differently, but, in Ivanchuk’s opinion, it is important to make this advance as soon as possible.

23 \( \text{h4} \) \( \text{Wc8} \) 24 \( \text{Wd3} \) \( \text{Wxc4}! \)

The simplest way of achieving a draw.

25 \( \text{Wxc4} \) \( \text{Wxa2} \) 26 \( \text{Wf1} \) \( f5 \) 27 \( d5 \) \( Wf8?! \)

In my view, there was nothing to prevent Black from gaining a theoretically drawn position by 27...\( \text{exd5+} \) 28 \( \text{Wxd5} \) \( \text{Wg7} \).
28 dxe6 fxe6 29 d4 e7 30 e5 aa4 31 f3 aa5+ 32 ff4 aa2 33 bb1 ff6

Black is not tempted by the variation 33...xg2 34 ee5 eg3, as a result of which he might have had problems: 35 eb7+ ef8 36 ff6 eg8 37 e4.

In the subsequent play, Black continues acting in equally non-typical fashion in this, generally speaking, typical drawn ending, but in the end nevertheless maintains the balance.

34 gg3 ee2 35 bb3 e5 36 bb6+ eg7 37 bb3 ff6 38 ea3 eg6 39 eh3 ef6 40 g4 hxg4+ 41 fxg4 fxg4+ 42 gg4 eg6 43 h5+ eh6 44 aa6+ eh7 45 ea3 eh6 46 ef5 e4 47 e4x4 exh5 48 ef5 ef2+ 49 eg6 ea2 50 fg5 ef2+ 51 eh5 eg6 52 e4
3b2 53 ea7 bb5+ 54 eg6 bb6+ 55 ef7
56 eg6+ eg5 57 eg6 ef4 58 ff6
59 h5 ½-½ (Notes by Dolmatov)

Apart from castling, the other theoretical replies are 13...cc6 and 13...cc7.

14 cc3 cc6 15 cc3 cc5 16 0-0

16 cc2 is sometimes played here, and then - if my memory does not betray me, according to some analysis by Arnason – Black gains a draw by force with 16...f4. It is interesting that on one occasion a game Topalov-Iglesias took place before my very eyes. I was already familiar with Arnason’s analysis, and I expected that after 16 cc2 Iglesias would demonstrate this possibility. But, to my amazement, Black played 16...eh6?! 17 0-0 aa7, which led to a quite different game in which the Bulgarian player prevailed. What was going on? For a long time I racked my brains over this mystery, and did not find an answer. Finally, I could not restrain myself and I put the question to Vladimir Kramnik. He heard me out, and unexpectedly suggested: ‘What if simply neither of them knew of this possibility?’ I somehow could not believe that this could be so at such a high level. But a year passed, in Dos Hermanas the two players met again, and they again played the same Sveshnikov Variation with 16 cc2. And what do you think – Kramnik had guessed correctly. On this occasion Iglesias, playing Black, was now au fait with the variation. There followed 16...f4! 17 bh5 ef7! 18 axh7+ af8 19 ef5 ec8 20 xe6 xxe6 21 bg4 wh6 22 ef5 xe6 23 fe3 wh6 24 ff5 and White was obliged to agree to a repetition of moves.

16...aa7

Of course, here after 16...f4 17 bh5 the situation is quite different.

17 bh5 aa7

In the rapidplay game Ivanchuk-Kramnik, London 1994, after 17...e4 18 cc2 we8 19 xxe8 xxe8 20 f3 White retained the advantage.

18 g4?! e4 19 cc2 fxg4 20 xxe4 ae5 21 wh6?!

As shown by Kramnik, by 21 h3! (to answer 21...gxh3 with 22 f4!), White could have attained a clearly better position.

21...hh8!

A move which, in all probability, was overlooked by the St Petersburg grandmaster. Now, in view of the fact that 22
A vertical take-off

\(\text{Ax}e6\) is dangerous because of 22...\(\text{Wh}4\) 23 \(\text{O}xg4\) \(\text{H}g7\) 24 \(\text{Wh}1\) \(\text{X}g4\) 25 \(f4\) \(\text{Wh}3\) 26 \(\text{O}c7\) (\(\text{H}g1+\) was threatened) 26...\(d5!!\) (or 26...\(\text{O}x\) 8), a draw results by force.

22 \(\text{Wh}1\) \(\text{X}d5\) 23 \(\text{X}d5\) \(\text{O}e7\) 24 \(\text{Wh}4\) \(\text{X}d5\) 25 \(\text{W}x\) 8 \(\text{X}d8\) 26 \(\text{X}d5\) \(\text{O}f5\) 27 \(\text{Ad}1\) \(\text{O}d8\) 28 \(\text{G}2\) \(\text{H}5\) 29 \(\text{H}1\) \(\text{O}f6\) 30 \(\text{O}d3\) \(\text{O}f5\) \(\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}\) (Notes by Dolmatov)

And when he happened to end up in a difficult position, Kramnik's tactical resourcefulness came to his aid.

51...\(\text{C}4\)!

A tactical way of creating scope for the activation of the black rook.

52 \(\text{B}x\) \(\text{B}4\) \(\text{H}b8\) 53 \(\text{C}5\) \(\text{B}2\) 54 \(\text{C}6\) \(\text{O}e7\) 55 \(\text{X}g6+\) \(\text{C}6\) 56 \(\text{O}e5\) \(\text{X}a2\) 57 \(\text{C}4+\)

57 \(\text{X}f5\) \(\text{X}c2+\) 58 \(\text{X}c2\) a2 59 \(\text{O}c4+\)

\(\text{C}7\) could hardly have satisfied White.

57...\(\text{C}7\) 58 \(\text{G}3\) \(\text{A}1\) 59 \(\text{Xa}3\) \(\text{A}a3\)

60 \(\text{H}4\) \(\text{X}c6\) 61 \(\text{G}5\) \(\text{A}5\) 62 \(\text{Xf}5\) \(\text{D}6\)

63 \(\text{G}4\) \(\text{G}7\) 64 \(\text{D}3\) \(\text{C}5\) 65 \(\text{G}3\) \(\text{D}6\) 66 \(\text{G}4\) \(\text{H}5\) 67 \(\text{G}4\) \(\text{H}4\) 68 \(\text{O}f5\) \(\text{G}5\) 69 \(\text{G}5\)

\(\text{H}3\) 70 \(\text{G}4\) \(\text{H}4\) 71 \(\text{G}2\) \(\text{H}2\) 72 \(\text{G}3\)

\(\text{D}4\) 73 \(\text{G}1\) \(\text{H}1\) 74 \(\text{G}2\) \(\text{H}8\) \(\frac{1}{2}-\frac{1}{2}\)

As for the wins... This one, for example, Vladimir himself considered to have been achieved too easily. Nevertheless the energy and power that he instilled into his pieces is appealing.

No. 82
Ivanchuk–Kramnik
Linares 1998

Despite his extra pawn, it is very, very difficult for Black to defend. Thus Kramnik was afraid of the most natural 34 \(\text{O}d7\) \(\text{X}d7\) 35 \(\text{X}d7\) \(\text{O}d8\) 36 \(\text{C}1d6!\) \(\text{X}d7\) 37 \(\text{C}6e6+\), although the sharper continuation chosen by his opponent also sets him a mass of problems.

34 \(\text{C}6d6\) \(\text{X}d6\) 35 \(\text{ex}d6\) \(\text{Ad}8\) 36 \(\text{d}7\) \(\text{O}e7\) 37 \(\text{dx}c8\) \(O+\) \(\text{B}x\) \(\text{c}8\) 38 \(\text{X}d8\)

It would have been more advisable for White to avoid the exchange – 38 \(\text{G}1e1\)!

38...\(\text{X}d8\) 39 \(\text{O}x\) \(\text{e}6\) \(\text{H}h8\) 40 \(\text{O}g5\) \(\text{h}4\) 41 \(\text{h}3\) \(\text{f}6\) 42 \(\text{f}2?!\)

42 \(\text{a}4!\) was now obligatory; although even in this case it would have remained unclear whether White's advantage was sufficient for a win.

42...\(\text{X}d8\) 43 \(\text{d}3 \text{a}4!\) 44 \(\text{O}g5\)

The last practical chance was probably 44 \(\text{bxa}4,\) in order at the cost of both a-pawns to win the h-pawn. After Black advances his surviving pawn to a3, his counterplay becomes quite sufficient for a draw.

44...\(\text{a}3!\) 45 \(\text{O}f3\) \(c5\) 46 \(\text{g}5\) \(\text{d}4\) 47 \(\text{f}3\)

\(\text{d}7\) 48 \(\text{e}3\) \(\text{d}8\) 49 \(\text{f}3\) \(\text{e}8+\) 50 \(\text{f}2\)

\(\text{d}8\) 51 \(\text{x}h4\)

No. 83
Kramnik–Svidler
Linares 1998

Catalan Opening

1 \(\text{G}3\) \(\text{f}3\) \(\text{e}6\) 2 \(\text{c}4\) \(\text{e}6\) 3 \(\text{g}3\) \(\text{d}5\) 4 \(\text{d}4\) \(\text{e}7\) 5

\(\text{G}2\) \(0-0\) 6 \(\text{O}c6\) 7 \(\text{W}c2\) \(\text{a}6\) 8 \(\text{W}xe4\) \(\text{b}5\)

9 \(\text{W}c2\) \(\text{b}7\) 10 \(\text{f}4\) \(\text{d}5\) 11 \(\text{O}c3\) \(\text{X}f4\) 12

\(\text{g}x\) \(\text{f}4\) \(\text{d}7\) 13 \(\text{f}d1\) \(\text{x}f3\) 14 \(\text{x}f3\) \(\text{b}8\) 15
With purposeful play, ‘not begrudging his bishop’. White has gained an appreciable advantage, and now his tested, powerful weapon – the breakthrough – goes into action.

19 d5! exd5

Otherwise the knight would have been longing to go to d4.

20 e5 dxe5 21 Wh3 22 ag2 Wh4 23 Wd4 Whx4 24 Whh4 25 Whd1 Wb6 26 Whd4 Whc6

Or 26...Wh6 27 Wd4, and loss of material becomes inevitable.

27 Whc6 Whx5 28 Whd7 Whd8 29 Whxh4 1-0

By the will of Caissa, Kramnik’s next event was not far from Linares – in the small Spanish town of Cazorla, and it was the so-called match of the candidates for the right to play Garry Kasparov. Frankly speaking, everything here looked so vague, so uncertain, that already six months later one had to wonder: what sort of delusions suddenly shrouded such clever people, as the best chess players in the world, by what sort of charms did they suddenly allow themselves to be captivated?”

Let’s even leave to one side the World Chess Council, hastily convened before the tournament in Linares – another organisation that was opposed to FIDE and had undertaken to organise the battle for Garry Kasparov’s chess crown (the President of FIDE and of Kalmykia, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, presented with this fact, appraised it with the deadly-ironic phrase: ‘I would like to know, what will they call the next such organisation?’). Kramnik and Anand were named as the participants in an elimination event, but the Indian, betrayed by his own doubts about the match, for a couple of months nevertheless delayed his... official refusal. At the very last minute he was replaced by Alexey Shirov, formerly from Riga and now a Spaniard, a pupil of the great Mikhail Tal, who had adopted much in the style and manner of play from his teacher. It cannot be said that the change of opponent was a complete surprise for Kramnik: he considered such a turn of events to be more than likely. But it is one thing to understand a situation ‘on the level of your cerebral cortex’, and quite another to perceive it at the ‘subconscious level’. Preparing for the games with Shirov, Kramnik could not rid himself of the ‘image of Anand’, and – being a person of feelings and mood – like it or not he devalued his mental make-up and his preparations by at least a half. That is why later he later admitted that after Anand’s refusal he should have followed his example, and that would have been the only right move...

More was to follow. The contract with the match participants was not signed until the very start of play. And when it came out into the open, everyone gasped. For the first time in the history of sport, a fee was promised to... the loser, and the winner would receive as his prize... a ‘rich’ match with Kasparov, no guarantee being given about the forthcoming battle! Add to this the fact that Kramnik was considered the undisputed favourite – and it will be easy to understand his state of mind at that time. And if you also add the fact that, by generally accepted standards, the organisation of the match was quite unacceptable, then...

Here is the evidence of Kramik’s second, grandmaster Sergey Dolmatov:
We had to solve a rather difficult problem. Volodya had often played unsuccessfully with Shirov, and first he had to overcome some kind of psychological incompatibility. Alas, he did not succeed.

The chess preparations for the match were fairly intensive, and we worked very productively. We managed quite well with the black pieces, and Kramnik did not experience any particular problems as Black, as Shirov himself admitted. But with White at the beginning of the match Volodya was unable to gain any advantage here we must give Shirov and his team their due. Alexey has quite a broad opening repertoire, and he had used the Grünfeld Defence before, although he had avoided its main variations. That is why part of Volodya’s white games went on finding out whether Shirov was ready for a theoretical discussion in the main lines of the Grünfeld. It became clear that he was.

Then, starting from the fifth game, we changed tactics, and the opponent immediately began to experience serious difficulties with the black pieces. At this stage we were always ahead in our preparations – we chose various schemes, thus making life very difficult for the opposing camp. We tried to avoid forcing variations, as we realised that Shirov knew them very well. We used opening novelties which, even if they were only semi-correct, had been well studied by us. We managed to select three systems, fairly dangerous in my view, which posed Shirov problems directly at the board. It was felt that Alexey did not cope with them very well, and each every time he chose decisions that were not the optimal and were strategically extremely risky.

Unfortunately, with the exception of the openings, the games of the match were of rather low quality, and not very interesting in the chess and competitive respect.

Kramnik’s performance is impossible to explain from the chess point of view. At crucial moments he was unable to make the subtle, correct decision. A striking example is the afore-mentioned ninth and final game. With a significant time advantage after being well prepared in the opening, Volodya did not play 19 d7, which would effectively have concluded the game. It is understandable – the decisive game, incredible stress, one is not completely responsible for one’s actions… And none the less, not such a difficult move for a player of Kramnik’s class.

What was the reason for this? Volodya’s physical condition before the match was good enough, and the answer is more likely to lie in the realms of psychology. He was expected to win, and for Alexey it was much easier in this respect – he had nothing to lose.

Well, all, even the greatest players, have “black” days. And Kramnik’s enormous potential is demonstrated by… his mistakes. Their origin lies in the fact that Volodya sees too much. Sometimes he analyses continuations that do not even occur to his opponent. The constant search for even minimal counterplay for the opponent, sometimes making a mountain out of a mole-hill, takes a lot of strength and energy. He tries to calculate everything to the end, and if he is in poor form this leads to a loss of concentration and to seemingly inexplicable oversights.

It is worrying, only, that this match is already the third that Kramnik has lost. It is probable that play on a small section of the opening repertoire, against one and the same opponent, is not his forte. Possibly he loses inspiration and passion.”

No.84
Kramnik–Shirov
World Chess Council Candidates
Cazorla 1998 (game 9)
Grünfeld Defence

To support what has been said, here is the afore-mentioned final game of the match, with commentary by his second.
1 \( d4 \) \( \text{c}f6 \) 2 \( c4 \) \( g6 \) 3 \( f3 \)

An original system of development, the main virtue of which is its comparative novelty and freshness.

3...\( d5 \) 4 \( \text{cxd5} \) \( \text{exd5} \) 5 \( e4 \) \( \text{b6} \) 6 \( \text{c3} \)

\( \text{g7} \) 7 \( \text{e3} \) 0–0

The alternative involves immediate pressure on the centre – 7...\( \text{c6} \).

8 \( \text{wd2} \) \( e5 \)

Here too 8...\( \text{c6} \) is an alternative way of developing. On encountering a novel position, Shirov remains true to his customary method of playing the opening – to act naturally, energetically, and through the centre.

9 \( d5 \) \( c6 \) 10 \( \text{h4}!? \)

10 0–0–0 looks more usual, but the move played is interesting and probably no less strong.

10...\( \text{h5} \)

Only the further employment of this variation in practice will be able to clarify how good this blocking move is, and whether it is inferior to 10...\( \text{exd5} \) 11 \( \text{exd5} \) \( f5 \) (it is not easy for Black to equalise after 11...\( \text{d8}d7 \) 12 \( h5 \) \( \text{f6} \) 13 \( \text{hxg6} \) \( \text{fxg6} \) 14 0–0–0 \( \text{d7} \) 15 \( g4 \) \( \text{e8} \) 16 \( \text{b1} \) \( \text{c4} \) 17 \( \text{xc4} \) \( \text{xc4} \) 18 \( \text{ge2} \) ) 12 \( \text{h5} \).

11 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{cxd5} \) 12 \( \text{exd5} \) \( \text{d8}d7 \)

A position has arisen where the most varied reactions by the two sides are possible (even as far as 12...f5!?).

13 \( \text{d6}! \)

Up to this point the situation had developed favourably for White: Shirov had already spent more than an hour on his clock, whereas Kramnik had used considerably less.

13...\( \text{d6} \)

If 13...\( \text{e8} \), Black has to reckon with 14 \( \text{b5} \).

14 \( \text{g5} \)

Renewing the threat of \( g2-g4 \).

14...\( \text{e8} \)

14...\( \text{c6}!? \) suggests itself, allowing 15 \( g4 \). However, up to here Kramnik had played very quickly and confidently, and Shirov apparently wanted in any way possible to deviate from the prepared analysis. It is possible that the reason for rejecting 14...\( \text{c6} \) was not the move 15 \( g4 \) itself, which the Spanish grandmaster may not have considered dangerous, but 15 \( \text{h3} \), and since it is undesirable to allow the consolidating 16 \( \text{f2} \), he would want to play 15...\( \text{c}3d3 \) and, this would involve a loss of time.

15 \( \text{d1}!? \) \( \text{e6} \)

It transpires that after 15...\( \text{e6} \) again 16 \( \text{h3} \) \( \text{f8} \) 17 \( \text{f2} \) is unpleasant for Black, when he does not have time to take the pawn: 17...\( \text{d6} \) 18 \( \text{xf6}! \) \( \text{xf6} \) 19 \( \text{fe4} \).

16 \( \text{h3} \) \( \text{c4} \)

A not altogether justified decision. In the light of what follows, the preparatory 16...\( \text{d8} \) was necessary.

17 \( \text{xc4} \) \( \text{xc4} \) 18 \( \text{b3} \) \( \text{a6}!? \)

Although after 18...\( \text{e6} \) 19 \( \text{f2} \) White stands markedly better, even so there is the definite guarantee that for the time being the advance of the d-pawn has been blocked.

This was Kramnik's last opportunity to level the scores in the match. But one of the basic signs of poor form is a lack of precision in one's play. Thus here, after beginning his calculations with the seemingly most promising move 19 \( \text{d7} \), he quickly estimated that he would gain a definite, but nevertheless not altogether decisive advantage after 19...\( \text{xd7} \) 20 \( \text{xd7} \) \( \text{xd7} \) 21 \( \text{xd7} \) \( \text{e4} \) 22 \( \text{xe4}? \) \( f5 \), and promptly switched to other variations (19...
A vertical take-off

The stunning refutation was not long in coming.

19...e4!!

Sacrificing a rook. Black develops a spectacular and irresistible attack.

20 \( \text{Qxd5} \)?

Winning another pawn; the end is close.

\[ \begin{array}{cccccccccc}
36 & \text{f2} & \text{f1} & 37 & \text{xe1} & \text{e1} & 38 & \text{d2}
\
h4 & 39 & \text{e3} & \text{d5} & 40 & \text{b4} & 41 & \text{h3} & 42 & \text{f5}
\
& & & & & & \text{d2} & 43 & \text{e4} & 44 & \text{g2} & 45 & \text{d7} & 46 & \text{b6} & 47 & \text{g4} & 48 & \text{e5}
\
& & & & & & \text{h7} & 49 & \text{f3} & 50 & \text{b4} & 51 & \text{e5} & 52 & \text{b4}
\
& & & & & & \text{e4} & 53 & \text{f4} & 54 & \text{g4} & 55 & \text{e5} & 56 & \text{b4}
\end{array} \]

And, without waiting for Black's reply, White resigned.

Much later, when the declared match between Kasparov and Shirov collapsed ignominiously, so that the latter did not receive a penny for the greatest success in his chess career, with a smile Kramnik's friends congratulated him on his 'timely' loss of the match: 'At least everything was relatively alright with your fee!' Vladimir laughed the matter off, making on that he agreed, but from what had happened he drew for himself several - and important - conclusions. True, he could no longer cancel his tour of Europe that had been planned earlier (more about this in the next chapter) and he did not want to give up the chance of another victory in his favourite Dortmund, which, however, somewhat annoyed the organisers. One can understand them: for four years in succession, one and the same name at the head of the tournament table - on the one hand this was some kind of mystique, but on the other hand it was monotonous.

Game No.158 turned out impressively, as did these:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
No.85 & & \\
\hline
\text{Kramnik–Svidler} & & \\
\text{Dortmund 1998} & & \\
\text{Grünfeld Defence} & & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

1 d4 \( \text{Qf6} \) 2 c4 g6 3 \( \text{c3} \) d5 4 cxd5 \( \text{Qxd5} \) 5 e4 \( \text{xc3} \) 6 \( \text{bxc3} \) g7 7 \( \text{c4} \) c5 8 \( \text{Qe2} \)

Only after this game did it become possible to condemn this queen sortie. Earlier it was considered quite acceptable, but...

Kramnik said that he had studied this variation very thoroughly for his match with Shirov, and, since he knew that
Alexey rarely plays the main lines, he had prepared a number of new ideas in the sidelines. Svidler ran into one of these.

11 \text{\texttt{d2 d8}} 12 \text{\texttt{d5}}

After 12 \text{\texttt{c3}} 0-0 13 0-0 \text{\texttt{g4}} 14 \text{\texttt{f3}}

\text{\texttt{d7}} 15 \text{\texttt{b1 c7}} 16 \text{\texttt{d2 a6}} 17 \text{\texttt{b3 b5}}

18 \text{\texttt{h1 wb6}} 19 \text{\texttt{f4 ac8}} 20 \text{\texttt{f5 b4}} 21 \text{\texttt{a1}}

\text{\texttt{a5}} the play is extremely sharp

(Belyavsky-Svidler, Madrid 1997).

12...\text{\texttt{e5}} 13 \text{\texttt{c3}} 0-0 14 \text{\texttt{b3 wb6}}

'All this is well known in theory, but now Black will have to seek new ideas here, because Kramnik's innovation looks very convincing.' (Mikhailchishin)

15 \text{\texttt{f4! g4}} 16 \text{\texttt{d4 wa5+}}

After 16...\text{\texttt{xd4}} 17 \text{\texttt{xd4 xd4}} 18

\text{\texttt{xd4 f6}} 19 e5 \text{\texttt{xd5}} 20 \text{\texttt{xd5 db8}} 21

\text{\texttt{b5! xd5}} 22 \text{\texttt{ac7}} White wins.

17 \text{\texttt{wd2 xd2+}} 18 \text{\texttt{ac2 e5}}

19 h3!

'An uncommonly energetic move,' said Mikhailchishin about this reply, and he added: 'Very deep analysis by Kramnik. If now 19...\text{\texttt{xd4}}, then 20 \text{\texttt{hxg4 d3}} 21 \text{\texttt{c3}} or

19...\text{\texttt{f6}} 20 \text{\texttt{fxe5 xe4+}} 21 \text{\texttt{e3}} with advantage to White.'

19...\text{\texttt{xd4}} 20 \text{\texttt{hxg4 g5?!}}

Svidler desperately seeks counterplay.

21 g3! \text{\texttt{hxg4}} 22 e5!

For the pawn White has a highly powerful pawn centre, and the bishop at g7 is half-dead: more than sufficient compensation.

22...\text{\texttt{xe2}} 23 \text{\texttt{xe2 fc8}} 24 \text{\texttt{ad1 gc3}}

25 \text{\texttt{d3!}}

Blocking the black rook and preparing to advance his pawns.

25...\text{\texttt{ae8}} 26 \text{\texttt{d6 b5}}

Or 26...\text{\texttt{xd3}} 27 \text{\texttt{xd3 c3+}} 28 \text{\texttt{xd4}}

\text{\texttt{xf3}} 29 \text{\texttt{d7}} and wins.

27 \text{\texttt{xc3 dxc3}} 28 \text{\texttt{e6!}}

A breakthrough, the justification for which is the elegant little combination that occurs in the game.

28...\text{\texttt{f8}} 29 \text{\texttt{e7+ e8}} 30 \text{\texttt{xf7+!}} 1-0

After this, for some months – an unusually long time for him – Kramnik did not sit down at the chess board.

His performance at the tournament in Tilburg is fully characterised by his notes to game No. 157 and this admission: 'I did not set myself the aim of definitely winning this tournament. I played in rather relaxed fashion, and I wanted to experiment a little. It told, of course, that for three months before Tilburg I had not played serious chess. I began the tournament extremely badly: against Anand I hardly managed to get out of the opening, and I lost without a fight. At the finish I had to exert myself to avoid a failure.'

In early 1999 Kramnik was on tour for almost four months, playing in events that were united under one general sign: they all belonged to the 'super-tournament' class, and the star line-up of this 'wandering chess troupe' effectively led to a continual battle: which of them was the very, very strongest...

It undoubtedly turned out to be Kasparov: on his results (two clear first places), his arsenal of preparations and his especial qualities 'of a cold killer at the chess board'. Kramnik and Anand again confirmed that the second position in the chess world belonged to them. But only Vladimir went through all three tournaments (in Dutch Wijk aan Zee, and in Spanish Linares and Dos Hermanas) without a single defeat, while also 'stinging' his 'historic rival' (No 135).

Another of their games was also pretty sharp: in an opening known for its
peacefulness, Kramnik based his play on counterattack.

No. 86
Anand–Kramnik
Wijk aan Zee 1999
Petroff Defence

1 e4 e5 2 d3 f6 3 dxe5 d6 4 d3 dxe4 5 d4 d5 6 d3 c6 7 0-0 e7 8 c1 g4 9 c3 f5 10 wbd3 0-0 11 d2 a5 12 waf4 c6

White only needs to return his queen to the ‘thematic’ square b3, and...

13 d5 h4

Accepting the challenge and intending, at the cost of a pawn, to sharply activate his pieces.

14 g3 f6 15 xc6 bxc6 16 wxc6 e8
17 d5 c6 18 dxe5 19 f4 wh3+ 20 g2 wb8

Planning a possible switching of the rook to the kingside, where the concentration of black pieces may become considerable. White, naturally, prevents this.

21 c4 dxc4 22 d3 d3 23 d3

With the exchange of the g4 bishop, Black’s domination of the light squares disappears, and Kramnik takes the game to the result which he tacitly offered on moves 11-12.

23...xb2+ 24 xb2 w2+ 25 wh1 d2+ 26 gl d3+ 27 wh1 d2+ ½-½

In general Kramnik drew rather a large number of games in these tournaments. They were both the result of rapidly growing fatigue (more than 40 games during the tour – that is something!), and the logical outcome of those chess and competitive problems that Kramnik set himself.

But of course, by no means all were peaceful draws; many times an advantage achieved was not converted, or proved insufficient. As, for example, in the following specific case.

No. 87
Kramnik–Kasparov
Linares 1999
Grüinfeld Defence

1 d4 d6 2 c4 g6 3 c3 d5 4 cxd5 cxd5 5 e4 xc3 6 bx3 g7 7 c4 e5 8 d2 c6 9 c3 0-0 10 0-0 g4 11 f3 a5 12 f7+ x7 13 xg4 xf1+

All this was tested by Kasparov back in his matches against Anatoly Karpov. There Black experienced some problems, and here too he has to work hard for a draw.

14 xf1 xd4 15 cxd4 e5 16 d5 c4 17 d3 xe3+ 18 xex3 wh4 19 h3 h6 20 d3 d8+ 21 g1 f2+ 22 h1 e3 23 d4 b5 24 x5 b2 25 e8+ f8 26 e6+ h8 27 d6 xex2 28 xex5+ g7 29 e8+ f8 30 d7 d3 31 e5 h6 32 c6 h7 33 g1 f3 34 b8 xh3 35 gxh3 d4+ ½-½

‘And wins... In these high-class tournaments they were normally achieved by classical means: accurate handling of the opening, an advantage, and its conversion with the help of very fine technique. Moreover, the early disappearance of the queens – a deliberately new phenomenon in Kramnik’s style – did not frighten him, although because of this he missed gaining several half points. It is, after all, hard to win against an opponent who is somewhat inferior, but nevertheless of grandmaster class, when your own boundless imagination is deprived of a greater part of the ‘combustible material’...
against the two bishops. However, Botvinnik, a classic handler of this type of ending, would have been proud of the mastery shown by a pupil from his school...

From an English Opening the game has transposed into a Grünfeld Defence, with all its trademark motifs: Black’s piece play in the centre should give him counterplay. However...

\[ 12 \text{ex}c6 \text{bxc6} 13 \text{d}c1 \text{xf3} 14 \text{wxf3} \text{xd}4 15 \text{f}d1 \text{e}5! \]

The alternative 15...\text{e}5 would have cut off the bishop from the defence of the kingside, with the danger in the future of an attack on the dark squares.

\[ 16 \text{dxc5} \text{xe}3 17 \text{xd}8 \text{xc5} 18 \text{xa8} \text{xa8} \]

Nominally White is a pawn up, but that is not the point. It is instructive to follow how the lone white queen prevents Black from setting up safe defensive lines.

\[ 19 \text{b}c3 \text{e}8 20 \text{f}f1 \text{c}7 21 \text{a}4 \text{b}6 \]

Aiming for activity.

\[ 22 \text{w}e5! \text{c}2 23 \text{a}5 \text{c}5 (23...\text{xf}2 24 \text{wb}8+ \text{g}7 25 \text{wb}3 \text{d}2 26 \text{wb}3+) 24 \text{f}4 \text{e}6 25 \text{g}4 \text{c}4 26 \text{w}c7! \text{h}6 27 \text{f}5 \text{gxf5} 28 \text{gxf5} \text{exf5} 29 \text{exf5} \text{f}6 30 \text{w}g3+ \text{d}8 31 \text{w}g6 \text{d}4 32 \text{w}h6+ \text{e}7 33 \text{w}f4 \text{d}7 34 \text{h}4 \text{a}4 35 \text{w}e4 \text{d}6 36 \text{h}5 \text{a}1+ 37 \text{c}2 \text{e}5 38 \text{wb}4+ \text{d}5 39 \text{wb}7+ \text{c}4 40 \text{h}6 \text{a}2+ 41 \text{f}3 \]

The time scramble ended, and Black resigned.

After this the guiding star to Kramnik’s chess heaven became the FIDE World Championship in Las Vegas. It was not far off, only some two to three months. Vladimir’s first serious teacher, Mikhail Botvinnik, would have been horrified by
such fleeting preparations for such a high-sounding battle. The Patriarch would have been one hundred per cent right, had it been a genuine, heavyweight, traditional match for the crown, but... The current championships, suggested and brought into practice by the FIDE President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, are a quite different matter! It is sufficient to say that, by the adopted formula, it is possible to win not a single (I repeat, not a single!) game, and nevertheless become champion! Nonsense? Undoubtedly. But I think that all the peoples in the world have a saying, similar to: 'He who pays the piper calls the tune'...

Kramnik himself, after returning from the championship, made the following assessment of what had happened:

'Let us begin with the choice of venue. Attempts to develop interest in chess in the USA with the aim of attracting sponsorship money from there have been going on for a long time. And indeed, in a country that has spent enormous sums on investigating the President's amorous adventures, or on shameful military operations in Yugoslavia, why should not someone be found who all of a sudden would like to do a good deed and feed the army of hungry (and therefore rather embittered) chess players? However, as yet no particular success in this field has been observed - in my view, not so much due to the unwillingness of potential sponsors, but rather on account of the absence in the chess world of a framework, professionally involved in marketing. Thus here, after putting together an impressive prize fund, FIDE decided not to spend anything on advertising, as a result of which the championship went unnoticed by the American mass media and television. And also, the daily presence in the playing hall of not more than a hundred spectators at a tournament with a 3-million dollar prize fund can only inspire sad thoughts. All this once again confirms the rule (which, incidentally, is also highly relevant in the game of chess): any idea, even the most attractive, needs to be implemented well. In general, an explosion in the popularity of chess in the USA and a fierce battle between major American companies for the right to sponsor the next FIDE World Championship are hardly to be expected...

'Now regarding the formula for staging the championship. On the one hand, one cannot help but be pleased that the circle of players, able to receive a worthy material reward for their labour, has been extended from 10-15 to 104. I think that this is the only chance of restoring the situation in the chess world, since everyone knows that no single state can function morally without an extensive stratum, called the "middle class".

'On the other hand, I have always been against the idea of staging the World Championship on the knock-out system, especially, since at the present moment this is the only event (I have in mind classical chess) in which this formula is used. The point is that players are not used to experiencing such prolonged stress (I should remind you that a normal tournament lasts 9-11 rounds. and in a knock-out tournament, believe me, one game is equivalent to two!). And in Las Vegas it was especially noticeable that the standard of play deteriorated with every round, as a result of which often the winner was not the objectively strongest, and not even the strongest at the given moment, but simply the one with the greater physical stamina or the one who enjoyed more luck. In general, the role of luck in the knock-out system is too great: after all, a score of 1-1 is highly probable, and in the tie-break (especially considering the fatigue and enormous nervous tension of both players) it is like drawing lots... However, apparently it is this that many find attractive. In an interview shown recently on Russian TV, one of the FIDE officials Mr Omuku was asked what he thought about the knock-out system in chess. The essence of his reply
was as follows: since the International Olympic Committee has recognised chess as a sport, it is quite natural and normal that in our day it is the physical state of a chess player that should become the most important. Comment is superfluous...

In order that the World Championship should continue to be played in a democratic way (with the participation of a large number of grandmasters), it is to be hoped that we will have the opportunity of simply competing in the ability to play chess.

I should like it to be noted that all these thoughts were not inspired by my personal performance in Las Vegas: much of this I had already said in interviews or in personal conversations with colleagues. The championship that has just taken place simply once again confirms all this. Nevertheless, I am absolutely convinced that an imperfect system for staging the world championship is better than none at all. And all players..., well, nearly all... would like the FIDE World Championship (I hope, with certain changes regarding the playing formula) to become firmly established in the annual calendar of chess tournaments.

But if one remembers the purely chess and competitive aspect of what happened, then...

Las Vegas was preceded by the traditional Dortmund tournament, where Kramnik, as you know, had trained everyone – and himself – only to expect first place. On this occasion he fulfilled his program by 80-90%: again he did not lose once (after which his unbeaten series grew to 45, and after the FIDE World Championship it was well past the half century), but to the unconcealed delight of the organisers, who were ‘tired’ of his victories, he finished half a point behind the first prize-winner – the Hungarian Peter Leko. ‘I “warmed up” and did not reveal all my opening secrets, which is what I was aiming for,’ was how Kramnik assessed his performance.

In Las Vegas it was the general opinion that he had the most unfortunate pairings: the chess goddess Caissa clearly begrudged giving him easy opponents. Without particular problems in ‘normal time’, i.e. classical chess, he won micro-matches against his old colleague from junior competitions Sergey Tiviakov (No.136), against Viktor Korchnoi (increasing his individual score with him to +6–0=5) and against Veselin Topalov – after draws in classical chess and two wins in rapidplay. But against the Englishman Michael Adams, despite having much the better of the play, he unexpectedly lost in the 15-minute games. However, why unexpectedly? I will never forget how I myself, who was never a brilliant blitz player, and who at the famous annual Moscow blitz tournaments used to finish at the bottom of the table, nevertheless won against Titans such as Tal and Bronstein. The Americans have a saying: ‘God created people of various heights, but Colonel Colt levelled them all.’ In chess the same can be said about blitz. It is another matter that this sharp, piquant, and undoubtedly witty amusement ought not to have any bearing on the possession of the chess crown.

Thus it was another grandmaster who went through to the semi-finals of the FIDE Championship, and the final was between... the 36th and 45th players on the FIDE Rating List of 1st July 1999. Kramnik by no means regarded this as a tragedy or even a drama. He congratulated his colleague on his victory and...

Life goes on!
The Spirit of the Time

IT IS HOPELESS to try and resist it. In the direct sense of the word it defeats all that is alive on the Earth, but also in the course of a game – quietly and masterfully – it dictates on the players its own rules, imposes its ideas and, strangely enough, does this in our common interests.

Time has extended the working day of chess players from five hours, as was generally accepted over the last 50-60 years, to seven, but on the other hand it has done away with exhausting sleepless nights: the analysis of adjourned positions and adjourned games themselves have both disappeared – here the sharply increased standard of computers has played its role.

Time has pushed newspapers aside, bringing to the fore today’s monster – television, and the desire to break out into the whole world through the small screen led to the birth of so-called ‘rapid chess’ with an approximate time control of 25 minutes each for the whole game: the initiators hoped that TV would be able to devote that much time to chess. ‘Blitz’, having dismissed the contempt of such giants of the past as Lasker, Alekhine and Botvinnik, was also already an established form of the game, and it flourished to the extent of there being one – and that an unofficial – world championship (which was won by the great Mikhail Tal, who left behind the much younger and stronger Anatoly Karpov and Garry Kasparov), as well as half a dozen big international gatherings (as a rule, on the final day of really serious tournaments). And now five-minute games have been called on to judge opponents, if rapid games have been unable to reveal a winner: and this – on any level, including a match for the crown, FIDE version.

To introduce all these innovations, Time needed an ally, and world champion Garry Kasparov was ideally suited for such a role. After breaking away from FIDE, he first founded the Grandmasters’ Association, then the Professional Chess Association, and for the self-assertion of the latter (and to attract onto its side the broader mass of grandmasters) a multi-stage rapidplay Grand Prix was ideally suited: it was original, spectacular and exciting. And the prize money at every tournament and at the end of the year was most attractive. That was why rapid chess became firmly established in the individual calendars of almost all the strongest players, and practically all the active grandmasters of the second, third and remaining ranks made use of every opportunity to break through the qualifying sieve into the main tournaments.

But perhaps they regarded it as some sort of fun, as an air-vent in the stressful life of professionals, or finally, as an additional opportunity to earn some fast, in 2-3 days, money? Look carefully at the next chapter of the book, and in Vladimir Kramnik’s notes to his selected games you will find many references to... rapid chess. To theoretical novelties used in it, and to surprises – both inflicted and received. After carefully studying Kramnik’s comments to his game with Kasparov, given below, grandmaster Alexey Shirov publicly admitted that his scepticism with regard to rapid chess had been considerably shaken, and that during such a period of time it was quite realistic to create a chess masterpiece. An equally serious attitude to 25-minute games was shown by others whose names are widely known. They prepared, and even arranged special training sessions. It is simply that in this type of play the weight of the struggle is shifted to that most inherent – or God-given, factor – intuition, which is what distinguishes a
true latent from those who have reached their standard of play by training and hard work, but who are much less gifted.

But what is interesting is this. While in fact demonstrating their serious attitude to rapid chess, some grandmasters – Kramnik and Korchnoi (incidentally, he was one of the strongest masters of blitz during his ‘Soviet’ years) and Anand – have described such tournaments as ‘amusement’. A harmless one, however: one loses neither rating, nor image. There is no dualism, and certainly not any double-dealing here; it is rather the subconscious defensive reaction of authoritative people, who would sometimes like, as in childhood, to hop a couple of metres on one leg, but who very much do not want to be caught carrying out such a pursuit...

The PCA launched its first cycle in 1994 with the grandiosely organised ‘Kremlin Stars’ tournament. Earlier too, in the old Moscow Kremlin there had been representatives of the even older game. Legend has it that it was at the chess board that death caught up with the first bloody Kremlin leader – the Tsar and Sovereign Ivan the Terrible. Other masters of the Russian Land either did not pay much attention to chess, or, like Peter I – did not like the Kremlin. But in February 1918 the first of the line of masters of the Soviet Land, Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov-Lenin arrived here; judging by how he solved a famous study by Platov, by present-day standards the leader’s chess rating could well have corresponded to first category, or even ‘FIDE Master’: by Russian standards – candidate master.

And now through the same gate, across the same bridge overlooking the Alexandrovsky Garden, the chess stars entered the Kremlin. Almost 100 players: for selecting those six, who together with the ten personally invited would make up a tournament to be held on the knock-out system. Showing rare insight, the oldest of the ‘main’ participants, Viktor Korchnoi, predicted the finalists: the first prize would be contested by Kramnik and Anand. True, for this to happen, among other things, there was the ‘small’ matter that in the quarter-final Vladimir had to block Kasparov’s way to the top. And it happened in their second rapid game, which is annotated here by the winner.

No.90
Kramnik–Kasparov
Moscow Rapid 1994
King’s Indian Defence

1 d4 f6 2 c4 g6 3 d3 g7 4 e4 d6 5
d4 0–0 6 e2 e5 7 d5

Earlier I mainly used to play the Sämisch Variation, but at that time I had turned to the Petrovian Variation. Not long before it had seemed a ‘closed book’, since Black invariably used to obtain a good position (thanks largely to findings by Kasparov), but not all is so simple. I cannot say that I have analysed this variation deeply, but I remember a well-known rule: when the two knights are ‘linked’, for example at d7 and f6, they are less manoeuvrable. Of course, there is the plan with ...a7-a5 and ...b56, but here the knight is not altogether well placed, whereas White always has the standard plan of a2-a3, b1 and b2-b3-b4. Two months earlier in Linares I had expected Kasparov to choose the plan with ...a7-a5 and ...d5, but he played 7...bd7, and so in Moscow I was prepared for this turn of events. My decision was also influenced by the fact that my opponent had lost three times (!) in this variation: to Veingold in 1979 (at the USSR Spartakiad), to Yusupov in the World Cup (true, he had a completely won position there), and to me in Spain.

Incidentally, the immediate 7...d5 is also played – this is what Kamsky chose against me in Monaco 1994. There followed 8 d2 (in order if 8...c5 to have the possibility of 9 b4!) 8...h8?! (even to this day I do not understand the
point of this move) 9 a3 c5 (now the prospects of the queen’s knight are obscure) 10 h4! h5 11 f3 g4 12 g5. The battle developed on the kingside, where White was much better mobilised, and the black knight at a6 came into play only when it need not have bothered...

7...bd7 8 e3

In Linares 1994 (game No.160) I played 8 g5 – this is the main line. But ‘active’ chess is a special game, where it is important to be the first to surprise the opponent, particularly if he is Kasparov... My continuation does not aspire to an opening advantage, but is, so to speak, a ‘practical’ move, which, however, forces the opponent’s reply: if White is allowed to play 9 d2, he will have a clear advantage.

8...g4 9 g5 f6 10 h4 h5 11 d2 h6 12 f3 d7?!

12...a5 came into consideration. The position that has now arisen was not known to me (nor to Kasparov, I suspect). The usual plan in such situations is 0–0, f2 and h1, but with the black pawn at h5 it is more logical to castle long.

13 wc2 h6 14 0–0 c5

15 dxc6?!

An inaccuracy. Stronger was 15 b1, then White is a little better. At any event, I would only like to play White in this position. Now the situation becomes unclear.

15...bxc6 16 b1 a5?!

Kasparov too does not choose the longest continuation. Black’s counterplay is more effective after 16...c5! 17 b3 (or 17 f2 c6 18 b3 e7, and there is nothing to prevent the black knight from comfortably occupying d4 after the preparatory ...c6-c5) 17...e3.

17 a4

With the obvious idea of 18 c5, forcing the opponent’s reply.

17...c5 18 c3 e3?!

Played after not much thought, this move surprised me. Black goes in for the exchange (wasting valuable tempo!) of one of the main defenders of his own king – and for the knight at d2, which is cramping its own pieces. I was sure that there would follow 18...b7 19 d5 a4 with unclear play (19...g5, with the idea of ...e6-d4, is weaker in view of 20 xg5 xg5 21 g3 h6 22 f4 with the initiative).

19 d5 d4 20 b3

Here I considered my position to be much superior. However, the prestige of the world champion weighed on me, causing me to have doubts: perhaps I am missing something?

20...b7 21 xd4 cxd4 22 f4 b8?!

A careless move. 22...h6 was stronger, when I would have continued 23 fxe5 dx e5 24 c5 c6 (weaker is 24...c8 25 b3 x c5 26 xf6+ h8 27 wg3! when Black stands badly) 25 h1 with the initiative.

23 h1 h6

24 c5!

Here I practically did not work out any variations, although I saw that the quiet 24
fxe5 dxe5 25 c5 \(c_6\) promised me an advantage. I decided to play creatively...

24...\(\text{c5}\) (there is obviously nothing else) 25 exd5 \(\text{c5}\) 26 fxe5

I had already planned the entire following play with sacrifices, and I somehow did not want to switch to positional lines, but serious consideration should have been given to 26 c6, with the possible variation 26...\(c5\) 27 fxe5! \(\text{cxd}6\) 28 exd6 \(\text{cxd}6\) 29 \(\text{cxd}4\) \(\text{dxf}5\) 30 \(\text{cxc}4\) \(\text{ec6}\) 31 \(\text{cxc}7\) \(\text{dxc}7\) 32 \(\text{cxd}7\) \(\text{cxd}7\) 39 c7 \(\text{cgc}8\) 38 \(\text{cxb}8\) + \(\text{cxc}8\) 39 \(\text{c7}\). The game concludes in similar fashion after 34...\(\text{cxd}8\) 35 \(\text{cxb}6\) \(\text{cxb}6\) 36 \(\text{cxc}7\) \(\text{cxb}7\) 37 c7 \(\text{cge}8\) 38 d6, when there is no defence against the threat of \(\text{cxd}3\) -f5;

(b) 31...\(\text{c5}\) 32 \(\text{cxd}4\) \(\text{cxd}4\) 33 \(\text{cxc}5\) (33 \(\text{c5}\) is also good) 33...\(\text{c5}\) 34 \(\text{c5}\) \(\text{c5}\) 35 \(\text{c5}\) \(\text{c5}\) 36 \(\text{c6}\) \(\text{c6}\) 37 \(\text{c6}\) \(\text{c6}\), and the king avoids perpetual check.

Therefore the move made by Black can be considered his only possibility. 31 \(\text{cxd}5\) \(\text{cxd}5\)

The decisive oversight; here 31...\(\text{cxd}4\) would indeed have been stronger, and after 32 \(\text{cxb}4\) \(\text{axb}4\) 33 \(\text{c6}\) \(\text{c6}\) White has only a draw: 34 \(\text{c6}\) \(\text{c6}\) 35 \(\text{c6}\) \(\text{c6}\) 36 \(\text{c6}\) \(\text{c6}\) 37 \(\text{c6}\) 38 \(\text{c6}\). True, the quiet 32...\(\text{c6}\) would have led to a very complicated and, importantly, unusual position, in which White's chances are still better. Nevertheless, the battle would have continued, with all three results of the game still possible.

32 \(\text{c5}\) \(\text{c5}\)

Here Kasparov threw up his hands: in a serious game it is unlikely that he would have missed this check. Now Black ends up in zugzwang.

32...\(\text{c6}\) 33 \(\text{c6}\)

Of the three white pieces, two are hanging, yet neither can be taken. There
was also 33 c6 \( \mathcal{W} \)xd6 34 c7 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xg4 35 c8\( \mathcal{W} \)+ \( \mathcal{A} \)xc8 36 \( \mathcal{W} \)xc8+ \( \mathcal{Q} \)g7 37 \( \mathcal{W} \)xg4+ with a big advantage, but the move played is more immediately decisive.

33...\( \mathcal{B} \)b7 34 c6

Here my opponent became animated and began shaking his head as he calculated variations, but I had seen in advance that the sacrifice did not work.

34...\( \mathcal{A} \)xb2+ 35 \( \mathcal{Q} \)xb2 \( \mathcal{W} \)b6+ 36 \( \mathcal{Q} \)a3 \( \mathcal{W} \)c5+ 37 \( \mathcal{A} \)a4 \( \mathcal{W} \)c2+ 38 \( \mathcal{B} \)b5 \( \mathcal{W} \)b2+ 39 \( \mathcal{Q} \)a6 \( \mathcal{W} \)e2+ 40 \( \mathcal{B} \)b7 \( \mathcal{W} \)h7+ 41 d7

Black resigned in view of the variation 41...\( \mathcal{B} \)b5+ 42 \( \mathcal{C} \)c7 \( \mathcal{A} \)xd7+ 43 cxd7 \( \mathcal{W} \)c5+ 44 \( \mathcal{A} \)d8.

So, that was that? But in the semi-final something happened that was talked about in the entire chess world for months on end, and there was not a single magazine that did not give this final position from the match.

It had been preceded by two draws in the main, rapid games, and then came a blitz tie-break: 6 minutes for White, 5 minutes for Black, but with the draw in Black’s favour. Naturally, in this position there is no hint of this, and Kramnik was already intending to resign, when suddenly his opponent, at that time a very solid grandmaster, offered... a draw! Alexey suddenly imagined that he was playing... Black(!!), and hence his decision to go into the final by the safest way! Such a black-out is beyond the bounds of chess, and psychologists too would do best to keep quiet. Someone suggested: perhaps it was Kramnik that the heavens wanted to see in the final.

There, of course, he was unable to play calmly: ‘I was upset by this incident’. In a superior position in the second blitz game he stumbled on easy ground and the first prize went to Anand. But in the next stage in New York he overcame his opponents by clean scores in rounds one and two, in blitz he defeated Ivanchuk, and in the final, without reaching the blitz games, he again beat Kasparov. And he led the Grand Prix series, ahead of Anand, Kasparov and Ivanchuk, although it was after this defeat that the world champion named as his main rival – and the No.2 in the world – not him, but the Indian player...

In principle the London stage did not change anything, if one disregards the quite sensational success at the start of... the computer ‘Pentium Genius’, which at the will of the organisers was included among the finalists. Moreover, the heartless machine defeated none other than the strongest player on the planet! Kramnik reached the semi-finals without difficulty.
14 fxe5 dxe5 15 ♗h6+ ♗g7 16 ♗g4 ♗g8
17 ♗h6 ♗b7 18 ♗d2 ♗e7 19 ♖f6 20
♗a1 ♖d6 21 ♘xf8 ♘xf8 22 ♖d1 ♖e7 23
♕e3 ♘a5 24 c5 ♗g7 25 cxb6 axb6 26 d5
c5 27 d6 cxd6 28 ♖xd6 ♖xd6 29 ♖xd6
♖xe4 30 ♖xb6 ♖xg2 31 ♖xg2 ♔e4 32
♗c2 f5 33 ♖a6 ♖b7 34 ♘a7 ♙f7 35 ♖c4
♖f6 36 ♖b2 ♖bd6 37 ♘a6 ♖e6 38 ♖xd6
dxe4 39 ♖4 1–0

After this Kramnik retained the overall
lead, although Anand and Ivanchuk were
close behind him.

The concluding stage in Paris began as
expected. Kasparov and Kramnik confid­
ettly got through to the semi-fin als,
Vladimir’s play bein g, if not always
consistent, then very interesti ng.

He held the initiative in his first semi­
final match with Kasp arov, and mounted
his trademark breakthrough in the centre,
but the world champion defended very
tenaciously (as Kramnik put it, with enor­
mous concentration), and managed to save
the draw. But in the blitz game, where
Black was again satisfied with a draw, the
unwritten rule of football went into
operation: ‘if you don’t score, they will
score against you.’

No.93
Kasparov–Kramnik
Paris Rapid 1994

Here White blundered – 62 ♖f3? (well,
that’s blitz for you), when instead of
62...♕d3+ and 63...♕xb4 with a
theoretical draw, Kramnik replied with the
simply disastrous 62...♕f6?? and lost on the
86th (!) move.

In the end Kasparov caught him on the
total number of points, but, as they were
going onto the stage for the presentation,
Vladimir heard from the champion and his
former mentor: ‘We’ll share the money
fifty-fifty, and you can have the glory!’
Indeed, on all three accepted tie-breaking
indicators Vladimir was ahead, and in
addition, he alone of all the Grand Prix
participants had not lost a single (!) game
in the main rapidplay chess.

For two more years the PCA and its
main sponsor – the international computer
firm Intel – excited the world with its
multi-stage spectacle. ‘For us the series of
rapidplay tournaments has become that
vital force, which has enabled us to
become established both in chess, and on
the television screen. We are looking to the
future, and professional chess seems a
reality,’ the creator of the association,
Garry Kasparov, confidently asserted, and
at that time much of what was said was
confirmed by many. Life put everything in
its place, but – eighteen months later...

The 1995 Grand Prix again started in the
Moscow Kremlin, with the slight dif­
ference that – to the delight of television –
they contrived to hoist the first prize, with
its four wheels, onto the front stage of the
colossal playing area with a single chess
board in the middle. ‘In such a tournament
the tension is much higher than in a
“serious” event. The value of every move
increases. After all, if you lose in an all­
play-all or even an open, the following day
you can gain your revenge, whereas here
you can no longer recoup your losses. One
mistake – and you are out. This is felt
especially strongly in blitz,’ said Kramnik
at his winner’s press conference after the
quarter-final stage.

But the following game was not blitz,
and there was a chance to calculate
variations, which is what White did.
The spirit of the time

After conceding White the initiative on the queenside (only there is nothing there to attack), in his favourite manner, from a distance. Black prepares an attack on the king.

\[34...h5\ 35\ h3\ h4\ 36\ h2?!\ c7\ 37\ f1\ ab8\ 38\ a4\ xb1\ 39\ xbl\ h7\ 40\ b7\ g5\ 41\ g4\ xg4\ 42\ hxg4\ h3\ 43\ d7\ xd7\ 44\ xd7\ d6\ 45\ b6\ c1\ 46\ xd6\]

Overlooking his own... pretty defeat! But even the better 46 gxh3 f3+ 47 g2 c7 48 b7 h4+ 49 g1 g5 would have left Black with the unpleasant threat of 50...h2+ 51 xh2 xf1 with a mating net in prospect.

\[46...xf1+!\ 47\ h2\]

By taking the rook, White would have allowed the black pawn to queen.

\[47...xf2\ 48\ xd5\ g2+\ 0–1\]

And the main semi-final pairing was decided. ‘Tomorrow will be a happy day,’ said Kasparov, and he went off to prepare. ‘If I slept badly before a game with Kasparov, I would have suffered from insomnia a long time ago, since we have played each other a number of times,’ Kramnik replied to a journalist’s question.

And again everything was decided by the blitz game.
This time the draw was in favour of Kasparov, who to achieve it chose as his weapon the peaceful Petroff Defence. But here Black’s defence is very difficult, especially after the natural activation of the white king.

Kramnik, however, immediately went into the pawn ending with a ‘nominal’ additional fighting unit.

\[
29 \texttt{dxe6 } \texttt{xe6} 30 \texttt{xd5} \texttt{f6} 31 \texttt{exe6}+ \texttt{exe6} 32 \texttt{exe6} \texttt{exe6} 33 \texttt{d2} c4 34 b5 \texttt{d5} 35 \texttt{e3} \texttt{e5}
\]

The tournament bulletin recommended here \(35...g5\) as leading to a draw. But in fact Black loses: \(35...g5? 36 \texttt{f3} h5 37 h4! \texttt{e6} (37...\texttt{gxh4} 38 \texttt{xf4}) 38 \texttt{hxg5} \texttt{f5} 39 \texttt{g6} \texttt{gxg6} 40 \texttt{g4} h4 41 \texttt{g2} \texttt{h6} 42 \texttt{h3} \texttt{g5} 43 a4.

\[
36 h4 h5 37 g3 g6 38 \texttt{xf3} \texttt{f5} 39 a4 \texttt{e5}?
\]

What an important, nervy blitz game does even to the great! – \(39...g5\) would have given a simple draw.

\[
40 g4 \texttt{e6}
\]

Subsequently grandmaster Pal Benko, who composed a study on the theme of this ending, showed that Black could still have drawn as follows: \(40...\texttt{hxg4}+! 41 \texttt{g4} \texttt{f6} 42 \texttt{xf4} \texttt{g7}! 43 \texttt{g5} \texttt{f7}! 44 \texttt{h5} \texttt{gxh5} 45 \texttt{hxg5} 46 \texttt{g4} \texttt{e5} 47 \texttt{g5} (47 \texttt{f3} \texttt{f5} with the opposition) 47...\texttt{e4} 48 \texttt{f6} \texttt{e3} 49 \texttt{e5} \texttt{d2} 50 \texttt{d4} \texttt{c1(d1)}! 51 \texttt{xc4} \texttt{xc2}. The position is one of mutual zugzwang, and since it is White to move, a draw is inevitable: \(52 \texttt{b4} \texttt{d3} 53 \texttt{b3} \texttt{e4}! etc. Only all this is not for a blitz game!

\[
41 \texttt{g5} \texttt{g6} 42 \texttt{f4}??
\]

No one will ever be able to seriously explain why Kramnik did not take the opposition with \(42 \texttt{e4}\) and thus go forward into the final.

\[
42...\texttt{f6} 43 \texttt{e4} \texttt{e6} 44 a5 bxa5 45 \texttt{d4} \texttt{f5} 46 \texttt{xc4} \texttt{g4} 47 \texttt{b3} \texttt{exh4} 48 \texttt{c4} \texttt{g5} 49 c5 h4 50 \texttt{c6} h3 51 \texttt{c7} h2 52 \texttt{c8} \texttt{h1} \texttt{d8} 53 \texttt{xf5} 54 \texttt{d3}+ \texttt{e5} 55 \texttt{e3}+ \texttt{d6} 56 \texttt{d4}+ \texttt{e6} 57 \texttt{c4}+ \texttt{d6} 58 \texttt{f4}+ \texttt{e6} 59 \texttt{e3}+ \texttt{d6} 60 \texttt{c4} \texttt{b1}+ 61 \texttt{c3} \texttt{a1}+ 62 \texttt{d2} \texttt{b2}+ 63 \texttt{e1} \texttt{b4}+ 64 \texttt{d1} \texttt{xc4} 65 \texttt{h6}+ \texttt{e5} 66 \texttt{e3}+ \texttt{xb5} ½–½.
\]

It is said that Volodya sat ashen-faced in the spacious press room, surrounded by emptiness – the reporters did not dare to approach him. Then he quietly said to himself: ‘We have a lucky champion... Although I had no more right to go forward into the final, but how could I not play my king to e4?! Some kind of black-out.’

As a result, everything was again decided in Paris with its increased scores. The leader Ivanchuk quickly fell by the wayside, and everything was decided in the final! Which Kramnik reached not without some anxiety, but quite confidently.

In the final the maximalism of youth suddenly had its say. After winning the first game with Black (!), Kramnik went chasing the bird in the bush, which in principle is not typical of him, and in a large-scale battle, which he went into voluntarily and where he had an easy draw, he nevertheless lost. The Grand Prix challenge cup was passed to the world champion.

It stands to reason that Kramnik did not know that the 1996 Grand Prix would be the last, and that rapidplay chess, although it would remain in society and would even find itself a worthy refuge, would no longer be able to provoke such a great wave of interest. He did not know – and he won the first stage, the ‘Kremlin Stars’, having flown in the day before, with flight changes, from the exhausting ‘rapid-blindfold’ tournament in Monaco. Only, at the start he lost as White (!) to Nigel Short, and... allowed the co-author of this book to receive the prize for the most significant question by a journalist at the press conference after the match:

‘Between the first and second games there is a break of ten minutes. What were they like for you?’

‘I don’t even remember. I think I came in, sat down...’ I did not even think about
how to play the next game: after all, there are hardly any chances of winning as Black. I simply sat down and waited for the start of the game.

And unexpectedly... White encountered such a pawn structure, that it was clear that he would be ready to agree a draw at any moment. Therefore, in search of adventures, Kramnik sacrificed a pawn, did not gain any attack, could have lost by force, and nevertheless achieved his aim! In his opponent’s serious time trouble Short overlooked that with the long move ...\textit{c2-h7} Black could defend against the mating threats.

The quarter-finals took place only two days later, and Kramnik, having rested and caught up on his sleep, easily strode into the semi-final...

...And then into the final, again defeating the only girl in this company of ambitious men (who, however, the day before had knocked out none other than Ivanchuk...), Judit Polgar.

The final, naturally, was rather more difficult: it ‘consisted’ of Garry Kasparov and – a continuation of their already endless battle.

Both rapidplay games ended in draws and took such a conventional course, that the Bulgarian grandmaster Veselin Topalov, who had been eliminated much earlier, and whose style of play fully corresponds to the Russian meaning of his name (Veselin \textit{cheerful, lively}), even moaned: ‘Bor-ing’. But in the first blitz game...

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{No.97} &  \\
\textbf{Kramnik–Chernin} &  \\
\textit{Moscow Rapid 1996} &  \\
\hline
\begin{position}
\end{position} &  \\
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\begin{position}
\end{position} &  \\
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The position does not appear to contain any particular sharpness, but Black’s knight is misplaced, and, more important, his kingside is weakened.

15 \textit{\texttt{cxe5!}}

From here the knight threatens sacrifices at \textit{f7} and \textit{g6}, and White’s attack develops of its own accord.

15...\textit{\texttt{cxd4}} 16 \textit{\texttt{exd4 \texttt{w7c7}}} 17 \textit{\texttt{h4 \texttt{d7}}} 18 \textit{\texttt{h5 \texttt{xe5}}} 19 \textit{\texttt{dxe5 \texttt{g5}}} 20 \textit{\texttt{\texttt{b1 \texttt{d8}}} 21 \textit{\texttt{wh7+ \texttt{f8}}} 22 \textit{\texttt{\texttt{e4 \texttt{xd1}}} 23 \textit{\texttt{\texttt{xd1 \texttt{xe5}}} 24 \textit{\texttt{\texttt{d8+ \texttt{e7}}} 25 \textit{\texttt{w8g8 \texttt{wb5}}} 26 \textit{\texttt{\texttt{d1}}} 1-0

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{No.97} &  \\
\textbf{Kasparov–Kramnik} &  \\
\textit{Moscow Rapid 1996} &  \\
\hline
\begin{position}
\end{position} &  \\
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\begin{position}
\end{position} &  \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
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Declining the draw (the previous moves from the same position were 25 \textit{\texttt{f3 \texttt{e4}}} 26 \textit{\texttt{\texttt{e2 \texttt{f5}}}}, White ventured 27 \textit{\texttt{w4}}, which Kramnik immediately exploited for his favourite breakthrough.

27...d4! 28 \textit{\texttt{wx6d6 \texttt{xd6}}} 29 \textit{\texttt{d1}}

Various pins and overloadings have prevented the exchange of pawns, but now a stake is plunged into the very heart of the white position.

29...g5! 30 \textit{\texttt{h5 \texttt{hx5}}} 31 \textit{\texttt{hx5 d3 \texttt{d}}} 32 \textit{\texttt{d2 \texttt{g4}}} 33 \textit{\texttt{f3 \texttt{gxf3}}} 34 \textit{\texttt{xf3 \texttt{xe3}}}
Gradually White lost his a-pawn, and in the end he finished three pawns down.

In the second blitz game, stipulated in the rules for the final, the world champion was again two pawns down, but...

Black’s passed pawn is worth a great deal, and here he could have won by 42...\texttt{\texttt{W}}d4 43 \texttt{\texttt{W}}f1 \texttt{\texttt{W}}xf2+ 44 \texttt{\texttt{W}}xf2 \texttt{\texttt{A}}xc2, after which the blitz would have continued.

Instead of this 42...\texttt{\texttt{A}}xc2? 43 \texttt{\texttt{A}}xc2 \texttt{\texttt{A}}d2+ 44 \texttt{\texttt{A}}xd2 \texttt{\texttt{C}}xd2 45 \texttt{\texttt{W}}e8+ \texttt{\texttt{W}}f8 46 \texttt{\texttt{W}}d7 \texttt{\texttt{W}}xb4 47 \texttt{\texttt{A}}f2 led to a draw, and gave Vladimir the first prize. On this occasion there was no car on the stage of the Kremlin Palace...

Then the Grand Prix jumped from the well-trodden route of New York–London–Paris and set off to Geneva: in this second stage some new names ‘seeped through’ from the qualifier into the main net, but the running was nevertheless made by the stars. Thus in the first round Kramnik and Korchnoi (who in his best years used to play blitz with strong masters, giving them odds of 4(!!) minutes!) played in such lively fashion, that on the conclusion of their match the spectators applauded for some five minutes. After winning the first game, at the required moment Vladimir elegantly forced a draw.

After 25 \texttt{\texttt{Q}}xe6 fxe6 26 \texttt{\texttt{W}}xe6+ \texttt{\texttt{A}}h8 27 d7 although Black is a piece up, things are still far from clear – 27...\texttt{\texttt{A}}cd8 28 \texttt{\texttt{W}}f1 etc.

But... 27...\texttt{\texttt{F}}f2+ 28 \texttt{\texttt{A}}h1 \texttt{\texttt{A}}xh2+, and there is no escape from perpetual check.

Kramnik also held on in the first game of the quarter-final, using another, more rare, chess ‘tool’.

The simplest, although 73 \texttt{\texttt{A}}h2 g3+ 74 \texttt{\texttt{G}}g2 \texttt{\texttt{A}}a2+ 75 \texttt{\texttt{G}}g1 \texttt{\texttt{H}}h2 76 \texttt{\texttt{A}}b6! was also possible, obtaining Henrik Kasopian’s well-known drawn position.
The spirit of the time

...h3+ 74 ♘h2 ♙a2+ 75 ♘h1 ♘g2 76 ♘b7+ ♘g6 77 ♘g7+, and there is nowhere to hide from the ‘desperado’ white rook.

Alas, in the second game the sensation of Geneva occurred: Kramnik lost to a very nice Englishman, who was not only not one of the ‘big four’ of the main contestants, but who had reached the top group only by qualifying. And in the final Anand defeated Kasparov, and with 9 points became the leader. Kasparov and Kramnik were immediately behind him, so that there was still all to play for...

That, at least, is what they thought. As did the whole chess world. But... “In life ‘but’ happens very often,” Anton Pavlovich Chekhov, a subtle expert on human psychology, used to say. For the sake of initiating a match with the super-computer Deep Blue Kasparov ‘betrayed’ the company Intel, the main sponsor completely terminated its support (which even before then had not been very scrupulously carried out) for the PCA, and the Professional Chess Association with its showpiece Grand Prix passed away...

Rapid chess, as a system, withstood the test of time only at the traditional tournaments in Monaco – in combination with playing... blindfold. Its organisation and financing has for ever put into the history of chess the Dutchman Joop van Oosterom – without doubt the most prominent of all the chess patrons in the second half of the 20th century. Enormous expenses – every year more than half a million dollars – and absolute disinterestedness!

The tournaments acquired their ‘double’ formula only from 1993, and in 1994 the 19-year-old Vladimir Kramnik made his debut. Later he admitted: ‘Personally they have always given me enormous pleasure,’ although there are absolutely opposite opinions. Kasparov, for example, has never taken part in these battles, having explained once to the author of these lines that playing blindfold with a high degree of concentration – otherwise there is no point in making a fuss – demands too much strength and energy. Kramnik has his own opinion: ‘For a professional, there is no particular difference between a rapid and a blindfold game. But when you are playing “rapid”, it is extremely hard to concentrate – there is no motivation, you just move the pieces, you are in a semi-relaxed stage. But playing blindfold, like it or not, you have to make your body work at full power, otherwise you risk losing your orientation on the board.’

Perhaps that is why he has four times come out top in this designation? – and the games give evidence of what high-class play he has demonstrated...

Vladimir in general describes with pleasure the ‘Melody Amber’ tournaments held annually in March. And a kaleidoscope of his appraisals of different years creates a truly unique picture.

‘Even if you want to, you can’t find any faults in the excellent organisation of the traditional tournament in Monaco. Thanks to the care of Joop van Oosterom and his family, the participants and their companions always have the most favourable conditions. One of the best hotels in Monte-Carlo, the Metropol, an open account in its restaurant and bars (which, of course, we don’t abuse), and even pocket money for everyday expenses. They meet us, they see us off... Van Oosterom lives on Aruba and usually he flies to Monaco with his wife and two daughters for the start of the tournament. It is pleasant to see a person who quite sincerely finances chess out of his love for it, not for business purposes. He is not very concerned about advertising and the attention of the public. Van Oosterom gains pleasure simply from the play itself. He is a good chess player, a correspondence grandmaster, and he happily joins in the analysis of the completed games, and suggests quite reasonable moves.

‘The organisers are constantly trying to add variety to the guests’ leisure time and
tempo – 11...c5 12 c3 0–0, with quite
good piece play.

11 b4! axb5 12 cxb5

And facing Black is the terrible threat of
13 c5 wd8 14 wa7, against which he can
defend only at the cost of a very strong
attack... on his king.

12...d5 13 d6+ e7 14 c5 wa6 15
w2 e8 16 b5 w4 17 w4 xd6 18
xd6+ e8 19 xb8 xb8 20 a4

Although nominally Black is ahead on
material, he has no way of opposing the
armada of white pawns on the queenside.

20...wc7 21 f1 fc5 22 a5 e5 23 c6
b6 24 axb6 xb6 25 a8 d8 26 b8 1–0

No.104
Kramnik–Ljubojevic
Monaco Rapid 1996
Sicilian Defence

1 df3 c5 2 e4 w6 3 d3 g6 4 e4 w6 5
d4 xd4 6 cxd4 d6 7 f2 cxd4 8 xd4
g7 9 e3 0–0 10 wd2 d7 11 0–0 c6
12 f3 c7

A theoretical position has been reached,
but with Black a tempo down.

13 b4 b6 14 ac1 b7 15 fd1 c8 16
g5 f6!? 17 h4

Retreating back to c3 followed by b5
was also possible.

17...e5 18 b5 c6

After 18...a6 there is 19 d4, when
Black's b6 pawn is weakened. Now White
decided to go in for a forcing variation, but
he miscalculated. Meanwhile, the quiet 19
a3! followed by w2 would have consol­
dated his advantage.

19 wd5+?! w8 20 xa7 xb4!

It was this that I had overlooked – if 21
xb7 Black has 21...xb8. I had to think
for a long time, for some... 12 minutes.

21 wd2 a8 22 xb4 xa7

Thus, an equal position has been
reached. Given simple play, in the end the
two sides would have exchanged a- and b­
pawns, White would have played c4-c5,
and a draw would have resulted. However,
Ljubojevic was of a different opinion, and,
sensing his aggressive intentions, I
unhurriedly played 23 nec2, when there
followed 23...xc6 24 xb1 wa8 25 wd2
g5 26 af2 g4!

My opponent finds a very interesting
way of complicating the play, and the
tension grows.

27 xb6 gf3 28 gf3!

Accepting the challenge. 28 xc6 would
have led to a straightforward draw. In reply
Ljubojevic began pressing from all sides.

28...g8 29 df1 a3

An unpleasant move; in some cases
...xe4 is threatened.

30 b3 a5 (intending ...h5) 31 c5!
It is good that if 31...a4 White has 32 a3.

31...d5

The situation has become extremely sharp. White’s defensive resources are sufficient, but at this point I had only one minute left, while Ljubojevic had about 20! However, he over-rated his position.

32 b6 (intending 33 xc6) 32...a4

White’s trump is his c5 pawn, but he was already down to his last 30 seconds.

34...d8?

After the game Ljubo and I analysed the game for about an hour – given accurate play by White, all three results were still possible.

35 c6 f5 36 b4 xc6 37 xc6 wc6

38 xa5 c1+ 39 e1 (everything somehow knits together) 39...g8

Threatening 40...d4, and if 40 b4 c3, so that White has only one reply.

40 d2 exf3

Apparently the best practical chance was still 40...c3, but at this point Ljubojevic began to grow markedly nervous.

41 xf3 wc4+ 42 e2 f4 43 d5

White is saved by the addition of ten seconds per move.

43...e6 44 xe6 xh2 45 e2 f4 46 d2 a4 47 g2 a3 48 b3 a6+ 49 e2 wc6 50 wc4 wb6 51 xg7! (now is the time!) 51...xg7 (51...xg7 52 wc8+ g8 53 c3+) 52 c3+ f8 53 b4+ g7 54 c3+ f8 55 wc8+ e7 56 wxg8 wb1+ 57 e1 1–0 (Notes by Kramnik)

No. 105

Van Wely–Kramnik
Monaco Rapid 1998
Queen’s Gambit

1 d4 f6 2 c4 e6 3 f3 d5 4 c3 c6 5 e3 bd7 6 wc2 d6 7 e2 0–0 8 0–0 dxc4 9 xc4 b5 10 xd3 b7 11 d1 a6 12 e4 e5 13 dxe5 dxe5 14 xe5 xe5

White’s subsequent play is consistent, but at the same time forced: neither 15 f4 d4+ 16 h1 g4 nor 15 g5 xh2+ is possible. At the same time his king’s residence is not defended by a single piece, and Black is about to launch an attack.

15 xb5 xh2+ 16 h1 we7 17 e2 e5 18 f3 c5

Beginning a siege of the c4 pawn, and completely seizing the initiative.

19 e1 fe8 20 g1 ad8 21 g5 h6 22 xf6 xf6 23 f5 d1 f4 24 xd8 xd8 25 d1 wh2+ 26 f1 d4 27 wb3

This hastens White’s already inevitable defeat. Bad is 27 d5 xd5 28 e5 wb1+ 29 e2 e8+ 30 d2 wh4, while if 27 e2, then Black has the unpleasant 27...h1+ 28 g1 a5 with the threats of...d6-f6 and...a6.

27...b8 28 wa4 a5 29 wc4

29...d5!

White resigns, since any of the three captures leads to a quick mate, whereas
after 29...\texttt{xa6}? 30 \texttt{xa6 xxb2} White would have been able to give perpetual check.

`Blindfold' games from Monaco

Here it seems to me that one cannot get by without a small foreword. Undoubtedly, it is only to people who are very distant from chess that blindfold play seems a phenomenon virtually from another world (and a simultaneous display – the more so!), but even so, out of all the existing variations of chess it is the most difficult and stands apart. True, Kramnik has said that whoever plays well at classical chess will also play well blindfold, but this is perhaps the only case where there is reason to regard his authoritative opinion with a certain degree of scepticism. After all, strong grandmasters have come to the Melody Amber tournament and made 'blindfold' results such as 0 out of 7! And because they only played well. But you need to play very ill. Otherwise you have to strain yourself, not to notice and calculate variations, but merely to `see' the position and sense it...

Even the stars do not manage without incidents, to an equal degree dramatic and... amusing. In Kramnik's games they are more rare than with others, but even so, even so... Thus, on this occasion Judit Polgar played excellently against him. She even landed a pretty tactical blow and soon attacked the queen... with an undefended bishop!

12...\texttt{d5}! 13 \texttt{c4 xxe3} 14 \texttt{fxe3 fxe4} 15 \texttt{dxe4 e7} 16 0-0 \texttt{c8} 17 \texttt{d3 e6} 18 \texttt{c2 exb4} 19 \texttt{axb4 h8} 20 \texttt{c5 b5} 21 \texttt{a6 ac8} 22 \texttt{dxex5 g8} 23 \texttt{g4 h5} 24 \texttt{gh2 c4} 25 \texttt{e1 d3}??

Initially Vladimir was slightly taken aback, but then he decided not to take a risk and began calculating the moves backwards. The verdict pronounced was unfavourable for Polgar, and the bishop was captured...

26 \texttt{xd3 cd8} 27 \texttt{c2 e6} 28 \texttt{xa7 a8} 29 \texttt{xa8 xxa8} 30 \texttt{e5} 1-0

Regarding his debut in blindfold chess in 1994, Kramnik had this to say: 

...The entire day was filled with chess! A rapid game, then analysis with the opponent, and soon after a meal the time came to sit down at the board again. In addition, playing the blindfold game second is especially difficult, and towards the end of the tournament much was decided by stamina.

`For example, not long before the finish I had the better position in a "blind" game with Ivanchuk, when I made a curious oversight. With white pawns at g4, g5 and h4, at some point I captured a black pawn on h5 by g4xh5, and for a long time I thought that it was... the white h-pawn that had moved there. The error came to light when I gave a check with my queen from f5, where it was undefended, and Vasily happily captured it. And at this point I was contending with Anand for overall victory!'

'Another, similar instance occurred in a crucial game with Anand. I conducted the game well, but...

'In the diagram position something incredible happened to me...'
I cannot claim that White has a won position, but Black’s problems are quite serious. I decided first to drive the rook from its active position.

26 $\text{a}a_6$ $\text{a}8$

Later many reckoned that I had forgotten where the black king was – at h8 instead of g8. In fact I extremely rarely lose sight of where a piece is. The problem is that on the computer screen (which displays an empty board and the opponent’s last move) the letters ‘a’ and ‘e’ are rather similar. And after glancing briefly at the display, I decided that Anand had played 26 ... $\text{a}e_8$ (after 26 ... $\text{a}a_8$ I was planning 27 $\text{b}b_7$ and then the capture on a5).

27 $\text{b}b_5$

Setting up a powerful battery against... the phantom rook at e8. At this point I was very happy with my position: the ending seemed unpleasant and very difficult for Black. Suspicion set in a move later.

27...$\text{c}c_5$ 28 $\text{x}a_5$ $\text{x}a_5$ 29 $\text{f}f_5$ $\text{x}a_5$

The rook appeared from nowhere, it all became clear to me, and I had to resign.

This absurdity spoiled my entire tournament. In the rapid game with Anand in my eagerness to gain revenge I overstepped the mark, advanced imprudently, and lost 0-2. I realised that first place was out of the question, and second or third did not greatly interest me. I switched to a regime of complete relaxation: I rested, stopped preparing for the games, and simply tried out new openings. (Notes by Kramnik)

But on most occasions everything went ‘normally’...

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1 $e4$ $c5$ 2 $d3$ $d6$ 3 $d4$ $cxd4$ 4 $xd4$ $f6$
5 $c3$ $d6$ 6 $g5$ $e6$ 7 $b5$ $b6$ 8 $f6$
$gxf6$ 9 $b3$ $a6$ 10 $e2$ $c7$ 11 $a4$ $b6$ 12
$d4$ $b7$ 13 $xc6$ $xc6$ 14 $d4$ $g8$ 15
$f3$ $c5$

White has played the opening limply and his opponent already has the initiative – both in the sharp middlegame, and in the ‘Sicilian’ endgame. The f6 pawn is now taboo (16 $wxf6$? $g7$), and so...

16 $wd3$ 0-0-0 17 0-0 $h5$ 18 $g1$ $h4$ 19
$h3$ $b8$ 20 $a3$ $e5$ 21 $b3$ d5!? 22 $g4$

In order to meet 22 ... $d5$ with 23 $f4$.

22...$\text{c}c5$ 23 $\text{exd5}$

23...$f5$! 24 $e2$ (24 $f3$? $d6$)
24...$\text{xd5}$ 25 $\text{xd5}$ $\text{xd5}$ 26 $f3$ $\text{xb3}$
(26...$d6$? 27 $xb6+$ and 28 $xd6$) 27
$xb3$ $d8$ 28 $c3$ $d2$ 29 $f2$ $xf2$ 30 $c4$
(forced in view of the threatened ...$d3$, ...
$xf3$ and ...$g3$) 30...$xb2$ 31 $xb2$
$xb2$ 32 $g4$ hxg3 33 $h4$, and White
continued his hopeless resistance until the following piquant position was reached:
The spirit of the time

It is White to move. He can acquire a queen – 52 h8\(\mathbb{Q}\), but after 52...g1\(\mathbb{Q}\)! he is mated!

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No.109
Karpov–Kramnik
Monaco Blind 1995
Queen’s Gambit

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 \(\mathbb{Q}\)f3 \(\mathbb{Q}\)f6 4 \(\mathbb{Q}\)c3 dxc4 5 a4 \(\mathbb{Q}\)f5 6 e3 e6 7 \(\mathbb{Q}\)xc4 \(\mathbb{Q}\)b4 8 0–0 0–0 9 \(\mathbb{W}\)e2 \(\mathbb{Q}\)g6 10 \(\mathbb{Q}\)e5 \(\mathbb{Q}\)bd7 11 \(\mathbb{Q}\)xg6 hxg6 12 \(\mathbb{Q}\)d1 \(\mathbb{W}\)a5 13 \(\mathbb{Q}\)d2 e5

Somehow over-hasty. More accurate is 13... \(\mathbb{Q}\)ad8 14 \(\mathbb{Q}\)e1 \(\mathbb{Q}\)b6 15 \(\mathbb{Q}\)b3, and now 15...e5, as I subsequently played against Kamsky.

14 d5 \(\mathbb{Q}\)ad8

Weaker is 14...cxd5 15 \(\mathbb{Q}\)xd5 \(\mathbb{Q}\)xd5 16 \(\mathbb{Q}\)xd5 with a marked advantage to White.

15 dxc6 bxc6

Here we can take stock. White has the better pawn structure, and if his a4 pawn were still at a2, he would have a more definite advantage. Black’s play is associated with the b4 square and the b-file.

16 \(\mathbb{Q}\)e1 e4 17 \(\mathbb{Q}\)b3

A somewhat inaccurate move. The set-up 17 \(\mathbb{W}\)c2 followed by \(\mathbb{Q}\)e2 looks more logical.

17...\(\mathbb{Q}\)e5 18 \(\mathbb{Q}\)c2

Neither I nor my opponent noticed the possibility of 18 \(\mathbb{Q}\)xe4. Black loses a pawn, and even if he has the initiative after 18...\(\mathbb{Q}\)xe1 19 \(\mathbb{Q}\)xf6+ \(\mathbb{Q}\)xf6 20 \(\mathbb{Q}\)xe1 \(\mathbb{Q}\)b8,
in any case White should have gone in for this position.

18...\(\mathbb{Q}\)d6 19 g3 \(\mathbb{Q}\)c5 20 \(\mathbb{Q}\)g2 \(\mathbb{W}\)f5 21 \(\mathbb{Q}\)d2 \(\mathbb{Q}\)e5 22 \(\mathbb{Q}\)ad1

22...\(\mathbb{Q}\)b8!

The result of White’s passive play and the inaccurate placing of his pieces (cf. the note to his 17th move). Now he loses a pawn on the queenside, and at the same time his light squares on the kingside are hopelessly weak.

23 \(\mathbb{Q}\)b1

It is hard to suggest anything better.

23...\(\mathbb{Q}\)xc3 24 bxc3 \(\mathbb{Q}\)xa4 25 \(\mathbb{Q}\)a2 \(\mathbb{Q}\)b2!

A tactical nuance, based on the rook at d1 being inadequately defended: White cannot play 26 \(\mathbb{Q}\)xb2 \(\mathbb{Q}\)xb2 27 \(\mathbb{W}\)xb2 \(\mathbb{W}\)f3+ and 28...\(\mathbb{Q}\)xd1.

26 \(\mathbb{Q}\)d2 \(\mathbb{Q}\)c4 27 \(\mathbb{Q}\)d1 \(\mathbb{Q}\)e5 28 h3 \(\mathbb{Q}\)f3 29 \(\mathbb{Q}\)a4 \(\mathbb{Q}\)g5 30 g4 \(\mathbb{W}\)e5 (with the terrible threat of ...\(\mathbb{Q}\)f3) 31 \(\mathbb{W}\)c2 \(\mathbb{Q}\)f8 (securely defending the e4 pawn before invading with the knight at f3) 32 \(\mathbb{Q}\)xa7 \(\mathbb{Q}\)f3 33 \(\mathbb{W}\)a2 \(\mathbb{W}\)h2+ 34 \(\mathbb{Q}\)f1 \(\mathbb{W}\)xh3+ 35 \(\mathbb{Q}\)e2 \(\mathbb{Q}\)e5 36 \(\mathbb{Q}\)c2 \(\mathbb{W}\)xg4+ 37 \(\mathbb{Q}\)d2 \(\mathbb{Q}\)ed8+ 38 \(\mathbb{Q}\)c1 \(\mathbb{Q}\)xd1+ 39 \(\mathbb{Q}\)xd1 \(\mathbb{W}\)g1 40 \(\mathbb{Q}\)d2 \(\mathbb{Q}\)d3+ 41 \(\mathbb{Q}\)c2 \(\mathbb{Q}\)b2+ 0–1 (Notes by Kramnik)

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No.110
Kramnik–Nikolic
Monaco Blind 1995
Queen’s Indian Defence

1 \(\mathbb{Q}\)f3 \(\mathbb{Q}\)f6 2 c4 b6 3 g3 \(\mathbb{Q}\)b7 4 \(\mathbb{Q}\)g2 e6 5 0–0 \(\mathbb{Q}\)e7 6 \(\mathbb{Q}\)c3 0–0 7 \(\mathbb{Q}\)e1 d5 8 cxd5 exd5
9 d4  e4 10  c2  d7 11  f4  xc3  12  bxc3  f6 13  d1  e8 14  g5!  e8

If 14...c5 there follows 15 dxc5  xe5 16  d4 with the threat of  f5 and pressure on the d5 pawn.
15 c4  c5
15...c6 would have been passive – 16  e5 with a big advantage.
16  xf6  xf6 17  xd5  xd5
17...xd4 is also bad on account of 18  xc8 and 19  xd4. However, now White’s pawns gain the opportunity to cross the demarcation line, cramping the opponent’s forces.
18  e4  b7 19  e5  d8 20  d5  c4 21  d6
18...d5 22  g5!

The decisive exchange, depriving Black of any saving hopes.
22...xg5 23  xb7  ab8 24  d5  g6
25  xc4  xc4 26  xc4  b5 27  d5  a5 28
f4  d8 29  g4  a4 30  f5  a5 31  e6  fe6 32
fe6  xe1 33  e7+  g7 34  xe1 1–0
(Notes by Kramnik)

No. 111
Kamsky–Kramnik
Monaco Blind 1996

1 e4  c5 2  f3  c6 3  d4  xd4 4  xd4  f6
5  c3  d6 6  g5  e6 7  d2  a6 8 0–0–0  h6
9  e3  xd4 10  xd4  b5 11  e3

A rather rare move, employed by Shabalov. He used to work with Kamsky, and so I expected something of this sort from Gata.
11...d7 12  e5  dxe5 13  xe5  b8
(the strongest) 14  xb8+

Earlier 14  e3 had been played, without success.
14...xb8 15  xf6  xf6 16  c4  c6
17  xf6+  e7

Now it becomes clear what counterplay Black has acquired by the pawn sacrifice: his light-square bishop has occupied the long diagonal, and his rook is assisting in the pressure on g2 – his compensation for the pawn is quite reasonable. So far this is all theory, and it would appear that White had not prepared anything new.
18  h5  g8 19  f3  g5 20  f4  h5

The idea is fairly simple – the development of the dark-square bishop at h6, and also the possible further pawn advance ...h5–h4–h3.
21  h4!!

I don’t like this move. It weakens the kingside, whereas the possible opening of the position on the queenside is to Black’s advantage – the white king will become a target for attack.
21...e5 22  d3  h6+ 23  b1  e3
24  e1?

A serious positional mistake. White has only two active pieces – his knight, and his rook at d1, so why exchange one of them? After all, if 24...g8 (as in fact occurred) White cannot play 25  xe3  xe3 26  h2 with the idea of 27  e2 on account of 27...g1. He should have driven away the rook at e3 with the knight from c2: 24  b4  b7 25  c3 and then 26  c2.
24...g8 25  xe3  xe3 26  c3  f5 27
xe2  f6 28  h3  f4!

The white pieces are completely inactive, but a certain accuracy is required. Of course, there was no point in engaging in unnecessary complications – 28...e5 29

29  d1?!

An incorrect plan, but there is nothing in particular that he can move.
29...e5 30  c2  d7 31  h1  f5
Threatening 32  d8 and 33  d2+; here Kamsky involuntarily shook his head and admitted his mistake.
32  d1  d8

White had a wide choice – it was also possible to pick up a pawn after 32...xd3 33  xd3  xg2, but I did not want to exchange pieces.
33  c2  e4 34  xe4  xe4 35  b3  a5
For a decisive breakthrough of White’s defences it is essential to open a file on the queenside.
36  a3
The spirit of the time

This merely increases the effect, but 36 \texttt{h3} b4 37 c4 a4 etc. also does not help.

36...\texttt{b4}! 37 axb4 axb4 38 \texttt{cxb4} \texttt{c8+} 39 \texttt{b2} \texttt{d4+} 40 \texttt{b1} \texttt{a8} 41 \texttt{c1} \texttt{a1+}

The rook has broken into the opponent's position. the outcome is decided.

42 \texttt{d2} \texttt{a2+} 43 \texttt{cl} \texttt{e3+} 44 \texttt{b1} \texttt{d2} 45 b5 \texttt{d1+} 46 \texttt{c2} \texttt{c1+} 47 \texttt{b2} \texttt{xh3} 48 b6 \texttt{xfl} 49 b7 \texttt{d4+} 50 \texttt{a3} \texttt{e5}

I had not forgotten about the b-pawn (in blindfold play this is possible), and so White resigned. It is amusing that with the black pieces in this tournament I scored a maximum 5 out of 5 playing blindfold -- it is probable that the initial role of defender is better suited to this type of play. (Notes by Kramnik)

1 e4 c5 2 \texttt{f3} \texttt{c6} 3 d4 cxd4 4 \texttt{xd4} \texttt{f6} 5 \texttt{e3} d6 6 g5 e6 7 \texttt{d2} a6 8 0-0-0 h6 9 \texttt{e3} \texttt{e7} 10 f3 \texttt{xd4} 11 \texttt{xd4} b5 12 \texttt{b1} \texttt{b8} 13 \texttt{xf6} \texttt{xf6} 14 \texttt{xd6} \texttt{xd6} 15 \texttt{xd6} \texttt{e7} 16 \texttt{a1} \texttt{xc3} 17 bxc3 \texttt{e5}

Despite White's extra pawn, there is no question of him having an advantage.

18 \texttt{b2} \texttt{e6} 19 \texttt{d3} \texttt{hec8} 20 \texttt{a1}

Planning to exchange the weak queenside pawns.

20...\texttt{c5} 21 \texttt{hbl} \texttt{d7} 22 \texttt{f1?!}

White is attracted by the idea of 23 c4 bxc4+ 24 \texttt{c3}, but an unpleasant surprise awaits him.

22...\texttt{bc8}! 23 c4 \texttt{e6}!

This is the whole point. If 24 c3 there follows 24...\texttt{xc4} 25 \texttt{xc4} \texttt{xc4}, when White has to suffer for a long time in a gruelling rook ending, and possibly in vain.

24 \texttt{cxb5} \texttt{xc2+} 25 \texttt{a3} \texttt{xb5} 26 \texttt{xb5}

White appears to have got away with a slight fright: after 26...\texttt{xa2} the position is equal, but the a2 pawn can also be taken in another way.

26...\texttt{xa2} 27 \texttt{xe5+} \texttt{xe6} 28 \texttt{a5} \texttt{b8}

A curious position. There are no direct threats against White, but his men are pinned to the left side of the board by the 'physically' stronger black pieces. It only remains to resolve the problem of how to break through on the kingside.

- 29 \texttt{a7+} \texttt{f6} 30 \texttt{a4}

30...\texttt{g5} 31 \texttt{g3}?

Anand was evidently extremely distressed by the course of the game, and he loses without a fight.

31...\texttt{hxh2} 32 \texttt{a3} \texttt{f2} 33 \texttt{b5} \texttt{h5}

Whatever he does, White is quite unable to get to the right side of the board, and the game is decided by the advance of the h-pawn.

34 \texttt{a6} \texttt{g7} 35 \texttt{a5} h4 36 \texttt{g6h4} \texttt{xh4} 37 \texttt{b6} \texttt{a8+} (37...\texttt{xb6} is also possible)

38 \texttt{a6} \texttt{axa6+} 39 \texttt{a6} \texttt{h3} 40 \texttt{a1} \texttt{f6}

0-1 (Notes by Kramnik)
I know of only one game, between two amateurs, where this move occurred — there, however, it was made without any aim. But if Ivanchuk plays this, it implies an entire set-up of the forces, and quite a good one.

11 d4 a5 12 f4

Seemingly the most logical. The following day, in our rapid game, Karpov unexpectedly went in for this same line, but, to be honest, I had not found time to look at it, and for variety’s sake I played... the weaker 12 e5 d6, and now the extremely unfortunate 13 f4. I ended up slightly worse and had to defend, but I made a draw. Here 13 f4 is totally inappropriate: the king’s position is weakened, the prospects of playing f4-f5 are obscure, and the bishop at e5 is ‘blunted’.

12...d6

The point of Black’s idea. He wants to exchange bishops, simplify the position somewhat, and then play ...c7-c5. If immediately 12...c5, then 13 d5 (exploiting the fact that if 13...exd5 14 exd5 fxe5 there is the winning stroke 15 h7), and White has a great advantage.

13 e5

Even with gain of tempo I did not want to place the pawn on e5. In principle, White’s main aim in this position is to advance d4-d5.

13...e7

I underestimated the other plan for Black, involving ...f7-f6 and ...e6-e5, after which it is rather hard for White to devise anything with the pawn structure. It is not altogether clear what to do with the bishop at f4: on e3 or d2 it comes under attack after ...c4. I decided to ‘bash on’.

14 g4 f6 15 f3 a3

If 15...e5 White has the very unpleasant 16 h4! Then after 16...c8 17 f5 xf5 18 exf5 he has the advantage, while 16...exf5 is not possible because of 17 f5, when the queen is trapped: 17...f7 (d7) 18 h6+. There is also 16...h5, but I did not work it out fully. After 17 xh5 exf4 18 g6 d8 19 e5! I think that there must be a mate somewhere. Vasya realised all this and made a rather interesting move. Apart from 16...b2 he is also threatening 16...xe4 17 xe4 f5 — such a nuance is easily overlooked in blindfold play. I decided to retreat my bishop.

16 c1 a8 17 b4 xc1 18 xc1 a3 19 e2 c5

Objectively the position favours White. If Black’s pawn were at f7, he would be completely alright. With his pawn at f6, beginning typical operations on the c-file is problematic, since I have h3, when Black has difficulties with his e6 pawn.

20 h3 a4?!

During the game I didn’t like this move: at a3 the queen was tying down the rook at c1.

21 c1 c6?!

A provocative move, and undoubtedly a poor one. I was expecting the exchange 21...cxd4 22 cxd4, and then, for example, 22...c8 followed by d8.

Here I had a wide choice of good continuations, such as 22 dxc5 bxc5 23 d6, or 22 h5. But the artist in me
awakened, and I launched into tactical complications. It was, after all, more of a recreational tournament, and I decided to enjoy myself a little.

22 d5!

To judge by Vasya’s reaction, this was completely unexpected for him.

22...exd5 23 Wh5

Threatening (after, for example 23...dxe4) 24 f5 h6 (24...g6 25 Oxf6) 25 Wg6. Ivanchuk finds an excellent resource, which came as a surprise to me.

23...e5! 24 f5 g6 25 Wg4

If 25 Oxf6 there is the unusual defence 25...e8!, and White stands badly.

25...e8 26 f4

Continuing the attack. After 26 exd5 Axe1+ (26...Axf5 27 Axe1 Wxg4 28 Oxf6 f5 it is doubtful whether White stands any better in the ending.

26...Axe4!?

The correct decision: after 26...Axe7 27 Afxe7 and 28 exd5 White has a powerful initiative. Vasily takes the steam out of the attack.

27 Afxe4 dxe4 28 Wh6+ Axf7?

Essential was 28...Ag7 29 Axf7 (29 Wxf4 is also fairly unpleasant for Black) 29...Axe4.

29 Wh6

The adventures did not end here. Ivanchuk found an interesting tactical chance.

29...e3 30 Ad8 Ae4 31 Axf8+ Af8 32 Ag2?

A blunder. Something extraordinary occurred here: I had the feeling that the black knight was somewhere very remote and would not quickly come into play. The simple 32 f5!, breaking up Black’s position, would have won. I decided: I will pick up the e3 pawn and Vasily will resign immediately.

32...Axc4! 33 f5!? Ag8?

Black had the very interesting move 33...Ae8!? with the idea of ...Ad5. And although objectively White should probably win, there are plenty of complications. Now Black loses by force.

34 Ad8+ Ae8 (34...Ag7 35 f6+ Ah6 36 Af8+) 35 f6

Threatening 36 f7+ Afxf7 37 Ah1+, and if 35...Af7 White has 36 Ac7+.

35...We5 36 We7 Wxe7 37 Axe7 38 Oxe3 Od2 39 Be2 Of3+ 40 Af2 Dg5 41 Dc4 1-0

The game turned out to be interesting, fairly logical, and, I think, the best one I played in Monaco 1997. (Notes by Kramnik)

\[\text{No. 114} \]

Karpov – Kramnik

Monaco Blind 1997

Queen’s Gambit

1 d4 Af6 2 c4 e6 3 Af3 d5 4 Ac3 Ab4 5

Ab3 c5 6 cxd5 exd5 7 dxc5 Ac6 8 e3 0-0

9 Ae2 Ae6!

White is slightly better after 9...Bxc5 10

0-0.

10 Af4 Axc5 11 Axe6 Axe6 12 0-0

The b-pawn is poisoned: 12 Ab7? Ab4 when Black is threatening 13...Ab8 and 13...Ac2+.

12...We7 13 Ad2 Wh8 14 Ad1

14 Ad1 followed by 15 Ae1 was better.

14...a6 15 Ac3 Aa8 16 Ae1 Ac7

Black’s position is now slightly more pleasant.

17 Ab2 (17 Ab1 d4!?) 17...Ae5! 18

Ac2?

Again, as in our game in Dos Hermanas (No.152), Karpov is let down by his ‘habit’ of placing his pieces on the back rank. After 18 b4 b5 Black’s advantage would have been minimal.

18...Ae4 19 Ab3

White does not have time to reposition his knight at d2: 19 Ab2? Axb2 20 Axf2

Axf2! (20...Axe3 21 Ac3) 21 Axf2

Axe3+!! 22 Axe3 (if 22 Af1 Black wins by 22...Ah4) 22...Ac5+ 23 Af4 Aa8+ 24

Axe5 (24 Ag3 Af2+ 25 Ah3 Axe2)

24...Axf5+ 25 Axe6 Ac8+, and the white king perishes in enemy territory.

19...Ah4 20 f3
After 20 g3 \textit{\text{Wh}}3 Black wins, while 20 f4 is bad in view of 20...\textit{\text{Dg}}6 with the threat of 21...\textit{\text{Dxf}}4.

20...\textit{\text{Dd}}6

The game would have concluded quickly after the resolute 20...\textit{\text{Dg}}4!! 21 \textit{\text{fxf}}4 22 \textit{\text{xf}}4 (22 h3 \textit{\text{g}}3) 22...\textit{\text{xf}}4 23 \textit{\text{xf}}4 \textit{\text{Wf}}2+ 24 \textit{\text{h}}1 \textit{\text{Wxe}}2.

21 g3 \textit{\text{Wh}}3 22 \textit{\text{Df}}2 \textit{\text{e}}4?

In a completely won position I was drawn towards 'brilliance'. This striving not only to beat, but to crush my opponent led to an oversight in a lengthy, forcing variation. Meanwhile, the prosaic attack on the king – 22...\textit{\text{f}}6 would have been decisive.

23 \textit{\text{fxe}}4 \textit{\text{Dxe}}4 24 \textit{\text{xf}}2 \textit{\text{Wh}}2+ 25 \textit{\text{e}}1 \textit{\text{Wxg}}3+ (25...\textit{\text{Df}}8??) 26 \textit{\text{d}}2 \textit{\text{d}}4 27 \textit{\text{c}}2 \textit{\text{Dg}}2+ 28 \textit{\text{c}}3! \textit{\text{d}}3+

28...\textit{\text{Dc}}8 would not have saved Black after 29 \textit{\text{Wxb}}7 \textit{\text{Wxe}}2+ (29...\textit{\text{Dxe}}3+ 30 \textit{\text{bxc}}3 \textit{\text{Wxe}}2+ 31 \textit{\text{Dd}}2) 30 \textit{\text{b}}1 \textit{\text{Wc}}4 31 \textit{\text{exd}}4 \textit{\text{Dxd}}4.

29 \textit{\text{b}}1 \textit{\text{Wg}}5 30 \textit{\text{Df}}1

Objectively Black's position is lost, but I continue to resist.

30...\textit{\text{De}}7 31 \textit{\text{Dh}}3 \textit{\text{Dd}}6 32 \textit{\text{Dd}}2 b5 33 \textit{\text{Da}}2 \textit{\text{Wh}}4 34 \textit{\text{Ax}}x\textit{\text{e}}6 \textit{\text{Wxe}}4 35 \textit{\text{Dc}}3 \textit{\text{Wh}}4 36 \textit{\text{Df}}1 \textit{\text{Dd}}8 37 \textit{\text{e}}4 \textit{\text{Wh}}2 38 \textit{\text{Wd}}5 \textit{\text{De}}8 39 \textit{\text{Df}}7! \textit{\text{Cc}}4 40 \textit{\text{Dc}}8?

The bishop 'intrudes' out of turn; again the queen should have had its say. White could have won instantly by 40 \textit{\text{Wf}}7! \textit{\text{Dxd}}2+ 41 \textit{\text{e}}2 \textit{\text{Gg}}8 42 \textit{\text{Wxg}}8+.

40...\textit{\text{Dxd}}2+ 41 \textit{\text{a}}2 \textit{\text{Dxf}}1 42 \textit{\text{Wf}}7?

42 c5!? would have retained the advantage, but how could White resist the temptation of a triple (!) attack on a7, f1 and f8?! But I have an amazing resource.

42...\textit{\text{Wf}}2!!

Unexpectedly everything is defended!

43 \textit{\text{Dd}}7 \textit{\text{Dd}}4 44 \textit{\text{Wh}}3 \textit{\text{Cc}}4+ 45 \textit{\text{a}}1 (45 \textit{\text{b}}1??) 45...\textit{\text{Dc}}3 46 \textit{\text{Gg}}6 h6 47 \textit{\text{Wd}}7 \textit{\text{Cc}}2+?

The following line, discovered by Anand, could have become a worthy conclusion to this crazy encounter: 47...\textit{\text{Dd}}4! 48 \textit{\text{f}}7 (48 \textit{\text{Dd}}8+ \textit{\text{Gg}}8 49 \textit{\text{Wxd}}4 \textit{\text{Cc}}2+) 48...\textit{\text{Wxf}}7!! 49 \textit{\text{Wf}}7 \textit{\text{Cc}}3, and the d-pawn cannot be stopped. Fantastic! I have rarely encountered anything like this. But at that moment we each had about a minute left, and to find such a non-trivial variation in time trouble, and blindfold, is exceptionally difficult.

48 \textit{\text{b}}1 \textit{\text{Dxa}}3+ 49 \textit{\text{a}}1 \textit{\text{Cc}}2+ 50 \textit{\text{b}}1 \textit{\text{Cc}}3+ 51 \textit{\text{Cc}}1??

Karpov is also in a fighting mood and is not agreeable to draw, but he is wrong to avoid the repetition of moves. Three pawns are three pawns, even in Monaco...

51...\textit{\text{De}}3+ 52 \textit{\text{d}}1 \textit{\text{Dc}}3+ 53 \textit{\text{e}}1 \textit{\text{Cc}}2+ 54 \textit{\text{f}}1 \textit{\text{Wg}}8 55 \textit{\text{Cc}}5

It was worth picking up a pawn: 55 \textit{\text{Dxd}}3 \textit{\text{Cc}}4 56 \textit{\text{Dxc}}4 \textit{\text{bxc}}4 57 \textit{\text{Wf}}7 with chances of a more tenacious resistance.

55...\textit{\text{Wf}}8+ 56 \textit{\text{Df}}7 \textit{\text{Gg}}5 57 \textit{\text{e}}5 \textit{\text{Dd}}4 58 \textit{\text{e}}6 \textit{\text{d}}2 59 \textit{\text{Cc}}3 \textit{\text{Wd}}8 60 \textit{\text{Gg}}2 \textit{\text{Dxd}}7 61 \textit{\text{exd}}7 \textit{\text{b}}4 62 \textit{\text{Dd}}1 \textit{\text{a}}5 63 \textit{\text{b}}3 \textit{\text{g}}6 64 \textit{\text{Wxe}}6 \textit{\text{Gg}}7 65 \textit{\text{h}}5 \textit{\text{Dxb}}3 66 \textit{\text{Dc}}3 \textit{\text{Cc}}5 67 \textit{\text{Cc}}4 \textit{\text{a}}4 68 \textit{\text{Dxd}}2 \textit{\text{a}}3 0–1 (Notes by Kramnik)

No. 115

Kramnik–Topalov

Monaco Blind 1998

Modern Defence

1 \textit{\text{Df}}3 \textit{\text{g}}6 2 \textit{\text{d}}4 \textit{\text{d}}6 3 \textit{\text{c}}4 \textit{\text{Gg}}7 4 \textit{\text{Cc}}3 \textit{\text{e}}5

Here it is possible to transpose into a normal King's Indian; personally I do not like the 4...\textit{\text{e}}5 variation for Black. Among chess players it has become known as the 'Azmaiparashvili Opening'. One can play
this way, of course, but it is basically rubbish.

5 dxe5 dxe5 6 ♕xd8+ ♕xd8 7 ♜d2

White has quite a few ways of developing his initiative. Apart from 7 ♜d2 there is 7 ♞g5+ f6 8 0–0–0 ♟d7 9 ♜d2, as Kasparov played against A. M. Shamshirvili (Olympiad, Moscow 1994).

7...♘e6 8 0–0–0 ♟d7 9 ♞g5!!?

Not wasting time on the defence of the c4 pawn. After 9 b3 or 9 e3 Black will probably complete his development without particular problems: ...c7-c6, ...♗e7, ...f7-f6 and ...♗c7, achieving a normal position. Therefore White must act energetically.

9...♗c4 10 e4!?

A new move. I think. Before this 10 b3 ♔e6 11 ♘xe6+ fxe6 12 g3 had been played (or recommended by someone), with, at the least, sufficient compensation for the pawn. The move 10 e4 is to some degree typical, but in the given situation it is more in the spirit of the position. True, for the moment it is not clear where later I could have gained an advantage, but Black's position gave cause for alarm both to me and to my opponent.

10...♖xf1 11 ♕xf1 ♔h6

Practically forced: if 11...♗e8 White has the unpleasant 12 ♘b5.

12 f4

This is the point of my idea — White begins opening lines, and the black king feels extremely uncomfortable.

12...c6 13 ♘xe5

13 f5?? followed by h2–h3 and g2–g4 also came into consideration. Now, however, complications begin, and they are rather unclear.

13...♗e7 (13...♗xe5? 14 ♘xe6+) 14 ♗f3 ♘g4 (15 ♘g5+ was threatened) 15 ♘d5 ♘e8 16 e6 ♘xe6 17 ♕d6 ♘h8 18 ♖fd1

The critical point of the game. Here I thought for a long time, about ten minutes. White has various possibilities, up to the sacrifice of a second pawn — 18 e5?!, which did not satisfy me. I went in for this position when I played 12 f4, thinking that White has a reasonable initiative, but in fact it proved not at all easy to develop.

18...♗f6!

A calm and strong reply. I had assumed that Black would play 18...h6. Then 19 ♕d8+ ♕xd8 20 ♕xd8+ ♗f7 21 ♜d2 followed by 22 ♗b8. After the move played, in my view, a position of dynamic balance is reached. I decided to 'step on the gas'.

19 e5!?

After 19 ♘xf6 ♘xf6 Black can always answer e4–e5 with ...♗d5. Then, after ...♗e7, he gradually brings his pieces out, and I was afraid that my initiative might evaporate.

19...♘xg5+ 20 ♘xg5 ♘xe5

After 20...♗c3 21 ♖d3 ♘c4 White can give up the exchange — 22 ♖ce4.

21 ♘xe6 ♗e7

22 ♖d8!?!?

This move was underestimated by Veselin. Incidentally, it also sets a nice trap with a draughts-like theme — I don't know if my opponent saw it: 22...♗f7? 23 ♘e1+! ♕xd6 24 ♘xf7+ and 25 ♘xh8. A cheap trick, perhaps, but one easy to miss playing blindfold.

For the moment Black maintains his concentration.

22...♗b8

I 'bash on' further — 23 ♘e4 with the intention of going to c5. A viscous, complicated position has arisen.

23...♖fd7
Black would appear to be playing for a win, and the variation 23...\(\text{c}4\) 24 \(\text{xc}6\) \(\text{xd}8\) with a probable draw does not suit him. However, I too have no less grounds for aiming for a win.

24 \(\text{e}6+\) \(\text{xd}8\)

24...\(\text{f}8\) is extremely dangerous for Black in view of 25 \(\text{f}1+\) \(\text{g}7\) 26 \(\text{e}7+\) \(\text{h}6\) 27 \(\text{f}7+\) \(\text{xf}7\) 28 \(\text{fxf}7\).

25 \(\text{xe}5\) \(\text{f}8?!\)

This disrupts the logical course of the game. True, the mistake is not yet decisive, but it makes things considerably more difficult for Black. During the game we both thought that 25...\(\text{e}8\) was not possible because of 26 \(\text{xd}7+\) \(\text{xd}7\) 27 \(\text{f}6+\). But here it unexpectedly transpires that after 27...\(\text{d}6\) 28 \(\text{xe}8\) \(\text{xe}8\) 29 \(\text{xe}8+\) \(\text{e}7\) the knight is trapped, and it is now White who has to seek a way to save the game, by giving up the piece at a6 or b6. After 25...\(\text{e}8\) the simplest way to draw is by 26 \(\text{f}6\) \(\text{xe}5\) 27 \(\text{xd}7\) \(\text{d}5\) 28 \(\text{xb}8\) \(\text{c}7\) 29 \(\text{xc}6\).

26 \(\text{c}5\) \(\text{f}7\)

White has the draw in hand, but I manage to find an interesting and latent resource – 27 \(\text{e}3!\), the idea of which – the threat \(\text{f}3\) – Topalov did not see, and he played 27...\(\text{b}6\)?

He had to make use of his last chance – 27...\(\text{c}7\) (which Topalov very much did not like) 28 \(\text{e}6+\) \(\text{b}6\) 29 \(\text{b}3+\) \(\text{a}5\).

After the game we moved the pieces about a bit in this position, but did not find a mate – the black king escapes, although White does have a perpetual check.

28 \(\text{f}3!\) \(\text{xf}3\)

Not 28...\(\text{e}7\) 29 \(\text{xd}7\) \(\text{xd}7\) 30 \(\text{f}8+\) \(\text{c}7\) 31 \(\text{xd}7+\).

29 \(\text{xd}7\)

The simplest. The rook ending after 29 \(\text{xd}7+\) \(\text{c}8\) 30 \(\text{gx}f3\) \(\text{xc}5\) 31 \(\text{hx}7\) \(\text{b}4\) may not be won. But now the white knight cannot be trapped. Here Veselin spent a long time calculating, but there was no longer any way to save the game...

29...\(\text{f}2\) 30 \(\text{xb}8+\) \(\text{c}7\) 31 \(\text{a}6+\) \(\text{b}7\)

If 31...\(\text{c}8\), then 32 \(\text{d}2!\) \(\text{xd}2\) 33 \(\text{xd}2\) c5 34 b4 \(\text{b}7\) 35 b5 is good enough to win.

32 \(\text{b}4\) c5 33 \(\text{c}2\) \(\text{c}6\)

Alas, 33...\(\text{xg}2\) is not possible because of 34 \(\text{d}7+\).

34 \(\text{d}2\) \(\text{f}1+\) 35 \(\text{d}1\) \(\text{f}2\) 36 \(\text{g}1\) g5 37 h3 h5 38 \(\text{e}1\) c4 39 \(\text{f}3\) c3 40 bxc3 \(\text{xa}2\)

41 \(\text{b}1\) \(\text{f}2\) 42 \(\text{g}5\) \(\text{d}5\) 43 g4 h4 44 \(\text{d}1+\) \(\text{c}4\) 45 \(\text{e}4\) \(\text{h}2\) 46 g5 \(\text{b}3\) 47 \(\text{g}1\) a5 48 g6 1-0 (Notes by Kramnik)

I was also happy with the next game, a complete one in the strategic sense.

No. 116

Nikolic–Kramnik

Monaco Blind 1998

Queen's Gambit

1 d4 \(\text{f}6\) 2 c4 e6 3 \(\text{f}3\) d5 4 \(\text{c}3\) c6 5 \(\text{cxd}5\)

Usually Nikolic plays 5 \(\text{g}5\), but here he apparently did not want to allow the Botvinnik Variation – a difficult one for blindfold play.

5...\(\text{exd}5\) 6 \(\text{g}5\) \(\text{e}7\) 7 e3

A passive move; if White is aiming for anything, he should play 7 \(\text{wc}2\).

7...\(\text{f}5\) 8 \(\text{d}3\) \(\text{xd}3\) 9 \(\text{wc}3?!\)

A slight inaccuracy. It is better to exchange first on f6.

9...\(\text{bd}7\)

Now after 10 \(\text{xf}6\) \(\text{xf}6\) the knight at f6 is excellently placed, and the bishop can switch from e7 to its 'lawful' square d6.

10 0–0 0–0 11 \(\text{ab}1\) a5 12 a3

A debatable point. In my opinion, White should not undertake any aggressive attempts such as b2-b4, which merely weakens his position, but should prefer playing for equality: the capture on f6 followed by deploying the pieces in the centre and a probable e3-e4.

12...\(\text{e}4\)

12...a4 13 \(\text{w}2\) \(\text{a}5\) is also possible – in such a set-up without the light square bishops, Black is in no danger.

13 \(\text{xe}7?!\) (13 \(\text{f}4\) is better) 13...\(\text{xe}7\)
Now I have a very easy game. The knight is excellently placed at d6, eyeing both flanks, and the f-pawn is ready to advance to f4.

14 b4?

A routine move and a significant mistake. After 14 0xd2 it is rather early to talk of an advantage for Black. Now, however, the c4 square is seriously weakened, and White's position becomes very uneasy.

14...b5!

A typical idea, not allowing b4-b5.

15 wc2 axb4 16 axb4 0xd6

The position has clarified. The knight goes to c4, completely blocking White's play on the queenside, and the weight of the struggle switches to the kingside, where Black's resources are greater. This game outwardly seems dull, but in fact it is a classic one for the Carlsbad structure. Without false modesty I would say: the plan that I was able to carry out may well find its way into the books as a striking example of how positional mistakes may lead to defeat in a fairly solid position.

17 0xb3?!

It was better to set up a counter on the a-file by 17 0b3 and 0a1, or else try to transfer the knight from c3 to a more promising position.

17...0b6!

Exploiting an opportunity, I direct my less active knight to c4.

18 0xe5 0fc8 19 0xd3

My opponent became rattled and was unable to find a concrete plan. But strategically White's position is very unpleasant, and it is not clear what in general he should do. Wait until Black begins to 'roll' on the kingside?

19...0bc4 20 0c5

White intends at a convenient moment to play e3-e4, and although this is not a panacea against all his ills, I play to keep my opponent on the canvas.

20...0e8

I considered play on the a-file to be insufficient, and therefore I decided to widen the front.

21 h3?

Most probably the decisive mistake. Now, hanging over White's position like a Sword of Damocles is the typical sacrifice on e3, since the square g3 has been irreparably weakened, and hence also the white king. He should have played 21 0h1. After the move in the game it all became clear to me, and the further deployment of the pieces went 'like clockwork'. White has no way of opposing the opponent's plan.

21...g6 22 0c1 0a7 23 0d1 h5 24 0h1 0g5 25 0bb1 0ae7 26 0a1 0f5

Everything is ready for the knock-out blow.

27 0a2
Instead of a leap by his attacked knight to e6, White finds an original move which sharply increases his activity on the queenside.

17 a4!? b5

So as not to lose the queen: 17...hxg5?
18 b6 a6 19 d2.

18 c6 axb6 19 dxe6 fxe6 20 dxe6

Instead of a leap by his attacked knight to e6, White finds an original move which sharply increases his activity on the queenside.

17 a4!? b5

So as not to lose the queen: 17...hxg5?
18 b6 a6 19 d2.

18 c6 axb6 19 dxe6 fxe6 20 dxe6

Instead of a leap by his attacked knight to e6, White finds an original move which sharply increases his activity on the queenside.

17 a4!? b5

So as not to lose the queen: 17...hxg5?
18 b6 a6 19 d2.

18 c6 axb6 19 dxe6 fxe6 20 dxe6
I had thought up this strange move a long time before, since when it had already been played.  
11 ëe2 ëc6 12 ëb5 ëa7 13 ëa4
Possibly Anand did not object to a repetition of position and a draw, but psychologically it was difficult to go in for this. It seemed to me that he made this last move reluctantly – the entire enterprise was not to his taste.

13...ëe6
I also examined 13...b5 14 ëxb5 ëxb5 15 ëxb5 a4 16 ëc1 d5, but considered it to be an over-forceful solution.

14 ëxa7
14 0-0 is unfavourable because of 14...ëc4 and 15...b5, and queenside castling also looks dangerous. Possibly 14 ëf2 should have been preferred, but then Black has a good choice: 14...ëb8, 14...ëc8 or 14...b5?!

14...ëxa7 15 ëf2 ëa8 16 0-0-0?
This ambitious move surprised me. I though that 16 0-0 had to be played, when Black is only slightly better.

Now White wants to consolidate his grip on the light squares – ëb5 and a2-a4 (of course, g2-g4-g5 is not a threat). Reckoning that it would be hard to play ...d6-d5, I was planning at some point the exchange sacrifice ...ëc8xc3. I had already entered 16...ëc8 on the computer keyboard, but then I decided that the rook would come in useful on a8, and in addition the queen was not doing anything at d8.

16...ëb8!
It was obvious that my opponent did not like his position. In this type of play the opponent's emotions are often clearly seen. When things are not going well, even the most 'steely', such as Karpov, give themselves away.

17 ëb5 ëc8 18 ëa4?!
Probably 18 a4 should have been played, when I was planning 18...ëxc3 19 bxc3 ëc7 (after the immediate 19...d5 I did not like 20 ëb6 or 20 ëc5) and then ...d6-d5.

18...d5! Now all the black pieces are in play, and many variations for White do not 'gel'.
19 ëb6 a4
Here there were many tempting continuations, but 19...a4 is probably the most accurate.

20 ëxa4
1f-20 ëxa4 dxe4, or 20 ëxe8 ëxc8 21 ëd2 a3 and White's position collapses.
20...ëa7 (20...d4 was also very strong)
21 exd5 (21 ëhfl d4 22 ëxe8 ëxc8) 21...ëd8! (it would appear that Anand overlooked this move) 22 dxe6 ëxb6 (Black wins a piece) 23 exf7+ ëxf7 24 ëc5 ëxa4! The final precise stroke. White resigns. (Notes by Kramnik)

And, finally, blitz. The eternal safety-valve for even the most serious and orthodox of chess researchers – with very rare exceptions. A quite different game, with other values that come to the fore. Error-free five-minute games practically do not exist, and 'he who analyses blitz games is stupid', as Rashid Nezhmetdinov, a fervent supporter of this relaxation and also my teacher, liked to say. Incidentally, both he, and also other Soviet masters, gave a good thrashing to the young USA champion, Bobby Fischer, who was already a grandmaster, on the only occasion when he came to the 'chess Mecca' – Moscow. After this Bobby began training seriously in five-minute chess, and in this he was fully successful...
Kramnik himself considers blitz to be that extreme boundary, which allows chess to remain... chess. Anything more rapid is foolish. But five minutes, in his opinion, allows you to think at the required moment, carry out a plan, and calculate sufficiently far and accurately. Of course, as the flag begins to rise, technique sometimes suffers, and accidental, by no means obligatory moves appear, but at the top grandmaster level it is a spectacle from which it is hard to turn away.

This is why blitz tournaments have nowadays become sometimes even an obligatory diversion in the program of major tournaments – for example, on an additionally allotted free day. There is no need to take from here many games by Vladimir, who, incidentally, in blitz plays 1 e4 as often as 1 d4 or 1 f3. A single miniature will suffice.

No. 120
Kramnik–Salov
Wijk aan Zee Blitz 1998
Giococo Piano

1 e4 e5 2 f3 c6 3 c4 c5 4 c3 d6 5 d4 exd4 6 cxd4 b4+ 7 d3 g4 8 0-0 f6 9 d5 xf3 10 gxf3 xc3 11 dxc6 a5 12 cxb7 b8 13 a4+ c6 14 xc6+ e7 15 e5 dxe5 16 c5+ d6 17 xa5 xb7 18 b3 1-0

But we cannot pass by the grandiose two-day battle with direct coverage on the Internet, which was arranged in late November of the same year, 1998, between Garry Kasparov and Vladimir Kramnik. The 24 blitz games, each valued (apart from the priceless prestige and ambition essential for a genuine competitor) at $1000 – they were followed by the entire world.

Here the entire range of great mastery was displayed. Skilful building up of pressure, intermediate moves, resourcefulness and composure in defence – all this can be seen here:

No. 121
Kramnik–Kasparov
Moscow Blitz Match 1998
Queen’s Gambit

1 f3 d5 2 d4 f6 3 c4 e6 4 c3 c6 5 g5 bd7 6 cxd5 exd5 7 e3 e7 8 d3 0-0 9 wc2 e8 10 0-0 d8 11 ab1 a5 12 a3 d6 13 be1 g4 14 d2 h5 15 f4! h6 16 ah4 g6 17 f5 h7 18 h3 8d7 19 f3 b5 20 e4 b4

No. 122
Kramnik–Kasparov
Moscow Blitz Match 1998
King’s Indian Defence

1 f3 f6 2 c4 g6 3 c3 g7 4 e4 d6 5 d4 0-0 6 e2 e5 7 0-0 c6 8 d5 e7

It is a thankless task playing the King’s Indian against Kramnik. In his hands 9 b4 is a sharp weapon...

9 b4 a5 10 a3 axb4 11 xb4 d7 12 a4 f5 13 g5 c5 14 xc5 dxc5 15 f3
A new move! 15 \( \text{w}b3 \) had previously been played. The white bishop, as usual in this variation, 'cuts through' the long light-square diagonal, since the e4 pawn may be exchanged on f5, and the d5 pawn will inevitably move to e6.

15...\( \text{a}a6 \) 16 a5! (fixing the target at b7) 16...\( \text{h}h8 \) 17 \( \text{e}6 \) \( \text{x}e6 \) 18 dxe6 f4 19 \( \text{w}x \text{xd}8 \) \( \text{xd}8 \) 20 \( \text{f}b1 \) \( \text{b}8 \) 21 \( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{xd}5 \) 22 cxd5 \( \text{f}8 \) 23 \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{a}7 \) 24 \( \text{a}6 \) \( \text{d}6 \)

Now and later 24...\( \text{ba}8 \) would have eased the defence, exchanging the dangerous white pawn.

25 \( \text{h}4 \) \( \text{g}7 \) 26 \( \text{c}4 \)

26...b6? (the decisive mistake, after which the rest is silence) 27 \( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{h}6 \) 28 \( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 29 \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{f}6 \) 30 \( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 31 \( \text{h}3 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 32 \( \text{d}3 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 33 \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{g}7 \) 34 \( \text{c}6 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 35 \( \text{b}5 \) \( \text{g}7 \) 36 \( \text{b}7 \) \( \text{f}8 \) 37 \( \text{g}1 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 38 \( \text{g}3 \) \( \text{f}3 \) 39 \( \text{c}1 \) \( \text{d}8 \) 40 \( \text{c}3 \) \( \text{h}5 \) 41 \( \text{h}1 \) \( \text{e}7 \) 42 \( \text{d}1 \) 1–0

It can be added that at the start Kasparov broke away, then at the two-thirds distance Kramnik was leading, but even so the final score was 12-12. Apparently, to the obvious dissatisfaction of both participants and to the delight of all chess lovers. This encounter became known as the 'Cosmic Superblitz'. And by no means because it took place in the casino of the Cosmos Hotel in Moscow...

Another trend of the times is televised chess. Though not yet everywhere, it is gradually gaining ground – naturally, by the efforts of those who are of interest to everyone. Here, for example, is an account by Kramnik himself, with an excursion into recent history.

'My August journey in 1998 to Western Europe began with Cologne. The local television channel VDR (it broadcasts over the whole of Germany) has been popularising chess for about ten years now with commendable constancy. Every year on a Sunday evening in August at 23.30 viewers can watch a so-called live game between two top players.

'Naturally, the specific nature of TV transmission dictates certain demands. The time control is one hour for the entire game for each player. The player with White needs to win, in order to retain the right to appear in Cologne the following year. Commentary is by the well-known German grandmasters Hort and Pfleger. Frederic Friedel also arrives with his program Fritz – it too is included in the analysis of the game. All this should certainly stimulate the interest of fans. It would interesting to know whether the organisers calculate the rating of the audience?

'I made my debut in this unusual spectacle in 1996, when with Black (newcomers are traditionally given this colour) I drew with Anand and eliminated him, and then in 1997 I won.'
After the exchange of queens White unhurriedly builds up the pressure.

21 \( \text{Bxd2} \) \( \text{Be8} \) 22 \( \text{Ba2} \) f5 23 exf5 \( \text{Bxf5} \) 24 \( \text{Bbd1} \) \( \text{Cc6} \) 25 g4 \( \text{Be6} \) 26 \( \text{Bac3} \) \( \text{Da5} \) 27 \( \text{Bb1} \) b6 28 \( \text{Bg2} \) h6 29 \( \text{Dd3} \) g5 30 \( \text{De4} \) \( \text{Bxc3?} \)

The decisive mistake: Black voluntarily parts with a potential defender of the d6 pawn and the kingside. A move later White will play h2-h4, and there will no longer be anything with which to oppose this.

31 \( \text{Bxc3} \) \( \text{Bac8} \) 32 h4 gxf4 33 \( \text{Bxh6} \) \( \text{Cc7} \) 34 \( \text{Bg5} \) d7 35 \( \text{Bxh4} \) b5 36 \( \text{Bd5} \) \( \text{Bxd5} \) 37 cxd5 \( \text{Bf7} \) 38 \( \text{Bf5} \) \( \text{Cc7} \) 39 \( \text{Bf6} \) \( \text{Bf8} \) 40 \( \text{Bxa2} \) 1-0 (Notes by Kramnik)

'I n 1998 Michael Adams was nominated as my opponent. And in contrast to my game with Anand two years previously, this time the organisers were simply happy: the game proved to be very tense and interesting. Everything was decided literally in the last few seconds.'

\[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{No. 124} \\
\text{Kramnik–Adams} \\
\text{Cologne TV 1998} \\
\text{Nimzo-Indian Defence}
\end{array} \]

1 d4 \( \text{Bf6} \) 2 c4 e6 3 \( \text{Bc3} \) \( \text{Bb4} \) 4 \( \text{Cc2} \) 0-0 5 e4

The need to play for a win demanded that I initiate sharp play as soon as possible.

5...d5 6 e5 \( \text{Bd6} \) 7 \( \text{Bxd3} \) c5 8 cxd5 exd5 9 \( \text{Bge2} \)

I did not specially prepare for the game, but I had noticed this move in \text{Informator. Most probably it is not one of the strongest.}

Adams thought up a very good idea (or perhaps he knew it already?).

9...cxd4 10 \( \text{Bxd4} \) \( \text{Bd7} \)

White has not even a trace of an advantage. He can simplify the position by 11 \( \text{Bxe4} \) dxe4 12 \( \text{Wxe4} \) \( \text{Bxe5} \) 13 0-0, but then he cannot hope for more than a draw. Therefore I went in for a risky variation.

11 f4 \( \text{Wf4}+ \)

Another poor move, this time with more serious consequences. It was not yet too late for 18...f6 19 g4 \( \text{We8} \) 20 e6, although in this version Black's position is now rather unpleasant: 21 \( \text{Ba3} \) is threatened, and if 20...\( \text{Bc4} \) White has excellent prospects on the kingside after g4-g5 and \( \text{Wf3} \).
19 g4 \( \text{h4} \) 20 f6! \( \text{\&xe5} \)

Fortunately for Black, he finds the only possibility of parrying the threats of 21 \( \text{\&f3} \) and 21 \( \text{\&f5} \), trapping his queen.

21 fxg7 (21 \( \text{\&f4} \) is also interesting)

21...\( \text{\&e8} \) 22 \( \text{\&f5} \) \( \text{\&d8} \) 23 \( \text{\&e3} \)

I went in for this position from afar, evaluating it as `with a big advantage to White’. But Adams defends very skilfully.

23...\( \text{\&e6} \) 24 g5 (24 \( \text{\&d4} \) is an empty threat in view of 24...\( \text{\&c6} \) 24...\( \text{\&e8} \) 25 \( \text{\&h6+} \)?)

Somewhat over-hasty. I could have calmly strengthened my position by 25 \( \text{\&ae1} \) \( \text{\&h1} \), and only then \( \text{\&f6+} \).

25...\( \text{\&xh6} \)

Forced, since if 25...\( \text{\&xg7} \) White wins by 26 \( \text{\&d4} \) \( \text{(\( \text{\&xh5}\))xg5} \) 27 \( \text{\&xf7} \)!

26 \( \text{\&xh6} \) \( \text{\&e6} \) 27 \( \text{\&h1} \)!

Time trouble began to interfere (at this point we each had about five minutes left). I saw 27 \( \text{\&f5} \), which is probably the strongest move, but decided not to get mixed up in complications after 27...\( \text{\&g6} \) 28 \( \text{\&xe5} \), although in this case White’s position is objectively won on account of the catastrophic position of the black king. After 27...\( \text{\&c4} \) 28 \( \text{\&f3} \) \( \text{\&g6+} \) 29 \( \text{\&h1} \) my pieces would also have been very active. The desire to win as calmly as possible runs into serious counterplay by Black.

27...\( \text{\&g6} \) 28 \( \text{\&h3} \) \( \text{\&g4} \)

Of course, not 28...d4 29 cxd4 \( \text{\&d5??} \) 30 \( \text{\&c8+} \) with mate. It is hard to comment on the subsequent events, which took place in a time scramble. White must be on his guard: the opponent’s pieces have taken up active positions, and it is easy to overlook some mate. For the moment Black is threatening to bring his queen onto the long diagonal.

29 \( \text{\&f3} \) \( \text{\&c7} \)

Putting the pressure on: mate at h2 is threatened. Here I had been counting in advance on 30 \( \text{\&f4} \), but I noticed in time 30...\( \text{\&xc3} \), and the queen cannot be taken because of mate on f2. I had to change my plans.

30 \( \text{\&g1} \) \( \text{\&e5} \)

Mickey does not lose heart, and is not bought off by 30...\( \text{\&xh6} \) 31 \( \text{\&ad1} \) with advantage to White.

31 \( \text{\&h3}? \)

A mistake. As shown by Fritz, 31 \( \text{\&f4} \) was possible, and if 31...\( \text{\&g4} \) 32 \( \text{\&f5} \) d4!? (which we both thought was very dangerous for White) – 33 \( \text{\&e6} \)!! But try finding such a move with your flag about to fall!

31...\( \text{\&c6} \)

In passing I had set a trap: 31...d4? 32 cxd4 \( \text{\&c6} \) was too early in view of 33 d5!

32 \( \text{\&d4} \) \( \text{\&g3+} \)

Black goes in for an exchanging operation, leading to a roughly equal ending. 32...\( \text{\&xh6} \) 33 \( \text{\&g2} \) \( \text{\&g6} \) 34 \( \text{\&e2} \) \( \text{\&e6} \) etc. was also unclear.

33 hgx3 \( \text{\&xh6} \) 34 \( \text{\&xh6} \) \( \text{\&xh6} \) 35 \( \text{\&g2} \) \( \text{\&f6} \) 36 \( \text{\&f4} \) \( \text{\&xg7} \) 37 \( \text{\&xf4} \) \( \text{\&g6} \) 38 \( \text{\&e5} \)!

Playing to rest the queen, although it would have been simpler to win the a7 pawn. We were now down to our last seconds, and Adams cracked under the tension.

38...a6 39 \( \text{\&f4} \) \( \text{\&e8} \)?

A blunder, leading quickly to defeat. True, my position is slightly better: Black has no useful moves. The knight is bodily protecting the d5 and f6 pawns, and the advance of the pawn to h5 is liable to result in its loss after \( \text{\&h4} \). Evidently Mickey should have simply waited, by playing ...b7-b5 and ...a6-a5. After his blunder the only question was: would I have time to mate the black king?

40 \( \text{\&xf6} \) \( \text{\&g8} \) 41 \( \text{\&f8+} \) (41 \( \text{\&xe5} \) was simpler, and if 41...\( \text{\&xe5} \) 42 \( \text{\&g4+} \) \( \text{\&h8} \) 43 \( \text{\&f8} \) mate) 41...\( \text{\&xh8} \) 42 \( \text{\&xf8+} \) \( \text{\&xh8} \) 43 \( \text{\&xe5} \) \( \text{\&f7} \) 44 \( \text{\&f3} \) \( \text{\&c6} \) 45 \( \text{\&f4} \) b5 46 a3 \( \text{\&e5} \) 47 \( \text{\&d4} \) a4 48 \( \text{\&g5} \) \( \text{\&f7} \) 49 \( \text{\&h6} \) \( \text{\&g8} \) 50 \( \text{\&g4} \) \( \text{\&f7} \) 51 \( \text{\&xh7} \) 1–0 (Notes by Kramnik)
Selected Games

IN MODERN CHESS – more than ever before – it is hard to draw the line between positional and tactical play: in grandmaster games these elements of the game are naturally combined. Therefore the divisions we have used are somewhat arbitrary: for example, a breakthrough is based on the implementation of a strategic plan, and it, in turn, relies on the tactical features of the particular position. We will merely draw the attention of the reader to some counter-argument in each game – and not more.

Breakthrough

No.125
Kramnik–Belyavsky
Belgrade 1995
Réti Opening

With thanks to faulty equipment

‘This was the last round, and for overall victory in the tournament it was essential for me to win. For this reason I avoided the main theoretical set-ups of the Queen’s Gambit, which were well known to my opponent, and chose something of a sideline. Especially since at the start of the tournament my computer had broken down, and all my opening preparation essentially came to nothing. I had to play “on spec”, and I myself was surprised that with such a modest opening I was able to win, within the “official bounds” of a miniature game…” (Kramnik)

To this it can be added that the present game might well serve as a `visiting-card` of the breakthrough – a very sharp weapon in Kramnik’s hands.

1 \( \text{d}f3 \) d5
2 \( g3 \) c6

Radically preventing a possible e2-e4, which in the event of 6...\( \text{d}gf6 \) White would nevertheless be able to play after \( \text{d}e1 \). It should be said that at that time Black’s last move was beginning to come into fashion.

3 \( \text{g2} \) g4
4 0–0 \( \text{d}7 \)
5 d4 e6
6 \( \text{bd}2 \) f5

Here I decided to begin playing more actively, in order to try and exploit my opponent’s slight delay in developing his kingside. Because if Black should succeed in playing ...\( \text{d}gf6 \) and ...0–0, he will achieve a highly favourable version of the ‘stencil’-set-up, without his light-square bishop being shut in.

7 c4 \( \text{d}6 \)

The black queen must not be diverted to the defence of the pawn – for the moment it is guarding the g5 square, to where the white knight is eager to go.

8 \( \text{b}3 \) \( \text{b}8 \)

Hinting that e2-e4 will be highly probable after the pawn exchange in the centre. Incidentally, after 9...\( \text{d}gf6 \) this is
what White would have played: 10 cxd5 cxd5 11 Qg5 We7 12 f3 h5 13 e4, beginning a direct attack on the king.

9 ... Qh6
10 cxd5 cxd5
11 h3!

At this point I did not even know of the game's predecessor, Hug-Speelman, Altensteig 1994, where White illogically blocked the e-file by 11 â£e5, and after 11...â£xe5 12 dxe5 â£c7 a draw was agreed a few moves later.

11 ... Qh5

This loses in surprising fashion, but also after 11...â£xf3 12 exf3, firstly, Black cannot save his e6 pawn without losing the right to castle, and secondly, he is clearly unable to deploy his knights satisfactorily.

12 e4!! fxe4
13 Qg5!

I no longer remember the details, but I think that during the game I first considered the 'normal' 13 â£xe4, then found a more expeditious continuation. It was this that my opponent did not expect.

13 ... Qf7

If 13...â£xg5 14 â£xe4 We7 White has either 15 â£g5! â£f6 (after 15...â£f8 there follows 16 â£xd5! exd5 17 â£xd6 mate) 16 â£xf6+ gxf6 17 â£xh6, when the attack continues now for free, or 15 â£xd6+ â£xd6 16 â£f4, picking up the rook at b8 and then also the pawns at d5, e6 and b7.

If 13...â£e7 the strongest is 14 â£xe6 â£f7 (14...â£xe6 15 â£xe4) 15 â£xg7+ â£f8
16 â£xe4 â£xg7 (16...â£xe4 17 â£xh6) 17 â£g5 â£f8 18 â£xh6+ â£h6 19 â£e3+ â£g7 20 â£g5+ â£g6 21 â£xd6 (a curious fact: White himself exchanges his attacking pieces, because in their place others immediately arrive) 21...â£xd6 22 â£e7+ with a quick mate.

Even so, that would seem to be a more tenacious defence for Black.

14 â£xe4 dxe4
15 â£xe6 â£xe6

Everything else (such as 15...â£f6 16 â£xe4 â£e7) would also not have saved the game, but would merely have prolonged the struggle for a few moves.

16 â£xe6+ â£e7
17 â£e4

The simplest.

17 ... Qd8
18 â£d5

Here I expected 18...â£f6, after which I had prepared 19 â£xe7 â£xd5 20 â£e6, regaining the piece and transposing into a won ending. However, Black resigned: evidently it had become unbearable for Belyavsky to continue.

On this whole game White spent slightly more than an hour on his clock.

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No.126
Kramnik–Ulibin
Chalkidiki 1992
Bogo-Indian Defence

Attack in the endgame

This encounter between two young compatriots played abroad did not have any psychological implications. It was simply that the younger of them very much needed to win - so as in the end to head the tournament table. But winning 'to order' is easier said than done - players know the value of such victories. Besides, Kramnik's opponent from the Urals had both gone through an excellent chess training, and had played splendidly in the
country's junior championship: this tournament has a symbolic and at the same time quite realistic name – 'Hopes of Russia'. Nevertheless, this game can be compared with an examination, which an erudite teacher sets a student: White's 'questions' were distinguished by their originality, and answers to them were not found...

1 d4 e6 2 c4 cf6 3 d3 b4+ 4 d2 e7
5 g3 dce6 6 d3 c3 0–0 7 g2 xc3 8 xc3 de4 9 c1 d6 10 d5 d8 11 dxe6 cxe6

12 b4!

At that time this was a new move. Earlier 12 0–0 had been played, and after 12... c3 13 xc3 d7 followed by ...c6 Black has no problems.

12 ... d7

The main idea of my previous move consisted in the variation 12... c3 13 c3 d7 followed by ...c6 Black has no problems.

13 e5!?

13 0–0 is also good, but in my preparations for the game I had decided that 13 e5 was stronger.

13 6c5?! As I expected, half an hour's thought was not sufficient for my opponent to risk these interesting complications: 13... c6 14 xe4 (14 d3!? c6 15 0–0 also comes into consideration) 14... xe5 15 xb7 xb2 (15... ab8? 16 c3) 16 b1 xa2 17 xa8 xa8 18 b3 a6 19 0–0 – here White has only a minimal advantage. Now, however, the white bishops prove to be significantly stronger than the opponent's knights.

14 xd7 xd7
15 0–0 a5
16 a3 fe8

Significantly stronger was the attempt to support the knight at e4, since, firstly, in the given variation this is a very important square for Black, and secondly, White's long-range light-square bishop, which later becomes rampant, would then have been securely restricted. Thus the set-up with ...b7-b6 followed by ...f7-f5 was effectively essential for Black in his battle for equality. Moreover, it is unfavourable for Black to exchange queens, and it later transpires that without exchanging queens the outpost at e4 can no longer be maintained.

17 b3 b6
18 b2 ad8
19 d4

Initially I had been intending to play 19 f3 c5 20 e4 with a subsequent pawn offensive on the kingside, but in the end I did not like 20... f5! 21 exf5 (21 d5+ fe7 22 xf7+ xf7 23 exf5 e2) 21... e3+ 22 gh1 d3 with counterplay for Black.

19 ... fe6

After 19... f6 20 ce1! followed by e2-e4, f2-f4 and g3-g4-g5 Black would have faced a difficult defence. Perhaps 19... f5 should have been preferred. White would then have had an opportunity to exchange queens, which is advantageous to him, but he could also consider the plan of ce1 with a breakthrough on the kingside: g3-g4.
Thus the situation has clarified. In the endgame White has a clear advantage, although Black’s position is very solid.

21 ... h6?!

In principle, in such positions Black should move his knight from f6 and play ... f7-f6. Of course, it is not possible to restrict both bishops, but then at least one of them – the dark-square bishop – would have had its ambitions markedly reduced, although White’s advantage would have remained undisputed.

The move played does nothing to solve these problems, and merely creates additional preconditions for active play by White on the kingside.

22 e3

The attempt to set up a pawn chain by 22 f3 c5 23 e4 does not have much point: the light-square bishop is shut in and the pawns in the centre lose their mobility. White’s aim is to carry out the pawn advances a2-a3 and b3-b4, as well as g3-g4 and h2-h4, i.e. to mount an offensive on the flanks, leaving the centre open and the bishops working at full capacity.

22 ... d7
23 f1 e7
24 e2 de8
25 g4!

Beginning play aimed at opening lines on the kingside (with h2-h4 followed by g4-g5).

25 ... e6
26 h4 e7

Black is obliged to mark time.

27 f3 dc5
28 d5

The threat of g4-g5 is hanging over Black’s position. 28...f6 does not get him out of his difficulties, as after 29 g2! the knight at e4 is in danger.

28 ... a6

Trying to divert White from his activity on the other side of the board.

29 a3!

29 h5? (with the idea of g4-g5) did not work on account of 29...b4 30 a3 g3+!

29 ... ac5

With 29...c5 Black could have won a pawn, but he would have come under a very strong attack: 30 g5! xb3 31 g1.

30 b4 axb4
31 axb4 a6
32 b5!

32 a3 was also satisfactory, but I decided to leave the bishop on the a1-h8 diagonal, even at the cost of the c5 square, on which the black knight now establishes itself.

32 ... ac5
33 a1 a6

The only defence against g4-g5.

34 dd1

After 34 xf6 gx6 Black can still hold on.

34 ... fe4
35 a7 b8
36  g5!

To breach Black's position on the queenside is very difficult, and White makes a positional pawn sacrifice for an attack on the king. A rather unusual occurrence for the endgame.

36  ...  hxg5
37  hxg5  Oxf5
38  a6  c8
39  d1  g8
40  a1!

The inclusion of the second rook in the attack decides the game.

40  ...  ce6

It is already hard to suggest anything for Black. For example, if 40 ... f6 41 d5+ d7 42 ag1 e8 43 h7 and his position collapses.

41  h4  f6

Or 41 ... h7 42 ah1 ce8 43 e4 g6 44 d5, and Black, who has no useful moves, is defenceless against the threat of f2-f4-f5. The white bishops rake the entire board!

42  g1  f7
43  d5

Not 43 f4 h3!

43  ...  e8
44  h8+  f8
45  f4  ge6

After 45 ... gh7 even the 'cynical' 46 g8 wins.

46  f3

White can take play into a won ending by 46 xe6 and 47 xg7, but there is no reason for him to hurry – the black pieces are completely stalemated.

46  ...  f5

This hastens the end, but in any case Black's position is quite hopeless.

47  g6!  c5
48  xg7  f7
49  xf8

Black resigns

In view of the loss of material after 49 ... xf8 50 xf8+ xf8 51 g8+ and 52 xc8.
1 d4 ♜f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♜c3 ♜g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0–0 6 ♜e3 ♜bd7 7 ♛d2 c5 8 d5 ♜e5 9 ♜g5

If 9 h3 Black has 9...♗h5 with counter-chances, and in the event of the exchange sacrifice 10 f4 ♐g3 11 fxe5 ♐xe5! 12 ♜f4 ♜xh1 the black knight cannot be trapped.

9 ... ♜f7

The Riga player Zigurds Lanka has been playing the King’s Indian Defence all his life, and has often demonstrated original ideas in it. Here too he employs a new move, which nevertheless feels somewhat artificial. The point of it possibly consisted in the variation 10 f4 h6 11 ♜h4 ♜g5, when Black has definite compensation for the pawn in the form of his ‘eternal’ outpost at e5 and splendid King’s Indian bishop.

Therefore White, in full accordance with his style of play, first restricts the opponent’s possibilities.

10 ♜h6 ♜xh6

It was time to resort to the thematic 11...f5, at the same time preparing a retreat for the knight. Here too the position is in White’s favour, of course, but the move played is really very slow.

12 h4 f6

The only defence against h4-h5.

13 ♛d2 ♜a5

After 13...b5 14 cxb5 ♜a5 15 f4 ♜g4 16 ♜e2 ♜b6 17 bxa6 Black does not have sufficient compensation, but at least to some extent he would have diverted White from his play in the centre and on the kingside. The time for unhurried action by Black has passed.

14 ♛f4 ♜f7

15 ♜f3 ♜b8

16 a4

Despite so few moves having been made, strategically the game is already decided. Black has no pawn breaks, his pieces are poorly coordinated, and White is preparing both h4-h5 and e4-e5.

16 ... ♜b6

17 ♜d3 ♜g4

If 17...♗b4, then simply 18 b3, and the pawn is ‘poisoned’ – 18...♗xb3? 19 ♘b1, while if 17 ...♗d7 White begins a mating attack – 18 h5 ♘g7 19 e5!

18 ♜h2

After 18 0–0 ♘xf3 19 ♘xf3 it will be difficult to play e4-e5, and so I decided to retain my knight.

18 ... ♜d7

19 b3 ♜h8

Black displays signs of desperation, but his position would also have remained very difficult in the event of 19...♗a8 followed by ...♖c7.

20 0–0 ♘a8

21 ♛b2 ♚g8

22 ♜f3

22 ♘ae1 is also good, but then at the cost of a pawn Black would have hampered the e4-e5 breakthrough: 22...b5 23 cxb5 axb5 24 ♘xb5 ♚c7. Therefore White does not deviate from the planned course.
Neither of the captures on e5 would have saved the game, although they would have slightly prolonged it.

This piece sacrifice is correct, for the additional reason that Black’s queen, rook at b8 and knight at a8 are far from the field of battle.

The bishop would have been more securely placed at h5, but Black justifiably wants to control the f5 square: the pawn breakthrough f4-f5 is on the agenda.

24 \( \text{exf6} \)

The most accurate. White does not allow the rook from a8 to go to g8, which was possible after 34 \( \text{e6} \). The rest does not require any commentary.

34 \( \text{e8!} \)

The rook from a8 to go to g8, which was possible after 34 \( \text{e6} \). The rest does not require any commentary.

The rook from a8 to go to g8, which was possible after 34 \( \text{e6} \). The rest does not require any commentary.

Or 27...\( \text{h6} \) 28 \( \text{ae1 e8} \) 29 \( \text{xe4 g7} \)

Another way to win was 29 \( g4\) \( \text{xf6} \) 30 \( \text{xf6 e8} \) 31 \( g5\), when if 31...\( \text{d2} \) even

If 32...\( \text{f3} \), then simply 33 \( \text{h1} \).

\( \text{No.128} \)

\text{Kramnik–Lputian}

\text{European Team Championship}

\text{Debrecen 1992}

\text{Queen’s Gambit}

\text{Zugzwang in the middlegame}

‘Black’s entire system of defence was refuted. After an elegant breakthrough in the centre Kramnik permitted himself a quiet move, and promptly said to himself, half-jokingly and half-seriously: “The opponent appears to be in zugzwang.”’

‘This was indeed so, despite the enormous number of pieces. And a clearing of the centre quickly led to a win that was elegant and spectacular, and all the more valuable for having been gained against a very solid player, one of the heroes of the recent Olympiad in Manila.’

(Grandmaster Sergey Makarychev, trainer of the Russian team)
1 d4 e6 2 c4 ♞f6 3 ♟f3 d5 4 ♟c3 ♞e7 5 ♟f4 0-0 6 e3 c6 7 ♞c2 ♞bd7 8 h3

Usually Black's counterplay involves ...d5xc4, ...b7-b5, ...♗b7 and ...c6-c5. Therefore White does not hurry to develop his bishop at d3, but makes a useful move; Black does the same.

8 ... a6
9  ♟d1

An unfortunate reply, which weakens the b1-h7 diagonal. In the 'battle for a tempo' Black could have played either 9...♗a5, to which White was intending to reply 10 ♟d2, or immediately 9...b5, although after 10 c5 Black has a solid and...very passive position.

10 a3 dxc4

Even so, Black should have prolonged the 'duel' with 10...♗e8, after which White must apparently 'give way' with 11 ♟d3. As a result of these opening inaccuracies, Black ends up in a difficult position.

11 ♟xc4 ♟d5
12 0-0

The most energetic, although 12 ♕g3 ♟xc3 13 ♞xe3 is also not bad. White creates a powerful piece outpost in the centre and prepares an attack on the king, with the f4-f5 breakthrough and play on the e-file in reserve.

12 ... ♟xf4
13 exf4 ♞e7

The other possible set-up – 13...♗e8 14 ♕e5 ♟f8 15 f5 ♘f6 16 ♕e4 ♞e7 17 ♕g4 ♟h7 18 ♟fe1 – would also have led to a very difficult position.

14 ♕e5 ♘f6

14...c5, aiming for counterplay, would have allowed White a pleasant choice between 15 d5 ♚xe5 16 fxe5 ♞xe5 17 ♟fe1 with a powerful initiative for the pawn, and the even stronger 15 ♕a2. Then Black loses quickly after 15...exd4 16 ♕b1 f5 (16...♗f6 17 ♕d5!) 17 ♕d5! ♞d6 18 ♕xe7+ ♗xe7 19 ♕g6, while after 15...♘xe5 16 dxe5 b5 17 ♕b1 g6 18 ♕d3 the white rook heads for g3 and the attack becomes irresistible.

15 ♕a2 ♕d7
16 ♘b1 ♘e8

My opponent was apparently somewhat at a loss, and he makes a decisive mistake. The only possibility of continuing the resistance was 16 ♚fd8 17 ♕c4 ♗f8 18 ♕xf6 ♘xf6 19 ♛h7 ♘e7 20 ♕fe1 ♘h8 21 ♛c2, when the king's march to the centre, to put it mildly, has not improved Black's position.

The move in the game prepares the defensive advance ...g7-g6, but Black obviously overlooked the following blow.

17 d5!! ♕d8

Both captures with the pawns lose to 18 ♕xd5.

18 ♕fe1

As they say, a demonstration of strength, based on the fact that Black...has nothing to move. In principle, the fairly forcing 18 dxe6 fxe6 19 ♕c4 g6 20 ♕g3
Kramnik: my life and games

No. 129
Kramnik–Nunn
Bundesliga 1994
King's Indian Defence

With the ‘agreement’ of the opponent

‘Round about 1990 the Petrosian Variation in the King’s Indian had almost ceased to be played. But one day I took a look at it, convinced myself that not all the resources were exhausted, employed it several times, twice defeated Kasparov, and... returned this tabiya to modern chess. The variation became fashionable and proved to be by no means as simple as it appeared.

‘It rarely happens that a new move has the aim of deploying the forces some 8-10 moves ahead, and it is even more rare to succeed completely in implementing the plan. In the present game this is what happened; and that is why it appeals to me.’ (Kramnik)

1 ♗f3 ♗f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♗c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 d4 0–0 6 ♗e2 e5 7 d5 a5 8 ♗g5 h6 9 ♗h4 ♗a6 10 0–0 ♗e8 11 ♗d2 ♗d7 12 ♗h1 ♗h7 13 a3 h5 14 f3 ♗h6 15 b3

15 ... ♗b8

A move that was introduced not long before our game by Judit Polgar, although I have seen the manoeuvre ...♗e8-b8-a7 in one of Rubinstein’s old games. The queen establishes control over the dark squares, and White must play quite accurately. At

26 ♗d7!

The concluding stroke, after which Black suffers serious loss of material – 26...♗xd7 27 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 (the capture with the bishop allows mate in three moves) 28 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 29 ♗d4+ and 30 ♖xd7.

Literally seconds before the fall of his flag (I still had far more than an hour remaining) Black managed to resign.
any event, in the stem game Judit with Black defeated Alexey Shirov!

Here is that new idea about which I have spoken. Here Shirov continued 17 \( \text{\textup{e}2} \), and in time he stood worse. The move played begins the following regrouping: \( \text{\textup{c}3-d1} \), \( \text{\textup{d}2-b1-c3} \), \( \text{\textup{c}2-c1} \) (after the black bishop moves off the a7-g1 diagonal), \( \text{\textup{e}2-d3-c2} \) and \( \text{\textup{f}3-f4-f5} \), beginning an attack.

17 ... \( \text{\textup{a}7} \)
18 \( \text{\textup{d}1} \) \( \text{\textup{e}5} \)
19 \( \text{\textup{c}1} \) \( \text{\textup{a}8} \)

19...\( \text{\textup{b}8} \) came into consideration, with the idea of setting up counterplay on the queenside as soon as possible.

20 \( \text{\textup{d}3} \! \! \! \! \! \! 1 \)

This accuracy is essential. After the immediate 20 \( \text{\textup{b}1} \) Black would have disrupted the implementation of the above plan by 20...\( \text{\textup{b}6} \).

20 ... \( \text{\textup{c}6} \)
21 \( \text{\textup{b}1} \)

Black needs to play more actively, and the capture 21...\( \text{\textup{c}xd5} \) would have answered this. After 22 \( \text{\textup{exd5}} \) (if 22 \( \text{\textup{c}xd5} \) Black acquires adequate counterplay on the c-file) 22...\( \text{\textup{g}7} \) 22...\( \text{\textup{b}6} \) is dangerous on account of 23 \( \text{\textup{h}6} \) \( \text{\textup{xb}3} \) 24 \( \text{\textup{bc}3} \) with the threat of \( \text{\textup{e}4-f6} \) 23 \( \text{\textup{f}4} \) \( \text{\textup{f}5} \) the position is complicated and unclear, as shown by the following variation: 24 \( \text{\textup{xe}5} \) 25 \( \text{\textup{c}3} \) \( \text{\textup{a}4} \) 26 \( \text{\textup{b}4} \) (26 \( \text{\textup{xe}5} \) ? \( \text{\textup{d}4} \) 26...\( \text{\textup{d}4} \), although here too I would prefer to be playing White.

22 \( \text{\textup{c}2} \) \( \text{\textup{g}7} \)

Here if 22...\( \text{\textup{c}xd5} \) White has the good reply 23 \( \text{\textup{bc}3}! \) (seemingly it was this that my opponent missed in his preliminary calculations) followed by \( \text{\textup{c}3-d5} \) and possibly \( \text{\textup{h}4-c7} \).

23 \( \text{\textup{bc}3} \) \( \text{\textup{a}7} \)

The loss of two tempi cannot fail to tell, even in a position that for the moment is closed. In addition, White is able to carry out his plan in full.

24 \( \text{\textup{g}3} \) \( \text{\textup{f}6} \)

There can no longer be any question of activity (if 24...\( \text{\textup{f}5} \) 25 \( \text{\textup{f}4} \), with crushing threats), so Black tries to set up defensive lines.

25 \( \text{\textup{f}4} \)

One gains the impression that it is a Ruy Lopez that has been played.

25 ... \( \text{\textup{h}4} \)

A dubious decision. I think that the last defensive possibility was 25...\( \text{\textup{g}5} \), and after 26 \( \text{\textup{f}5} \) the position would have become so blocked, that it would have taken White a long time to win.

26 \( \text{\textup{f}2} \) \( \text{\textup{xf}4} \)
27 \( \text{\textup{xf}4} \) \( \text{\textup{g}5} \)

27...\( \text{\textup{h}3} \) , then 28 \( \text{\textup{gxh}3} \) \( \text{\textup{hxh}3} \) 29 \( \text{\textup{g}1} \) is not at all bad, `eyeing' the g6 pawn.

28 \( \text{\textup{d}2} \) \( \text{\textup{f}7} \)

This allows White to win by force. The lesser evil was 28...\( \text{\textup{e}5} \) (neither of the
black knights is destined to reach this square) 29 \( \text{Qe3} \) with a great advantage.

29 e5! \( \text{Qxe5} \)

No better was 29...fxe5 30 \( \text{Qxc5} \) \( \text{Qxf1} \) 31 \( \text{Qxf1} \) \( \text{Qxe5} \) 32 \( \text{Qxh7} \) \( \text{Qxh7} \) 33 \( \text{Qxg5} \) with a rapid mate, or 29...dxe5 30 \( \text{Qh7} \) \( \text{Qxh7} \) 31 \( \text{Qe4} \) \( \text{Qxf2} \) 32 \( \text{Qxf2} \) \( \text{Qd4} \) 33 \( \text{Qd4} \) \( \text{Qg7} \) 34 \( \text{Qxe6} \) \( \text{Qf2} \) 32 ... \( \text{Qxe6} \) (32 ... \( \text{Qf2} \) 33 \( \text{Qxe6} \) \( \text{Qg7} \) 34 \( \text{Qxf6} \) \( \text{Qxf6} \) 35 \( \text{Qxg5}+ \geq 36 \) \( \text{Qxe7} \) ) 33 \( \text{Qxd4} \) \( \text{Qxd4} \) 34 \( \text{Qb2} \) \( \text{Qf2} \) 35 ... \( \text{Qxf6} \) 36 \( \text{Qxe8} \) \( \text{Qxf2} \) 36 \( \text{Qxe7}+ \).

30 \( \text{Qxe5} \) fxe5

After 30...dxe5 White would have won as in the above variation.

31 \( \text{Qh7} \) \( \text{Qxh7} \)

32 \( \text{Qxf2} \) \( \text{Qf2} \)

33 \( \text{Qf2} \)

Black has a terrible deficiency in force on the kingside; meanwhile \( \text{Qc3-e4-f6+} \) is threatened.

33 ... \( \text{Qc5} \)

Or 33...\( \text{Qd4} \) 34 \( \text{Qce4}! \) \( \text{Qxe4} \) 35 \( \text{Qh5}+ \geq 36 \) \( \text{Qxh7}+! \)

34 \( \text{Qxh4}+ \) \( \text{Qg7} \)

35 \( \text{Qe1} \) \( \text{Qf5} \)

36 \( \text{Qg5}+ \) \( \text{Qg6} \)

37 \( \text{Qg4} \)

White has a comfortable position: he begins an attack and at the same time he is a pawn up.

37 ... \( \text{Qf5} \)

38 \( \text{Qh6}+ \) \( \text{Qf7} \)

39 \( \text{Qh8} \) \( \text{Qe7} \)

40 \( \text{Qg7}+ \) \( \text{Qf7} \)

41 \( \text{Qh6} \) \( \text{Qf2} \)

Or 41...\( \text{Qf4} \) 42 \( \text{Qg5}+ \) \( \text{Qd7} \) 43 \( \text{Qf5}. \)

42 \( \text{Qg5}+ \) \( \text{Qd7} \)

43 \( \text{Qe3} \)

Here it is time to remember a humorous precept of one of the classics: ‘If you have a choice between the mate in three moves and the capture of a piece, take the piece: the mate may not in fact be there.’ Rather than 43 \( \text{Qf5} \) with a mating attack, White prefers a pin, created with gain of tempo: if 43...\( \text{Qf4} \) there follows 44 \( \text{Qxf7} \) \( \text{Qxf7} \) 45 \( \text{b4} \) winning a piece. Therefore Black resigned.

No.130
Kramnik–Ivanchuk
Novgorod 1996
Queen’s Gambit

Quite legitimate pleasure

Kramnik did not in fact conceal his satisfaction after the game. ‘It is not every day that one is able to win a “miniature” against Ivanchuk.’ However, for this it was very important to see the whole chess board, which, strictly speaking, is what distinguishes great chess players – and footballers, and ice hockey players too – from us, mere mortals. It might also be added that during the tournament it was this game that was the subject of numerous adventures on the Internet...

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 \( \text{Qf3} \) \( \text{Qf6} \) 4 \( \text{Qc3} \) e6 5 \( \text{Qg5} \) dxe4 6-e4 b5 7 e5 h6 8 \( \text{Qh4} \) g5 9 \( \text{Qxg5} \) hxg5 10 \( \text{Qxg5} \) \( \text{Qbd7} \) 11 g3 \( \text{b7} \) 12 \( \text{Qg2} \) \( \text{Qb6} \) 13 exf6 c5 14 d5 0–0 15 0–0 b4 16 \( \text{Qa4} \) \( \text{Qd6} \)

17 \( \text{Qf4} \)

Up till now the two players’ clocks had largely measured only the time necessary for the physical completion of the moves. Here White deviates from 17 dxe6, the theoretical move at that time.

17 ... \( \text{e5} \)

Black replied very quickly, but somehow strangely, killing all his own play. Now White’s d5 pawn is very strong.
And yet the jury awarded the brilliancy prize to Kramnik. For this game, in which the spirit of creativity clearly triumphed over matter, and Tal’s favourite postulate – ‘The time that we don’t have is more precious than the piece that we have’ – was embodied in a pure and refined form.

13 ... \textit{c8}(?)

An idea of Kamsky, which in this game, it would appear, I managed to refute. Stronger is 13...b4 14 \textit{e4}, transposing into an old theoretical variation which was popular back in the fifties.

If I succeed in playing 15 0–0, then, apart an extra pawn, I will have in prospect a ‘free’ attack on the king, which is condemned to remain in the centre. Ehlvest is obliged to set up counterplay urgently.

14 \textit{e2}

The immediate 14...c5? was bad in view of 15 d5 \textit{b7} 16 0–0 b4 17 \textit{w}c3! bx\textit{c}3 18 dxe6, when mate is not far off.

15 \textit{e4} \textit{c5}

This was then the fashionable move order. Earlier Black used to play 12...b4 13 \textit{e4} \textit{a6}, but after 14 b3! was found, he had problems.

13 \textit{w}f3

In recent times the main theoretical battles have developed after 13 a3, on which, it would appear, Ehlvest’s preparation was based. Now he thought for some 20 minutes.

16 \textit{d}5!

Immediately beginning a direct attack on the king. 16 \textit{xd}1?? was interesting, but this seemed less convincing to me on account of 16...\textit{cxd}4 17 \textit{xd}4 b3+ 18 \textit{d}2 bx\textit{a}2! 19 0–0 a1\textit{w} 20 \textit{xa}5 \textit{xa}5, when it is unclear whether White’s compensation for the sacrificed piece is sufficient.

16 ... \textit{exd}5

17 \textit{w}f5!

The most energetic. 17 0–0 was less clear on account of 17...\textit{wb}6! followed by 18...\textit{we}6 and 19...\textit{d}e5.
17  dxe4

Obtaining at least some compensation for his ‘suffering’. Clearly bad was 17...d4? 18 g4, when White has a strong attack with equal material. The attempt at counterplay – 17...c3!? came into consideration, although here too after 18 g4 (18 xd5 is also good) 18...b5 (it is hard to believe that Black can hold on after 18...b5 19 xd5 cxb2 20 d1) 19 xd5 cxb2 20 d1 things are difficult for Black (20...b3+ 21 d2).

18  0-0-0!

Of course, the white king would feel more comfortable on the kingside, but here it is no longer a matter of general considerations.

18  ...  ecx7

Passive defence was not at all promising – 18...c7 19 g4 c5 20 hel with the following variations:

(a) 20...b7 21 exe4! xe4 22 xe4 d8 23 xd8+ xd8 24 a8+;
(b) 20...d3+ 21 xd3;
(c) 20...d8 21 exe4 (21 exe4!? 21...xd1+ 22 xd1 d6 23 f4 c8 24 g5 b7 25 e1;
(d) 20...d6 21 exe4 f8 22 exe5! exe5 23 d7 xb2+ (23...wb8 24 xf7+! xf7 25 d7+ and mates) 24 xb2 c3+ 25 c1 wc6 26 f4!, and there is no good defence against White’s threats.

Of course, not all these variations are forced, but they excellently demonstrate White’s resources.

19  g4!

The simple 19 xe4+ was also not bad, but the move played is much more energetic.

19  ...  b5

An amusing position arises after 19...xa2 20 xd7 a1+ 21 d2 xb2+ (21...c3+ 22 e3) 22 e3 c3+ (22...d4+!?) 23 xd4 cxd4+ 24 xd4 c5+ 25 xc5 xc5 26 xc5 b3 27 b4 g8 28 h4 and wins) 23 f4! The white king finally escapes from the pursuit, and against xe4+ Black has no satisfactory defence (if 23...b7, then simply 24 hed1!).

20  xe4+  d8

21  xd7!

White had so many tempting continuations, that it was not easy to choose one of them. After spending almost all my remaining time, I was able to find the most clear-cut path. After 21 hel h6 22 xh6 xa2 23 f4 c3! the opponent would have gained some counterplay.

21  ...  xd7

Black also fails to save the game by 21...xd7 22 f4! (threatening mate in one move) 22...d3 (after 22...a6 23 a8+ c8 24 xa7 the threat of 25 b6+ is irresistible) 23 a8+ d7 24 hel with mate to follow.

22  hel

The inclusion of another white piece in the attack decides matters. 23 we8 mate is threatened.
22 ... $\text{h6}$

With his flag about to fall, Ehlvest gives White an opportunity to force mate, but equally after 22...$\text{d6}$ 23 $\text{xd6}$ all he could have done was resign.

23 $\text{a8+} \text{tc8}$

24 $\text{txd7+}$

Black resigns

After 25...$\text{c7}$ there follows 26 $\text{e7+}$ and 27 $\text{b7}$ mate.

The indefatigable queen

'A typical game, which after the d4-d5 breakthrough was conducted in one breath, and over a lengthy period of time Black was literally one move away from consolidating his position. It is also worth drawing attention to the white queen, which got through a considerable amount of work. The route it took was also impressive: d1-g4-e4-f3-g3-g4-f5-h3-f5-c5-c7-c4-e4-c6-c8-h8 and so on! It essentially returned to the square from which it began its journey (excluding the initial position), and all the time picked up something!' (Kramnik)
Strangely enough, it is not so simple for White to exploit the pluses of his position, and he gives up once and for all any attempts on the c4 pawn in favour of activating his pieces.

18 \( \text{f}3 \)

Condemning the black rook to remain in its initial and by no means best position.

19 \( \text{f}4?! \)

20 \( \text{d}1 \)

Intending, instead of \(... \text{a}5\), to play \(... \text{b}4\), creating a piece outpost at d5 with a perfectly good position. The immediate exchange 20...\( \text{a}5 \) 21 \( \text{x}b7 \) \( \text{x}b7 \) 22 \( \text{f}3 \) would have put the knight at b7 out of play, as after 22...\( \text{d}5 \) the c4 pawn could have been comfortably picked up.

21 \( d5! \)

Even without calculating all the variations to the end, I sensed intuitively that I would gain a strong initiative. For example, 21...\( \text{ex}d5 \) 22 \( \text{x}b6 \) (22 \( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 23 \( \text{xd}5 \) looks attractive, but the interposition 22...\( g5 \) 23 \( \text{f}5 \) \( \text{xc}4 \) 24 \( \text{xd}5 \) \( \text{xe}3!? \) 25 \( \text{xf}7+ \) \( \text{h}6 \) forces White to give perpetual check; after all, he does not have many pieces in the attack) 22...\( \text{cxb}6 \) 23 \( \text{xc}4 \).

Therefore my opponent begins concrete play...

21 \(...\) \( g5 \)
22 \( \text{g}3 \) \( h4 \)
23 \( \text{g}4 \) \( \text{e}5 \)
24 \( \text{d}4 \) \( \text{f}6 \)
25 \( \text{xe}5 \) \( \text{xe}5 \)
26 \( \text{dxe}6 \)

...and at the end of it he makes a decisive mistake. In this difficult position Black’s only chance was 26...\( \text{xc}3 \) 27 \( \text{e}4 \) \( \text{c}7 \) 28 \( \text{bxc}3 \) (28 \( \text{xg}5 \) \( f5 \)) 28...\( \text{xe}4 \) 29 \( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{fxe}6 \) 30 \( f4 \), when White regains the pawn, continuing to harass the ‘bare’ black king. But this was the lesser evil.

27 \( \text{xf}5 \) \( \text{f}6 \)
28 \( \text{h}3 \)
The most accurate: if 28 \( \text{Wg4} \) Black would have offered the exchange of queens – 28...\( \text{Wf4} \).

28 ... \( \text{Axc3} \)
29 \( \text{bxc3} \) \( \text{Wxc3} \)
30 \( \text{Wf5} \)

Again the most precise.
30 ... \( \text{Wf6} \)
31 \( \text{Wc5} \) \( \text{h6} \)

All the same the \( c7 \) pawn is practically impossible to defend.
32 \( \text{Wxc7} \)

32 ... \( \text{Dd5} \)

All the same Black's position is lost. If 32...\( \text{Wxe6} \) there follows 33 \( \text{Df1} \) (although 33 \( \text{De4} \) is also sufficient) 33...\( \text{Dd5} \) (33...\( \text{Cc8} \) does not save Black in view of 34 \( \text{Dd6} \)), and now 34 \( \text{Cc3} \) is good, but the most accurate is 34 \( \text{Dg4} \) \( \text{Wxg4} \) (or 34...\( \text{Wf6} \) 35 \( \text{De3} \) \( \text{Wh7} \) 36 \( \text{Wc5} \) \( \text{Df7} \) 37 \( \text{Dxd5} \) \( \text{Dxd5} \) 38 \( \text{Ax}d5 \) \( \text{W}a1+ \) 39 \( \text{Dd1} \)) 35 \( \text{Wxb6+} \) \( \text{Wxe6} \) (if 35...\( \text{Dxe6} \), then 36 \( \text{Dc1} \) \( \text{Dc8} \) 37 \( \text{Wc6} \) \( \text{De7} \) 38 \( \text{Dxe3} \), and if 38...\( \text{Wf4} \) 39 \( \text{Dxd5} \)) 36 \( \text{Wc5} \) \( \text{Cc8} \) 37 \( \text{Wxd5} \) \( \text{Wxd5} \) 38 \( \text{Dxd5} \) \( \text{e3} \) 39 \( \text{Dd1} \).

These are sample variations, but even without them it is evident that Black's position is collapsing. His pieces are remarkably uncoordinated: knight at \( b6 \), king at \( h6 \), bishop at \( a8 \), rook at \( h8 \)...
save time when short of it. I think it was Sergey Belavenets, one of the strongest pre-war masters and an excellent teacher, who recommended this procedure in clearly superior positions for its psychological effect, and as prophylaxis against over-hastiness in converting an advantage.

Strictly adhering to ‘central’ strategy, which, in my opinion, is the best path in the overwhelming majority of cases.

All these moves were suggested somewhere by someone, ending with the evaluation ‘with counterplay’. Indeed, it is not immediately apparent how White is to defend his central pawns (...\(\text{c3}\) is threatened). But a couple of years before this game I had taken a closer look at this position.

With 7 d4 White can obtain a well-known theoretical position, but attempts to gain an advantage in it have for the present been largely unsuccessful.

7 ... d5
8 cxd5 \(\text{\textit{cxd5}}\)
9 e4 \(\text{\textit{\textit{xc3}}}\)
10 bxc3 c5
11 d4

11 ... \(\text{\textit{c3}}\)

In my opinion, 11...cxd4 12 cxd4 \(\text{\textit{c6}}\) is stronger, as they played in the good old days.

The most logical, although 12 h4!? also comes into consideration.

White was threatening d4-d5.

13 \(\text{\textit{e5}}\)

16 d5!!

This thematic advance is made at the most unexpected moment.

16 ... exd5

This activates the white bishop at g2, but it would appear that Black cannot avoid this, for example: 16...\(\text{\textit{c5}}\) 17 \(\text{\textit{d3}}\) \(\text{\textit{a6}}\) 18 \(\text{\textit{d2}}\) \(\text{\textit{b4}}\) 19 \(\text{\textit{c6}}\) \(\text{\textit{xc6}}\) 20 \(\text{dx}c6\) with advantage, or 16...\(\text{\textit{c3}}\) 17 \(\text{\textit{c6!}}\) \(\text{\textit{xc6}}\) (17...\(\text{\textit{xc6}}\)? 18 \(\text{dx}c6\) \(\text{\textit{xa1}}\) 19 \(\text{\textit{xd8}}\) \(\text{\textit{xd8}}\) 20 \(\text{\textit{xb7}}\) 18 \(\text{\textit{xc3}}\) exd5 19 exd5, and 19...\(\text{\textit{xd5}}\)? (19...\(\text{\textit{xd5}}\) 20 \(\text{\textit{xc6}}\) fails to 20 \(\text{\textit{xc8}}\) \(\text{\textit{xc8}}\) 21 \(\text{\textit{xd5}}\) \(\text{\textit{d8}}\) 22 \(\text{\textit{c1!}}\), when White keeps his extra piece.

17 exd5 \(\text{\textit{d6}}\)

After prolonged thought Black reconciles himself to an inferior game. Attempts to try and refute the opponent’s plan could have ended in a forced defeat: 17...\(\text{\textit{xd5}}\) 18 \(\text{\textit{d3}}\) \(\text{\textit{xf4}}\) (18...\(\text{\textit{c5}}\) 19 \(\text{\textit{c3}}\) \(\text{\textit{b5}}\) 20 a4 \(\text{\textit{a5}}\) 21 \(\text{\textit{c4}}\), and in all cases
White gains a material advantage) 19 gxf4! \( \text{\textsc{x}}g2 \) (19...\( \text{\textsc{w}}c7 \) 20 \( \text{\textsc{d}}d7 \) \( \text{\textsc{f}}d8 \) 21 \( \text{\textsc{x}}e7 \) \( \text{\textsc{x}}d1+ \) 22 \( \text{\textsc{x}}d1 \) \( \text{\textsc{x}}e7 \) 23 \( \text{\textsc{d}}d8+ \) \( \text{\textsc{f}}x8 \) 24 \( \text{\textsc{x}}xb7 \) \( \text{\textsc{b}}x7 \) 25 \( \text{\textsc{d}}d7 \) \( \text{\textsc{x}}d7 \) 26 \( \text{\textsc{x}}d7 \) a5 27 \( \text{\textsc{h}}b7 \) 20 \( \text{\textsc{h}}d8 \) \( \text{\textsc{fxd}8} \) (20...\( \text{\textsc{x}}xd8 \) 21 \( \text{\textsc{w}}b3 \) 21 \( \text{\textsc{b}}b3 \) \( \text{\textsc{c}}3 \), and now the simplest is 22 \( \text{\textsc{x}}xg2! \) \( \text{\textsc{x}}x1 \) 23 \( \text{\textsc{xf}7} \) \( \text{\textsc{f}}8 \) (the only move, otherwise there is a standard mate by 23...\( \text{\textsc{f}}8 \) 24 \( \text{\textsc{h}}6+ \) \( \text{\textsc{h}}8 \) 25 \( \text{\textsc{g}}8+ \) \( \text{\textsc{x}}xg8 \) 26 \( \text{\textsc{f}7} \) 24 \( \text{\textsc{g}}5 \) \( \text{\textsc{d}}7 \) 25 \( \text{\textsc{w}}e6 \) and wins.

In the interests of saving paper, I will not give all the variations after 17...\( \text{\textsc{x}}d5 \) 18 \( \text{\textsc{d}}3 \). I will merely say that they are very similar to those given above (after 17...\( \text{\textsc{d}}d5 \)), and end no less dismally for Black.

Also bad is 17...\( \text{\textsc{c}}5 \) 18 \( \text{\textsc{d}}3 \) \( \text{\textsc{a}}6 \) 19 \( \text{\textsc{d}}2 \) \( \text{\textsc{b}}4 \) 20 \( \text{\textsc{c}}6 \) \( \text{\textsc{xe}6} \) 21 \( \text{\textsc{xc}6} \) \( \text{\textsc{xd}2} \) 22 \( \text{\textsc{w}}x2d \) 22 \( \text{\textsc{xd}2} \) with a technically won ending for White.

18 \( \text{\textsc{c}}6 \)

The most critical, although 18 \( \text{\textsc{d}}3 \), for example, was also good.

18... \( \text{\textsc{x}}c6 \)

19 \( \text{\textsc{xd}6} \) \( \text{\textsc{a}4}!\) ?

Things are also difficult for Black after 19...\( \text{\textsc{w}}x6 \) 20 \( \text{\textsc{xc}6} \) \( \text{\textsc{xd}1}+ \) 21 \( \text{\textsc{xd}1} \) \( \text{\textsc{c}}7 \) 22 \( \text{\textsc{f}4}!\) followed by \( \text{\textsc{f}3} \) and \( g3-g4-g5 \), completely cramping the opponent’s pieces. In my perception of chess, such positions (given appropriate play by White) cannot be saved.

Choosing between two ‘goods’ can often be more difficult than between two evils. Here I deliberated for a long time over whether or not simply to pick up a pawn: 20 \( \text{\textsc{xa}4} \) \( \text{\textsc{w}}x6 \) 21 \( \text{\textsc{xa}7} \) \( \text{\textsc{xd}5} \) 22 \( \text{\textsc{xd}5} \) (of course, not 22 \( \text{\textsc{d}1} \) ?? \( \text{\textsc{xe}3} \) or 22 \( \text{\textsc{d}3} \) \( \text{\textsc{e}5} \) 22...\( \text{\textsc{w}}x5 \) 23 \( \text{\textsc{xb}6} \), when White retains quite good winning chances. The move played, if not stronger, is at any event more interesting.

20... \( \text{\textsc{x}}x1d \)

21 \( \text{\textsc{e}7} \) \( \text{\textsc{c}7} \)

The immediate attempt to break out:

21...\( \text{\textsc{xd}5} \) 22 \( \text{\textsc{xd}8} \) (22 \( \text{\textsc{d}1} \) \( \text{\textsc{xe}7} \) !)

22...\( \text{\textsc{xe}3} \) 23 \( \text{\textsc{g}5} \) \( \text{\textsc{xe}2} \) 24 \( \text{\textsc{d}1} \) leads to the ‘fianchettoed’ knight being lost.

22 \( \text{\textsc{d}1} \)

Thus, instead of a position with an extra pawn, White has reached a position where he is without his queen. But, after assessing the potential of the \( d5 \) pawn, I decided that in the future I had real chances of matching the opponent’s number of queens.

22... \( \text{\textsc{d}7} \)

It is very dangerous to win the pawn:

22...\( \text{\textsc{c}2} \) 23 \( \text{\textsc{ed}3} \) (23 \( \text{\textsc{f}3} \) \( \text{\textsc{xa}2} \) 24 \( \text{\textsc{d}6} \) \( \text{\textsc{d}7} \) 25 \( \text{\textsc{e}5} \) with the idea of \( \text{\textsc{f}3} \) 23...\( \text{\textsc{xa}2} \) 24 \( \text{\textsc{xf}6} \) !? \( \text{\textsc{g}x6} \) 25 \( \text{\textsc{d}6} \) \( \text{\textsc{d}8} \) 26 \( \text{\textsc{d}7} \), and the gradual transference of a rook to \( c8 \) or \( e8 \) must be decisive, especially since the black pawns do not advance particularly quickly.

23 \( \text{\textsc{h}3} \) \( \text{\textsc{h}6} \)

23...\( \text{\textsc{b}7}? \) ?

24 \( \text{\textsc{f}5}? \)

An interesting move, which does not in fact create any immediate threats. I had two ideas in mind: to take control of \( c2 \) (so that the opponent’s queen or rook should not ‘call in’ there) and also to disturb Black’s king, reckoning that he would clearly not want to play... \( g7-g6 \), as this would seriously weaken his king’s position.

24... \( \text{\textsc{b}5}? \) ?

I think that this was the decisive inaccuracy. 24...\( \text{\textsc{b}7} \), vacating the c-file.
Selected games

for the rook, was stronger, although even after this White's advantage is enormous (25...b4!?).

25...b4!

Vacating the e7 square for the rook, where, as can be guessed, it will be very actively placed.

25...d8
26...e7

This loses by force, although I can no longer offer Black any advice: 26...g6 can be met by 27...e6! (of course, 27...d6 or 27...h3 is also possible) 27...fxe6 28...xe6 (Black also loses after 28...e4 29...e7 - 29...dxe7 also wins - 29...xb4 30...xe8+...f8 31...xf8+...xf8 32...d6, or 28...c2 29...dxe7 30...exd7 31...a7+ 31...g2...d5+ 32...f3...xa2+ 33...h3) 29...xe7...xd1+ 30...g2...xe6 31...xa7 with an easily won ending.

27...d7!

27...e4 was also good, but the time had come to calculate some variations.

27...d7
28...xd7...xb4
29...d6...a4

If White can calmly advance his pawn to d7 with his rook behind, it will all be over. Therefore Black tries to prevent this.

30...d3

Possibly I could also have won by 30...e1!?...d4 (30...b4 31...e8+...h7 32...f5+...g6 33...d7 31...e8+...h7 32...f5+...g6 33...d7...d1+ 34...g2...d5+ 35...f3...xa2+ 36...h3, but already I had firmly decided to keep my rook on the d-file (for safety's sake).

30...e4

Other routes are no more successful for the queen: 30...xa2 31...f5...a5 32...d7...d8 33...c3, or 30...c4 31...f5...c1+ 32...g2...c6+ 33...f3...c2+ 34...h3...c5 35...e4...h5+ 36...g2 and finally d6-d7.

31...xb5...e1+
32...g2...e4+
33...g1...e1+
34...g2...e4+
35...f1

I decided to play for a win...

35...h1+
36...e2...e4+
37...f1...h1+
38...e2...e4+
39...d1

This is that rare instance where the safest place for the king is in the centre. The checks quickly come to an end.

39...g4+

Or, from the other side: 39...b4 40...d7...b1+ 41...e2...xa2+ 42...f3 or 39...h1+ 40...c2...a1 41...d7...xa2+ 42...d1...b1+ 43...e2.

40...f3...h3
41...d7

I had waited a long time for this moment! Now White easily escapes from the few remaining checks, for example: 41...f1+ 42...c2...e2+ 43...d2!, and so Black resigned.
A glance to the right

In principle Kramnik likes playing over the whole board and he rarely avoids the exchange of queens, if there is the prospect of an interesting and at least slightly favourable ending.

Here, however, the opponent’s restrained play led to a position where White was simply obliged to look only to the right – at the black king. He conducted the attack in virtuoso style, in one breath, but it had an unusual basis: the leap by a rook into the centre creates a strong impression, especially since its further intentions are not at all obvious.

1...f3 f6 2 c4 b6 3 g3 b7 4 g2 e6 5 0-0 e7 6 e1 0-0 7 c3 d5 8 cxd5 exd5 9 e4 c6 10 bxc3

11...f6 12 c5

An idea of Ivanchuk, which he first tried in a game with me in Monaco a few months earlier (see No. 113).

11 d4 a5
12 h4!?

My previous experiences against 10...c6 were not particularly successful. For example, 12 c5 d6 13 f4 e8!? and the position is unclear (Kramnik-Karpov, Monaco 1997), or the aforementioned game with Ivanchuk.

12...e8

Probably the strongest move in this position and one typical of Karpov, strictly prophylactic. Incidentally, it excellently characterises the style of my opponent, who not so much creates threats, as stifles the active play of his adversaries. Thus here Black defends his bishop at e7 and prepares to play ...c7-c5. The immediate 12...c5 is not very good in view of 13 d5! exd5 14 exd5 xd5 15 xxe7 xe7 16 xd5 ad8 17 g5.

13 h5

The rather strange looking manoeuvre 13 g5 h6 14 h3 also comes into consideration.

13...h6
14 e5 d6
14...c5?! 15 d5.
15 f4 e7
16 g4 h8
17 d3

Or 17 ad1 ad8 18 d3.

17...ad8
18 ad1 c6!?

It seems time for Black to take positive action, but there again follows a move in Karpov’s patent style – slightly waiting, and... very interesting. In fact, 18...xf4?! 19 gxf4 followed by e3-g3 or f4-f5 is not good for Black.
position: 19 \( \check{\text{xd6}} \) (19 d5!? e5) 19...\( \mathbb{W}\text{x}d6 \) (weaker is 19...\( \check{\text{xd6}} \) 20 dxc5 bxc5 21 \( \check{\text{e}5} \), when 21...\( \check{\text{ed}8} \) fails to 22 \( \check{\text{xd6}} \) \( \check{\text{xd6}} \) 23 \( \check{\text{f}4} \) \( \check{\text{g}8} \) 24 \( \check{\text{xf}7} \)), and now both 20 \( \check{\text{e}5} \) and 20 dxc5!? leave White with some advantage. But after 18...\( \check{\text{e}6} \)? I was unable to find any real way of strengthening my position, and I decided to change radically the pattern of the game.

19 e5!? \( \check{\text{a}3} \)
20 \( \check{\text{xc}6} \) \( \check{\text{xc}6} \)
21 \( \check{\text{e}4} \)

The rook defends the d4 pawn in the event of ...c7-c5, and it is also ready to switch to the kingside.

21 ... \( \mathbb{W}\text{d}7) \)!

This attempt to safeguard the king completely involves a loss of time, which allows White by energetic play to gain a strong initiative. It was better to set up counterplay by 21...\( \check{\text{a}5} \) and 22...c5, with a very complicated, double-edged position.

22 \( \mathbb{W}\text{f}3 \) \( \check{\text{f}8} \)

23 \( \check{\text{e}3} \)!

A rather instructive moment. The move played contains both offensive motifs, since it frees a path for the rook to the kingside along the fourth rank, as well as prophylactic ones, since the manoeuvre of the knight via e7 is now impossible. In the event of 23 g4 \( \check{\text{e}7} \) 24 g5 \( \check{\text{f}5} \) Black would have had everything in order.

23 ... \( \check{\text{a}5} \)
24 g4! \( \check{\text{c}4} \)
25 g5

It becomes evident that Black’s counterplay involving ...c7-c5 is too late.

25 ... \( \check{\text{xe}3} \)
26 \( \check{\text{fxe}3} \)!

Simpler was 26 \( \mathbb{W}\text{x}e3 \) hxg5 27 \( \mathbb{W}\text{x}g5 \) with a clear advantage to White, but I wanted to open the f-file for the attack, at the same time strengthening the centre.

26 ... \( \mathbb{W}\text{g}4 \)
27 \( \mathbb{W}\text{g}4 \)
28 \( \mathbb{W}\text{f}1 \) \( \mathbb{W}\text{c}6 \)
29 \( \mathbb{W}\text{g}3 \)

Unfortunately, White does not have time to play his knight to e4: 29 \( \check{\text{f}2} \) f5!

29 ... \( \mathbb{W}\text{f}6 \)

The only move. After 29...\( \check{\text{a}3} \) 30 \( \mathbb{W}\text{x}g5 \) \( \mathbb{W}\text{xc}3 \) 31 \( \check{\text{f}4} \), mate is very close.

30 e4

30 h6!? was also interesting, but I did not like the fact that in the variation 30...gxh6 31 exf6 \( \mathbb{W}\text{h}7 \) 32 \( \check{\text{e}5} \) there is 32...\( \check{\text{d}5} \) (33 e4 \( \check{\text{a}5} \)), although here too White has a powerful attack.

30 ... \( \mathbb{W}\text{a}3 \)

30...\( \mathbb{W}\text{d}8 \) is passive: 31 h6! (31 exf6 gxf6 32 e5 f5 33 \( \mathbb{W}\text{g}5 \) \( \mathbb{W}\text{x}g5 \) 34 \( \mathbb{W}\text{x}g5 \) \( \mathbb{W}\text{g}7 \)) 31...gxh6 (31...c5 32 hxg7+ \( \check{\text{g}8} \) 33 exf6 \( \check{\text{xf}6} \) 34 e5 \( \check{\text{g}7} \) 35 \( \mathbb{W}\text{x}g5 \) with a strong attack, e.g 35...exd4 36 \( \mathbb{W}\text{h}5+ \) \( \check{\text{g}8} \) 37 \( \mathbb{W}\text{g}6 \)) 32 exf6 followed by \( \check{\text{e}5} \)-g6.

30...c5 came seriously into consideration, after White must play very energetically: 31 h6 (31 exf6 gxf6 32 \( \check{\text{f}4} \) \( \mathbb{W}\text{h}7 \))
Kramnik: my life and games

33 \( \texttt{Qg6} \texttt{Wd8} \), and nothing decisive is apparent) 31...\texttt{exd4} (31...\texttt{gxh6} 32 \texttt{exf6} \texttt{Wh7} 33 \texttt{Qe5} and then \texttt{f6-f7}) 32 \texttt{hxg7+ \texttt{hxg7} 33 \texttt{Qf4}! (the strongest; I will not tire the reader with the numerous other variations) 33...\texttt{xf4} 34 \texttt{Wh4+ \texttt{g8} (34...\texttt{h6} 35 \texttt{Whxh6+ \texttt{Wh7} 36 \texttt{Wxf6+ \texttt{Wh7} 37 \texttt{Qf2!} \texttt{Wh2+} 38 \texttt{Qe1} and wins) 35 \texttt{exf6}, and now:

(a) bad is 35...\texttt{Wf8} 36 \texttt{fxg7 \texttt{Qxg7} 37 \texttt{Qxf4};

(b) 35...\texttt{d8} 36 \texttt{Wh6 \texttt{Qe7} 37 \texttt{cxd4} (37 \texttt{Qxf4} \texttt{dxc3} 38 \texttt{Wxf7} \texttt{Qh6} 39 \texttt{Wxh6+ \texttt{Wh7} or 37 \texttt{Wh1?}) 37...\texttt{Wh7} 38 \texttt{Whxh6} (38 \texttt{Qxf4}?) \texttt{Wh7} 39 \texttt{Whxg7+ \texttt{Qdx7} 40 \texttt{Qxh7}+ \texttt{Qf8} 42 \texttt{Qf2};

(c) 35...\texttt{c5} 36 \texttt{Wh1 \texttt{Qf8} (36 \texttt{Wh7} loses to 37 \texttt{fxe7 \texttt{Qxe7} 38 \texttt{cxd4}) 37 \texttt{Qxf4!} (a pretty draw results from 37 \texttt{fxg7 \texttt{Qxg7} 38 \texttt{Wh8}+ \texttt{Qe7} 39 \texttt{Whxh6+ \texttt{Wh7} 40 \texttt{Whg8+ \texttt{Wh7} 41 \texttt{Whxh6+ \texttt{Qf8} 42 \texttt{Qh2};

I would not pretend that I saw all this at the board, but I believed in the strength of White's attack.

31 \texttt{exf6} \texttt{Wxc3}? The decisive mistake in severe trouble. The only chance was 31...\texttt{gxh6} 32 \texttt{e5} (also interesting is 32 \texttt{Qxf6}! \texttt{Qg7} 33 \texttt{Qe5} or 32 \texttt{Qf4}! \texttt{Wh7} 33 \texttt{Qh3}) 32...\texttt{f5} (32...\texttt{Wxc3}?! 33 \texttt{Wxf6} 33 \texttt{Qxg5} \texttt{Qh6} (33...\texttt{Qg7} 34 \texttt{Qf4} \texttt{Qxg5} 35 \texttt{Wxg5} with a strong attack) 35...\texttt{Wxc3}? fails to 36 \texttt{Qh1!} \texttt{Wc6+} 37 \texttt{d5}! \texttt{exd5} 38 \texttt{Qg6+ \texttt{Qh7} 39 \texttt{Qxf8+ \texttt{Qxf8} 40 \texttt{Wh7+ \texttt{Qg8} 41 \texttt{Qg1+}) 34 \texttt{Qg6 \texttt{Qh7} 35 \texttt{Qf2!} \texttt{Wf8} (Black loses after 35...\texttt{Wxc3} 36 \texttt{Qg2} \texttt{Wxd4+} 37 \texttt{Qf1 \texttt{Wd8} 38 \texttt{Qxh6}) 36 \texttt{Qg2}!?, although here too things are not wonderful for Black.

32 \texttt{f7} \texttt{Qc8} Otherwise the rook comes under attack:

32...\texttt{Wxd8} 33 \texttt{Qe5} (33 \texttt{d5}!? 33...\texttt{Wxg3+ (33...\texttt{Wxd4+} 34 \texttt{Qh1}) 34 \texttt{Qxg3 \texttt{Wxd4} 35 \texttt{Qc6} and wins.

33 \texttt{d5!} \texttt{exd5}

34 \texttt{e5} White's attack is irresistible.

34...\texttt{... \texttt{c5} Some twelve moves too late.

35 \texttt{Qf3} Being short of time, in the variation 35 \texttt{Wh5} c4 36 \texttt{h6} \texttt{g6} 37 \texttt{Qxg6} \texttt{Wxd3} 38 \texttt{Qg8+ \texttt{Wh7} I forgot about 39 \texttt{Wxh8+!} with mate in two moves.

35...\texttt{... \texttt{c4}

36 \texttt{Qf2} \texttt{Qe1+}

Or 36...\texttt{Wc1+} 37 \texttt{Qg2} c3 (37...\texttt{Qe7} 38 \texttt{Qe6} \texttt{Qd6} 39 \texttt{Wf5} followed by \texttt{h5-h6}) 38 \texttt{Qxg5} c2 39 \texttt{h6} \texttt{Wxg5} 40 \texttt{Wxg5} c1 \texttt{W} 41 \texttt{hxg7+ \texttt{Qxg7} 42 \texttt{Qh3+ \texttt{Wh6} 43 \texttt{Qxh6} mate.

37 \texttt{Qg2} \texttt{Qe7}
Even the appearance of another queen does not save Black: 37...c3 38 \( \text{exg5} \) c2 39 h6 e1 w (39...g6 40 \( \text{exg6} \) 40 hxg7+ \( \text{hxg7} \) 41 \( \text{h3}+ \) \( \text{hx6} \) 42 \( \text{wh6} \) mate.

38 \( \text{exg5!} \) \( \text{hxg5} \)

Now it all ends disappointingly prosaically. Black resigns in view of 39...\( \text{xf8} \) 40 \( \text{xf8}+ \) \( \text{h7} \) 41 \( \text{wh6} \) mate.

The question remains open

I cannot say that every game with Anand is a matter of life and death, but it has somehow happened that in public opinion we have broken away from the No.4 player. In my view, the main battle is nevertheless between me and Anand, and not between Kasparov and Anand – I do not consider that Vishy has demonstrated any clear superiority over me either by rating or by results. I am pleased that I have won my last two games (at that time – Translator’s note) against Anand, because many journalists seemed to reckon that the No.2 place in the world rankings had already been taken. But for me it has always remained open. I should like to mention this: despite our professional rivalry, my personal relations with Vishy are very good.” (Kramnik)

1 \( \text{d4} \) \( \text{d5} \)
2 \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{dxc4} \)

In recent times the Queen’s Gambit Accepted has become for Vishy roughly the same thing as the Petroff Defence for me – a solid opening, in which time and again Black is able to solve all his opening problems.

3 \( \text{\textbf{d}f3} \) \( \text{e6} \)
4 \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{\textbf{d}f6} \)
16...\text{\texttt{x}}h4 is bad in view of 17 \texttt{d}3! f5 (or 17...g6 18 \texttt{x}h4 \texttt{wh}4 - 18...exd5 19 \texttt{x}g6 - 19 \texttt{wc}3 and wins) 18 \texttt{hx}h4 \texttt{b}7 (18...\texttt{wh}4 19 \texttt{c}7 \texttt{d}8 20 \texttt{wc}3) 19 \texttt{xf}5!

17 \texttt{d}3 \texttt{g}6
18 \texttt{we}3 \texttt{e}6!??

I think that many players would have preferred the more solid 18...\texttt{c}6, but then Black is deprived of his only active possibility (...\texttt{a}5-c4), after which the opponent can unhurriedly build up the pressure: 19 \texttt{xc}7 \texttt{xe}7 20 \texttt{wh}6, or 19 \texttt{wh}6 \texttt{f}8 20 \texttt{wf}4.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

19 \texttt{wh}6

It was hard to refrain from this ambitious move, although even during the game I was not convinced that it was stronger than 19 \texttt{xe}7 \texttt{xe}7 20 \texttt{wh}6 \texttt{f}8 21 \texttt{h}4, with a not too great, but very enduring advantage.

19... \texttt{xe}6!
20 \texttt{xf}6

It is easy to see that everything else loses quickly: 20...\texttt{xf}2+ 21 \texttt{xf}2 \texttt{b}6+ 22 \texttt{f}1 \texttt{fx}g6 23 \texttt{yg}6+ \texttt{f}8 24 \texttt{gy}5, or 20...\texttt{fx}g6 21 \texttt{wg}6+ \texttt{f}8 (or 21...\texttt{h}8 22 \texttt{wh}6+ \texttt{yg}8 23 \texttt{xe}6) 22 \texttt{wh}6+ \texttt{f}7 23 \texttt{wh}7+ \texttt{f}6 (23...\texttt{f}8 24 \texttt{hx}4 \texttt{f}7 25 \texttt{wh}6+ \texttt{g}8 26 \texttt{xf}5) 24 \texttt{hx}4, and White’s attack is irresistible.

21 \texttt{h}7+

Any professional player knows: against Vishy you can play well, you can even win(!), but you cannot avoid time trouble...

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

21... \texttt{h}8
22 \texttt{x}g6+ \texttt{g}8
23 \texttt{wh}7+ \texttt{g}8
24 \texttt{hx}4

Black fails to withstand the tension, and voluntarily goes into a cheerless ending, although all was not yet lost: 24...\texttt{xb}2! The attempt to refute this move by force leads only to a draw: 25 \texttt{f}5 \texttt{fx}g6 26 \texttt{wh}6+ \texttt{f}7 27 \texttt{wh}7+ (27 \texttt{d}6+ \texttt{c}7 28 \texttt{xe}8 \texttt{xe}8 29 \texttt{yg}6 \texttt{f}6) 27...\texttt{f}8 28 \texttt{wh}6+ \texttt{f}7. Of course, White retains the initiative after 25 \texttt{d}3 (or 25 \texttt{f}5) 25...\texttt{g}7 26 \texttt{h}5, but there would still have been all to play for (26...\texttt{c}4!).

25 \texttt{yg}7+

In my ‘joy’ I did not even consider any other move, although the ‘inhuman’ (in both the direct and figurative sense) 25 \texttt{f}5!? was interesting, for example: 25...\texttt{wh}7 26 \texttt{hx}h7 \texttt{c}4 27 b3? \texttt{xf}5 28 \texttt{xe}8+ \texttt{xe}8 29 \texttt{xf}5 \texttt{xa}3 30 \texttt{h}4 \texttt{b}4 31 \texttt{g}4 with good winning chances.

25... \texttt{yg}7
26 \texttt{d}3 \texttt{c}4
27 \texttt{b}4

27 \texttt{e}2! was simpler and more accurate.

27... \texttt{b}2?!

I do not see the point of voluntarily removing the knight from such a strong position. Black should probably have preferred 27...d4 28 \texttt{f}3 \texttt{mad}8 29 \texttt{e}2! (29 \texttt{e}4? \texttt{b}2), and although White has an obvious advantage, he is still faced with
overcoming considerable technical difficulties.

Selected games

What else? If 38...\(\text{c3}\) there follows 39 \(\text{d3}\).

\[
\begin{array}{c|c|c}
28 & \text{f1} & \text{d4} \\
29 & \text{g3} & \text{ad8} \\
30 & \text{eb1} & \text{c4} \\
31 & \text{d1} & \text{g4} \\
\end{array}
\]

32 \(\text{d3}\)!

Possibly it was this move that Vishy had underestimated, reckoning only on 32 \(\text{xd4} \text{xf3} 33 \text{xd8} \text{xd8} 34 \text{gxf3} \text{d2}\) with good drawing chances, e.g. 35 \(\text{g2} (35 \text{g2} \text{xf1} 36 \text{xf1} \text{d3}; 35 \text{e2} \text{e8}) 35...\text{d3} 36 \text{f4} \text{c4} 37 \text{b7} \text{xa3} (or 37...\text{xa3} 38 \text{xa3} \text{xa3} 39 \text{xa6} \text{c2}) 38 \text{xa6} \text{c2} 39 \text{xb5} \text{d4}. \\
32 \ldots \text{d2} \\
32...\text{e4} 33 \text{d2!} \text{xd2} 34 \text{xd2} was even worse.

33 \text{xd4} \text{xf3} \\
34 \text{xd8} \text{xd8} \\
35 \text{gxf3} \\

With the knight at b2 it is a quite different matter!

35 \ldots \text{c8} \\

Forced, as after 35...\text{d2} 36 \text{c1} White is the first to attack the opponent’s pawns on the queenside.

36 \text{a2}! \\

A very important resource. Now the active 36...\text{c2} is strongly answered by 37 a4!

36 \ldots \text{a4} \\

Or 36...\text{c4} 37 \text{c2}.

37 \text{d2} \text{c6} \\
38 \text{f4} \text{b6} \\

That’s it! The time control has been reached, the main technical work has already been done, and you can relax a little – it is hard to imagine that it is possible not to win this position. That is roughly what I thought at this moment, forgetting that human possibilities are unlimited.

40 \ldots \text{b2} \\

Black loses by force after 40...\text{g6}+ 41 \text{g3} \text{xa3} 42 \text{d2!} \text{xc3}+ 43 \text{f3} \text{c4} 44 \text{xe4} \text{bxc4} 45 \text{f3}. \\
41 \text{g3}+ \text{h8} \\

A rather strange move, in my view. Although it is not of crucial importance, in my opponent’s place I would have preferred any other square.

42 \text{e2} \\

This does not yet spoil anything, but somewhere around I experienced a short-term lapse, which took the form of a series of pointless moves.

42 \ldots \text{c2} \\
43 \text{h5} \\

Better was 43 \text{f3} (with the idea of \text{b7} or \text{d5}), and if 43...\text{d3}? 44 \text{e4!}, winning.

43 \ldots \text{c7} \\
44 \text{f5?} \\

Sheer madness. The activation of the king – 44 \text{f3} – would have left Black
without any real chances of saving the game.

44 \ldots \texttt{h}7

45 \texttt{e}2?!  

Another move, the idea of which I am still unable to understand. Evidently White is already forced to give up one pawn (as a consequence of his 44th move), but even so after 45 f6!? \texttt{h}6 46 \texttt{f}3 \texttt{d}3! 47 h4 (47 \texttt{e}4 \texttt{f}4+ 48 \texttt{f}3 \texttt{h}5) 47...\texttt{f}4+ 48 \texttt{h}2 \texttt{h}5 49 \texttt{g}5 \texttt{xf}6 50 \texttt{c}5 he has every justification for expecting to win.

45 \texttt{h}6

46 h4

Also a so-so move.

46 \ldots \texttt{c}2

47 \texttt{f}3 \texttt{c}4

Here, having already picked up the bishop, I noticed that on the intended 48 \texttt{b}7 there follows 48...\texttt{d}6! 49 \texttt{a}6 \texttt{c}6. I had to play the more modest

48 \texttt{d}5

but this episode had a positive effect on me – from this point I began playing sensibly and accurately.

48 \ldots \texttt{d}6

49 \texttt{d}3!  

After 49 f6 \texttt{d}2 it is not altogether clear what to do with the bishop.

49 \ldots \texttt{g}7

49...\texttt{xf}5 50 \texttt{xf}7 \texttt{h}4+ 51 \texttt{f}1 is hardly any better.

50 \texttt{f}3!

This practically forces an ending with bishop and two pawns against knight and one. I felt that it should be won, but, of course, I was not completely sure. The problem is that there is no longer anything better.

50 \ldots \texttt{xf}5

51 \texttt{b}7 \texttt{h}4+

52 \texttt{g}1! \texttt{e}2

Otherwise both pawns are lost.

53 \texttt{xa}6 \texttt{e}5

54 \texttt{c}3! \texttt{f}5

55 \texttt{c}5 \texttt{xc}5

56 bxc5

In view of the fact that the advance of the white f-pawn is unfavourable, the achievement of the No.1 objective – driving the black king from e5 – is not so simple.

56 \ldots \texttt{d}4

57 c6 \texttt{xc}6

58 \texttt{xb}5 \texttt{a}5

59 \texttt{g}2 \texttt{f}6

60 \texttt{f}3 \texttt{e}5

61 \texttt{e}3

Or 62 a4 \texttt{a}5.

62 \ldots \texttt{f}6

Of course, the pawn cannot be moved to f5: 62...f5? 63 \texttt{f}4+ \texttt{d}6 64 \texttt{d}3 \texttt{e}6 65 \texttt{d}4 with an easy win.

63 a4 \texttt{a}5

64 \texttt{f}7!  

I think that this is the best square for the bishop – in many variations it is very important to be able to defend the a4 pawn.
from e8 (for example, 64...\textit{d}d6 65 \textit{c}c4 \textit{c}c5 66 \textit{f}f5 \textit{b}b4 67 \textit{e}e8).

64 ... \textit{c}c6

Black could have tried to prevent \textit{d}d3 by 64...\textit{b}b7, but then he has problems with his king: 65 f4+! \textit{d}d6 66 \textit{d}d4 – now \textit{d}d5 is threatened, and after 66...\textit{c}c5 the white a-pawn begins to advance.

65 \textit{d}d3!

After 65 f4+? \textit{d}d6 66 \textit{e}e4 \textit{e}e7 White’s chances of winning are highly problematic, e.g. 67 a5 \textit{c}c7 68 a6 \textit{b}b6 69 \textit{c}c4 \textit{a}a7 70 \textit{d}d3 (incidentally, with the pawn at f2 this position is won for White) 70...\textit{b}b6 71 \textit{d}d4 \textit{a}a7 (71...f5? 72 \textit{e}e5) 72 \textit{c}c5 f5! 73 \textit{d}d4 \textit{g}g6 74 \textit{e}e3 \textit{b}b6 75 \textit{f}f3 \textit{a}a7 76 \textit{xf}5 \textit{xf}4.

65 ... \textit{d}d6

After 65...\textit{a}a5 66 \textit{c}c3 the white king breaks through on the queenside (66...\textit{c}c6 67 \textit{e}e8), while Black’s counterplay does not succeed: 67 \textit{e}e8! \textit{f}f3 68 \textit{b}b4, and the knight comes to grief.

66 \textit{e}e4 \textit{e}e7

Black concedes his defensive lines one after another – now he allows the advance of the a-pawn. However, there was no way of saving the game. For example, the following variation very much appeals to me: 66...\textit{a}a5 67 \textit{d}d5! \textit{c}c5 68 \textit{f}f3! \textit{b}b4 (68...\textit{d}d6 69 \textit{d}d4 f5 70 \textit{f}f4) 69 \textit{f}f5 \textit{xa}4 70 \textit{xf}6 \textit{b}b5 71 \textit{f}f4 \textit{c}c5 72 \textit{e}e6, and the general superiority in chess of bishop over knight is demonstrated here to the full.

67 a5 \textit{c}c5

68 a6 \textit{c}c8

In the event of 68...\textit{b}b6 69 \textit{c}c4 \textit{a}a7 the white king proceeds via f4-g4-h5-h6-g7, and there is no way of preventing this.

69 \textit{h}h5!

Not 69 \textit{f}f5? \textit{b}b6 70 \textit{c}c4 \textit{d}d6+.

69 ... \textit{d}d6

Or 69...\textit{d}d6+ 70 \textit{f}f4 \textit{b}b6 71 \textit{e}e2 \textit{a}a7 72 \textit{d}d3 \textit{b}b6 73 \textit{g}g4 \textit{a}a7 74 \textit{h}h5 and 75 \textit{g}g6.

70 \textit{f}f3!

Black is unable to prevent the breakthrough of the opponent’s king:

For example: 70... \textit{c}c6 71 \textit{f}f5+ \textit{b}b6 72 \textit{b}b7, or 70...\textit{a}a7 71 \textit{d}d4 \textit{b}b5+ 72 \textit{c}c4 \textit{a}a7 73 \textit{b}b7 \textit{c}c7 74 \textit{e}e5 f5 75 f4 \textit{b}b8 76 \textit{b}b6, and so he resigned.

No. 136
Kramnik–Tiviakov
FIDE World Championship
Las Vegas 1999
Nimzo-Indian Defence

This decisive white colour...

The system of mini-matches, adopted in this tournament, dictated similar tactics to practically all the ‘serious’ participants: if the first of the two games was with the black pieces – not to go into complications oneself, but try to win with White, if only to avoid ‘rapid chess’ with its enhanced element of chance and to gain a rest day before the next round. That was how Kramnik acted in his initial match.

1 d4 \textit{f}f6 2 c4 e6 3 \textit{c}c3 \textit{b}b4 4 \textit{w}w\textit{c}c2 0–0 5 a3 \textit{x}xc3+ 6 \textit{w}xc3 b6 7 \textit{g}g5 \textit{b}b7 8 f3 \textit{h}h6 9 \textit{h}h4 d5

10 e3 \textit{e}e8

One of the few moves that leaves White with chances of some opening advantage.

11 \textit{h}h3

Of all the possible continuations (11 \textit{d}d3, 11 \textit{ex}d5, 11 \textit{xc}1 or even 11 0–0–0!?) I chose the most natural.
11 ... \( \Box bd7 \)

12 cxd5

On checking my computer database, I discovered to my surprise that in roughly a dozen games 12 \( \Box e2 \) was played here. But at the board I could not see what White would do against the reply 12...\( \Box e4 \)!

12 ... exd5

Here, however, the typical move in this variation 12...\( \Box xd5 \) is not so convincing, for example: 13 \( \Box xd8 \Box xc3 \) 14 \( \Box h4 \Box d5 \) 15 \( \Box f2 \) e5 16 e4 exd4 17 0-0-0! with advantage to White.

13 \( \Box e2 \) \( \Box e7 \)

Now 13...\( \Box e4 \)? again does not work in view of 14 \( \Box xd8 \Box xc3 \) 15 \( \Box xc7 \Box xe2 \) (or 15...\( \Box ac8 \) 16 bxc3 \( \Box xc7 \) 17 \( \Box d2 \) 16 \( \Box xe2 \) \( \Box ac8 \) 17 \( \Box ac1 \).

14 \( \Box f2 \) c5

15 0-0

White has some advantage, but Black’s position is solid and he has counterplay on the queenside.

15 ... c4

The most logical. 15...\( \Box ac8 \) does not yield any dividends in view of \( \Box fe1 \) followed by \( \Box f1 \) etc., and it is not clear what Black can do next.

Before my reply I thought for a long time, and in the end I decided first to make a few prophylactic moves on the queenside, and only after this to prepare the typical advance e3-e4.

16 b3 b5

17 bxc4 bxc4

Of course, 17...dxc4? 18 e4 is not worth discussing.

18 \( \Box d1! \) \( \Box b6 \)

19 \( \Box c2 \) \( \Box c6 \)

20 a4 \( \Box d7 \)

21 a5 \( \Box c8 \)

This entire series of moves is very logical and does not require any commentary. Both sides have carried out their plans: White has suppressed the opponent’s counterplay on the queenside, while Black has transferred his pieces to better positions and has seriously hindered the opponent’s pawn advance in the centre.

22 \( \Box h4 \)

Vacating the f2 square for the knight and at the same time disrupting somewhat the placing of the black pieces.

22 ... \( \Box h7 \)

23 \( \Box f2 \) \( \Box d6 \)

24 \( \Box g4! \)?

This looks very strong, since it is extremely undesirable for Black to allow the knight to go to e5, and 24...f6? fails for tactical reasons: 25 \( \Box xh7+ \Box xh7 \) 26 \( \Box xf6 \) h5 27 \( \Box e5 \). But, unfortunately, Black finds a worthy defence.

24 ... \( \Box f5! \)

25 \( \Box f2 \)

Of course, not 25 \( \Box e5 \)? because of 25...\( \Box xe5 \), but after 25 \( \Box xf5 \) \( \Box xf5 \) 26 \( \Box e5 \) \( \Box e6 \) followed by f7-f6 Black again solves all his problems. I am therefore again forced to switch to unhurried manoeuvring.

25 ... f6
26 h3
26...h5 was threatened.
26 ...
27 afe1

The critical point of the game. Here it was time for Black to venture the slightly weakening 27...h5 28 d2 g8, when his position would have remained solid, although after 29 f1 White's position is nevertheless preferable (thus if ...f6-f5 there is always the unpleasant reply g3). Instead of this, for the moment my opponent decided simply to make a useful move, 'on general grounds'.

27 ...

Strange enough, this would seem to be Black's only and decisive mistake in this game.

28 e4!!

After this breakthrough all White's pieces become active, and his bishops begin to 'rake' the entire board.

28 ...

b5

Even outwardly it was apparent that Sergey was rattled. Indeed, there would no longer appear to be any good defence, although, in my opinion, more tenacious was 28...dxe4 (28...h5 29 exd5 axd5 30 c3 b5 31 d2 also brings little joy) 29 d5 b5 (29...a5 is weaker in view of 30 ad1, when the pin on the d-file is fatal, for example 30...c6 31 d4) 30 fxe4 h5 (30...g5? 31 e5) 31 d2 g5, although here too after the energetic 32 e5! fxe5 33 g6 (33 xe5? g4) 33...d7

34 f3!? White has a clear advantage.

29 d2 h5

Black's position is also very difficult after 29...dxe4 30 fxe4 h5 31 h2 g5 32 d5.

30 e3! dxe4

The inclusion of 30...c3 31 d1 would merely have aggravated the situation.

31 d5 f5

This loses almost by force, but there is nothing else (31 g5 is met by the simple 32 h4).

29 ac8?

Strangely enough, this would seem to be Black's only and decisive mistake in this game.

32 xf5!

The most precise.

32 ...

xd5

After 32...xd5 (32...xf5 33 dxc6 with a won position, while 32...xf3 is very strongly met by 33 b4!) White has a pleasant choice between 33 fxe4 e6 34 xd7 xd7 35 e5! with a big advantage in the endgame, and 33 xe4!? (which would seem to be even stronger), since now 33...f6? is bad in view of the unexpected 34 xg7!, winning.

33 xd5+

34 a4

34 fxe4 c6 35 e5 is also good, but the move played leaves Black with no saving hopes. My opponent evidently overestimated the strength of his connected passed b- and c-pawns, thinking that he would gain some practical drawing chances.

34...

a6

35 g5 axb5

36 fxe4!
A pleasant if trifling matter, although 36 \( \mathcal{Q}d6 \) was also good enough to win.

36 ... \( \mathcal{Q}c6 \)  
37 \( \mathcal{Q}d6 \) \( \mathcal{Q}f6 \)  
38 a6 \( c3 \)

Also after 38...b4 the black pawns do not go very far: 39 a7 b3 40 \( \mathcal{Q}a6! \) \( \mathcal{Q}a8 41 \mathcal{Q}xe8 \mathcal{Q}xe8 42 \mathcal{Q}b6 \mathcal{Q}d7 43 \mathcal{Q}b4 \).

39 a7 c2  
Or 39...b4 40 \( \mathcal{Q}xe8 \mathcal{Q}xe8 41 \mathcal{Q}eb1 \).

40 e5 \( \mathcal{Q}e4 \)  
If 40...\( \mathcal{Q}d5 \) White has 41 \( \mathcal{Q}xe8 \mathcal{Q}xe8 42 \mathcal{Q}ec1 \).

41 \( \mathcal{Q}xe8 \mathcal{Q}xe8 \)  
42 \( \mathcal{Q}ec1 \)

Now if 42...\( \mathcal{Q}xf2 \) the most convincing is 43 \( \mathcal{Q}xc2! \), and so Black resigned.

\section*{Attack}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
No.
137 & Kramnik–Kaidanov & Groningen 1993  \\
\hline
& Queen’s Gambit &  \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textbf{Highest category of difficulty}

A queen sacrifice always impresses and is practically always concrete. Rooks and minor pieces, as a rule, are also laid on the altar of the attack not on general grounds. But the sacrifice of a pawn for the initiative... It has always been regarded as a distinctive measure of mastery: after all, the activity has a tendency to die away, and then you may simply find yourself in an ending a pawn down...

In this game White very skilfully fanned the small flame of his initiative, and in the end the blaze extinguished the heart of the black resistance.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
1 & \( \mathcal{Q}f3 \) \( d5 \)  \\
2 & \( d4 \) \( \mathcal{Q}f6 \)  \\
3 & \( c4 \) \( e6 \)  \\
4 & \( \mathcal{Q}c3 \) \( dxc4 \)  \\
5 & \( e4 \) \( \mathcal{Q}b4 \)  \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

10 ... \( \mathcal{Q}bd7 \)  
10...\( \mathcal{Q}d7 \) leads to a rather unpleasant position for Black. After 11 \( \mathcal{Q}xf6 \) gxf6 12 \( \mathcal{W}b3 \a6 13 \mathcal{Q}c2 \mathcal{Q}c6 14 0-0 \mathcal{W}c7 15 \mathcal{Q}ab1 \) (15 \( \mathcal{W}a3!?; 15 \mathcal{Q}d1!? \) ) 15...\( \mathcal{Q}a5 \) 16 \( \mathcal{W}a3 \) I had already experienced this for myself (Khenkin-Kramnik, Sochi 1989).

11 \( \mathcal{Q}xf6 \) \( \mathcal{W}xc3+ \)  
12 \( \mathcal{Q}f1 \) \( \mathcal{G}xf6 \)  
13 \( h4 \) \( a6 \)

Very dangerous is 13...\( \mathcal{Q}e7 ??! \) 14 \( \mathcal{H}h3 \mathcal{W}a5 15 \mathcal{H}b1 \mathcal{H}d8 16 \mathcal{W}c1! \), when there is literally nothing that Black can move (Adorjan-Chernin, Debrecen 1990).

14 \( \mathcal{H}h3 \) \( \mathcal{W}a5 \)  
15 \( \mathcal{Q}e2 \) \( \mathcal{Q}c5 ??! \)

15...\( \mathcal{Q}e7 \) is stronger, although after 16 \( \mathcal{Cc1 \mathcal{H}d8 17 \mathcal{W}c2 \) White, in my opinion, has more than sufficient compensation for the pawn.

16 \( \mathcal{Q}b3! \)

Exchanging Black’s only active piece is even more advantageous, for the reason that the white knight at d4 is not too well placed.

16 ... \( \mathcal{Q}xb3 \)  
17 \( \mathcal{W}xb3 \) \( e5 \)

At that time this was a new move – and an unsuccessful one. It is true that, in order to refute it, at the board I had to find
several precise and difficult moves. Earlier 17...\textit{c}7 18 \textit{d}1 \textit{d}7 was tried, but after 19 \textit{b}2! Black had serious difficulties.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

18 \textit{f}3

The only way of maintaining the initiative and of forestalling the opponent’s clear plan: ...\textit{c}7(d8)-\textit{e}7 and ...\textit{e}6. Instead 18 \textit{c}3 looked tempting, but then 18...\textit{e}6! would have fully equalized, e.g. 19 \textit{xb}7 \textit{xc}3 20 \textit{xa}8+ \textit{e}7 21 \textit{b}7+ \textit{f}8 22 \textit{d}1 \textit{xa}2 23 \textit{xa}6 \textit{e}6.

18 ... \textit{d}8?!  

18...\textit{e}7 was dangerous on account of 19 \textit{c}1 followed by \textit{fc}3, but in the light of subsequent events perhaps Black should have gone into an ending: 18...\textit{e}6 19 \textit{xb}7 \textit{xc}3 20 \textit{xa}8+ \textit{e}7 21 \textit{b}7+ \textit{f}8 22 \textit{d}1 \textit{xa}2 23 \textit{xa}6 \textit{e}6.

19 \textit{c}1!

This move was underestimated by my opponent. Now it is not apparent how he can complete the development of his pieces. I will give a few variations:

(a) 19...\textit{g}4?! 20 \textit{d}3 \textit{xe}2+ 21 \textit{xe}2 \textit{c}7 22 \textit{b}6 \textit{d}8 (22...\textit{e}6 23 \textit{xe}6+ \textit{f}6 24 \textit{c}7 25 \textit{c}7 and wins;

(b) 19...\textit{e}6 20 \textit{xb}7 0–0 21 \textit{d}1 \textit{e}8 22 \textit{xf}6 and White has a decisive advantage;

(c) 19...\textit{b}5 20 \textit{c}6! \textit{e}6 21 \textit{a}3 (21 \textit{xe}6+? \textit{f}6 22 \textit{xe}6+ \textit{e}7) 21...\textit{e}7 22 \textit{xb}5! \textit{xa}3 23 \textit{xa}6+ \textit{e}7 24 \textit{f}xa3 with a positional and a material advantage;

(d) 19...0–0 (the most critical, but also insufficient) 20 \textit{e}3 \textit{h}8 21 \textit{h}6 \textit{g}8 (21...\textit{e}6 22 \textit{d}3 \textit{e}7 23 \textit{c}7) 22 \textit{d}3 \textit{e}7 (better is 22...\textit{f}8 23 \textit{xf}6+ \textit{g}7, when Black faces a difficult defence in the endgame) 23 \textit{c}7! \textit{e}6 24 \textit{d}6! \textit{xd}6 25 \textit{xf}7.

Black chooses another alternative, which is little better.

19 ... \textit{e}7  

20 \textit{b}6 \textit{d}8?!

Reluctantly played. Kaidanov’s suggestion of 20...\textit{g}4 21 \textit{c}7 \textit{e}6 would have lost to 22 \textit{xb}7 \textit{d}8 23 \textit{c}4! \textit{xf}3 24 \textit{xf}3 \textit{h}3+ (24...\textit{d}6 25 \textit{xf}7+ \textit{f}8 26 \textit{d}5) 25 \textit{e}2 0–0 26 \textit{xf}7, but the lesser evil was 20...\textit{e}6 21 \textit{xf}6 \textit{xb}6 22 \textit{xb}6 \textit{e}6, with some chances of saving the game.

21 \textit{e}7!  

More energetic than 21 \textit{xf}6.

21 ... \textit{d}4  

22 \textit{e}7+!

Simpler than 22 \textit{xd}4 \textit{ex}d4 23 \textit{c}4, which, however, was also quite strong.

22 ... \textit{xe}7  

23 \textit{xf}6+ \textit{d}7  

24 \textit{d}3  

This is somewhat more accurate than 24 \textit{xf}7+ \textit{d}8 (24...\textit{c}6? 25 \textit{f}6+ \textit{c}5 26 \textit{e}7+) 25 \textit{d}3 (25 \textit{f}6+? \textit{e}7) 25...\textit{d}7 26 \textit{xd}4 \textit{ex}d4 27 \textit{f}6+ \textit{c}7 28 \textit{c}5+ \textit{e}6, where Black connects his rooks (which, it is true, also should not save him).

24 ... \textit{xd}3
26 \texttt{\textbf{c}4}!

The main thing is not to allow the opponent to coordinate his pieces.

26 \ldots \texttt{\textbf{e}7}
27 \texttt{\textbf{x}f7}

White has a small material advantage and a big positional one. The outcome of the game is decided.

27 \ldots \texttt{\textbf{d}8}

Or 27...b5 28 \texttt{\textbf{d}5 \textbf{a}7} 29 \texttt{\textbf{c}6+ \textbf{d}8} 30 \texttt{\textbf{f}8+}, winning the ill-fated rook.

28 \texttt{\textbf{b}6+ \textbf{d}7}
29 \texttt{\textbf{b}3 \textbf{e}8}
30 \texttt{\textbf{a}4+ \textbf{f}7}

After 30...\texttt{\textbf{d}7} Black finally ‘unravels’ himself, but on the way he loses a rook: 31 \texttt{\textbf{x}d7+ \textbf{xd7}} (31...\texttt{\textbf{xd7}} 32 \texttt{\textbf{xb7+}}) 32 \texttt{\textbf{e}6+} and 33 \texttt{\textbf{g}8+}.

31 \texttt{\textbf{d}8}

Black resigns. He did not in fact manage to complete his development.

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No. 138

\textbf{Ivanchuk–Kramnik}

\textit{Linares 1993}

Sicilian Defence

Perfect pitch

It is something that musicians have, as well as engineers (it is sufficient to recall Eiffel and the aviation engineer Tupolev, who at one glance could give a diagnosis as to whether or not a plane would fly) and poets. It is also something – equally rarely – that chess players have. It is this gift from God that enables them to see what was earlier unknown, and to find that which others earlier passed by.

Without this perfect chess pitch Kramnik would have been unable to play such a game: Mozart-like clear, transparent and convincing. And this against an opponent whose unusual thinking is acknowledged by the entire chess society...
with the immediate 11 f4 \( \text{Qxc4} \) 12 \( \text{Qxc4} \) \( \text{Wxc4} \) 13 \( \text{Wf3} \) followed by queenside castling and the e4-e5 breakthrough.

10 \( \text{vxc4} \)?

A purely Ivanchuk-like idea. In the event of 10 0-0 \( \text{Qxe7} \) 11 \( \text{Qe3} \) \( \text{Qc7} \) Black has no problems.

But today 10 \( \text{Qe3} \) \( \text{Qc7} \) 11 f4 is more common, with the plan indicated above. This is what Ivanchuk played against me at the Paris rapidplay in 1995. This is possibly stronger, but the retreat of the bishop to g3 is significantly more cunning.

10 ... \( \text{h5}! \)

An intuitive, one could say 'genuinely Sicilian', and very strong move, with which I was happy. White would have developed a serious initiative in the variation 10...\( \text{Qc7} \) 11 f4 \( \text{Qc4} \) 12 e5! dxe5 (12...\( \text{Qxb2} \)? is totally bad – 13 \( \text{Qd4} \) and White wins) 13 fxe5 \( \text{Qxe5} \) (13...\( \text{Qd7} \) does not help on account of 14 \( \text{Wd4} \)) 14 \( \text{Wd4} \) \( \text{Qfd7} \) 15 0-0-0. I did not find a forced win here for White, but this position did not appeal to me. And although I saw that with my tenth move I was condemning my king to a 'dangerous life' in the centre, I sensed that due to dynamic features Black should not be clearly worse, and that I could hope for counterplay.

11 \( \text{h3} \)

Of course, 11 f4? will not do at all due to 11...\( \text{Qeg4} \), but 11 f3 came into consideration, when Black should play something like 11...\( \text{Wc7} \) 12 \( \text{Wd4}!? \) h4 13 \( \text{f2} \) b5 14 a4 \( \text{Qc6}! \) 15 \( \text{Wd2} \) b4 16 \( \text{Qd1} \) d5 with the initiative.

11 ... \( \text{Qc7} \)

12 f4

Now nothing is achieved by 12 \( \text{Wd4} \) b5 13 a4 \( \text{Qc6} \) 14 \( \text{Qe3} \) \( \text{Qb4}! \) 15 \( \text{Qd3} \) \( \text{bxa4} \) 16 \( \text{Qxa4} \) \( \text{Qb8} \), when Black is at least equal. However, this is also the case after 12 a4 \( \text{Qd7} \) 13 \( \text{Wd4} \) \( \text{Qc8} \), where he wins the battle for the c4 square.

12 ... \( \text{Qc4} \)

13 \( \text{Qxh5+} \)

An acknowledgement that White has no opening advantage (and, incidentally, played after half an hour's thought). The maximum that White could have achieved was a complicated game with chances for both sides in the variation 13 \( \text{Qd4} \) (13 e5? will not do – 13...\( \text{dxe5} \) 14 \( \text{fxe5} \) \( \text{Qxe5} \) 15 \( \text{Wd4} \) \( \text{Qf3}+ \)) 13...b5 14 e5 (14 a4 e5!) 14...\( \text{dxe5} \) 15 \( \text{fxe5} \) \( \text{Qb7} \) 16 0-0-0 \( \text{Qd8} \) 17 \( \text{Qf2} \) \( \text{Qc4} \) 18 \( \text{Qxe4} \) \( \text{Qxe4} \), although in this case he would also risk ending up in an inferior position.

13 ... \( \text{Wxc4} \)

14 \( \text{Qf3} \) \( \text{h4}! \)

Another precise move. The idea of it is to drive the bishop to an unfavourable position, since after 15 \( \text{Qf2} \) b5! 16 e5 (16 0-0-0 \( \text{Qc7} \) with approximate equality) 16...\( \text{Qd5} \) 17 \( \text{Qxd5} \) \( \text{Wxd5} \) 18 \( \text{Wxd5} \) \( \text{exd5} \) 19 0-0-0 (19 \( \text{exd6} \) \( \text{Qxd6} \), and the f4 pawn is 'hanging') 19...\( \text{dxe5} \) 20 \( \text{fxe5} \) \( \text{Qf5} \)! Black solves all his problems.

15 \( \text{Qh2} \) \( \text{Qd7} \)

16 0-0-0 \( \text{Qc8} \)

17 \( \text{Qhe1} \)

A natural move, on which for some reason my opponent spent quarter of an hour out of his already small amount of remaining time.

17 ... \( \text{b5}! \)

More energetic than 17...\( \text{Qe7} \), which, however, is also quite good.

18 \( \text{Wf2?} \)

After this Black seizes the initiative. 18 a3 was better, when the position, in my opinion, is one of dynamic balance. In
Ivanchuk’s defence I should mention that already he had little more than 15 minutes remaining on his clock, whereas I still had a good half hour.

18 ... \(\text{Wc7}!\)

This was probably overlooked by my opponent. Now 19 a3 does not help White on account of the simple 19...a5, and he is obliged to begin forcing play, sensing in so doing that it is not in his favour. But how else can he defend against the threat of ...b5-b4 here?

19 e5 b4
20 \(\text{Nd3}!\)

A reasonable chance, since after 20 exf6 bxc3 21 f5 cxb2+ 22 \(\text{Bb1}\) e5 23 fxg7 \(\text{Qxg7}\) things are completely bad for White (24 f6 \(\text{Qxf6}\)).

20 ... \(\text{dxe5}\)
21 fxe5 bxc3
22 \(\text{Qxc3}\)

Black also finds a defence after the showy 22 exf6 \(\text{Qxh2} 23 \text{Qxd7} - 23...\text{Qg3}! 24 \text{Qxg3 hxg3} 25 \text{Qa7 cxb2+} 26 \text{Qxb2 gxf6} 27 \text{Qxa6 f5}\) with the better chances.

22 ... \(\text{Wxc3}\)
22...\(\text{Qb8}\) seemed dangerous to me, but in fact it was the strongest, e.g. 23 \(\text{Qxc8+} \text{Qxc8} 24 \text{Qf1! Hh7!} 25 \text{Qf4}\) (there is nothing else) 25...\(\text{Qc7}!\)? 26 exf6 \(\text{Qxf4+}\) 27 \(\text{Qxf4}\) gxf6 and the ending is quite hopeless for White.

However, there are few players – if any at all! – who under the threat of impending time trouble would have found 24...\(\text{Hh7}!\), and it is on this move that 22...\(\text{Wb8}\) relies. So that from the practical viewpoint the move played can in no way be considered a mistake. However, theoretically it relinquishes the advantage, although White did not exploit this chance opportunity.

23 \(\text{bxc3}\) \(\text{Qa3+}\)
24 \(\text{Qd2}?!\)

In time trouble White overlooks a good defensive resource, which was pointed out later by Anand: 24 \(\text{Qb1! Qd5} 25 \text{Qf4!}\), and the position becomes extremely sharp with chances for both sides. Such is the value of a move at this moment. The mistake made by White is not really so appreciable, and energetic play is still demanded of Black, but it would appear that the outcome of the game is already decided.

24 ... \(\text{Qd5}\)
25 \(\text{Qe4}\) \(\text{Qxc3}\)
26 \(\text{Qg4}\)
If 26 \(\text{Qxh4}\), then 26...0-0 followed by ...\(\text{Qf8}\).

26 ... 0-0!

The black rook, which has been asleep for a long time at h8, comes into play with decisive effect.

27 \(\text{Qxh4}\) \(\text{Qf8}\)
28 \(\text{Qd4}\) \(\text{Qb4}\)
29 \(\text{Qe2}\) \(\text{Qb5+}\!\)

The lone white king is attacked by all the black pieces!

30 \(\text{Qxb5}\)
Black would have won pretty well in the variation 30 \( \text{xf2} \) \( \text{xc2+} \) 31 \( \text{xc2} \) \( \text{xc2+} \) 32 \( \text{xf3} \) (32 \( \text{g1} \) \( \text{c1+} \) 33 \( \text{f2} \) \( \text{fl+} \) 34 \( \text{g3} \) \( \text{c1 mate} \) 32...\( \text{e2+} \) 33 \( \text{e4} \) \( \text{c4 mate!} \)

30 ... \( \text{xc2+} \)
31 \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{xb5} \)
32 \( \text{xb4} \)

Played a few seconds before the fall of his flag.
32 ... \( \text{xb4} \)
33 \( \text{xb4} \) \( \text{c3+} \)

White resigns

Professional obligation

'I have to play in the Bundesliga several times a year – a few games at a time. How do I regard such international events? As a professional. The club team championship of Germany long ago became a first-class event: a couple of decades ago the then West German clubs invited "mercenaries" of the class of Mikhail Tal, Boris Spassky and Viktor Korchnoi, dozens of grandmasters from the countries of the former Soviet Union, then from England, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary... And you have to justify your invitation."

(Kramnik)

1 e4 c5 2 \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{c6} \) 3 d4 cxd4 4 \( \text{xd4} \) \( \text{f6} \)
5 \( \text{c3} \) e5 6 \( \text{db5} \) d6 7 \( \text{g5} \) a6 8 \( \text{a3} \) b5
9 \( \text{d5} \) e7 10 \( \text{xf6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 11 c3 0–0 12
\( \text{c2} \) \( \text{g5} \) 13 a4 \( \text{bxa4} \) 14 \( \text{xa4} \) a5 15 \( \text{c4} \)
\( \text{b8} \) 16 b3 \( \text{h8} \) 17 0–0 g6

Before this game practically only 17...f5 had been played, but after 18 exf5 \( \text{xf5} \) the e4 square may end up in White’s hands. In principle this is not so terrible, but my move involves capturing on f5 with the g-pawn – albeit at the cost of a slight weakening of the black king’s defences. Now many play this way, including Garry Kasparov...
22 ... e4!?

I liked the very idea of this swift attack, and hence this risky decision; even so, the white pawn on the a-file becomes very strong. After 22...axb4 23 cxb4 e4 24 h4 e8 25 h5 e5 the position is extremely sharp, although Black still holds the initiative.

23 bxa5

It was not easy to resist this temptation, but 23 ∆xa5! 24 ∆xa5 would have been more circumspect, when White gets rid of the black knight that later becomes terribly strong. The resulting position is very hard to evaluate: for the exchange White controls the centre and his knights have some excellent strong points. Even so, I would probably prefer to play Black here, but there is still all to play for and each side has his trumps.

Now, however, Black carries out his idea move by move.

23 ... ∆e5
24 h4 ∆xb4
25 cxb4

The second knight cannot be diverted to the queenside: after 25 ∆xb4 ∆f3+ 26 g2 e8 Black has a very strong attack. Now, however, the black knight would immediately be driven away from f3.

And so...

25 ... f4!

Of course, White's passed pawns made me somewhat nervous, but Black's attack is already very threatening, and in analysis after the game we were unable to find a defence for White.

26 ∆d4

Other continuations are also unsatisfactory, e.g. 26 ∆xe4 f5 27 e2 f3 and White has to give up a piece, or 26 ∆xf4 ∆xf4 27 gxh4 ∆f3+ 28 g2 (28 f1 h3 mate!) 28...h4, mating.

26 ... e3

A typical breakthrough in the Sveshnikov Variation of the Sicilian!

27 fxe3

White cannot maintain the pawn defences in front of his king: 27 f3 fxg3 28 hxg3 w5 29 g2 g8 30 g4 xg4. However, I also had to calculate some variations in the branch 27 gxh4 exf2+, when 28 h1 loses to 28...xf4 29 wc4 h3 with the main threats of 30...g8 and 30...w8, 28 xf2 to 28...h4+ 29 g1 (29 g3 xf4) 29...xf4 (with the threat of 30...h2+ 30 xf4 xf4 winning material, and 28 xf2 will not do since the bishop at c4 is undefended.

27 ... f3!?

27...fxg3 28 hxg3 w5 was also possible.

28 w2 f2+
29 g2

29 ... w8!

Also not at all bad is 29...c8 30 f1 x3! 31 xf3 c3 when White does not appear to have any defence. But why any unnecessary brilliance, if the black queen is simply heading for h5?!...
30 \( \text{ Axe2} \)

This is the main variation of those that I examined during the game. Everything else loses even more quickly: 30 \( \text{ f1} \) \( \text{ Qxc4} \) 31 \( \text{ Wxc4} \) \( \text{ Wc4+} \), 30 \( \text{ f1} \) \( \text{ Qg4} \) 31 \( \text{ Wc2} \) (otherwise there follows a check at e4) 31...\( \text{ Wh5} \), and 30 \( \text{ f4} \) \( \text{ Qxc4} \) 31 \( \text{ Wxc4} \) \( \text{ Wxe3} \) with many threats, the chief of which is 32...\( \text{ Axe4} \).

30 ... \( \text{ Qg4} \)

31 \( \text{ f3} \)

After 31 \( \text{ Axe4} \) \( \text{ Qxe4} \) 32 \( \text{ f4} \) \( \text{ Wxe3} \) 33 \( \text{ Wxf2} \) \( \text{ Qh3+} \) 34 \( \text{ Qg1} \) \( \text{ Axe4} \) White loses everything, since 35 \( \text{ gxf4} \) is not possible on account of 35...\( \text{ Qg8+} \).

If 31 \( \text{ b2} \) Black has the very convincing 31...\( \text{ g7} \) followed by ...\( \text{ Qxe3} \).

31 ... \( \text{ Qxe3+} \)

32 \( \text{ Qxe3} \) \( \text{ Wxe3} \)

33 \( \text{ Wxf2} \) \( \text{ Qh3+} \)

34 \( \text{ Qg1} \) \( \text{ Wc3} \)

35 \( \text{ Wc1} \) \( \text{ Ad2} \)

Since the rook cannot leave the back rank in view of 36...\( \text{ Qc1+} \), and cannot leave the e-file in view of 36...\( \text{ Qe3} \), White resigned.

It was the light-square bishop, taking upon itself every fourth move in the game, that fulfilled the role of that horse which once caused the fall of Troy. What is interesting is that it carried out its destructive work at the very distant approaches to the black king. This had already been seen before, but even so the play of the winner creates a very strong impression...

1 \( \text{ f3} \) \( \text{ d5} \)

2 \( \text{ d4} \) \( \text{ Qf6} \)

3 \( \text{ c4} \) \( \text{ e6} \)

4 \( \text{ Qc3} \) \( \text{ Qe7} \)

5 \( \text{ Wc2?!} \) \( \text{ 0-0} \)

6 \( \text{ Qg5} \) \( \text{ h6} \)

Two rounds earlier Belyavsky played 6...\( \text{ Qbd7} \) against me, but after 7 \( \text{ Bd1 dc4} \) 8 \( \text{ e4} \) \( \text{ Qb6} \) 9 \( \text{ h4?!} \) \( \text{ Qfd7} \) 10 \( \text{ Qe2} \) \( \text{ Qe8} \) 11 \( \text{ Qe3} \) he did not manage to equalise.

7 \( \text{ Qxf6} \) \( \text{ Qxf6} \)

8... \( \text{ Qd1} \)!

As far as I know, this is Romanishin’s favourite continuation. Also interesting is the more popular 8 0–0–0 with a sharp game.

8 ... \( \text{ g6} \)

Effectively giving up the fight for complete equality, which could have been initiated by 8...\( \text{ c5} \).

9 \( \text{ e3} \)

The hasty 9 \( \text{ e4?!} \) would have given Black quite good counterplay: 9...\( \text{ dxe4} \) 10 \( \text{ Qxe4} \) \( \text{ Qg7} \) 11 \( \text{ Qe2} \) \( \text{ Qc6} \).

9 ... \( \text{ c6} \)
evident that a tactical skirmish is imminent.

19 ... \( \text{h5} \)

20 \( \text{e5} \) \( \text{d7} ?? \)

Deviating from the main idea at the most inappropriate moment. Short was obliged to complete the series of active moves in the same style with 20...c5!, provoking wild complications. After 21 d5 exd5 White has two alternatives:

(a) 22 \( \text{Qxd5} \) \( \text{Wxe5} \) 23 f4 (I will not give all the variations, since there are too many; please believe me, the text moves are the strongest) 23...\( \text{Wd4+} \) ! (also interesting is 23...\( \text{Wxd5} \) !? 24 \( \text{Qxd5} \) \( \text{Qxd5} \) with some compensation for the queen) 24 \( \text{Qxd4} \) \( \text{Qxd4+} \) 25 \( \text{Qh1} \) \( \text{Qxd5} \) 26 \( \text{Qxd5} \) \( \text{Qxd5} \) 27 \( \text{f5} \) ! \( \text{Qe3} \) 28 \( \text{Qc4} \) \( \text{gx5} \) 29 \( \text{Qxf5} \) \( \text{Qxf5} \) 30 \( \text{Qxa8}+ \) \( \text{Qg7} \) 31 \( \text{Qf3} \), and the game should end in a draw.

(b) 22 \( \text{e6} \) !? \( \text{f6} \) (the only move) 23 \( \text{Qxd5} \) ! (after the incautious 23 \( \text{Qf7} \) ? Black seizes the initiative by 23...f5 ! ! 24 \( \text{g3} \) \( \text{d4} \) with a dangerous counterattack) 23...\( \text{Qxd5} \) 24 \( \text{Qxd5} \) \( \text{fxg5} \) 25 \( \text{Qxa8} \) (25 \( \text{Wxe6} \) !?) 25...\( \text{Wxa8} \) 26 \( \text{Wxe6} \) with a double-edged game. This analysis does not exhaust all the possibilities, but I would risk suggesting that 20...c5! leads to a position of dynamic equilibrium. This is not surprising – up to this point the play of both sides has been very logical. Naturally, in such a sharp position the price of any delay is high, since White gains time to include his reserves in the attack.

21 \( \text{Qe2} \) !

I think that my opponent overlooked this knight manoeuvre, which is rather unusual for this type of set-up. White’s threats are already pretty real, and the inclusion in the attack of one more piece is equivalent to that straw that broke the camel’s back. The appearance of this knight at \( f4 \) with a decisive attack on \( e6 \) or \( g6 \) cannot be prevented. For example: 21...\( \text{Qa6} \) 22 \( \text{Qf4} \) ! \( \text{Qxf1} \) 23 \( \text{Qxe6} \) ! \( \text{fxg6} \) (23...\( \text{Wxe8} \) 24 \( \text{Qf4} \) 24 \( \text{Qxe6}+ \) \( \text{Qh8} \) 25 \( \text{Wxe6} \), and despite Black’s enormous material advantage, he has no defence. He also fails to save the game by 21...\( \text{h6} \) 22 \( \text{Qxe6}! \) \( \text{fxe6} \) (or 22...\( \text{Qxg5} \) 23 \( \text{Qxh4} \) 24 \( \text{Qxg4} \) 23 \( \text{Wxg6}+ \) \( \text{Qg7} \) 24 \( \text{Qxe5} \) 25 \( \text{hxg5} \), or 21...\( \text{h6} \) 22 \( \text{Qc6} \) \( \text{fxe6} \) 23 \( \text{Wxe6} \).

My opponent, short of time, loses more prosaically.

21 ... \( \text{Qad8} ?? \)

22 \( \text{Qxe6} ! \) \( \text{fxe6} \)

23 \( \text{Qxe5} \)

24 \( \text{Qf4} \)

25 \( \text{Qf4} \)

With the irresistible threat of 24 \( \text{Qf4} \).

23 ... \( \text{Qxe5} \)

24 \( \text{Qh7}+ \)

25 \( \text{Qf4} \)

Black resigns, since after 25...\( \text{h6} \) there would have followed 26 \( \text{Qfxe6}+ \) \( \text{Qe8} \) 27 \( \text{Wg8}+ \), while if 25...\( \text{Qd6} \), then simply 26 dxe5.

No. 141

Kasparov–Kramnik

Dos Hermanas 1996

Queen’s Gambit

The inertia of victory

The day before, after a series of draws at the start of the tournament, Kramnik had won against Vishwanathan Anand in one of the longest games of his career. It had lasted 101 moves and nearly seven hours – his tiredness after it was both obvious, and understandable. So if White had been in a
peaceable mood, it is doubtful whether Black would have thrown down the gauntlet. But for the World Champion not to try and exploit the advantage of the first move... Such a thing could not be expected, and Kramnik prepared himself mentally for a grand battle.

Incidentally, from the concluding position of this entertaining, although by no means faultless game, one could boldly predict that it was some sharp variation of the Sicilian Defence that had been played. But in fact, after beginning the game with 1 d4, Kasparov suffered his first defeat since 1986, his first for 10 years!

1 d4 d5
2 c4 c6
3 Nc3 Nf6
4 g3 e6
5 e3 d3
6 a4 e4
7 c2 e5
8 dxe4 b5
9 a6

Naturally, Kasparov chooses one of the sharpest lines in the Meran.

Also possible is the ‘quieter’ 9...b4, which Anand likes to play.

10 e4 c5
11 d5 c4
12 Nc2 Bc7
13 Nc5

The main discussions at that time revolved around 13 dxe6 fxe6 14 Ng5 Qc5 15 e5!?

13 ... Qc5

In his game with Gelfand at Tilburg 1993, Dreev successfully employed 13...e5.

14 b4

An uncommon, but fairly logical move – White tries to open the position, in order to exploit his lead in development.

14 ... cxb3
15 axb3 b4
16 a4 Qxe4

17 Qxe4

A new move. Such a development of events had already occurred in a game Yakovich-Sorokin in 1988, where there followed 17 dxe6 Qd8 18 exf7+ Qxf7 with free play for Black. 17 Qxe4 sets more problems, but does not give any advantage.

17 ... Qd4
18 dxe6 Qd6!

The strongest, and possibly the only move. As my opponent said to me after the game, other moves (such as 18...0-0-0) lose almost by force (as is not difficult to see). The move played is the most logical – after all, Black wants to play ...0-0! However, already here it was necessary to anticipate the complications that arose in the game.

19 exf7+

19 Qb2 is also possible, but this is no way to play for an advantage.

19 ... Qxf7!

This involves the following piece sacrifice, but I did not want to concede the initiative – after 19...Qxf7 20 Qh5+! g6 21 Qh3 the black king feels uncomfortable.

20 f3 Qh5

All moves by the knight are bad on account of 21 Qe1+, and 20...0-0? also fails after 21 fx e4 Qf1+ 22 Qf1 Qxh2+ 23 Qxh2 Qxf1 24 Qc5! with a won ending for White.

21 g3

Again the most critical. After 21 h3 Qe5! 22 fx e4? Qh2+ 23 Qf2 0-0+ 24 Qf3
\( \text{x}e4 \) Black's attack is irresistible. Of course, 22 f4! is stronger, but after 22...\( \text{W}f6 \) 23 \( \text{b}2 \) 0–0 it is only a question of how great Black's advantage is.

21 ... 0–0?

It is obvious that, if I do not want to be mated (for example, 21...\( \text{Cc}5 \)? 22 \( \text{He}1+ \) \( \text{f}7 \) 23 \( \text{f}5! \) with a strong attack), I have to sacrifice a piece. Of the many possible versions of this sacrifice, the strongest was 21...\( \text{Dxg}3 \)! 22 \( \text{hxg}3 \) (22 \( \text{He}1+?! \) \( \text{Dc}4 \) 23 \( \text{Ma}2 \) 0–0 with an attack; 22 \( \text{He}1+ \) \( \text{f}7 \)! 23 \( \text{De}6 \) \( \text{Df}5 \) 24 \( \text{g}5+ \) \( \text{g}8 \) 22...0–0 23 \( \text{Ma}2! \) (a defensive manoeuvre on which White's entire position depends) 23...\( \text{Dxg}3 \) 24 \( \text{Dg}2 \) \( \text{C}5 \) 25 \( \text{Cc}5 \) \( \text{ad}8 \) 26 \( \text{Cc}3 \) \( \text{Cc}8! \), and it would seem that White has to seek salvation in variations such as 27 f4! (otherwise it is difficult to escape from the pin on the d-file) 27...\( \text{Wxd}1 \) 28 \( \text{Hxd}1 \) \( \text{Dxf}4 \) 29 \( \text{xf}4 \) (29 \( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{e}5! \)?) 29...\( \text{xf}4 \) 30 \( \text{g}d2 \) (30 \( \text{xg}7+? \) \( \text{h}8 \) 31 \( \text{Cc}7? \) \( \text{g}8+ \)), retaining reasonable drawing chances (30...\( \text{g}4?! \) 31 \( \text{Dde}6! \)).

22 fxe4 \( \text{W}h3! \)

Calmingly continuing the attack. Pretty, but insufficient, was 22...\( \text{Hxf}1+ \) 23 \( \text{Wxf}1 \) \( \text{xg}3?! \) (23...\( \text{xe}4?! \) retains some compensation) 24 \( \text{hxg}3 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 25 \( \text{Ma}2! \) (if not the strongest, then at least this is the simplest) 25...\( \text{h}1+ \) 26 \( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{h}2+ \) 27 \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{xa}2 \) 28 \( \text{xe}4 \), when White must win.

23 \( \text{f}3?! \)

Clearly underestimating the opponent's play. It was possible to include another piece in the defence – 23 \( \text{Ma}2 \), and after 23...\( \text{xe}4 \) (23...\( \text{gx}3?! \) 24 \( \text{f}5! \) \( \text{xf}5 \) 25 \( \text{xf}5 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 26 \( \text{g}5! \) 24 \( \text{Ma}1 \) (the only way of defending against ...\( \text{xe}3 \) 24...\( \text{b}7 \) (or 24...\( \text{ae}8 \) 25 \( \text{Cc}3 \) 25 \( \text{d}3! \) an unusual position arises: White is a piece up, for which Black has a pawn and positional compensation. It is very hard to give an accurate evaluation of this position. In a practical game I would prefer to be playing Black (25...\( \text{ae}8?! \), 25...\( \text{ae}8?! \), 25...\( \text{f}6?! \), 25...\( \text{ad}8?! \)).

However, 23 \( \text{W}e2! \) would have given White the advantage, for example: 23...\( \text{xe}3 \) (White parries the diverting 23...\( \text{xe}4 \) by interposing 24 \( \text{f}4! \) \( \text{xf}4 \) 25 \( \text{xe}4 \) 24 \( \text{f}5! \) During the game we both overlooked this strong move (insufficient is 24 \( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{xe}4 \)!, or 24 \( \text{hxg}3 \) \( \text{xe}3+ \) 25 \( \text{g}2 \) \( \text{f}1+ \) 26 \( \text{xf}1 \) \( \text{f}8+ \), and White stands badly in view of 27 \( \text{g}1 \) \( \text{W}e1+ \). Now, however, it very difficult to continue the attack: 24 \( \text{xf}5 \) 25 \( \text{xf}5 \) \( \text{hx}2+ \) (25...\( \text{xe}4 \) 26 \( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{xh}2+ \) 27 \( \text{f}1 \) \( \text{d}8 \) is possible, but Black has given up too much material for the attack to succeed) 26 \( \text{xf}2 \) \( \text{Wg}4+ \) 27 \( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 28 \( \text{f}2 \) \( \text{e}5 \) 29 \( \text{Cc}2+ \) 29 \( \text{f}1 \) and the white king escapes from the pursuit, or 24...\( \text{Cc}5 \) 25 \( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{xb}2 \) 26 \( \text{xb}2 \) \( \text{xb}3 \) 27 \( \text{d}3 \) with a clear advantage - I am not sure whether it is sufficient for a win, but the advantage is certainly there.

23 ... \( \text{xe}3 \)!
It was on this move that Kasparov was pinning his hopes. However, it was time that White seriously concerned himself with the safety of his king: 24 \( \text{We2} \), and although 24... \( \text{xf3} \)! 25 \( \text{xf3} \) \( \text{xe}2+ \) 26 \( \text{f1} \) \( \text{xf2} \) (26 \( \text{f1} \) \( \text{xe}4!! \) 27 \( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{g3}+ \) 28 \( \text{g1} \) \( \text{h2}+ \) 29 \( \text{f1} \) \( \text{h1}+ \) 30 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{e1}+ \) 31 \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{d8}+ \) and Black wins) 26... \( \text{h4}+ \) 27 \( \text{f1} \) looks very dangerous for him, there does not appear to be a win:

(a) 27... \( \text{e}5 \) 28 \( \text{c4}+ \) \( \text{h}8 \) 29 \( \text{f7} \) with counterplay;
(b) 27... \( \text{d6}?! \) 28 \( \text{b2}?! \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 29 \( \text{c4}+ \) \( \text{h}8 \) 30 \( \text{g}7+ \) \( \text{g}7 \) 31 \( \text{d4}+ \) \( \text{g}8 \) 32 \( \text{c4}+ \);
(c) 27... \( \text{g}3 \) 28 \( \text{g}2?! \) \( \text{xe}4 \) (28... \( \text{e}5 \) 29 \( \text{b2} \) \( \text{xb2} \) 30 \( \text{xb2} \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 31 \( \text{h3}!) \) 29 \( \text{xf3} \) \( \text{xf3}+ \) 30 \( \text{xf3} \) \( \text{xf3} \) 31 \( \text{c}5 \); 
(d) 27... \( \text{g}4 \) 28 \( \text{e}1!! \) \( \text{g}1+ \) 29 \( \text{f1} \) \( \text{g}3+ \) 30 \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{h}8+ \) (30... \( \text{d4}+ \) 31 \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{xa1} \) 32 \( \text{b2} \) 31 \( \text{c}2 \) \( \text{xe}4+ \) 32 \( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{xf}1 \) 33 \( \text{xc}4+ \) \( \text{xc}4+ \) 34 \( \text{xc}4 \);
(e) 27... \( \text{xe}4 \) 28 \( \text{c}4+ \) \( \text{h}8 \) 29 \( \text{c}5! \) \( \text{c}5 \) 30 \( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{xe}4 \) 31 \( \text{xe}4 \) \( \text{xa}1 \) with equality.

After 24 \( \text{c}5 \)? it would appear that the game can no longer be saved.

24 ... \( \text{xf3} \)
25 \( \text{xf3} \)

If 25 \( \text{a2} \) \( \text{xf1}+ \) 26 \( \text{xf1} \) \( \text{xf1}+ \) 27 \( \text{xf1} \) \( \text{c8} \) 28 \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{f4} \) 29 \( \text{xb7} \) \( \text{xe}3 \) 30 \( \text{xa6} \) \( \text{f4} \) with a very difficult ending, but White was still feeling optimistic.

25 ... \( \text{hxh2}+ \)
26 \( \text{f1} \)

26 ... \( \text{c6}!! \)

A quiet move of crushing strength, which was underestimated (or overlooked) by Kasparov. After the light-square bishop joins the attack, the position of White's king becomes totally precarious.

27 \( \text{g5} \)

It is surprising, but, despite his extra rook, White is completely defenceless, for example: 27 \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{h1}+ \) 28 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{e1}+ \) mate, 27 \( \text{a2} \) \( \text{b5}+ \) 28 \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{xd3}+! \) 29 \( \text{xd3} \) (29 \( \text{xd3} \) \( \text{h1}+ \) and 30... \( \text{e1}+ \) mate) 29... \( \text{f8}+ \) 30 \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{h1}+ \), or 27 \( \text{a5} \) \( \text{c7} \) 28 \( \text{a8} \) \( \text{d8} \).

27 ... \( \text{b5}+ \)
28 \( \text{d3} \)

28 ... \( \text{e8}! \)

Bringing up the last piece into the attack.

29 \( \text{a2} \)

The only 'sensible' move – 29 \( \text{c1} \) – also fails to save White: 29... \( \text{h1}+ \) 30 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{xe}4+ \) 31 \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{g2}+ \), and Black wins, since the \( \text{c1} \) square is not available to the king.

29 ... \( \text{h1}+ \)

Having seen a forced win, I did not even bother to look for anything better (especially since I had little time left). Meanwhile, it would have been simpler to conclude the game with... mate in four moves: 29... \( \text{xd3}+! \) 30 \( \text{xd3} \) (30 \( \text{xd3} \) \( \text{h1}+ \) 31 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{e1}+ \) mate) 30... \( \text{h1}+ \) 31 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{g2}+ \) 32 \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{xe}4 \) mate. It may seem incredible that this was not seen by a
player with such a rating, but the explanation is probably that it is psychologically difficult to give up 'such' a bishop for 'such' a knight, and so at a particular moment this move may be simply overlooked.

30 \textit{\textbf{e2}} \textit{\textbf{xe4+}}
31 \textit{\textbf{d2}}

There is a pretty mate after 31 \textit{\textbf{e3 \textbf{gg2+}}} 32 \textit{\textbf{f2 \textbf{xf2!!}}}

31 \textit{\textbf{...}} \textit{\textbf{g2+}}
32 \textit{\textbf{c1}} \textit{\textbf{xa2}}
33 \textit{\textbf{xg3}} \textit{\textbf{a1+}}
34 \textit{\textbf{c2}} \textit{\textbf{c3+}}
35 \textit{\textbf{b1}} \textit{\textbf{d4}}

Black regains the piece while continuing his attack. If 36 \textit{\textbf{f6}} he wins by 36...\textit{\textbf{xd3+}} 37 \textit{\textbf{a2 \textbf{b1+!}}} 38 \textit{\textbf{xb1 \textbf{d2+}}.}

Therefore \textbf{White resigned.}

\begin{center}
\textbf{No.142}
\textbf{Ivanchuk–Kramnik}
\textbf{Dos Hermanas 1996}
\textbf{Sicilian Defence}
\end{center}

\textbf{Timely ripened fruit}

One can, realising the importance of a forthcoming encounter, prepare for a quite specific game. One can prepare more abstractly, studying chess; this in particular is the approach taken by those who are capable of generating new ideas – and not by way of exceptions. But the happiest case must be considered that, when work that was done earlier comes in useful at a decisive moment. Any clash with Kasparov, Anand or Ivanchuk is always such a moment. And any victory of the 'Big Four' (at that moment – after all, its composition has a tendency to change frequently) in a battle between them always echoes around the chess world. So that the fresh 'seed' sown by Kramnik bore fruit a year later, where it was both necessary, and important.

1 e4 c5 2 \textit{\textbf{f3 \textbf{c6}}} 3 d4 cxd4 4 \textit{\textbf{xd4 \textbf{f6}}} 5 \textit{\textbf{c3 \textbf{d6}}} 6 \textit{\textbf{g5 \textbf{e6}}} 7 \textit{\textbf{d2 \textbf{a6}}} 8 0–0–0 h6 9 \textit{\textbf{e3 \textbf{e7}}} 10 f4 \textit{\textbf{xd4}} 11 \textit{\textbf{xd4 \textbf{b5}}} 12 \textit{\textbf{e3}}

Quite a popular move at that time. For 12 \textit{\textbf{d3}} see the following game.

\begin{center}
\textit{\textbf{12 \textbf{...}}} \textit{\textbf{c7}}
\textit{\textbf{13 e5 \textbf{dxe5}}}
\textit{\textbf{14 \textbf{xe5}}}
\end{center}

14 \textit{\textbf{... \textbf{g4!}}}

A new move that I had prepared roughly a year earlier. Theory used to recommend 14...\textit{\textbf{wa7}} 15 \textit{\textbf{g3 \textbf{b4}}}, but after 16 \textit{\textbf{b5}}! Black can resign.

15 \textit{\textbf{f3}} \textit{\textbf{xe5}}
16 \textit{\textbf{xa8 \textbf{d7!}}}

This is the point of the idea (bad is 16...\textit{\textbf{xc6?}}} 17 \textit{\textbf{xb5!}). Now White has problems with his development and the defence of his f4 pawn.
17 g3?
This is, of course, a radical attempt to solve all White’s problems, but a very unfortunate one. However, also after 17 \( \text{gxf3} \) the black pieces would have become extremely active: 17...\( \text{d6} \) 18 \( \text{e4} \) 19 \( \text{e2} \) 0–0 with full compensation.

17 ... \( \text{b6} \)
18 \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{b7} \)
19 \( \text{e4} \)

19 ... \( \text{f5!} \)
After 19...0–0 20 \( \text{g2} \) \( \text{c8} \) Black has excellent compensation for the sacrificed exchange (for example, 21 \( \text{e2} \) \( \text{a4} \) with the threat of ...\( \text{xe4} \) and ...\( \text{f6} \)), but I reckoned that my position already allowed me to hope for more.

20 \( \text{h5+} \) \( \text{f8} \)
21 \( \text{f2} \)

It is not hard to see that Black easily parries ‘attacks’ such as 21 \( \text{g5} \) – 21...\( \text{xe5} \) 22 \( \text{g}5 \) \( \text{f6} \).

Again in search of more, I rejected the chance of gaining a slight advantage after 21...\( \text{xe1} \) 22 \( \text{e1} \) \( \text{f6} \). The point is that my light-square bishop can often join the attack (for example, after 22 \( \text{g6} \) \( \text{a4} \) 23 \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{e4} \) 24 \( \text{wxe4} \) 25 \( \text{xb2} \) \( \text{e6} \) 26 \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{a1}+ \) 27 \( \text{d2} \) \( \text{c3}+ \) 28 \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{d4}+ \), picking up the rook), and I was reluctant to exchange it for a rook. Of course, all these ‘positional considerations’ were accompanied by the calculation of numerous specific variations.

22 \( \text{d3} \)
An interesting attempt to play for a counterattack, especially as it is not apparent how White can defend. After 22 \( \text{e1} \) even 22...\( \text{d6} \) is quite good.

22 ... \( \text{e4} \)!

Of course, not 22...\( \text{xe1} \) 23 \( \text{xe1} \) \( \text{a4} \) 24 \( \text{d1} \) when White holds on.

23 \( \text{e1} \) \( \text{xb2}+ \)
24 \( \text{f1} \)

Despite the apparent abundance of threats, it is not so simple to mate White, whereas the black king is also beginning to feel uncomfortable, and so...

24 ... \( \text{d5}! \)
Simultaneously defending and attacking; if 24...\( \text{e7} \) White calmly plays 25 \( \text{xf5} \), intending to reply to 25...\( \text{e6} \) with 26 \( \text{xe6} \).

25 \( \text{xb5} \)
In the hope of 25...\( \text{a5} \) 26 \( \text{a5} \), whereas 25 \( \text{xf5} \) would have led to a piquant mate – 25...\( \text{xa2}+ \) 26 \( \text{xa2} \) \( \text{e4}+ \) 27 \( \text{b1} \) \( \text{c3}+ \) 28 \( \text{xb2} \) \( \text{b4}+ \) 29 \( \text{c1} \) \( \text{a2} \) mate.

25 ... \( \text{xa2}+ \)
26 \( \text{xa2} \) \( \text{xb5} \)
27 \( \text{f1} \) \( \text{a5} \)

Somewhat short of time, Black overlooks a much simpler win: 27...\( \text{e7}! \) 28 \( \text{d4} \) \( \text{b4} \). When aiming for this position from afar, I was afraid of the checks available to White (29 \( \text{d8}+ \) etc.), but it is easy to see that they do not save him.
No better is 28 \( \text{h}x\text{e}6 \) \( \text{c}3+ \) 29 \( \text{b}x\text{b}2 \) \( \text{w}b4+ \) or 28 \( \text{d}d7 \) \( \text{w}x\text{e}1+ \) 29 \( \text{d}d1 \) \( \text{g}8! \) 30 \( \text{g}6 \) \( \text{f}6 \), but White had an excellent opportunity to stir up trouble with 28 \( \text{c}3! \), after which Vasily would have parried the mating attack, although without guaranteeing himself a draw. The following variations are interesting:

(a) 28...\( \text{c}x\text{c}3 \) 29 \( \text{d}d7 \) \( \text{w}b4+ \) 30 \( \text{c}c2 \) \( \text{b}2+ \) 31 \( \text{d}d1 \) \( \text{b}1+ \) 32 \( \text{e}2 \) \( \text{w}x\text{e}1+ \) 33 \( \text{f}3 \) \( \text{g}8 \) 34 \( \text{d}d1 \), unexpectedly trapping the queen;

(b) 28...\( \text{c}x\text{c}3+ \) 29 \( \text{w}x\text{b}2 \) \( \text{a}4+ \) 30 \( \text{a}a2 \) \( \text{b}4 \) 31 \( \text{d}d8+ \) \( \text{e}7 \) 32 \( \text{d}d7+ \) (or 32 \( \text{e}8+ \) \( \text{xe}8 \) 33 \( \text{xe}6+ \) \( \text{xe}6 \) 34 \( \text{w}x\text{e}8+ \) \( \text{e}7 \), transposing into a won ending) 32...\( \text{x}d7 \) 33 \( \text{f}7+ \) \( \text{e}8 \) 34 \( \text{w}x\text{e}6+ \) \( \text{b}8 \) 35 \( \text{e}5+ \) \( \text{a}8 \) 36 \( \text{d}5+ \) \( \text{a}7 \) 37 \( \text{d}7+ \) \( \text{b}8 \) 38 \( \text{e}8+ \) \( \text{xe}8 \) 39 \( \text{w}x\text{e}8+ \) \( \text{c}7 \) 40 \( \text{e}5+ \) \( \text{w}d6 \) and Black should win.

It is another matter that all this would have been not easy to find with time trouble approaching.

28...\( \text{a}3! \)

Apparently it was this move that Ivanchuk overlooked. Throughout the game it was mainly retreats by the bishop along the long diagonal that were considered, and this was probably the reason for White’s mistake.

29 \( \text{a}2 \)

The only defence against mate, but even this no longer provides a ‘cure’.

29...\( \text{c}3+ \)

There may be other ways to win, but this is the simplest and most clear-cut: the white king is not allowed out of the danger zone.

30 \( \text{d}5! \)

At last the black pieces have been ideally regrouped to set up the mating construction (33 \( \text{b}2 \) \( \text{a}3 \)). The knight at \( d5 \) blocks the d-file, and the opponent’s counterplay is a little too late.

\textbf{White resigns.}

\begin{center}
\textbf{No.143}
Hübner–Kramnik
Dortmund 1996
Sicilian Defence
\end{center}

\textbf{A rook makes a knight move}

To start with – nothing surprising. In those years when the German grandmaster and professor of classical philology Robert Hübner was among the candidates for the world chess crown, the openings were rarely played so dynamically, and only by a few players. But for the black rook to aim to go from \( b7 \) to \( a5 \), that is ‘to make a knight move’, and in so doing twice offer to sacrifice itself... Here Black displayed that same imagination, that in the ‘Hübner years’ was displayed by Bronstein, Tal and
Fischer. Those who were customarily called 'magicians' and 'sorcerers'...

1 e4 c5 2 d3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 xxd4 f6 5 c3 c6 6 g5 e6 7 w2 a6 8 0–0 h6 9 e3 e7 10 f4 xxd4 11 xxd4 b5 12 d3 b4

13 e2

In the 'Kremlin Stars-96' Judit Polgar played 13 a4 against me, but after 13...b8 14 e5 dxe5 15 xxe5 d7! 16 b3 xa4 17 bxa4 0–0 18 xb8 xb8 I gained more than sufficient compensation for the exchange.

17...f6

If 17 g3 or 17 h3 Black would have continued 17...d8 with sufficient counterplay.

17...d8

17...w7? came into consideration, not only making way for the a-pawn, but also preparing ...d6-d5. For example: 18 h3 d8 19 w2 (19 g4 d5!) 19...d5 20 fxe5 xxe4 21 xxe4 dxe4 22 xxd8+ xxd8 23 f4 e6 24 xxe4 a5 with compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

18 a7

If 18 h3 there would have followed 18...d5!

18...d7

Black could also have considered the seemingly strange move 18.xa8?!, with the possible continuation 19 g1 g4 20 b3 w7 21 c1 a5 22 c3 bxc3 23 xc3 w7.

19...g1

A fighting move. 16...d8 is no weaker, but in this case there can follow 17 c4! bxc3 18 xc3 (18 xc3 w7 leads to a complicated game) 18...xc3 (18...a4? 19 b6 d7 20 b3 wa3 is worth examining) 19 xc3 b7, and although Black stands perfectly well, the position is simplified somewhat and it becomes a little easier for White to play...

13...w5

Another move order is also quite possible – 13...e5 14 e3 (14 fxe5 dxe5 15 xxe5 wa5) 14...wa5.

14 b1 e5

15 e3 0–0

16 w1?!

Superfluous centralisation: at e1 the rook is rather passively placed. In my opinion, 16 x1 or 16 g3 is preferable.

16...b8?!

A fighting move. 16...d8 is no weaker, but in this case there can follow 17 c4! bxc3 18 wxc3 (18 xc3 w7 leads to a complicated game) 18...xc3 (18...a4? 19 b6 d7 20 b3 wa3 is worth examining) 19 xc3 b7, and although Black stands perfectly well, the position is simplified somewhat and it becomes a little easier for White to play...

17 g1

I was happy with the outcome of the opening – Black has a good position and fine play with his pieces. A brief skirmish in the centre with unclear consequences – 20...w7 21 c1 d5 (21...a5 22 c3! with the initiative) 22 exd5 cxd5 23 xex5 f6 24 xxd5 xxd5 25 h7+ xh7 26 wxd5 b5 27 w2 (of course, not 27 c5?! wxf4 28 wxf7? xxc5 29 xxc5 w5) – for the moment did not come into my plans.

21 c1 exf4
21...\

22

After 22 \( \text{d}4\)?! the black pieces would have unexpectedly become active on the kingside: 22...\( \text{h}5\) (22...d5 23 e5 \( \text{e}4\) 24 \( \text{xe}4 \text{dxe}4\) 25 \( \text{xf}4 \text{e}6\) 26 \( \text{xe}6 \text{fxe}6\) 27 \( \text{xe}4 \) leads to an advantage for White) 23 h3 (23 \( \text{c}4\)?) \( \text{g}5\)?!) 23...\( \text{e}6\) 24 \( \text{xe}6 \text{f}6\) 25 \( \text{c}4 \text{d}7\) 26 \( \text{xa}6 \text{bb}8\). True, in this case it is rather hard to give a clear evaluation of the position.

22

23 \( \text{d}4\)?

An incorrect formulation of the correct idea. 23 \( \text{cd}1 \text{g}4\) 24 \( \text{d}4\) would have maintained the dynamic balance. Hüblner overlooks Black's far from obvious reply.

23...

24

After 23...\( \text{g}4\) Black would have had to reckon with 24 e5!?

24

Panic. It was obvious that my previous move had come as an unpleasant surprise to my opponent, and he grew nervous. Meanwhile, White's defensive resources were considerable - if he had found the only accurate reply 24 \( \text{cd}1\):

(a) after 24...\( \text{a}5\) 25 \( \text{xa}5 \text{xa}2\) 26 \( \text{c}1 \text{a}1+\) (26...\( \text{xa}5\) 27 b3!) 27 \( \text{d}2 \text{xa}5\) 28 \( \text{a}1 \text{h}5\) 29 \( \text{c}1 \text{g}4\) (29...\( \text{d}5\) 30 \( \text{f}3\)!) 30 \( \text{b}1\) White parries the immediate threats;

(b) 24...\( \text{g}4\)! is stronger: 25 \( \text{xb}5\) (not 25 \( \text{c}1\) because of 25...\( \text{g}5\) 26 \( \text{g}3 \text{xc}1\) 27 b3 \( \text{a}3\) 25...\( \text{xb}5\) 26 \( \text{c}1 \text{g}5\)

27 \( \text{g}3 \text{xc}1\) 28 \( \text{xc}1\)! (White loses after 28 b3 \( \text{a}3\) 29 h3 \( \text{a}8\) 30 h4 \( \text{g}5\)! 31 \( \text{e}3 \text{f}6\) or 29 \( \text{xc}1 \text{a}8\) 30 \( \text{cd}1 \text{xa}2+\) 31 \( \text{cl} \text{c}8\) 32 \( \text{d}2 \text{xb}3\) 28...\( \text{c}8\) 29 \( \text{e}2 \text{e}5\)?! (aiming for c4; after 29...\( \text{xa}2\) 30 \( \text{d}2\) the king slips out of the danger zone) 30 \( \text{xe}5\) (30 a3 \( \text{b}3\) 30...\( \text{xe}5\) \( \text{g}4\) (also interesting is 31...\( \text{xa}2\)!, not reducing the tempo of the attack) 32 \( \text{dd}2 \text{xe}2\) 33 \( \text{xe}2 \text{xa}2\) Black's position is preferable, but whether this is sufficient for a win is hard to say.

24...

25 \( \text{e}4\)!

24...\( \text{a}5\) would have been parried by 25 a3.

25

The concluding error. The only way to retain some drawing chances, even if only minimal, was by 25 \( \text{xb}5 \text{xb}5\) 26 a3 \text{bxa3} 27...\( \text{g}5\) 28 \( \text{b}4 \text{xb}4\) 29 \( \text{a}4 \text{xc}1\) 30 \( \text{xc}1 \text{d}2\).

25...

26

The alternatives were no better: 26 \( \text{xb}5 \text{xb}3\), 26 \( \text{xc}3 \text{xb}3\) 27 \( \text{xb}3\) \( \text{xb}3\), or 26 \( \text{xc}3 \text{xb}3\) 27 \( \text{axb}3 \text{xd}4\).

26...

27 \( \text{xb}3\)

27 \( \text{xb}3\)

Major loss of material cannot be avoided - 28 \( \text{b}2 \text{b}8\) 29 \( \text{c}2 \text{a}2+\), and so White resigned.
No. 144

Gelfand–Kramnik
European Club Cup
Berlin 1996
Queen’s Gambit

We are friends, but...

The two friends were playing here for different clubs – ‘Agrouni universal’ from the Yugoslav town of Zemun and ‘Empor’ from Berlin, and this meeting between the favourites in the semi-final tournament practically assured the winners of a place in the Grand Final. The game was, as always, extremely uncompromising and sharp, and it ended in a problem-like mate, rarely seen in a practical game.

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ◇c3 ◇f6 4 ◇f3 e6 5 e3 ◇bd7 6 wC2 ◇d6 7 g4!? This unusual, strange-looking, but rather interesting move was first employed by a former Riga player, Alexander Shabalov, now an American grandmaster, but was introduced into a top-level chess by another former Riga player, Alexey Shirov, who was to become a Spanish grandmaster, in a game with Akopian, Oakham 1992. It was there that I saw this thrust, with which White fights for the rapid advance e3–e4 after 8 g5. It is amusing that I had analysed this possibility in... 1988, when I began studying the Meran Variation, and I was unable to reach a clear assessment of it. With every day this continuation seemed more interesting to me, but I did not employ it in practice, since... I did not believe in the high quality of the move. Reasoning of the sort ‘It cannot be good, because it can never be good’ operated strongly, but analysis, and quite deep, was carried out. Incidentally, at the time I was unable to find arithmetically precise equality for Black...

7 ... ◇b4

The main theoretical debates revolve around 7...◇xg4 and 7...dxc4. Both are worth considering, and lead to complicated and unclear play. With Boris, however, I employed a continuation that was much less well studied. The second move with the bishop seems strange, but in fact Black fights for the centre, and the flank diversion of the g-pawn may lose its value.

8 ◇d2 wC7

Aiming to exploit the weakening of the long light-square diagonal by ...b7-b6, ...◇b7 and ...c6-c5. My opponent thought for a long time, and...

9 a3

Perhaps not the best decision. White should have considered 9 g5 ◇xc3 10 ◇xc3 ◇e4 11 ◇d3. If Black takes the g5 pawn, then White has undoubted compensation, while 11...◇xc3 12 wC3 leads to a classic position from the Queen’s Gambit, the only difference being that the pawn is not at g2, but g5. Who this favours is hard to say; each side has arguments for and against. For example, 12...dxc4 13 ◇xc4 b5 14 ◇e2 ◇b7 with a double-edged game.

9 ... ◇xc3

10 ◇xc3 b6!

Both developing Black’s own aims, and as prophylaxis against the threatened 11 ◇b4.

11 ◇d3

Removing the pawn tension by 11 cxd5 would have discharged the situation, but after 11...exd5 would have given Black control of e4.
Black flexibly changes his strategic plan and, seemingly, takes the initiative. The point is that after 11...dxc4 12 axc4 b7 13 g5 he has to make a concession to White and place his knight not on e4, but on d5. During the game I considered the following sharp variation – 13...d5 14 d2 c5 15 e4 d7 16 0–0–0 cxd4 17 b4 dxc5 18 xd4 0–0 19 hd1. In this position Black has his trumps, but even so the move played is stronger.

The immediate 12 g5 would not do in view of 12...dxc4 13 gxf6 cxd3 14 fxg7 g8, while 12 cxd5 dxd3 13 xd5 exd5 was also favourable to Black.

After 12 d5 the simplest is 12...dxe5 13 dxe5 d7 14 a4 b7, when the opening thrust g2–g4 proves to be a blank shot, and the bishop at c3 resembles a large pawn.

12 ... dxc4!

13 a6

If 13 xc6 e8 14 a4 b7 15 b4 d8 16 c2 a5 and the weakness of the a8–h1 diagonal is felt.

13 ... cxd3

14 xd3

White should have considered 14 b7 0–0 15 c5 with the idea after 15...f8 of replying 16 xc6 xb7 17 xe7+ f8 18 c6, to all appearances achieving equality. Black, it is true, has the more cunning 15...e8! 16 xd3 (16 xc6?

\( \mathcal{D}xe5 17 \mathcal{W}xe8 \mathcal{D}f3+ \) ) 16...c8! 17 xa7 xg4, when it is dangerous for White to castle on either side. Even so, in a joint analysis we decided that Boris should have gone in for this position.

14 ... 0–0

15 g5

White would be very happy to play 15 g4–g2: alas, pawns do not move backwards...

15 ... d5

16 d2

16 ... f5!

Light-square strategy typical for the given pawn formation, reinforced by the variation 17 gxf6? xf6.

17 0–0–0

No better is 17 0–0 f7, heading for h5. But now too Black builds up an attack, and a swift one at that.

17 ... c5

18 b1 b5!

19 xb5

Practically forced (19...c4 was threatened), although it opens lines for a direct attack on the king.

19 ... ab8

20 a5 b3

I spent a considerable time on this move. The white king’s position is after all quite solid, and cannot easily be taken.

21 a2?

Perhaps the decisive mistake. It is natural that White should want to move off the b-file and to do this with gain of tempo,
but sounder was 21 \( \text{a1} \) c4 (with the threat of 22...c3) 22 \( \text{f1} \) c8 23 \( \text{c3} \) d5!, transferring the knight to c6 and gradually increasing the pressure (even after 24 d5 dxe5 25 \( \text{xe5} \) c6).

\begin{align*}
21 & \ldots \\
22 & \text{a1}
\end{align*}

This is more vigorous than 22...c4 – the queen gains access to c6.

\begin{align*}
23 & \text{h1}
\end{align*}

This allow Black to conclude the game with a pretty finish. Initially I thought that White had the defence 23 dxe5 dxe5 24 dxe5 dxe5 25 \( \text{c3} \) c5 26 dxc3, but then I found 26...dxe4!, when everything falls into place: 27 \( \text{xe3} \) e6 28 a1, mating.

\begin{align*}
23 & \ldots \\
24 & \text{c3}
\end{align*}

‘Charging up the battery’ – 24...d5+, 25...d5 and 26...d5 mate!

\begin{align*}
24 & \text{a1} \\
25 & \text{c5}
\end{align*}

The last chance.

\begin{align*}
25 & \ldots \\
26 & \text{c5}
\end{align*}

Apparently all is still not clear: if 26...c3 White has 27 d4. However, Black now has evil intentions.

\begin{align*}
26 & \ldots \\
27 & \text{c3}!
\end{align*}

Mate also cannot be avoided after 27 dxe3 dxe3 28 d4 dxb2+ 29 a2 (29 dxb2 dxe4 30 dxe6 dxb2 31 a2 d8b2 mate) 29...a3+ 30 a3 d6+.

27 \ldots \text{xb2}
28 \text{xb2}

The desperate 28 \( \text{f}8+ \) does not work in view of 28...d8f8!

28 \ldots \text{a2}+

White resigns

The first purely problem-like mate in my career. I myself liked it...

\begin{center}
\textit{Positional Play}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\textbf{No. 145}

\textbf{Kramnik–Kamsky}

\textit{Linares 1993}

Queen’s Gambit
\end{center}

\textit{When tenacity does not help...}

Kramnik’s opponent, the already experienced grandmaster Gata Kamsky, had from his early years been accustomed to spending all his time during a game only at the board: such tenacity often bore fruit, and he was able to save some positions where anyone else would simply have given up resisting. But here the shield was inferior to the sword: too strong, and more important, too timely was the blow struck by White on the 16th move. Kramnik himself tactfully refrains from saying that Black undoubtedly ‘had the right’ to resign much sooner that he actually did...
In my preparations for the game I devoted a lot of attention to the Grünfeld Defence, but this opening came as a complete surprise to me.

5 \( \text{\textit{g5}} \) \( \text{\textit{b}d7} \)

Black avoids engaging in a sharp theoretical dispute in the Botvinnik Variation after 5...dxc4.

6 e3 \( \text{\textit{a}5} \)
7 \( \text{\textit{d}2} \) \( \text{\textit{b}4} \)
8 \( \text{\textit{c}2} \)

8 \ldots \text{e5}

An interesting attempt by Black to solve his opening problems by tactical means. He fails to equalise by 8...0-0 9 \( \text{\textit{e}2} \) dxc4 (or 9...e5 10 0-0! exd4 11 \( \text{\textit{b}3} \) with a slight advantage to White) 10 \( \text{\textit{x}f6} \) \( \text{\textit{x}f6} \) 11 \( \text{\textit{x}c4} \) \( \text{\textit{c}7} \) 12 a3 \( \text{\textit{e}7} \) 13 b4, and White has a clear positional advantage.

9 \( \text{\textit{b}3} \)

I decided not to check the opponent’s analysis after 9 \( \text{\textit{x}f6} \) (9 dxe5?! \( \text{\textit{e}4} \)) 9...\( \text{\textit{x}f6} \) 10 dxe5 \( \text{\textit{e}4} \) 11 \( \text{\textit{d}xe4} \) dxe4 12 0-0-0 \( \text{\textit{x}c3} \)! 13 \( \text{\textit{xc3}} \) \( \text{\textit{xa}2} \). At the board this position appeared to me to be unclear, which would seem to be not far from the truth.

9 \ldots \text{\textit{c}7}

The most natural, but 9...\( \text{\textit{b}6} \)!? also came into consideration.

10 \( \text{\textit{e}2} \) dxc4

10...\( \text{\textit{e}4} \) was more critical, when the following approximate variations were possible: 11 \( \text{\textit{h}4} \) exd4! 12 \( \text{\textit{xd}4} \) (12 exd4 0-0 13 0-0 \( \text{\textit{f}4} \) with an equal game) 12...\( \text{\textit{a}5} \) (or 12...\( \text{\textit{x}c3} \) 13 bxc3) 13 0-0! \( \text{\textit{xc3}} \) (13...\( \text{\textit{xc3}} \) 14 bxc3 \( \text{\textit{x}c3} \)?) 15 \( \text{\textit{b}3} \) \( \text{\textit{b}4} \) 16 a3 and White wins, or 14...\( \text{\textit{d}6} \) 15 \( \text{\textit{f}5} \) with a big advantage) 14 exd5! exd5 (after 14...\( \text{\textit{xd}4} \)?) 15 \( \text{\textit{x}e4} \) \( \text{\textit{x}c3} \) 16 dxc6 bxc6 17 f4 White has an obvious advantage) 15 bxc3 \( \text{\textit{xc3}} \) 16 \( \text{\textit{d}1} \), and White has full compensation for the pawn.

11 \( \text{\textit{xc}4} \) 0-0
12 0-0 \( \text{\textit{d}6} \)
13 h3

13 \ldots \text{\textit{e}8}?

A dubious move, weakening the f7 pawn. Much stronger was 13...a6 followed by ...b7-b5 and ...\( \text{\textit{b}7} \), although even this plan does not guarantee Black equality. On the contrary, the attempt by Black to play ‘actively’ did not work: 13...h6?! 14 \( \text{\textit{h}4} \) (not 14 \( \text{\textit{x}h6} \) ? \( \text{\textit{b}6} \) 15 \( \text{\textit{g}6} \) \( \text{\textit{e}8} \)! 16 \( \text{\textit{e}4} \) \( \text{\textit{e}7} \)!) 14...\( \text{\textit{b}6} \) 15 \( \text{\textit{d}3} \) (15 \( \text{\textit{x}f6} \) \( \text{\textit{xc4}} \) 15...exd4 16 \( \text{\textit{xd}4} \) g5?!) 17 \( \text{\textit{g}3} \) \( \text{\textit{g}3} \) 18 \( \text{\textit{fxg3}} \) \( \text{\textit{xg3}} \) 19 \( \text{\textit{xf6}} \) \( \text{\textit{xe}3} \)+ 20 \( \text{\textit{f}2} \) \( \text{\textit{xd}3} \) 21 \( \text{\textit{hxh6}} \), and White’s attack is irresistible.

14 \( \text{\textit{ad}1} \) exd4?!

Black should have reverted to the plan of ...a7-a6, ...b7-b5 and ...\( \text{\textit{b}7} \), although after 13...\( \text{\textit{e}8} \) it is no longer so good.

15 \( \text{\textit{xd}4} \) \( \text{\textit{e}5} \)

After thinking for some twenty minutes, I realised that it was time for vigorous measures, while the difference in activity
of the white and black pieces was so appreciable.

16 f4!

Exchanging, at the cost of a pawn, Black's only active piece – his dark-square bishop.

16 ... \( \text{\textbf{\text{\textit{xe3}}}} \)

17 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{xd4}}} \)

This is stronger than 17 exd4 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{db6}}} \) 18 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{b3 \text{\textit{wd6}}}}} \) 19 f5, which, however, would also have set Black difficult problems.

17 ... \( \text{\textbf{\textit{xd4}}} \)

The remainder does not require any commentary, since this ending is an easy technical win for White.

20 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{xe3}}} \)

21 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{f2}}} \)

22 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{xf2}}} \)

23 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{d8}}} \)

24 \( \text{\textbf{\textit{xd8}}} \)

On his own experience

Chess players of even very high rank build their opening repertoires in different ways. Some place the accent on searching for innovations, capable in the first instance by their surprise value of bringing a tournament point. Others are ready to give up the effect of surprise and time after time go in for the same sharp, multi-variational
positions, in order in the next practical skirmish to check their home preparation. And so on until that particular scheme is completely exhausted, until in the endlessness of chess there becomes one less blank spot.

This game very clearly demonstrates the path followed by the still very young grandmaster Kramnik. It would be hard to find a more convincing demonstration!

1.e4 c5 2.d4 e6 3.c3 dxc4 4.e4 a6 5.a3 b5 6.d3 a5 7.b4 c5 8.bxc5

A rare move at the time. I have played this position as White several times, and earlier I always chose 16...e3. Here is a little theoretical analysis, based on my own games: 16...f6 17.e3 (17.exd5 exd5 18.a3 b4+ 19.d2 d7 20.c1 c8 21.c3 b6! 22.b5+ d6 23.e2 a6= Kramnik-Lautier, Linares 1994) 17...b8 18.a2, and now:

(a) 18...e3 19.b1 h2 20.b7 h2 21.a2 f7 22.g5 f5 23.d5 a6

(b) 18.c3 19.a2 e7 20.b3 e6 21.b2 c6 22.a1 d5 23.b4 b4 24.e3 e7= (Kramnik-Ivanchuk, Linares 1994).

16...e2 looks preferable.

17.e2 a8??

Now it can be considered that Black has lost the opening battle. 17...xg2 is perhaps not a lot stronger, but on the other hand it is far more consistent. After 18.b4+ b2 19.xg7 it still has to be clarified: where does the black pawn stand better, at f7 or at f6?

16...e3!!

Not allowing the black queen to go to f5, although the more modest 18.g3 was also good.

18...f6

Black’s desire to set up the g7-f6-e5 pawn chain is understandable, but it is unrealisable. I would have preferred 18...c7 19.d1 g2 20.f1 e3 21.exf3, and although White’s advantage is obvious, it is not so simple to transform it into something real.

19.hh1 h2

The time had come to calculate concrete variations. The ‘positional’ 21.xd1 xd1 22.xd1 xd1+ was less promising.

21...xh2

The knight cannot be firmly established at d5: 21.b4+ b2 22.a3 b3 23.d1 xh2 24.f3 h3 25.xh3 f1 26.e4, and if 26...e8 27.xd5! exd5 28.xd5 with an irresistible attack.

During the game 21...c7 seemed to me to be more logical. After a series of
obligatory moves – 22 \( \texttt{w}e7 \texttt{xe8} \) 23 \( \texttt{xc}7 \texttt{xe2}\) 24 \( \texttt{c}3 \) the position becomes typical of this variation: the white king defends itself, Steinitz-style – 24...\( \texttt{f}3+ \) (24...\( \texttt{g}x4?! \) 25 \( \texttt{a}5 \), with the threat of \( \texttt{b}6+ \), 25...\( \texttt{f}3+ \) 26 \( \texttt{b}4 \texttt{e}4 \) 27 \( \texttt{d}1 \), and the black king feels uncomfortable) 25 \( \texttt{b}4 \texttt{xg}4 \) (25...\( \texttt{b}6 \) 26 \( \texttt{b}3 \) 26 \( \texttt{e}1 \) \( \texttt{e}8 \) 27 \( \texttt{f}7 \), and White has a clear advantage thanks to the activity of his pieces. In fact, the white king feels more protected than its opposite number.

\[ \begin{array}{ll}
22 & \texttt{d}1 \texttt{b}8 \\
23 & \texttt{a}5!?
\end{array} \]

Also quite strong was 23 \( \texttt{e}7 \texttt{b}4+ \) (what else?) 24 \( \texttt{b}4 \texttt{xg}4 \) 25 \( \texttt{b}3 \texttt{e}4 \) 26 \( \texttt{d}2 \), but when I saw the idea of the coming combination, I was unable to resist.

\[ \begin{array}{ll}
23 & \texttt{c}7
\end{array} \]

This allows White to land an elegant blow. More tenacious was 23...\( \texttt{b}4+ \) 24 \( \texttt{b}3 \) (24 \( \texttt{b}1 \)?) 24...\( \texttt{d}5 \), although even here Black’s chances of saving the game are not great.

\[ \begin{array}{ll}
24 & \texttt{b}6+!!
\end{array} \]

\[ \texttt{a}1 \]?? would be too pretty. Unfortunately, chess is not draughts (chequers). Black is not obliged to take the queen, and he has the reply 24...\( \texttt{e}8 \)!

\[ \begin{array}{ll}
24 & \texttt{a}6 \\
25 & \texttt{xb}6 \texttt{a}6
\end{array} \]

Here 25...\( \texttt{e}8 \) loses to 26 \( \texttt{bxc}7 \texttt{xe2}\) 27 \( \texttt{bxe2} \texttt{xe2} \) 28 \( \texttt{c}1 \), when White’s passed pawn is unstoppable. But the obviously strange 25...\( \texttt{h}8 \) was objectively stronger, despite the fact that after 26 \( \texttt{bxc}7 \texttt{xc}7 \) White has excellent winning chances.

\[ \begin{array}{ll}
26 & \texttt{a}1 \texttt{d}8
\end{array} \]

The alternatives were:
(a) 26...\( \texttt{f}2 \) 27 \( \texttt{xa}6+ \texttt{bxa}6 \) 28 \( \texttt{xc}6+ \texttt{b}7 \) 29 \( \texttt{e}8+ \texttt{b}8 \) 30 \( \texttt{xa}6 \texttt{mate} \);
(b) 26...\( \texttt{g}2 \) 27 \( \texttt{e}7 \) with the threat of \( \texttt{xa}6+ \);
(c) 26...\( \texttt{e}5 \) 27 \( \texttt{xa}6+ \texttt{bxa}6 \) 28 \( \texttt{xc}6+ \texttt{b}7 \) 29 \( \texttt{f}3 \texttt{b}8 \) 30 \( \texttt{b}1 \), and there is no defence against \( \texttt{c}4 \);
(d) 26...\( \texttt{h}8 \) 27 \( \texttt{e}7 \texttt{b}8 \) (27...\( \texttt{b}8 \) 28 \( \texttt{xa}6 \) 28 \( \texttt{xa}6 \) \( \texttt{axa}6 \) 29 \( \texttt{wa}7+ \texttt{c}8 \) 30 \( \texttt{b}7+ \).

\[ \begin{array}{ll}
27 & \texttt{e}7 \texttt{d}6 \\
28 & \texttt{xa}6+ \texttt{b}8
\end{array} \]

\[ \texttt{xd}6+ \]

Greed (29 \( \texttt{wxg}7?! \)), as always, is punishable. After 29...\( \texttt{d}7 \) 30 \( \texttt{g}8+ \texttt{d}8 \) 31 \( \texttt{hxh}7 \texttt{d}7 \) White is obliged to repeat moves.

\[ \begin{array}{ll}
29 & \texttt{xa}3
\end{array} \]

In many games in this variation I have achieved a pleasant ending, but this was the first time that it was so pleasant!

\[ \begin{array}{ll}
30 & \texttt{c}5 \\
31 & \texttt{b}3 \texttt{g}6 \\
32 & \texttt{b}5 \texttt{e}6 \\
33 & \texttt{d}3 \texttt{e}5 \\
34 & \texttt{b}4! \texttt{h}5
\end{array} \]

Missing an opportunity to set a last trap:
34...\( \texttt{g}5 \) (34...\( \texttt{cx}4 \) 35 \( \texttt{xe}5 \texttt{fxe}5 \) 36 \( \texttt{g}5 \texttt{e}8 \) 37 \( \texttt{c}4 \) 35 \( \texttt{xe}2 \texttt{xb}4 \) 36 \( \texttt{ag}5 \)?? (36...\( \texttt{b}5 \) 37 \( \texttt{xe}5 \texttt{xe}5 \) 38 \( \texttt{c}5 \texttt{c}5 \)) 35...\( \texttt{xe}2 \texttt{xb}4 \) 36 \( \texttt{xc}5 \).
\[ \text{Selected games} \]

... and you may be surprised to learn that this is a theoretical draw. After 34...c4 35 \( \text{\texttt{Qxc4}} \) 36 \( \text{\texttt{Qxb5}} \) h5 37 g5hx5 g5hx5, however, White retains \textit{two} pawns on the b-file, and he wins in one of two ways. After first picking up the black kingside pawns: he moves his king to d8 and plays b4-b5 and e6, or he places his king at c5 and sacrifices his bishop on b7. When he has a reserve tempo with the b4 pawn to gain the opposition.

\[ \text{\texttt{\begin{tabular}{l}
35 & \text{\texttt{Qxc5}} & \text{\texttt{e6}} \\
36 & \text{\texttt{gxh5}} & \text{\texttt{gxh5}} \\
37 & \text{\texttt{Qxh5}} & \text{\texttt{Qxb6}} \\
38 & \text{\texttt{Qc3}} & \text{\texttt{Qc6+}} \\
39 & \text{\texttt{Qd4}} & \text{\texttt{b6}} \\
40 & \text{\texttt{Qc5}} & \text{\texttt{Qc6+}} \\
41 & \text{\texttt{Qd5}} & \\
\end{tabular}}} \]

Black resigns

No.147
Kramnik–Piket
Dortmund 1995
Catalan Opening

In the range from A to Z

Any top-class player is good at everything, or nearly everything. But such a degree of universalism... In this game White was ready to take play into a slightly better ending, positionally outplayed his opponent, and then sharply switched onto the lines of great complications. If it is born in mind that the commander of the white pieces had just turned twenty – only twenty! – then...

The following factor also merits surprise: Kramnik with obvious and sincere pleasure plays any type of chess, continuing most strikingly the line of Boris Spassky and Robert Fischer – the first universal players of the highest rank.

\[ \text{\texttt{\begin{tabular}{ll}
1 & \text{\texttt{Qf3}} & \text{\texttt{d5}} \\
2 & \text{\texttt{d4}} & \text{\texttt{e6}} \\
3 & \text{\texttt{g3}} & \text{\texttt{Qf6}} \\
4 & \text{\texttt{Qg2}} & \text{\texttt{Qe7}} \\
5 & \text{\texttt{0-0}} & \text{\texttt{0-0}} \\
6 & \text{\texttt{c4}} & \text{\texttt{dxc4}} \\
7 & \text{\texttt{Qc2}} & \text{\texttt{a6}} \\
8 & \text{\texttt{a4}} & \text{\texttt{Qc6}} \\
\end{tabular}}} \]

A rare continuation: \( 8... \text{\texttt{Qd7}} \) 9 \( \text{\texttt{Qxc4}} \) is more usual.

\[ \text{\texttt{\begin{tabular}{ll}
9 & \text{\texttt{Qxc4}} & \text{\texttt{Qd5}} \\
10 & \text{\texttt{Qbd2}} & \text{\texttt{Qd8}} \\
11 & \text{\texttt{e3}} & \\
\end{tabular}}} \]

11 \ldots \text{\texttt{Qh5}}? \text{\texttt{\begin{tabular}{l}
A rather awkward manoeuvre, but one can understand my opponent – he did not want to defend the slightly inferior ending after the theoretical 11... \text{\texttt{Qd7}} 12 \text{\texttt{Qe5!}} \text{\texttt{Qxc4}} 13 \text{\texttt{Qdxc4}} \text{\texttt{Qxe5}} 14 \text{\texttt{Qxe5}} \text{\texttt{Qd5}} 15 \text{\texttt{Qd2}}. \\
12 & \text{\texttt{e4}} & \\
\end{tabular}}} \]

Controlling the important d5 square and cutting off the black queen from the centre and the kingside.
Black tries to create counterplay, to avoid being squeezed.

14  \[\text{c3} \]  \[\text{e8} \]

A serious inaccuracy. Black should have continued in the same ‘crooked’ style: 15...\[\text{b4}! \] 16 \[\text{c2} \] \[\text{xb5} \]!, creating piece pressure on the centre. And although after 17 e5! White retains a slight advantage, this was the lesser evil.

16  \[\text{xa8} \]  \[\text{xa8} \]

Having reinforced his central pawns, White can face the future with confidence. Powerful centre, advantage in space, the opponent weak on the queenside – what more does he need?

17  ...  \[\text{a2} \]

18  \[\text{cl}! \]

18 \[\text{a1} \], exchanging the opponent’s only active piece, would also have retained the advantage. But I followed an ancient rule: for the side with a spatial advantage it is unfavourable to exchange pieces.

18  ...  \[\text{h6} \]

19  \[\text{h3} \]  \[\text{g6} \]

An original queen manoeuvre, rarely seen in practice.

20  \[\text{c1} \]

20 \[\text{d1}?! \] also came into consideration – for the moment it is hard to decide where the rook will be best placed.

20  ...  \[\text{f8} \]

White is already beginning to turn his sights to the kingside – after ...g7-g6 the black king’s position has been weakened.

22  ...  \[\text{d7}?! \]

The exchange of this piece, defending the king, gives White the opportunity for a dangerous attack, and also resolves for him the question of what to do with the knight at d2. Better was 22...\[\text{a6} \], with a perfectly defensible position.

23  \[\text{c3}! \]  \[\text{a6} \]

Not 23...\[\text{xe5}?! \] 24 \[\text{xb4} \] \[\text{xb4} \] 25 \[\text{xa2} \].

24  \[\text{xd7} \]  \[\text{xd7} \]

25  \[\text{f3} \]

The second knight goes to replace the one that has departed, but Black will find it much more difficult to get rid of this one.

25  ...  \[\text{a8} \]

I think that Black should have radically resolved the problem of the knight with 25...f6!, although this would have further weakened his kingside, which White could have aimed to break up, for example, by 26 h4!, with an obvious advantage.

26  \[\text{e5} \]  \[\text{e6}?! \]

A strange decision. It was time for Black to ‘come to his senses’ and bring up pieces to the defence – 26...\[\text{e8} \]. After the move played I spent a considerable time searching for a forced win by 27 d5?! , but I couldn’t help feeling that one white piece was clearly missing from the attack...
27 \( \text{\textit{d}1} \! \)
Now everything is ready for the decisive storm, and Black is forced to do something.

27 \ldots \textit{d}a2
28 \texttt{b}b2 \texttt{b}4

Or 28...\texttt{b}4?! 29 \texttt{e}3. After the advance of the pawn the most sensible (and strongest) move was the simple 29 \texttt{c}2!, again switching to positional lines and literally paralysing the opponent. But I had been preparing so long for an attack, that I was no longer thinking about anything else...

29 \texttt{d}5
This does not lose the advantage (in general it is difficult to lose it with one move), but it provokes unnecessary complications.

29 \ldots \textit{d}e8
30 \texttt{g}4
Continuing in the same spirit, but again 30 \texttt{e}2 was good.

30 \ldots \textit{c}3
31 \texttt{f}3 \texttt{h}5
32 \texttt{f}6+ \texttt{x}f6
33 \texttt{x}f6 \texttt{e}xd5
34 \texttt{d}4

As a result of his tactical operation White has gained a strong initiative, but also Black has acquired some counter-chances.

34 \ldots \textit{a}2

Of course, Black cannot concede the a1-h8 diagonal (34...\texttt{d}xe4? 35 \texttt{xb}4), but another attempt came into consideration: 34...\texttt{e}6?! 35 \texttt{xb}4 \texttt{x}e4 36 \texttt{d}4 \texttt{f}6, and he is still holding on.

35 \texttt{xb}4 \texttt{b}5?!

This tempting bid to complicate the game in the time scramble is probably the decisive mistake. An equally difficult endgame awaited Black after either 35...\texttt{xb}2 36 \texttt{xc}3 \texttt{a}2 37 \texttt{ex}d5 \texttt{b}5 38 \texttt{f}6 \texttt{b}1 39 \texttt{xb}1 \texttt{xb}1+ 40 \texttt{h}2 \texttt{xb}3 41 \texttt{d}8+ \texttt{g}7 42 \texttt{xc}7, or 35...\texttt{e}2+?! 36 \texttt{xe}2 \texttt{xb}2 37 \texttt{xb}2 \texttt{a}1+ 38 \texttt{h}2 \texttt{xb}2 39 \texttt{e}7 \texttt{b}5 40 \texttt{xc}7 \texttt{xb}3 (40...\texttt{xf}2? 41 \texttt{b}8+ and 42 \texttt{xb}5) 41 \texttt{ex}d5, but there was no longer anything better.

36 \texttt{f}6 \texttt{a}7
37 \texttt{e}3

Short of time, Pike had probably overlooked that the plausible 37...\texttt{c}5? loses to 38 \texttt{ex}d5! But now the white queen again joins the attack, this time with decisive effect:

37 \ldots \texttt{d}4
38 \texttt{e}7! \texttt{d}6
39 \texttt{d}3

Weak is 39 \texttt{e}1? \texttt{d}3 40 \texttt{f}1 \texttt{d}2 with counterplay – ...\texttt{d}1\texttt{w} is threatened.

39 \ldots \texttt{a}6

40 \texttt{d}1?!

With this last move before the time control I missed an opportunity for a forced and pretty win: 40 \texttt{g}5!! \texttt{xd}3 41 \texttt{h}6 \texttt{h}7 42 \texttt{f}8, and there is no defence against the mate. But the move played is also good enough to win.
40 ... \( \text{We2} \)
41 \( \text{f1} \) \( \text{d3} \)
42 \( \text{d4}! \)
The most precise way to win.
42 ... \( \text{d2} \)
There is nothing else.
43 \( \text{We5} \)
At last the battery along the long diagonal has gone into operation!
43 ... \( \text{f8} \)
44 \( \text{e3}! \)
Creating a mating threat that is difficult to parry. It is after all dangerous to weaken the position of the king with \( ... \text{g7-g6}! \)
44 ... \( \text{g8} \)
After 44...f6 45 \( \text{xf6}+ \text{f7} \) the simple 46 \( \text{f3} \) is possible, when apart from anything else White is a pawn up.
45 \( \text{h6} \) \( \text{xf2}+!? \)
An original tactical resource, which does not succeed. Black also fails to save the game by 45...\( \text{xf5} \) 46 \( \text{xe8}+ \text{h7} \) 47 \( \text{xf7}+ \text{xh6} \) 48 \( \text{exf5} \), when he is again one tempo short.
46 \( \text{xf2} \) \( \text{d1w}+ \)
47 \( \text{f1} \)
After 47 \( \text{f1}?! \) there is a surprising defence - 47...\( \text{wal}! \)
47 ... \( \text{g2}+ \)
48 \( \text{g2} \) \( \text{e2}+ \)
49 \( \text{g1} \)
Black resigns

Of course, this verdict of a genius is an extreme one, but there is a great deal of truth in it. To those who are capable of creating, it does indeed sometimes help to have a blank sheet, giving free scope to their imagination, and flight to their thoughts. And in this game Kramnik, had he wished, would have been quite within his rights to repeat another sentence of Picasso: ‘I do not seek, I find.’ Indeed, how can one not draw attention to the continuous interaction of the white pieces, to the instantaneous switching from one type of battle to another, and finally, to the diversity of motifs, which White first created and then was guided by...

1 \( \text{f3} \) \( \text{f6} \)
2 \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{e6} \)
3 \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{d5} \)
4 \( \text{d4} \) \( \text{bd7} \)
5 \( \text{cx}d5 \) \( \text{ex}d5 \)
6 \( \text{g5} \) \( \text{c6} \)
7 \( \text{e3} \) \( \text{e7} \)
8 \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{h5} \)

Before this I had never made a serious study of these Carlsbad structures with the knight at f3. I only knew the basic ideas after casting by both sides, whereas after this knight move I was obliged to ‘create’ at the board.

9 \( \text{xe7} \) \( \text{xe7} \)
10 0--0 0--0

The effect of a blank sheet

The great 20th century reformist painter Pablo Picasso has some words that are far from applicable to everyone: ‘A real artist should be an ignoramus, he should ignore everything, because knowledge is an impediment, it hinders seeing, and takes away direct perception and expression.’
And it turned out that in this theoretical position, after thinking for some fifteen minutes, I came up with an important improvement. Instead of the usual 11 \textit{\textbf{b}1}, White prepares his minority attack with gain of tempo.

\begin{align*}
11 & \ldots \textit{\textbf{h}f6} \\
12 & \textit{\textbf{b}4} \textit{\textbf{e}8} \\
13 & \textit{\textbf{c}1} \\
\end{align*}

After the immediate 13 \textit{\textbf{b}5} \textit{\textbf{c}5} White's advantage becomes merely symbolic. But after this move the knight at \textit{\textbf{c}3} is defended, and if 13...\textit{\textbf{e}4} there now follows 14 \textit{\textbf{b}5}.

\begin{align*}
13 & \ldots \textit{\textbf{a}6} \\
14 & \textit{\textbf{a}4} \textit{\textbf{g}6} \\
\end{align*}

A semi-waiting move. Here 14...\textit{\textbf{e}4} was possible, but the simple 15 \textit{\textbf{e}4} dxe4 16 \textit{\textbf{d}2} and 17 \textit{\textbf{b}5} would have given White an excellent game.

\begin{align*}
15 & \textit{\textbf{b}2} \\
\end{align*}

Improving the position of his queen, White 'just in case' takes control of the second rank and wishes in the event of exchanges to have the opportunity to recapture on \textit{\textbf{a}1} with his rook.

\begin{align*}
15 & \ldots \textit{\textbf{a}5} \\
\end{align*}

Since Black has no particularly useful moves, he forces the opponent to declare his intentions on the queenside.

\begin{align*}
16 & \textit{\textbf{bxa}5} \\
\end{align*}

A typical decision, since here too 16 \textit{\textbf{b}5} \textit{\textbf{c}5} does not promise White as much as he would like.

\begin{align*}
16 & \ldots \textit{\textbf{xa}5} \\
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
17 & \textit{\textbf{d}2} \\
\end{align*}

With the idea of beginning a siege by \textit{\textbf{b}3}, \textit{\textbf{a}4-a5} and \textit{\textbf{a}4}. Black is simply obliged to create at least some kind of counterplay.

\begin{align*}
17 & \ldots \textit{\textbf{g}4} \\
18 & \textit{\textbf{b}3} \textit{\textbf{d}6} \\
\end{align*}

Timman's entire plan is based on this pseudo rook sacrifice.

\begin{align*}
19 & \textit{\textbf{g}3} \\
\end{align*}

The 'gift' cannot be accepted: 19 \textit{\textbf{xa}5} \textit{\textbf{xh}2+} 20 \textit{\textbf{d}1} \textit{\textbf{xe}3} 21 \textit{\textbf{xe}3} \textit{\textbf{h}1+} 22 \textit{\textbf{e}2} \textit{\textbf{xg}2+} and Black wins.

\begin{align*}
19 & \ldots \textit{\textbf{a}7} \\
\end{align*}

It is very hard to say where the rook is best placed. After the game we jointly decided that it should have been retreated to \textit{\textbf{a}8}. But that was after the game...

\begin{align*}
20 & \textit{\textbf{e}4!} \\
\end{align*}

A timely breakthrough. For the moment Black's pieces are not very harmoniously placed, the weakening of his king's position may also tell, and the e-file is more likely to end up in White's possession than Black's.

\begin{align*}
20 & \ldots \textit{\textbf{dxe}4} \\
21 & \textit{\textbf{xe}4} \textit{\textbf{f}8} \\
22 & \textit{\textbf{e}1} \textit{\textbf{b}6} \\
\end{align*}

The attempt by Black to 'disentangle' himself with 22...\textit{\textbf{df}6} did not appeal to him in view of 23 \textit{\textbf{bc}5} \textit{\textbf{xe}4} 24 \textit{\textbf{xe}4} \textit{\textbf{f}6} 25 \textit{\textbf{b}6} \textit{\textbf{a}8} 26 \textit{\textbf{f}3} \textit{\textbf{xe}1+} 27 \textit{\textbf{xe}1}, when his queenside is still stalemated.

\begin{align*}
23 & \textit{\textbf{bd}2} \textit{\textbf{a}6} \\
24 & \textit{\textbf{c}2!} \\
\end{align*}
The exchange of bishops would ease the defence, and also White wants to launch an attack with $\texttt{b}3$ and $\texttt{g}5$.

24 $\texttt{...} \texttt{b}7$

Reluctantly played. But, firstly, Black very much wants to prepare the move of one of his knights to $f6$, in order to exchange at least a pair of minor pieces, and secondly, with his last few quiet moves White has already placed his opponent in a critical position, and it is not easy to suggest anything else. Thus if 24...c5 White interposes the unpleasant 25 $\texttt{h}3$, and the black knight has to go to $h6$, where, according to Tarrasch, it ruins Black’s entire game...

25 $\texttt{b}3 \texttt{g}6$

At last! But now other problems for Black appear.

26 $\texttt{ac}1 \texttt{c}8$
27 $\texttt{xf}6+$

By now there was a wide choice. 27 $\texttt{g}5$ does not look bad, and if 27...$\texttt{d}5$ 28 $\texttt{xc}6 \texttt{xc}6$ 29 $\texttt{xd}5 \texttt{f}6$ 30 $\texttt{xb}7$, although in this case Black’s pieces are slightly activated. I preferred to wait before winning material.

27 $\texttt{...} \texttt{xf}6$
28 $\texttt{d}5!$

A practically decisive breakthrough.

28 $\texttt{...} \texttt{xd}5$
29 $\texttt{e}4$

29 $\texttt{...} \texttt{d}8$?

The last straw that Black might have clutched at was the far from obvious 29...$\texttt{b}4$?! After this White wins a pawn – 30 $\texttt{f}6+$ $\texttt{h}8$ 31 $\texttt{d}5+$ $\texttt{f}6$ 32 $\texttt{xb}4 \texttt{xb}4$ 33 $\texttt{xf}6+$ $\texttt{g}7$ 34 $\texttt{c}3$, when Black is forced to play either 34...$\texttt{f}8$ 35 $\texttt{xc}6$ or 34...$\texttt{f}8$ 35 $\texttt{xc}6$. But in time trouble my opponent did not find this, and he lost quickly.

30 $\texttt{xc}6 \texttt{b}4$
30...$\texttt{g}7$ would not have saved Black after 31 $\texttt{d}2 \texttt{bd}7$ 32 $\texttt{xd}5 \texttt{xd}5$ 33 $\texttt{xd}5 \texttt{xd}5$ 34 $\texttt{f}6$+
31 $\texttt{f}6+$ $\texttt{f}8$

Forced, otherwise after 31...$\texttt{xf}6$ 32 $\texttt{xf}7+$ the queen is lost.

32 $\texttt{h}7+$ $\texttt{g}8$
33 $\texttt{f}6+$ $\texttt{f}8$
34 $\texttt{e}4$

Black resigns. The power of the white pieces in the final position is indeed very great.

No. 149
Kramnik–Ehlvest
Vienna 1996
English Opening

Foundation stone of a school

'This game was played in the third round. The tournament had not started very well for me – 0 out of 2, and in this games collection you will not find the game Kramnik–Shirov from the first round. In the second round (against Karpov) for the
first time in my life I was 45 minutes late for a game. The first round began at 15.00, and by all the laws of logic I decided that the second round would also start at this time. Strolling about at 14.40 not far from the tournament building, I saw a man running towards me and indicating with his fingers something resembling the "victory" sign (which in fact simply signified the number "two" – the starting time of the round). "My" mistake was belatedly explained to me, and I rushed in to play a game of rapid chess. In general I have quite good results at rapidplay, but evidently this was simply not my day.

'On arriving for the game with Ehlvest (and being pleasantly surprised that on this occasion I had guessed the starting time of the round), I suddenly remembered that the Soviet Chess School recommends that, after two successive defeats, in the following game you should if possible agree a quick draw. But I think that the Russian Chess School has not yet come to an opinion about this, and I decided to play a little…' (Kramnik)

8 ...  e6!? An unusual way of handling this position. Black more often plays 8... b7 9 g2 d6 10 0-0 bd7 etc.

9  g2  b7
10 0-0  d6
11  b2  e5

Sooner or later the a1-h8 diagonal will have to be blocked.

12  e3

Defending against ...d4.

12 ...  e8
13  d3

Also quite good is 13 d4 exd4 (weaker is 13...exd4 14 exd4 e4? 15 d2 d5 16 b5 xe7 17 c5) 14 exd4 xd4 15 xd4 cxd4 16 xd4 xg2 17 xg2 d5?!, but I did not like the fact that the position would be considerably simplified.

A poor move, from both the tactical, and the strategic viewpoint. After 13...e7 I was planning 14 b3!? (14 xe5? xg2 15 g4 e8! 16 xg2 h5 17 h6+ h7, or 16 h6+ h8 17 xg2 f6 18 g4 h5), threatening bxc5 and preparing d3-d4.

13...a6?! or 13...e7?!, defending the bishop, was probably best, although here too White retains a slight advantage thanks to his two bishops and more flexible pawn structure.

14  b5!

White's strategic idea is to block the position (after b4-b5 and e3-e4) and to transfer the weight of the struggle to the
kingside, where he has all the play. His advantage in space, in the absence of any counterplay for the opponent, gives him the advantage.

14 ... \( \text{De}7 \)

Or 14. \( \text{Db}8 \) 15 a4 a5 16 e4 \( \text{Db}d7 \) 17 \( \text{Rh}4 \) \( \text{Df}8 \) 18 f4. The following tactical operation would have been prevented by 14 ... \( \text{Aa}5 \), but here too after 15 e4, with the idea of \( \text{Rh}4 \) and \( f2-f4 \) (or the reserve possibility \( \text{Wc}2 \) and \( \text{Cc}3 \)), the poor position of the knight on the edge of the board guarantees White the advantage.

15 \( \text{Dxe}5 \) !?

At the board I thought that this gave more than the prosaic 15 e4 \( \text{Dg}6 \) 16 \( \text{Dd}2 \) \( \text{Df}8 \) 17 f4, but now I am not so sure.

15 ... \( \text{Axg}2 \)
16 \( \text{Dg}4 \)

This is the tactical justification of White’s idea. Now 16 ... \( \text{Axh}1 \)? 17 \( \text{Dxf}6+ \) \( \text{gxh}6 \) 18 \( \text{Wxf}6 \) leads to a direct mate, and Black also loses after 16 ... \( \text{Ch}5 \) 17 \( \text{Axg}2 \) f5 18 \( \text{Ch}6+ \) \( \text{Df}8 \) (or 18 ... \( \text{gxh}6 \) 19 \( \text{Wh}8+ \) \( \text{Df}7 \) 20 \( \text{Wxh}7+ \) \( \text{De}6 \) 21 \( \text{Wh}xh6+ \) \( \text{Dh}7 \) 22 \( \text{Wxh}5 \)) 19 g4! \( \text{fxg}4 \) 20 f3! g3 21 hgx3 gxf6 22 \( \text{Dh}1 \).

16 ... \( \text{Ded}5 \)!

Strictly the only move.

17 \( \text{Bxf}6+ \) \( \text{gxh}6 \)
18 \( \text{cx}d5 \)

18 ... \( \text{Ax}d5 \)!

A subtle evaluation of the position. After 18 ... \( \text{Axh}1 \) 19 \( \text{Bxf}1 \), despite the roughly equal material, it is hard for Black to defend against the threat of \( \text{Wc}4-f4 \) followed (if necessary) by \( \text{Cc}1-c4 \). He is forced to continue 19 ... \( \text{c}4 ! \) 20 dx\( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{Cc}4 \) 21 \( \text{Wd}3 \) \( \text{Bxc}4 \) (21 ... \( \text{Bxc}4 \) ? 22 f3) 22 \( \text{Wf}5 \) \( \text{We}7 \), but 23 e4! (23 \( \text{Bxf}6 \) \( \text{We}4 \)) leaves White with a strong initiative.

19 \( \text{Bf}1 \)!

After the immediate 19 \( \text{Wxf}6 \) \( \text{Wxf}6 \) 20 \( \text{Bxf}6 \) \( \text{Bf}3 \)! it would have been extremely difficult to convert the extra pawn.

19 ... \( \text{Bb}6 \)

Better was 19 ... \( \text{Bb}7 \) 20 f4! d5 21 \( \text{Wxf}6 \) \( \text{Wxf}6 \) 22 \( \text{Bxf}6 \), although now White has very real chances of exploiting his advantage (the opponent’s bishop cannot reach \( f3 \)).

20 f4

20 ... \( \text{Bg}7 ? \)

Excessively optimistic, as was 20 ... \( \text{c}4 ? \) 21 \( \text{Wd}4 ! \) \( \text{Bb}7 \) 22 f5! with an attack. It was better to forget about the f6 pawn: 20 ... \( \text{Bb}7 \) 21 f5 \( \text{Be}8 \) (21 ... \( \text{Be}5 \) 22 \( \text{Wc}4 ! \) \( \text{Bxf}5 \) 23 \( \text{Bf}1 \)) 22 \( \text{Wxf}6 \) \( \text{Wxf}6 \) 23 \( \text{Bxf}6 \). At least then Black would manage to seek salvation in the endgame.

21 f5

Beginning a direct attack.

21 ... \( \text{Be}8 \)
22 \( \text{Wd}2 \) \( \text{Bb}7 \)
23 e4 \( \text{h}6 \)
24 \( \text{Wf}4 \) \( \text{d}5 \)

Black’s only chance lies in counterplay in the centre, but it is too late. If 24 ... \( \text{c}4 \) even the simple 25 \( \text{Ad}1 ! \) ? is good.

25 \( \text{Wg}4+ \) \( \text{Bh}7 \)
26 \textit{Wh}4
26 \textit{Wh}5 is also good.
26 \ldots \textit{g}7
If 26 \ldots d4, then 27 \textit{c}1.

27 \textit{exd}5!
Not the most aesthetic, but the quickest way to win.
27 \ldots \textit{h}7
The black pieces are unable to defend their king: bad is 27 \textit{He}1+ 28 \textit{He}1 \textit{xd}5 29 \textit{c}1 \textit{Wh}8 30 \textit{e}7, as well as 27 \textit{g}8 28 d6! \textit{xd}6 29 \textit{e}6! \textit{xe}6 30 \textit{xf}6+ \textit{h}7 31 \textit{f}7+.

28 \textit{xe}4 \textit{xd}5
28 \textit{xe}4 29 \textit{dx}e4 would have enabled the defeat to be deferred slightly, but not avoided. Other moves lose more or less by force:

(a) 28 \textit{xd}5 29 \textit{xf}6 \textit{g}8 30 \textit{c}1! \textit{g}7 31 \textit{h}6;
(b) 28 \textit{g}8 29 \textit{xf}6 \textit{xd}5 30 \textit{h}6+ \textit{h}6 31 \textit{h}4 mate;
(c) 28 \textit{d}6 29 \textit{xf}6 (threatening \textit{h}6+) 29 \textit{f}8 30 \textit{g}4 \textit{xd}5 31 \textit{g}7+ \textit{xg}7 32 \textit{g}7 33 f6+.

29 \textit{xf}6
Black resigns

After the game, Judit Polgar, the only lady player in the world able to battle on equal terms with the strongest grandmasters, admitted that she had seen White's concluding rejoinder. But she herself so liked the unusual position, where all Black’s pieces were immobilized, that, rather than capitulate early, she decided not to reduce the impression of the final position.

1 \textit{f}3 \textit{f}6 2 c4 g6 3 \textit{c}3 \textit{g}7 4 e4 d6 5 d4 0-0 6 \textit{e}2 \textit{e}5 7 0-0 \textit{d}6 8 d5 \textit{e}7 9 b4 \textit{h}5 10 \textit{e}1 f5 11 \textit{g}5 \textit{f}6 12 \textit{f}3 \textit{h}8

This variation was only then coming into fashion, and many of its nuances were not yet known. The game Kramnik-J. Polgar, Linares 1997, No.65 in this book, had not yet been played; there I replied to 12 \ldots c6 with 13 \textit{e}3, and a way for Black to equalise has still not been found. The move played by Black here is useful in principle, but not to the extent of wasting a tempo in a position where time is undoubtedly important.

13 \textit{b}2

Along with this White could also have considered 13 \textit{b}3, 13 a4 or even 13 h3.

13 \ldots a5

Also possible was the immediate 13 \ldots h6 14 \textit{e}6 \textit{xe}6 15 \textit{dx}e6 with some advantage to White.

14 b5 \textit{b}8!
A strange-looking move, but the best defence. After 14 \ldots b6 15 \textit{e}6 \textit{xe}6 16

No.150
Kramnik-J. Polgar
Vienna 1996
King's Indian Defence

To general satisfaction
dx e6  \text{c}8 17  \text{d}d5  \text{B}lack cannot get at the e6 pawn, and the exchange on d5 would leave the backward c7 pawn very weak.

15  \text{e}6

The most energetic continuation, although 15  \text{d}3, for example, would also have been useful.

15  \text{...}  \text{xe}6
16  dx e6  \text{e}8
17  \text{b}3

The concrete attempt to breach Black's defences by 17  \text{c}5  dx e5 18  \text{w}d8  (18  \text{b}3  b6 19  \text{a}d1  \text{d}6) 18...\text{x}d8 19  \text{d}5  (things are not so clear after 19  exf5  gxf5 20  \text{xb}7  \text{d}6)  did not appeal to me because of 19...\text{x}d5!  (after 19...\text{xd}5 20  \text{ex}d5  \text{d}6  - 21  e7 was threatened - 21  \text{xe}5  \text{xe}5 22  \text{xe}5  \text{White has the advantage}) 20  \text{ex}d5  e4 21  \text{x}g7+  \text{g}7 22  \text{e}2  \text{xd}5  with strong counterplay. But possible was 17  \text{d}2  \text{c}8  (...b7-b6 is still unfavourable) 18  \text{d}5  \text{xe}6 19  \text{xa}5, when White stands better, but Black's position is solid. Now, however, the e6 pawn remains alive.

17  \text{...}  \text{c}5

Here 17...\text{xc}8 no longer works: 18  \text{c}5?!  dx e5 19  \text{a}d1  \text{d}6  (otherwise the rook will break through to d7) 20  b6!, and Black's position becomes critical.

18  \text{ex}f5  \text{gx}f5
19  \text{h}5  \text{c}7
20  \text{f}7  \text{c}8
21  \text{d}5  \text{cxd}5
22  \text{cx}d5

22  \text{...}  \text{f}4

In my view, the decisive mistake Black should have escaped from the vice by 22...\text{xf}7 23  \text{ex}f7  \text{f}8, and if 24  \text{f}4  e4, not allowing the opening of lines. White would still have had to win this position, whereas now he gains control of the light squares and begins an attack. It can be added that 22...\text{c}4 23  \text{a}3  \text{xd}5  did not work in view of 24  \text{xd}6  \text{d}8 25  \text{a}3  c3 26  \text{a}c1.

23  \text{h}5

23  b6 was an alternative. Here too Black can sacrifice the exchange, although after 23...\text{xf}7 24  \text{ex}f7  \text{f}5 25  \text{b}5  \text{xf}7 the white queen can invade the enemy position - 26  \text{d}7. But it is better not to allow this possibility at all, and, after transferring the bishop to e4, to begin concentrating the heavy pieces on the kingside.

23  \text{...}  \text{b}6
24  \text{a}d1  \text{a}5

Better chances of a successful defence were perhaps offered by the regrouping ...\text{g}8, ...\text{f}6 and ...\text{b}7-g7.

25  \text{f}3  \text{g}8
26  \text{e}4  \text{g}5
27  \text{d}3  \text{f}6
28  \text{h}3  \text{g}6

29  \text{f}3!

Strangely enough, White must exchange his active rook, so that the tripling of heavy pieces by Black on the g-file should not give at least some counterplay. After this, in my opinion, the outcome of the game is decided.
White’s plan is clear: to open up the position on the kingside, and Black is unable to prevent this.

32 \ldots $\text{d}e7$
33 $\text{h}1$ $\text{f}8$
34 $\text{g}1$ $\text{g}8$
35 $\text{f}3$ $\text{g}5$
36 $\text{h}4$ $\text{f}6$

Both 36... $\text{h}6$ 37 $\text{g}4$ and 36... $\text{e}7$ 37 $\text{g}xf4$ were bad for Black.

37 $\text{g}2$ $\text{e}7$
37... $\text{d}e7$ loses to 38 $\text{g}xf4$ $\text{x}g2$ 39 $\text{fxe}5$.

A zugzwang position has been reached, and Black’s nerve fails her.

38 \ldots $\text{fxg}3$

The opening of the $f$-file hastens the end, although after 38... $\text{f}8$ 39 $\text{g}4$ $\text{d}8$ 40 $\text{g}5$ White is also close to winning.

39 $\text{fxg}3$ $\text{f}8$
40 $\text{f}2$ $\text{d}8$
41 $\text{g}4$!

The quickest way to win.

41 \ldots $\text{e}7$

White wins after 41... $\text{h}6$ 42 $\text{g}5$, or 41... $\text{x}h4$ 42 $\text{f}7$ $\text{f}6$ (the only defence against the mate at $h7$) 43 $\text{h}xh4$.

42 $\text{g}5$ $c4$
43 $\text{x}f7$ $\text{e}8$

44 $\text{x}h7+$

Black resigns

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A smile in the endgame

With his sincere tactfulness, Kramnik is not capable of offending anyone, least of all his fellow-professionals. But he can laugh at himself (incidentally, the trait of a strong person without any inferiority complex), and also at his colleagues, in particular, if they give him grounds for doing so. That was the case in this game: Vasily Ivanchuk normally admits defeat graciously, but here he suddenly displayed a stubbornness worthy of a better application. This led Vladimir not only to conduct the endgame with a hint of irony, but also to furnish it with appropriate comments...

1 $\text{f}3$ $\text{f}6$ 2 $c4$ $g6$ 3 $\text{d}c3$ $d5$ 4 $\text{cxd}5$ $\text{d}x\text{d}5$ 5 $\text{w}a4+$ $\text{d}7$ 6 $\text{h}4$ $\text{xc}3$ 7 $\text{dxc}3$ $e5$ 8 $\text{g}5$ $\text{e}7$ 9 $e4$ $\text{c}6$ 10 $\text{c}4$ $h6$ 11 $\text{xe}7$ $\text{xe}7$

12 $\text{g}3$!? 

I unsuccessfully tried to make something of this position in my 1994 candidates match against Leonid Yudasin in Wijk aan Zee. There I played 12 0–0–0, but I was unable to achieve anything significant. Of course, 12 $\text{g}3$!? also does not give any appreciable advantage (it is
that kind of opening variation!), but some pressure remains, and accurate play is required of my opponent.

12 ... 0–0–0

I could only dream of 12...0–0? 13 \textit{\texttt{w}}xg6+.

13 0–0 \textit{\texttt{w}}f6

A possible, but somewhat strange move. More logical was 13...g5 (followed by ...f7–f6 and ...\textit{\texttt{a}}e6), although this plan also has its drawbacks – it weakens the f5 square, which if possible the white knight would be pleased to reach (true, in the very distant future).

14 \textit{\texttt{b}}ad1!

I spent about half an hour on this natural move, deliberating over that eternal problem in chess: which rook to place on an open file. The point is that, if the rook is left at a1, the possible future advance of White’s queenside pawns gains significantly in strength. On the other hand, the rook at f1 supports the advance f2–f4, which has become a very real possibility after Black’s 13th move.

14 ... \textit{\texttt{a}}e6?

Having defended his e5 and f7 pawns, Black wishes to exchange queens by ...\textit{\texttt{e}}f4.

15 \textit{\texttt{d}}d5 \textit{\texttt{e}}7

16 \textit{\texttt{d}}d2 \textit{\texttt{f}}4

17 \textit{\texttt{c}}c4

18 \textit{\texttt{e}}d2! This is stronger than 18 f3 \textit{\texttt{w}}xg3 19 h\textit{x}g3 \textit{\texttt{a}}e6, which, however, would also have left White with a slight advantage after 20 \textit{\texttt{a}}xe6+ \textit{\texttt{x}}xe6 21 \textit{\texttt{x}}xd8+ (21 g4 \textit{\texttt{h}}8! with the idea of ...h6–h5) 21...\textit{\texttt{x}}xd8 22 g4! (fixing the weakness at h6) 22...f6 23 \textit{\texttt{f}}f2 etc.

18 ... \textit{\texttt{e}}e7?

And this routine move leads to great difficulties.

While White was not threatening anything in particular, Black should have made some waiting move such as 18...\textit{\texttt{b}}b8, although even in this case his position is fairly unpleasant.

19 f3

But now the time for this is right.

19 ... \textit{\texttt{w}}xg3

Not 19...\textit{\texttt{e}}e6? 20 \textit{\texttt{x}}xe6 fxe6 21 \textit{\texttt{x}}xd7 \textit{\texttt{x}}xd7 22 \textit{\texttt{x}}xg6.

20 h\textit{x}g3 \textit{\texttt{a}}e6

21 \textit{\texttt{f}}f1

Black would also have faced a difficult defence after 21 \textit{\texttt{a}}xe6 fxe6 22 \textit{\texttt{x}}xd7 \textit{\texttt{x}}xd7 23 f4, but it is better to maintain the tension in the centre – due to the weakness of his e5 pawn, it is hard for Black to devise a sensible plan.

21 ... h5

An essential move, as otherwise White himself will play g3–g4, fixing not only the h6 pawn, but also the opponent’s entire pawn structure.

22 a3
Removing the pawn from the line of fire (in the variation 22 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{c}}}}c6 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}xd2 23 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}xd2 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}bd2 24 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{b}}}}xb7+ \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{b}}}}xb7 25 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}xd2 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{c}}}}xa2).

22 \ldots \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}b8

In view of the threat of \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{c}}}}c6, Black is forced to decentralise his king.

23 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{f}}}}f2

Fortunately, I have the possibility of doing the opposite.

23 \ldots a6

Now 24 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{e}}}}e3 can be met by 24...\textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{c}}}}e7, and if 25 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{c}}}}c6 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}xd2 26 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}xd2 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{c}}}}c4 (there is no mate at \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}8).

24 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{c}}}}c6!

Of the numerous tempting possibilities, this is the strongest. 24 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{e}}}}xe6 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}xd2+ 25 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}xd2 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}xd2+ 26 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}xd2 fxe6 27 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{f}}}}f4 also promises a big advantage, but after 27...\textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{c}}}}c8 28 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{f}}}}f3 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}d7! Black can still hold on (29 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{h}}}}h4 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{c}}}}e7).

24 \ldots \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}xd2+
25 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}xd2+
26 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}xd2 bxc6
27 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{f}}}}f4!

The e5 pawn has to be exchanged – it prevents White from activating his knight and, more important, his king.

27 \ldots exf4
28 gxf4 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{c}}}}c8
29 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{g}}}}g3

29 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{e}}}}e3 and 30 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}d4 should also have been good enough to win. I did not like the fact that in the future Black would have the possibility of play on the kingside (\ldots f7-f6, \ldots g6-g5), although on closer inspection it becomes clear that things would not have come to that.

29 \ldots \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}d7
30 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{h}}}}h4 f6

The white king cannot be allowed to go to g5.

31 e5! fxe5?!

There was no longer any way of saving the game, but, of course, 31...\textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{e}}}}e7 was a tougher defence (for the reason given in the previous note), after which the most precise is 32 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{e}}}}e4! fxe5 33 fxe5 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}d5 34 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{c}}}}c5 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{x}}}}xg2 35 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{g}}}}g5 (35 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{x}}}}xa6? \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{e}}}}e6 with counterplay) when White, without hurrying, picks up the a-pawn: 35...\textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{f}}}}f1 (35...\textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{h}}}}h3 36 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{x}}}}xg6 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{g}}}}g4 37 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{g}}}}g5) 36 a4 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{e}}}}e2 (36...a5 37 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{b}}}}xb4 38 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{c}}}}xb4 etc.) 37 a5 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{f}}}}f1 (37...\textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{g}}}}g4 38 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{x}}}}xa6 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{e}}}}e6 39 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{c}}}}c5+, and the a-pawn promotes) 38 b3 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{e}}}}e2 39 c4 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}d1 40 b4 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{e}}}}e2 41 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{x}}}}xa6 exd4 42 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{c}}}}c5 and wins. He could also consider 32 g3 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}d5 33 c4 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{g}}}}g2 34 exf6+ \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{x}}}}xf6 35 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{b}}}}b3.

32 fxe5 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{d}}}}d5
33 g3

Now it all ends very simply.

33 \ldots \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{e}}}}e6
34 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{g}}}}g5 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{x}}}}xe5
34...\textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{f}}}}f7 was slightly more tenacious.

35 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{x}}}}xg6 h4
36 g\textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{x}}}}h4 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{f}}}}f4
37 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{h}}}}h5 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{e}}}}e3
38 c4 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{g}}}}g2
39 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{b}}}}b3 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{f}}}}f1
40 h6 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{x}}}}xc4
41 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{c}}}}c5 \textit{\texttt{\textbf{\textcolor{red}{a}}}}a2
18 bxc6  
Now 19...Qd2 is threatened, and all would be fine, were it not for:

19 c1! 
Karpov evidently underestimated this move. Now none of Black’s attacking possibilities come to anything, for example:

(a) 19...Qd2 20 b4!;
(b) 19...Qg4 20 d5! Qc7 (20...exd5 21 exd5 Qxd5 22 c4 Qf5 23 Qxb6 Qd5 24 Qd4 Qf6 25 Qd3 with advantage to White, or 20...Qc8 21 Qf1! Qc7 22 Qd4!, and 22...Qd2? is bad in view of 23 Qc3! Qxf1 24 Qb5) 21 dxe6 fxe6 (21...Qgxf2 22 Qxf7+ Qxf7 23 Qxb6, winning a pawn for no compensation) 22 c5! (a very important resource) 22...Qxc5 23 Qxc5! dxc5 24 Qxe6+ Qh8 25 Qxg4 Qa2 26 Qe6, and White wins. Black is obliged to switch to passive defence.

19...Qd7 
Effectively admitting that his 17th move was a mistake.

20 Qe1  
21 Qx4  
22 f3  
23 Qd1! 
After 23 Qa1 Qx1 24 Qx1 Qa6 White’s advantage would have been reduced.

23...Qa2  
24 Qd3  
25 Qb3  
26 e4 

If this situation is compared with that of ten moves earlier, it will be evident that White has clearly strengthened his position, whereas for Black it is rather the reverse. White has an obvious advantage.

26 ... Qb8 
Planning to play the knight to a5, with the idea of putting pressure on the c4 pawn and harassing the bishop at b3.

27 c5 
Exploiting the currently unfortunate placing of the black pieces and my opponent’s approaching time trouble, I decided to sharpen the play, which, however, was not at all necessary. 27 Qf2 Qc6 28 Qc3 Qa5 29 Qa2 was good. With the move in the game I took a highly committing decision, but from the practical viewpoint it seemed to me to be correct.

27...bxc5  
28 dxc5  
29 Qxc5 
Black has got rid of his potential weakness at b6, but my pieces have become threateningly active.

29...Qc8 
Black also remains in difficulties after 29...Qc6 30 g4!? followed by g4-g5, when White’s initiative is very dangerous.

30 e5! Qe8? 
In the games of my opponent he has several times placed all his pieces on the back rank, but this ‘habit’ cannot be good. The only move was 30...Qd5, in order after 31 Qxd5 exd5 and, for example, 32
\[ \text{Qd3!} \] to defend this unpleasant ending for a further fifty-odd moves. Perhaps Karpov decided that an end without suffering was preferable to suffering without end.

31 \[ \text{Qa4!} \]

This move was obviously overlooked by my opponent. Expressed in football language, Black is pressed back in his own penalty area, which is usually liable to lead to a goal.

31 \[ \text{... Qc7} \]

White was threatening both \[ \text{Qa3} \] and \[ \text{Qd1} \].

32 \[ \text{Qa3} \] \[ \text{Qg8} \]

33 \[ \text{Je4!} \]

Now all the black pieces come under attack.

33 \[ \text{... Qxa4} \]

A picturesque position arises after 33...\[ Qba6 \] 34 \[ Qd6 \] (34 \[ Qd6 \] is also good) 34...\[ Qa7 \] (34...\[ Qd5 \] 35 \[ Qc6 \] 35 \[ Qb5 \]! with the primitive threat of \[ Qxa6 \], against which there is no defence. No better is 34...\[ Qb7 \] (instead of 34...\[ Qa7 \] 35 \[ Qxc7 \] \[ Qxe4 \] (35...\[ Qc8 \] 36 \[ Qd6 \] 36 \[ Qxe4 \] \[ Qc8 \] 37 \[ Qb5 \]! \[ Qxc7 \] (37...\[ Qxc7 \] 38 \[ Qd7 \] 38 \[ Qd1 \]!)

34 \[ Qxe7 \] \[ Qa6 \]

Or 34...\[ Qd7 \] 35 \[ Qd6 \] \[ Qa1+ \] 36 \[ Qf2 \] \[ Qb1 \] 37 \[ Qc5 \].

35 \[ Qc5! \]

The simplest. Now both 35...\[ Qc4 \] 36 \[ Qxa6 \] and 35...\[ Qxa3 \] 36 \[ Qxa6 \] leave White a piece up.

Black resigns.

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\[ \text{No.153} \]

Ivanchuk–Kramnik

Linares 1997

Sicilian Defence

'Turn, operation immediate'

This is the name given by sailors to the command after which a squadron or ship must completely change its direction of movement. In chess the two opposing sides do not both voluntarily follow an order that is advantageous to only one of them, but the objective course of events may force it to be done. Thus here, when at first sight the initiative was held by White, Black was able to find an unexpected and strong decision, changing the entire course of the struggle. It is possible that White still had chances of emerging unscathed, but then came the 'operation immediate' – a command for ~people who are very composed and not subject to emotions...

1 e4 \[ c5 \] 2 f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Qxd4 Qf6 5 Qc3 Qc6 6 Qg5 e6 7 Wd2 Qe7 8 0–0–0 Qxd4 9 wxd4 0–0 10 f4 Wa5

11 \[ Qb5 \]

Kamsky played this against me in Groningen 1993. I replied very accurately and equalised, but to remember all this again took me half an hour...

11 \[ ... \] \[ Qd8 \]

12 \[ e5 \] \[ dxe5 \]

13 \[ Wxe5 \] \[ h6 \]
Otherwise it is rather difficult for Black to develop his pieces.

If 16 $\text{Wh}5$ $\text{g6}$

If 16 $\text{Wh}f3$ Black simply continues 16... $\text{a6}$.

16 ... $\text{g4}$

If 17 $\text{We}1$ $\text{xd}1+$ and Black has no problems, while after 17 $\text{Wh}5$ there follows 17... $\text{f6}$.

17 ... $\text{xd}8$

In our game Kamsky chose 19 $\text{d}4$ here, and after 19... $\text{b}6$ the position was equal.

Ivanchuk employs a new move.

Now Black has a choice: to play solidly with 21... $\text{d}7$ and 22... $\text{c}6$, or else go 21... $\text{b}5$. In an endgame this would be a weakening, but I already realised that White had aggressive intentions.

21 ... $\text{b}5$

The white queen is completely excluded from active life, and the counterattack ...$\text{b}5$-$\text{b}4$, ...$\text{c}8$ etc. is on the agenda.

Initially I was intending 29... $\text{g}3$ 30 $\text{h}5$ $\text{b}4$, but then White has 31 $\text{h}x\text{g}6$ $\text{g}x\text{g}6$ 33 32 $\text{xf}7$ (32 $\text{d}3$!? is also an interesting possibility), with lots of checks and perhaps even a perpetual. The move played
is more accurate: complications are ruled out, and the position remains won.

30 h5 g2

Defending the queen and hampering the exchange hxg6. White in fact does not manage to carry this out profitably.

31 d1 f5
32 d3 b4
33 f1 d4
34 d2

34 ... f4!

Both 35...d8 and 35...c8 are threatened, and bringing the white queen back into play entails loss of material.

35 hxg6 xg6
36 h3 g5

I had a choice between capturing this pawn and another strong continuation – 36...xe2 37 xe2 c8+.

37 e3

White is practically forced to go into the endgame, since here too he had to reckon with the same capture on c2.

37 ... xe3
38 xe3 a5
39 d4 f5
40 g4 f4
41 c4 g7!

The last precise move. The e6 pawn is immune.

42 f2 f6

And now if 43 xe4+ Black has 43...e5. His plans include ...h8-h2(h1), when his e-pawn will irresistibly advance. Therefore White resigned.

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No. 154
Kramnik–Van Wely
Tilburg 1997
Queen's Indian Defence

When nuances are decisive

‘For the first ten moves it could have seemed that the two players were engaged in an unhurried positional game, in which without any particular adventures they were occupied with the mobilisation of their forces. But in fact I realised that – strangely enough – the position was a very forcing one, and that a decisive role in it was played by the question of tempi. Every move was important, and any nuance could decide the battle: either White would gain an advantage, or Black would have a comfortable game. I myself was surprised by my own conclusion, but the fact remains: time is much more important in this position than in many Sicilians.’

(Kramnik)
Groningen 1993) 12 ♜c1, when White's chances are slightly better, as in the game Gelfand-Karpov (Vienna 1996), brilliantly won by Boris.

11 ♛c2

11 ♜c1 is also possible, but in view of the fact that Black will be bound to play ...c7-c5, the best place for this rook is d1.

11 ... ♜c5

The preparatory exchange on c3 came into consideration: 11...♖xc3 12 bxc3 c5.

12 dxc5!

Or 12 ♖ad1 ♜c8 with a complicated game.

12 ... ♖xc5

The most critical. After 12...♖xc3 13 c6! or 12...♕xc5 13 ♕ad1 ♜c8 14 ♕xe4 ♖xe4 15 ♖b3 Black is forced to switch to passive defence.

13 ♕xe4 dxe4

14 ♖g5 ♖f6

14...♖c8!? 15 ♖b1 ♖f6 16 b4! ♖xf2+!? (16...♖d4 17 ♕d1) 17 ♖xf2 h6!, suggested after the game by Kasparov, would also not have given full equality in view of 18 ♖d1! (as shown by Garry, 18 ♖h3 leads only to a draw: 18...♖c3+! 19 ♕g1 ♖xg2 20 ♕xg2 ♖d5+ 21 ♕g1 ♖e6 22 ♕g2 ♖d5+) 18...♖e8 19 ♕g1!! (but not 19 ♖h3 with the same drawing variation) 19...hxg5 20 ♖d6 ♖e6 21 ♖xf8 ♖xf8 22 ♖b3.

15 ♕xe4 ♖xe4

16 ♕xe4 ♖d4

After this Black has to defend a very unpleasant middlegame.

However, 16...♖c8 17 ♖d3 ♕xe4 18 ♖xe4 ♖d4 19 ♖xd4 ♕xd4 20 ♕ad1 ♕xb2 21 ♕d7 would have led to a no less unpleasant endgame. Despite its apparent simplicity and obvious drawing tendencies, there is no certainty that Black can save it. After the game the Dutch grandmaster and I studied this ending fairly thoroughly, and the further we went, the more Loek recognised how hard it was for Black to solve the problems facing him. In the end our opinions coincided...

17 ♕f3

Being mated after 17 ♕xa8?? ♖xf2+ 18 ♕h1 ♖g4 19 ♕g2 ♖g1+! 20 ♕xg1 ♕f2 did not come into my plans.

17 ... ♖xf2+

18 ♕h1 ♖ac8

18...♖ad8 would also not have relieved Black's difficulties, for example: 19 ♕f1 ♖d4 20 ♕ad1 ♖b4 21 a3 ♖b5 22 b4 ♕c7 23 ♕c7.

19 ♕f1 ♖d4

20 ♕ad1 ♖b4

21 a3 ♖b5

The black queen is driven across the entire board.

22 ♕f5!

A very important resource, not allowing Black to consolidate. 23 b4 is threatened.

22 ... ♖a4?

A mistake that aggravates an already difficult position. Of course, not possible was 22...♖xb2? 23 ♕e5 ♖xa3 24 ♕xf6 gxf6 25 ♕e4 when it all ends quickly, but
with 22...\texttt{w}b3! Black could have still held on: 23 \texttt{d}d3 (23 e4 \texttt{w}e6!) 23...\texttt{w}e6 24 \texttt{w}x6 fxe6 25 b4 (25 \texttt{fd}1 is also quite good) 25...\texttt{e}7 26 \texttt{c}3 \texttt{f}7 27 g4!? \texttt{d}5!?, although White has an undisputed advantage.

23 e4!
Avoiding a rather transparent trap: 23 \texttt{e}5?! \texttt{e}7 24 \texttt{x}f6? \texttt{x}f6 25 \texttt{e}4 g6!

23 \ldots \texttt{w}c2
Otherwise e4-e5.

24 \texttt{d}d2
The simplest of the numerous tempting alternatives.

24 \ldots \texttt{w}c4
25 \texttt{f}d1
While the black pieces have been passively observing their main fighter rushing about, I have been able to deploy my forces ideally and it is now inevitable that Black will soon lose material.

25 \ldots \texttt{w}e6
It is annoying, of course, after making nine out of the last ten moves with the queen, to conclude the ‘Odyssey’ by exchanging it for the white queen (which has made only two moves), but there is nothing better: 25...\texttt{e}7 26 e5 g6 27 \texttt{d}d3 \texttt{w}xd3 28 \texttt{x}d3 \texttt{h}5 29 \texttt{h}6 \texttt{f}d8 30 \texttt{d}7, or 25...h5 26 e5 \texttt{g}4 27 \texttt{d}5 \texttt{w}a6 28 e6 with a strong initiative for White.

26 \texttt{w}xe6 fxe6
27 e5 \texttt{d}8?
Black’s position is very difficult, but 27...\texttt{d}5 was a much tougher defence, although even here after 28 \texttt{xd}5 exd5 29 \texttt{xd}5 a5! the win for White is a matter of technique.

28 \texttt{g}4 \texttt{c}7
29 b4 \texttt{e}7
30 \texttt{d}7 \texttt{f}7
If 30...\texttt{d}8, then 31 \texttt{c}1, winning.

31 \texttt{c}1

It is amusing that, beginning from the 19th move, the game has developed according to the one scenario: White attacks the black pieces, and they are forced to retreat. But now the time has come when it is no longer possible to defend everything.

31 \ldots \texttt{f}8
32 \texttt{x}f7 \texttt{x}f7
33 \texttt{c}6!
33 \texttt{f}3 \texttt{e}7 34 \texttt{b}7 \texttt{d}7 35 \texttt{xe}8+ \texttt{xe}8 36 \texttt{g}2 was also sufficient, but I decided ‘on the way’ to pick up the e6 pawn. In view of the variation 33...\texttt{e}7 34 \texttt{xe}6 \texttt{b}8 35 \texttt{g}5+ Black resigned.

No.155
Kramnik–Shirov
Tilburg 1997
King’s Indian Defence

To the satisfaction of the classics
‘The strength of playing chess lies in the accurate evaluation of a position,’ the classics tirelessly used to assert. The
Currently fashionable sharp, calculating play would appear to have pushed this axiom into the background, into the sphere of some academic science, but at the very highest level the main ‘commandments’ are absolutely unshakeable. If Black had evaluated correctly the position on the 23rd move, he would certainly have exchanged queens, but his liking for sharp play deprived him of his objectivity. White, by contrast, after weighing up everything on the evaluation scales, acted ‘in accordance with the position’, and the classics would clearly have remained happy.

1 d4 f5 2 c4 g6 3 d3 c6 4 e4 d6 5 d4 0–0 6 h2 e5 7 0–0 c6 8 d5 e7 9 b4 h5 10 c3 f5 11 g5 f4 12 xf4 exf4 13 c1

According to Zigurds Lanka, Alexey’s second in Tilburg, this had been played previously, but for me it was a new move.

14 e6 xe6
15 dxe6 xc3

Otherwise Black’s 13th move would lose its point.

16 xc3 fxe4
17 f1 e3

All the same the e4 pawn cannot be held, and it is useful for Black to open the f-file. After 17...c6? 18 xe4 White can unhurriedly strengthen his position (most probably by h2-h4-h5), exploiting the opponent’s complete lack of counterplay.

18 fxe3 fxe3
19 cxe3 c6

The other possible plan – 19...f6 followed by ...xf8-h6 and ...af8, looks rather slow. Black wants to play 20...a5 21 b5 cxb5 22 cxb5 wb6 followed by the doubling of rooks on the f-file with strong counterplay.

Generally speaking, White’s main objective in this position is not to allow the activation of the opponent’s pieces. After prolonged reflection I managed to find some accurate moves.

20 d2!

Threatening the switching of the white pieces to the kingside – h3 and wh6.

20 ... d5

Something of a concession (generally speaking, the opening of the game favours White), but there does not appear to be anything else, for example: 20...a5 21 h3 wb7 21...wb6+? 22 c5 xb4 23 wb6 22 g4! with the threat of wb6, or 20...f6 21 h3 wb8 21...h5 is possible, but it is very dangerous) 22 xg6 d8 23 c5 xd2 24 wb7, and Black’s counterattack does not succeed.

21 cxd5

Not 21 h3? dxc4 22 wh6 wd4+ 23 gh1 wg7 when White has no advantage.

21 ... cxd5

22 d4!!

The most difficult move in the game. It would appear to be the only way of preventing the black pieces from ‘leaping
out by the now familiar route: ...b6, ...f6 and ...a8, after which I would have had to concern myself with how to equalise. 22 h3? was not good in view of 22...b6+ 23 h1 x6! 24 h3 w7.

22 ...d6
22...f5? 23 w5 b6 (23...e7! is better) was bad on account of 24 e7! fxe8 25 x5+ g7 26 e5+ when White wins, while 22...b6 would have merely transposed moves after 23 c5! xc5 24 bxc5.

23 c5

Generally speaking, the manoeuvre d1-d2-d4-c5 makes a strange impression, but only with the help of it am I able to seize the initiative.

23 ... w4?

Clearly underestimating White’s 25th move. It was time for Black to resign himself to the role of defender and play 23...xc5 24 bxc5 f8 (or 24...b6! 25 cxb6 axb6 26 a3) 25 b1 a8, retaining reasonable drawing chances.

24 f3 w5
25 f7!

It was annoying, of course, simply to have to give up the pride of White’s position – his e6 pawn, but in return he gains a strong initiative. Nothing would have been gained by 25 xf8+ xf8 26 xa7 wd2! 27 e3 xb4 with equality.

25 ... f7
26 xf7+ xf7
27 c7

Critical tactical play now commences.

27 ... wh4
28 e3!

The black king begins to feel uncomfortable.

28 ... wxb4?

Probably the decisive mistake. More tenacious was 28...f8 29 g3 g5 (29...f6 30 e2! g8 31 xc7 f2+ 32 h1 e1+ 33 g2 f2+ 34 h3 and wins), although even here after 30 e2! things are difficult for Black: it is extremely hard for him to break the pin, his queenside pawns are hanging, and 31 h4 is threatened.

29 a3 wh4

It is very important that the rook stands at e3 – otherwise 29...b6 would be possible, with check.

30 xb7 e8

The counterattack 30...f8 31 xa7 g8 is easily repulsed: 32 xc7 d4 33 c4+ h8 34 g3.

31 xa7

Black’s position is very difficult, and in addition my opponent was beginning to run short of time.

31 ... d4

This move loses practically by force, but I would not venture to suggest anything instead.

32 c4+

Weaker is 32 xf3+ g7 33 d7 f8 34 g3 e4, when Black can still hold on.

32 ... f8
33 g3!
The most precise. After 33 \texttt{\textbackslash f3+ \textbackslash g7 34 \texttt{\textbackslash f7+ \textbackslash h6} the black king's position would be markedly improved.

33 \ldots \texttt{\textbackslash g4}

33\ldots\texttt{\textbackslash f6 34 \texttt{\textbackslash e6 \textbackslash g7} also does not help, if only because of 35 \texttt{\textbackslash b6!} with the strong threat of 36 \texttt{\textbackslash f6+}. Now, however, the d4 pawn is lost by force.

34 \texttt{\textbackslash e2 \textbackslash c8}

35 \texttt{\textbackslash x d4}

36 \texttt{\textbackslash g2}

After 36\ldots\texttt{\textbackslash c6+} White wins most simply by 37 \texttt{\textbackslash f3 \textbackslash c2+ 38 \texttt{\textbackslash e2}, and so Black resigned. Despite its outward lack of flamboyance, a very difficult and subtle game.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{No. 156} & \\
\textbf{Topalov–Kramnik} & \\
\textbf{Linares 1998} & \\
\textbf{Queen's Gambit} & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textbf{Class of higher optimism}

At times it is not easy to guess the latent sense of the intricate piece movements in this game. But at the required moment it was the black forces that became coordinated, and White's seemingly solid position began to crumble.

1 \texttt{d4 \textbackslash f6 2 c4 e6 3 \textbackslash f3 d5 4 \textbackslash c3 \textbackslash e7 5 \textbackslash g5 h6 6 \textbackslash h4 0–0 7 e3 b6 8 \textbackslash e2 \textbackslash b7 9 \texttt{\textbackslash x f6 \textbackslash x f6 10 cxd5 exd5 11 b4 c6 12 0–0 a5}}

13 b5
13 bxa5 is more usual, as Lautier played against me in Belgrade 1997.

13 \ldots c5

14 \texttt{\textbackslash e1}

14 \texttt{\textbackslash e1 \textbackslash d7 15 dxc5 is completely harmless, for example: 15...\texttt{\textbackslash x c5 16 \texttt{\textbackslash d4 \textbackslash c8} (16...\texttt{\textbackslash d6 is also good enough for equality)} 17 \texttt{\textbackslash g4 \textbackslash c7 18 \texttt{\textbackslash c e2 \textbackslash e5 19 g3 g6 20 \textbackslash h3 \textbackslash d6 21 \textbackslash c2 h5, and Black has no problems, as has been confirmed several times in practice.}}

14 \ldots \texttt{\textbackslash e8}

The only game with 14 \texttt{\textbackslash e1} that I found in my computer database went 14...\texttt{\textbackslash d7 15 \texttt{\textbackslash f1 \textbackslash e8 16 g3 \textbackslash c8 17 \texttt{\textbackslash c1 c4 18 \textbackslash h3 \textbackslash c7 19 \texttt{\textbackslash e2 \textbackslash e7 20 \texttt{\textbackslash a4 \textbackslash d6 with an acceptable position for Black.}}}

15 \texttt{\textbackslash c1} \texttt{\textbackslash d7}

16 \texttt{\textbackslash g3} \texttt{\textbackslash f8}
Otherwise Black achieves a good position without difficulty: 17 dxc5 bxc5 18 \(\mathcal{D}a4\) c4 19 \(\mathcal{D}e5\) \(\mathcal{W}b6\) (19...\(\mathcal{L}c8?!\)) 20 \(\mathcal{D}xb7\) \(\mathcal{W}xb7\) 21 a4 \(\mathcal{D}e6\), or 17 \(\mathcal{A}f1\) \(\mathcal{D}e6\) 18 \(\mathcal{D}g2\) cxd4?! 19 exd4 \(\mathcal{L}c8\), and in view of the weakness of the d4 pawn White must already concern himself with how to equalise.

17 ... c4

It is clear that 17...cxd4? is unacceptable on account of 18 \(\mathcal{D}xd4\) followed by \(\mathcal{D}c6\).

18 \(\mathcal{A}f1\) \(\mathcal{W}d6?!\)

A significant inaccuracy that gives White the initiative. After 18...\(\mathcal{W}c7\)! 19 \(\mathcal{D}g2\) \(\mathcal{M}d8\) 20 \(\mathcal{D}c3\) g6 Black deploys his pieces ideally and stands no worse.

19 \(\mathcal{L}g2\) \(\mathcal{A}d8\)

20 h4

20...g6?! came into consideration.

21 \(\mathcal{D}c3\) g6

21...\(\mathcal{D}c7\) was possible, soundly defending the d5 pawn (in fact, it was for this that I placed my queen at d6 on move 18), but then it seemed to me that this was too passive. Indeed, after 22 \(\mathcal{D}h2\) \(\mathcal{A}c8\) 23 \(\mathcal{D}g4\) White has some initiative, but in general the reserve of solidity in Black's position is very great.

22 \(\mathcal{D}d2\)

After 22 h5, apart from the natural 22...g5, I was also intending to give serious consideration to 22...gxh5?! 23 \(\mathcal{D}d2\) h4 with a sharp game.

The threat of \(\mathcal{D}xc4\) could also have been parried by 22...\(\mathcal{W}c7\). With the move in the game I wanted to nip this idea in the bud.

23 h5?!

The logical continuation of White's plan was of course 23 f4! As our joint analysis after the game showed, in this case too Black maintains approximate equality: 23...\(\mathcal{L}g7\) 24 \(\mathcal{D}f3\) f5! 25 \(\mathcal{D}e5\) (or 25 h5 g5! 26 \(\mathcal{W}c2\) \(\mathcal{W}f8\)) 25...\(\mathcal{L}xe5?!\) 26 fxe5 (26 dxe5 \(\mathcal{W}c5\) with the idea of ...d5-d4) 26...\(\mathcal{W}d7\) followed by ...h6-h5. Now, however, Veselin loses the threat of the game, makes a serious of moves without any sensible plan, and is gradually outplayed.

23 ... g5

24 \(\mathcal{D}f1?!\) \(\mathcal{L}e7\)

25 g4?

This merely weakens White's position, as in any case my next moves would have been ...\(\mathcal{L}g7\) and ...\(\mathcal{W}d7\).

25 ... \(\mathcal{W}d7\)

26 \(\mathcal{D}g3\) \(\mathcal{D}g7\)

27 a4 \(\mathcal{A}b4\)

28 \(\mathcal{L}h3\) \(\mathcal{A}b7\)

Bringing this bishop too into the action: Black no longer has to worry about his d5 pawn.

29 \(\mathcal{W}c2\)

Practically forcing White to spoil his pawn formation, as 30 \(\mathcal{W}d1?!\) \(\mathcal{X}xg3\) 31 fxg3 \(\mathcal{D}xh5\) is completely bad, but 30 \(\mathcal{D}ce2\) \(\mathcal{L}c7\) also does not bring any relief: his
Selected games

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pieces are completely paralysed, and I have an extremely simple plan: \ldots Wd6, \ldots \text{c8}, \ldots f8 and \ldots f7-f5 with an attack.

30 \text{gxf5} \text{gxf5}
31 \text{gxh5}

Even worse was 31 Whf5 Whxh5 32 gxh5 \text{b4} 33 \text{e2} \text{g7} followed by \ldots Whf6 and \ldots \text{c8}, when the f5 pawn has not long to live.

31 ... \text{b4}

The immediate 31 ... \text{c7} 32 \text{g2} Wd6 33 Wh1 \text{e7} and \ldots Whd8 was stronger. However, I can always revert to this plan.

Generally speaking, there is no point in hurrying in such positions, especially when time trouble is imminent. For the defending side it is always difficult to remain under pressure for long, and at some point he may 'help' his opponent. That is why with this move I did everything possible to camouflage my intentions, endeavouring for as long as possible to keep Veselin in the dark. As a result he kept on defending against illusory threats, and was unable to do anything to oppose my real plan. Although it is possible that there was not in fact any defence...

32 \text{g2} Wd6
33 f3

Black was threatening 33 ... \text{xc3} 34 \text{xc3} \text{e4} followed by ... Wh4, picking up the h5 pawn.

33 ... \text{e7}
34 \text{e2} \text{de8}
35 \text{ce1}

If 35 \text{d1} Topalov rightly feared 35 ... Wf4!

35 ... Wf6
35 ... \text{xc3} 36 \text{xc3} \text{b4} 37 \text{c2} c3 looked very interesting, with good winning chances, but firstly, I was afraid that my advantage might not be sufficient for a win, and secondly, for the moment I simply did not want to give up such a strong bishop (I feared the wrath of grandmaster Gufeld).

36 \text{g4} \text{d6}

Planning the possible regrouping ... \text{c7} and ... Wd6.

37 Wd1 \text{b4}

Bad was 37 ... \text{c7}? 38 c4! dxc4 39 \text{xe4}.

38 Wc2 \text{bd8}

Creating the new threat of ... \text{c8}, and, it would seem, finally 'stretching' the opponent's defensive lines. White no longer has any satisfactory defence.

39 \text{d1} \text{c8}
40 e4

This leads by force to a bad position, but also after 40 \text{a2} \text{de8}! 41 \text{f2} Wd6 42 Wh1 it is hard to believe that White can hold on. Besides, by now it would seem that my opponent was simply tired of such a difficult and passive defence.

40 ... \text{xc3}
41 e5

Or 41 \text{xc3} dxc4 42 fxe4 \text{b7}, and the white pawns begin to fall: 43 \text{f3} g4!

41 ... \text{xe5}!
42 dxe5
Or 42 \text{xc5} \text{xd4}.
42 ... \text{xe5}

With a material advantage of two bishops and a pawn against a rook (since it is hard to perceive the piece at g4 as being anything other than a pawn), the win is achieved without particular difficulty.

43 \text{de1} \text{c7}

The most precise: White's threats on the e-file are easily parried.

44 \text{e8}+
Or 44 \textit{e}c7 \textit{d}d7 45 \textit{e}e2 \textit{g}7 and 46...\textit{d}6.

44 ... \textit{g}7
45 \textit{e}xd8 \textit{e}xd8
46 \textit{d}d1 \textit{b}7
47 \textit{f}4

Desperation, since 47 \textit{h}3 \textit{e}5 with the idea of ...\textit{f}6 dispels any White illusions.

47 ... \textit{d}4+
48 \textit{f}3 \textit{d}3

In view of the variations 49 \textit{e}xc4 \textit{b}2+ 50 \textit{g}3 \textit{xf}3 51 \textit{xf}3 \textit{e}2+ and 49 \textit{f}2 \textit{xf}5! 50 \textit{xb}7 \textit{g}4+ 51 \textit{g}3 \textit{xd}1 further resistance is pointless, and my opponent stopped the clocks.

\section*{No.157

\textbf{Kramnik--Zviagintsev

\textit{Tilburg 1998

\textit{Queen's Gambit

Into a head wind…

The course taken by this game was partly dictated by Kramnik's condition during the tournament: there was no question of him being at the top of his form. Besides, chess players know that there is such a thing as a favourable wind and a head wind: as his opponent aptly put it, 'in Tilburg, Kramnik was completely out of luck.' But nevertheless…

1 \textit{d}4 \textit{d}5
2 \textit{c}4 \textit{e}6
3 \textit{f}3 \textit{f}6
4 \textit{c}3 \textit{e}7
5 \textit{g}5 0–0
6 \textit{xc}d5 \textit{exd}5

If Black does not want to play the Carlsbad structure, he can recapture on \textit{d}5 with his knight, which gives reasonable chances of equalising.

7 \textit{e}3 \textit{c}6
8 \textit{d}3

8 \textit{e}2 \textit{bd}7 9 \textit{d}3 is simpler, transposing into familiar positions.

8 ... \textit{g}4!? An interesting try, although one that is hardly good enough to equalise.

9 \textit{e}2 \textit{h}6

Usually this is not a very good move in this set-up, but I think that my opponent did not like the position arising after 9...\textit{bd}7 10 \textit{xf}6 (10 \textit{xe}5 \textit{xe}5! 11 \textit{dx}e5 \textit{d}7 is unclear) 10...\textit{xf}6 11 \textit{xe}5 \textit{e}6 12 \textit{f}4 \textit{c}5 13 0–0 \textit{ex}d4 14 \textit{ex}d4 \textit{wb}6 15 \textit{w}f2.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics{chess-board.png}
\end{center}

10 \textit{f}4

Nothing is achieved by 10 \textit{xf}6 \textit{xf}6 11 \textit{h}3 \textit{e}6! (after 11...\textit{xf}3 12 \textit{gxf}3 I like White's position) 12 \textit{g}4?! \textit{d}7 followed by ...\textit{c}6-c5, but 10 \textit{h}3!? is interesting: 10...\textit{xf}3 11 \textit{xf}6 \textit{gx}g2 (11...\textit{xf}6 12 \textit{gxf}3, or 11...\textit{e}4 12 \textit{exe}4 \textit{xf}6 – 12...\textit{dx}e4? 13 \textit{xe}7 \textit{ex}d3 14 \textit{we}5 – 13 \textit{d}5 and White stands better) 12 \textit{h}7+ \textit{h}8 13 \textit{gx}g7+ \textit{gx}g7 14 \textit{g}1 \textit{h}8 15 \textit{gg}2 \textit{d}7, although here too Black is alright (16 0–0–0 \textit{g}6 17 \textit{f}5 \textit{wd}6 18 \textit{dd}1 \textit{gg}8).

10 ... \textit{bd}7
11 \textit{e}5

White can also consider 11 \textit{h}3!? \textit{xf}3 12 \textit{gxf}3 \textit{c}5 13 \textit{dx}c5 \textit{xc}5 with a complicated game.

11 ... \textit{xe}5
12 \textit{xe}5 \textit{d}7

During the game I was more concerned about 12...\textit{e}6!? 13 0–0 (13 \textit{h}3 \textit{dd}7 14 \textit{g}3 \textit{c}5) 13...\textit{dg}4! 14 \textit{f}4 (14 \textit{g}3 \textit{dd}6 with equality) 14...\textit{d}6, but here too after 15 \textit{h}3! \textit{xf}4 (or 15...\textit{f}6 16 \textit{xd}6 \textit{xd}6
Selected games 207

17 $\text{Ab} 1$, and White retains a minimal advantage) 16 exf4 $\text{Qf} 6$ 17 $\text{Rf} 1$ the initiative is with White, although Black’s position is very solid.

13 $\text{B x} 3$ c5?!

It is clearly not the best moment for this advance – Black’s pieces are not very harmoniously placed. 13...e8 14 0–0 Qf8 was better, deferring ...c6–c5 until better times.

14 0–0

I did not see any point in going in for the complications after 14 $\text{Q x} \text{d} 5$ cxd4 (for example, 15 $\text{C c} 7$ We8 16 Wc4??), because, firstly, the move played promises an enduring positional advantage, and secondly, I was afraid once again in this tournament of miscalculating.

14...

Or 14...$\text{e} 6$ 15 $\text{A d} 1$ cxd4 16 exd4.

15 exd4 $\text{R b} 6$

16 $\text{B b} 3$?!

Overlooking Black’s reply. After the simple 16 $\text{R f} 1$ White has an obvious advantage, e.g. 16...$\text{b} 4$ (16...$\text{d} 6$!) 17 a3 $\text{Q x} c 3$ 18 $\text{W x} c 3$ Wd7 19 $\text{b} 4$! and things are not easy for Black.

16...

a5!

17 h3

After 17 a4 $\text{h} 4$ Black gains counterplay, e.g. 18 $\text{A e} 1$ $\text{d} 7$?

17...

a4

17...e6? was significantly worse: 18 Ael! a4 19 Wd1 followed by $\text{c} 2$ and Wd3.

18 $\text{W c} 2$

18 $\text{Q x} a 4$? $\text{X x} a 4$ 19 hxg4 $\text{Q x} d 4$, and the enemy pieces suddenly become very active.

18...

$\text{d} 7$

19 a3

Having conceded space on the queenside, I thought that at some point the a4 may become weak. Within ten moves I felt like Nostradamus!

19...

$c 6$?!

Too passive. The critical line was undoubtedly 19...$\text{e} 6$ 20 $\text{e} 5$ (after 20 $\text{A d} 1$ $\text{e} 8$! it is not clear what White’s next move should be) 20...$\text{x} e 5$ 21 dx5. Now 21...Wd7 does not bring any joy in view of 22 Wc2! $\text{A e} 8$ 23 f4 f6 24 Wh5!, when 24...fc5 25 fc5 Wc5? loses to 26 Wxh8+ Wxh8 27 $\text{W f} 1$+$ W g 8$ 28 Wf7+ Wh8 29 Wh8+, but 21...d4?! 22 $\text{Q e} 4$ $\text{e} 8$ comes into consideration. If Black did not want all these complications, then all the same 19...$\text{e} 8$ would have been better than the move played.

20 $\text{A e} 1$

$d 6$

21 Wd2! $\text{W c} 7$

Also rather dangerous is 21...$\text{Q x} g 3$ 22 fgx3 $\text{Q d} 7$ (22...$\text{Q c} 8$ 23 $\text{e} 5$?!) 23 $\text{Q f} 4$! $\text{Q f} 6$ 24 $\text{Q f} 1$ with the unequivocal threat of 25 $\text{W x} f 6$ gx6 26 Wxh6.

22 $\text{A x} d 6$ Wxd6

23 $\text{e} 3$ $\text{A e} 8$

Of course, 23...Qc4? 24 $\text{Q x} c 4$ dx4 25 d5 was unsatisfactory for Black, but also 23...$\text{R f} 8$ is met by 24 $\text{R f} 1$ $\text{R x} e 3$ 25
\( \text{\textperiodcentered} \text{Wxe3!} \text{\textperiodcentered} \text{h8} \) (the white queen cannot be allowed onto the h2-b8 diagonal: 25...\text{Wf8} 26 \text{Wf4!} 26 \text{\textperiodcentered}xb5!\text{\textperiodcentered}d7 (or 26...\text{\textperiodcentered}xb5 27 \text{\textperiodcentered}xb5 with the unpleasant threat of 28 \text{\textperiodcentered}e8+) 27 \text{\textperiodcentered}d2!, and White begins to break through (27...\text{\textperiodcentered}e8? 28 \text{\textperiodcentered}b4+ \text{\textperiodcentered}g8 29 \text{\textperiodcentered}xe8+ \text{\textperiodcentered}xe8 30 \text{\textperiodcentered}c7).

24 \text{\textperiodcentered}d1!

White begins breaking up the opponent's position on the queenside, and also does not allow him advantageously to defuse the unpleasant tension on the e-file - after 25...\text{\textperiodcentered}xe3 26 \text{\textperiodcentered}xe3 followed by \text{\textperiodcentered}f5 or \text{\textperiodcentered}g4, the white knight becomes menacingly active.

24...\text{\textperiodcentered}g6?

A move that is hard to explain - at least, for a primitive player such as myself. On noticing (after lengthy reflection) that White wants to play \text{\textperiodcentered}b4, I would have preferred to retrace my steps - 25...\text{\textperiodcentered}d6.

26 \text{\textperiodcentered}b4 \text{\textperiodcentered}d7?

Vadim, fearing the worst, was clearly rattled. The only possibility of defending was 26...\text{\textperiodcentered}d8, whereas after 26...\text{\textperiodcentered}xe3 27 \text{\textperiodcentered}xe3 \text{\textperiodcentered}d8 28 \text{\textperiodcentered}g4! \text{\textperiodcentered}h5 29 \text{\textperiodcentered}e5 Black's position would have presented a quite pitiful spectacle.

27 \text{\textperiodcentered}b5!

This standard procedure (the exchange of a 'bad' bishop, but one that is defending many of its pawns) was underestimated by my opponent. Now it is no longer apparent how he can avoid loss of material.

27...\text{\textperiodcentered}xe3
28 \text{\textperiodcentered}xe3 \text{\textperiodcentered}f6

28...\text{\textperiodcentered}a7 is met by the tactical blow 29 \text{\textperiodcentered}xd5, while after 28...\text{\textperiodcentered}b6 29 \text{\textperiodcentered}g4! on top of everything Black unexpectedly also has problems with his king.

29 \text{\textperiodcentered}xa4

I have to admit that I did not expect this to happen so quickly...

29...\text{\textperiodcentered}xa4
30 \text{\textperiodcentered}xa4 \text{\textperiodcentered}e8
31 \text{\textperiodcentered}d1

Since all endings are now easily won, White's plan is clear - to exchange all the pieces.

31...\text{\textperiodcentered}e4
32 \text{\textperiodcentered}g4 \text{\textperiodcentered}xg4
33 \text{\textperiodcentered}hxg4 \text{\textperiodcentered}g4

This does not change much, but from the practical viewpoint it is the correct decision - in the queen ending there are no chances.

34 \text{\textperiodcentered}g3 \text{\textperiodcentered}f6
35 \text{\textperiodcentered}b3?

Careless. After 35 \text{\textperiodcentered}e5 \text{\textperiodcentered}d6 36 \text{\textperiodcentered}e2 even my technique would have been good enough to win.

35...\text{\textperiodcentered}c8?
36 \text{\textperiodcentered}d1 (36 \text{\textperiodcentered}xd5? \text{\textperiodcentered}c2! - a move which neither of us saw) 36...\text{\textperiodcentered}c6
would have made it more difficult to convert the extra pawn, although with correct play by White (about the likelihood of which, however, I have serious doubts) it was unlikely to affect the result.

36 \( Wxb7 \) \( b6 \)
37 \( \text{xe}8+ \) \( \text{xe}8 \)
38 \( Wxb6 \) \( \text{e}1+ \)
39 \( \text{g}2 \) \( \text{e}4+ \)
40 \( \text{h}2 \) \( \text{g}7 \)
41 \( \text{c}7! \)

Now after 41...\( Wxd4 \) there follows 42 \( Wc3 \), while if 41...\( W2e2 \) 42 \( \text{e}5+ \), or 41...\( Wf3 \) 42 \( \text{f}4 \). Black resigns. This game, which was certainly not of very high quality, was my best achievement in this tournament.

No. 158
Kramnik–Yusupov
Dortmund 1998
Queen’s Gambit

The first thing is chess

On this occasion the spectators at the traditional tournament had their attention divided: the football World Cup was in progress, and in the Opera Hall where the players were playing, a number of television monitors had been set up. Now and then the participants would also take a look at the play of their ‘rivals’. Just occasionally.

‘I arrived in Dortmund feeling rather tired after my match with Shirov. In addition, before the tournament I was slightly unwell, and I did not have the feeling that I was in my best form. Jumping ahead, I should mention that the tournament confirmed this. Nevertheless I managed to take first place on the tie-break. I say managed, because I enjoyed a definite dose of good fortune.

‘I should mention the game with Yusupov: very tense and interesting, where we both played fairly well.’ (Kramnik)
Weaker is 16...\(\texttt{d}f6?!\) 17 e4 (17 \(\texttt{d}xd5!? \texttt{d}xd5\) 18 e4) 17...d4 18 e5 with the initiative.

17 a4!

Creating the potential threat of a4-a5, and also vacating a2 for the bishop. 17 \(\texttt{w}c2\) g6 18 \(\texttt{d}xd5!?\) was possible, but after both 18...\(\texttt{x}xd5\) 19 e4 \(\texttt{x}xe4\) 20 \(\texttt{w}xe4\) \(\texttt{w}c7\) and 18...\(\texttt{d}xd5!?\) 19 e4 \(\texttt{b}b4\) 20 \(\texttt{x}xd8\) \(\texttt{x}xc2\) Black has good chances of defending.

17 ... \(\texttt{f}6\)

After 17...a5 18 \(\texttt{c}c2\) g6 19 \(\texttt{a}a2\) White's pressure becomes threatening (19...\(\texttt{f}6\) 20 e4?!).

18 \(\texttt{c}c2\)

As my likeable opponent admitted after the game, here the thought occurred to him that he had probably not played the opening very well, if already on the 18th move he had to parry a threat of mate in one move.

18 ... g6

More vigorous than 19 \(\texttt{a}a2\) \(\texttt{x}xc3\) 20 \(\texttt{w}xc3\) \(\texttt{e}xa4\) (20...c4 21 a5 \(\texttt{d}d7\) 22 b3) 21 \(\texttt{w}c2\) \(\texttt{b}b6\) 22 \(\texttt{w}xc5\), although this too gives White a clear advantage. But now after the natural 19...\(\texttt{x}xc3\) I had in mind the following variations: 20 \(\texttt{w}xc3!\) \(\texttt{c}c4\) (20...\(\texttt{d}d7\) 21 \(\texttt{a}a2\) c4 22 b3 or 22 e4?) 21 e4! (21 \(\texttt{a}a2\) \(\texttt{w}xa5\) 22 \(\texttt{w}xa5\) \(\texttt{e}xa5\) 23 \(\texttt{x}xd5\) is hardly good enough for a win) 21...\(\texttt{x}xa5\) 22 \(\texttt{w}c1!!\) \(\texttt{g}g7\) (22...\(\texttt{d}xe4\)? loses to 23 \(\texttt{w}xh6\) with the threat of \(\texttt{g}g5\), e.g.

23...\(\texttt{exf3}\) 24 \(\texttt{h}g6\) \(\texttt{f}xg6\) 25 \(\texttt{w}xg6+\) \(\texttt{h}h8\) 26 \(\texttt{d}d7\) 23 \(\texttt{exd5}\) with a very dangerous initiative. And although I saw that after

19 ... \(\texttt{c}c4\)

I could transpose into this variation by 20 e4! \(\texttt{x}c3\) (20...d4 21 \(\texttt{a}a4\); 20...\(\texttt{w}xa5\) 21 \(\texttt{d}xd5\) \(\texttt{j}xd5\) 22 \(\texttt{d}xd5\) 21 \(\texttt{w}xc3\), I was nevertheless tempted by

20 \(\texttt{d}xd5\)

although to be honest, I somewhat overestimated my chances in the position arising after the 24th move.

20 ... \(\texttt{c}c4\)

Or 20...\(\texttt{x}xd5\) 21 e4.

21 \(\texttt{g}xf6+\) \(\texttt{w}xf6\)

22 \(\texttt{d}d2\) \(\texttt{x}f3\)

23 \(\texttt{gxf3}\)

White's advantage is too insignificant after 23 \(\texttt{w}xb2\) \(\texttt{w}xb2\) 24 \(\texttt{w}xb2\) \(\texttt{d}d5\) 25 \(\texttt{c}c1\).

23 ... \(\texttt{w}ab8\)

Of course, not 23...c4?? 24 \(\texttt{w}xb2\) c3 25 \(\texttt{w}a1!\) But now, surprisingly enough, White is unable to gain any significant advantage after 24 \(\texttt{w}xc5\) \(\texttt{h}b5!\) (24...\(\texttt{w}xf3\) 25 \(\texttt{d}d4\)) 25 \(\texttt{d}d4\) (25 \(\texttt{w}c7\) \(\texttt{w}f3\) with the threat of ...\(\texttt{h}h5\)) 25...\(\texttt{d}xd4\) 26 \(\texttt{w}xd4\) \(\texttt{w}xa5\), and although after 27 \(\texttt{e}e4\) Black still has to work for the draw, this did not satisfy me.

24 f4 c4

25 e4

The advance of the pawns looks very threatening, but with a series of precise moves my opponent consolidates his position.
Selected games

21 1

Black needs to exchange a pair of rooks.

27 28

Centralisation in the given position is more important than winning a pawn (28...\texttt{Wxa5} 29 \texttt{f5} or 29 \texttt{e6}?).

29 29 \texttt{f5}! \texttt{cxd3} 30 \texttt{fxg6} fxg6 31 e6 came into consideration.

29 30 \texttt{c2}?! After failing to find any advantageous forcing line, I decided for the moment simply to make a strengthening move, maintaining the tension. White achieves nothing with either 30 \texttt{b1} \texttt{b2}! 31 \texttt{exf7+ \texttt{g7}}! (31...\texttt{xf7}! 32 \texttt{xd3} cxd3 33 \texttt{xd3} or 32...\texttt{xe2} 33 \texttt{xd3} \texttt{xd3} 32 \texttt{xd3} or 30 \texttt{exf7+ \texttt{xf7} 31 \texttt{f5}?! \texttt{gx5} 32 \texttt{wh5+ \texttt{g7}} 33 \texttt{xf5} \texttt{f8}, but interesting was 30 \texttt{a2}?! \texttt{b2} 31 \texttt{we3} \texttt{xe3} 32 \texttt{fxe3}! (with the idea of 32...\texttt{xa2}? 33 \texttt{e7}; during the game I overlooked this resource) 32...\texttt{fxe6} (32...\texttt{c3}?! 33 \texttt{c7} \texttt{b8} 34 \texttt{c4} 33 \texttt{xe4} \texttt{c5}, when Black’s defences should hold.

30 30 \texttt{fxe6}\) 30...\texttt{e8} was a sensible alternative, although it too does not solve all Black’s problems: after 31 \texttt{exf7+ \texttt{xf7} 32 \texttt{f3} White retains the initiative, since 32...\texttt{e1}? fails to 33 \texttt{b7+ \texttt{e7} 34 \texttt{xe6+ \texttt{f6} 35 \texttt{xa6+ \texttt{e6} 36 \texttt{b5}! 31 \texttt{we6+ \texttt{g7}})

32 32 \texttt{a4}!

Although short of time, I manage to find a resource that maintains the initiative. The bishop as though ‘side-steps’ the powerful knight at d3 and intends to come into play from e8 or via c6 and e4. It also sets a trap, into which Yusupov, also in time trouble, falls. I should mention that after 32 \texttt{xa6}?! \texttt{b2} 33 \texttt{xd3} cxd3 Black gains a draw without difficulty.

32 32 ... \texttt{c3}?

A vexing mistake after Black’s long and tenacious defence. At this point each player had only a little more than three minutes left on his clock, which is of course clearly insufficient for such a complicated position. I will give a rough analysis of this position, the greater part of which was done without a board during the players’ meal together after the game:

(a) 32...\texttt{b1}? loses, as after 33 \texttt{xb1} \texttt{xf2+} 34 \texttt{h1} \texttt{f3+} 35 \texttt{h2} \texttt{f2+} 36 \texttt{f1} \texttt{xf4+} 37 \texttt{xf4} \texttt{f3+} 38 \texttt{h2} \texttt{f2+} 39 \texttt{h1} \texttt{f3+} 40 \texttt{g1} \texttt{g3+} 41 \texttt{f1} the white king finally escapes from the checks;

(b) 32...\texttt{xf2}? is little better: 33 \texttt{xf2} \texttt{a1}+ (33...\texttt{b2} 34 \texttt{e5}+) 34 \texttt{g2} \texttt{xa4} 35 \texttt{we5+} and the rook at b8 is lost;

(c) 32...\texttt{b2}?! also does not solve all Black’s problems: 33 \texttt{we7+ \texttt{h8}} (33...\texttt{g8} 34 \texttt{d7}, threatening mate in three moves) 34 \texttt{f8+ \texttt{h7} 35 \texttt{f5}! with advantage to White;

(d) 32...\texttt{f8}! 33 \texttt{e8} \texttt{f6} (after 33...\texttt{f6}? 34 \texttt{e7+ \texttt{g8} White has the very strong 35 \texttt{e6}!!, creating two threats: 36 \texttt{d5} and 36 \texttt{b1}) 34 \texttt{xc4 \texttt{xf2} (34...\texttt{xf4 35 \texttt{d7} with advantage to White in view of the weakness of the a6 pawn) 35 \texttt{d7} \texttt{d6} (35...\texttt{d8} 36 \texttt{e8}?) 36 \texttt{xf2} (36 \texttt{c8}?) 36...\texttt{xd7} 37 \texttt{xa6}, and although the most probable outcome is a draw, White retains winning chances.

Thus, despite Black’s powerful centralisation, he would still have had problems after the strongest move 32...\texttt{f8}. 33 \texttt{c2}!
This ‘strange’ retreat by the bishop was overlooked by my opponent. Now the pin on the knight is decisive. Unfortunately for Black, he cannot play ...c3-c4, as pawns, in contrast to bishops, are unable to move backwards.

33 ... 
33...d8 34 wxa6 would also have offered Black no chances.

34 w7+ g8

Finally driving the knight from d3, after which loss of material is inevitable.

35 ... 
36 gxf4 
37 d1
Black resigns

Completely Battles

No.159
Lautier–Kramnik
Interzonal Tournament, Biel 1993
Pirc-Ufimtsev Defence

On unfamiliar territory...

‘This was already our eleventh encounter (not counting one in “active” chess), and the seventh time I had played Black. In the six preceding games my opponent had invariably opened 1 c4, to which I had replied in the most various ways, even on one occasion 1 c4 e5 2 d3 d6 3 w3 f3 c6 4 g3 g5!? ’ (Kramnik)

1 e4!?  
‘Clearly expecting 1...c5 2 c3, since Joel sometimes plays this,’ I reasoned, and after thinking for some five minutes, I replied:

1 ... d6

which plunged the Frenchman into a ten-minute think.

2 d4 f6  
3 d3 e5

Our knowledge of this opening was, to put it mildly, not very profound. I had not played 1...d6 for two or three years, while my opponent, I suspect, had never played these positions at all (he plays 1 e4 ‘once in a blue moon’). This made the game all the more interesting.

4 f3 exd4  
5 d4 xd4 g6

We had played this all so ‘creatively’, that when I went for a stroll after my fifth move the Dutch grandmaster Jeroen Piket came up to me and asked: ‘From what opening did you reach your position?’ I was unable to give him a reply.

6 c3 g7  
7 g5
Activity in Lautier’s style. The quiet 7 0-0 0-0 8 c1 c6 9 a4 d7 would not have caused Black any problems.

7 ... h6  
8 h4 c6!?
Black voluntarily goes in for the doubling of his pawns, for which he gains play on the b-file. 8...c6 would have led to a normal position with chances for both sides.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{9 } \text{c}\text{c}6 \\
\text{bxc6}
\end{array}
\]

Against 10 f4?! I had prepared a rejoinder typical of the Sicilian Defence: 10...g5! 11 fxg5 \text{c}\text{c}4 12 \text{d}d2 \text{g}8! followed by ...\text{h}xg5, and Black firmly seizes the very important c5 square.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{10 } \ldots \text{g}5! \\
\text{Fighting for the initiative.}
\end{array}
\]

11 \text{g}3 \text{g}4
12 \text{h}3 \text{e}5
13 \text{e}2

Again an unusual and interesting idea 'à la Lautier'. The point is that he likes to hold the initiative, and for such a pleasure he usually does not begrudge his pawns. The move 13 \text{e}2?! is more understandable, for the fact that otherwise Black plays ...\text{g}6. ...\text{e}6 and ...\text{h}6-h5, when he himself gains the initiative.

13 \ldots \text{xd}3

Whereas I rarely decline an opportunity to take such a pawn.

14 \text{d}3

Of course, not 14 \text{cxd}3? \text{xb}2 15 \text{b}1 \text{g}7 16 f4 0–0, when the compensation for the pawn is clearly insufficient.

14 \ldots \text{xb}2
15 \text{ad}1! \text{g}7
16 e5 0–0

The time for Black to pay his debts has arrived quickly. He can no longer hold onto the – 16...d5? 17 \text{d}4 \text{d}7 18 e6!

\[
\begin{array}{c}
17 \text{exd}6?! \\
\text{Deviating in mid-course. The continuation of the offensive – 17 f4! \text{e}8 (17...\text{gxf}4 18 \text{xf}4 followed by \text{g}3 with an attack) 18 \text{f}3 (18 \text{f}5? \text{xf}5 with advantage) 18...\text{f}7 19 \text{d}4! \text{d}5 20 \text{f}5 (20 \text{c}6 \text{c}5+ 21 \text{f}2 \text{e}4!) 20...\text{e}6 21 \text{xc}6 would have led to completely unclear consequences. Now, however, the initiative passes to Black.}
\end{array}
\]

17 \ldots \text{cxd}6
18 \text{xd}6 \text{e}8
19 \text{c}4 \text{f}6!
20 \text{g}3 \text{g}6
21 \text{b}3

And this is simply going too far. It was time for White to 'climb down': 21 \text{xg}6 \text{xf}6 22 c5 \text{e}6 23 a3 with good drawing chances.

21 \ldots \text{e}6
22 \text{a}4 \text{h}5!

Black launches an attack that was clearly underestimated by my opponent, and his position begins to deteriorate rapidly.

23 \text{f}3?

Still in an optimistic frame of mind, the French grandmaster misses the time to take emergency measures, e.g. 23 f3 (preparing \text{e}4), although even here after 23...f5! Black's initiative is quite dangerous.

23 \ldots \text{h}4
After the game Joel expressed his surprise: how was it that Black’s attack became so dangerous? But it is no wonder at all, since the white bishop at d6 is very nicely placed, but it is merely playing the role of a spectator, while also coming under attack by the enemy pieces (as will be seen from the further events).

24 hxg4 hxg4

The only resource that enables White to hold on. 26 hxg4+ hxg4 27 fxe6!? (27...hxg4 is also good) 28 d2 c6! would have revealed the lack of coordination of the white pieces and the strength of the black bishops, which control literally the entire board (the white rook does not even have the d5 square – 29 f3).

26 ... B6d8!

It would have been cowardly for Black to satisfy himself with winning the exchange: 26 Bxc8 27 Bd5 Bxd1 28 Bxd1, and of his attack not a trace remains, whereas the bishop at d6, by contrast, unexpectedly becomes very strong (in view of a subsequent c4-c5). 27 f3 Bb8 28 Be4 f5 29 f4 h6 30 Be5

For the third successive move the white queen finds the only square. If 30 Bh2 Bxc4 31 Be3 there would have followed the prosaic 31...Bxe3+ 32 Bxe3 Bc6, after which the luckless bishop can no longer be saved.

25 f3 Axe8
26 Bh4 c6!

Not fearing ghosts such as 33 Bc8+ Bf7 34 Bd8 – since, despite the threatening placing of his heavy pieces, White – in contrast to Black – is not ‘in danger’ of mating his opponent.

30 Bf3 Bxc4 31 Bc3 Bxd1
32 Bxd1 Bg7!

Beginning a series of terrible moves, which in the end throw away the win. In my justification I can say that I was in time trouble, whereas Joel was only on the threshold of it. After the move 33...h3, as unpretentious as a one hundred-rouble note, White’s position cannot be saved, since if 34 Be3 there follows 34...Bxd4!, and it is all over. And if 34 g3, even the simple 34...Bc6 is good enough, ‘with numerous threats’, as they write in such cases.

34 Bf3 h3
35 g4 Bxd2
36 Bxd2 Bc8 was better, maintaining the tension.

36 Bxd2 Bc6
37 Be4 Bf5?

‘The madness of daring...’ With few pieces on the board and only seconds on his clock, Black launches a violent attack.
Meanwhile the positional 37...\(\text{\textit{h}}\text{h}6\) would have left him with minimal chances of success.

```
38 \text{\textit{g}}5 \text{\textit{d}}5
39 \text{\textit{x}}xh3
```

Now trying to play as solidly as possible, although simpler was 39 \(\text{\textit{w}}\text{d}3\), when a draw is inevitable.

```
39 \ldots fxg4
40 fxg4 \text{\textit{d}}4+
```

With the amusing idea after 41 \(\text{\textit{h}}\text{h}2\) of announcing 41...\(\text{\textit{w}}\text{d}6\) mate! ‘But I did not notice the bishop...’ However, the result of the game would not have been changed by 40...\(\text{\textit{w}}\text{b}6+\) 41 \(\text{\textit{f}}\text{f}2!\) \(\text{\textit{w}}\text{b}1+\) 42 \(\text{\textit{h}}\text{h}2\) (42...\(\text{\textit{w}}\text{b}8+\) 43 \(\text{\textit{h}}\text{h}3\)).

```
41 \text{\textit{h}}h2
```

Regaining our breath after the time scramble, we both simultaneously realised that for the first time in this entire far from faultless game, the position on the board was completely equal. And so:

```
41 \ldots \text{\textit{e}}6
```

\text{\textbf{Draw agreed}}

No. 160
\textbf{Kramnik–Kasparov}
\textbf{Linares 1994}
\textbf{King’s Indian Defence}

\textbf{Deceptive Madame Theory}

‘We played a variation that was fashionable in the sixties and seventies. It used to be thought that White gains the more pleasant position, but after this game I formed a different opinion. Basically White’s only achievement is the weakening of the f5 square, but with correct play by Black a white knight is unlikely to reach there.

‘Meanwhile, Black has his trumps: strong dark-square bishop and superior pawn structure, so that he has no particular opening problems. It was no accident that in my next game with Kasparov two months later (a rapidplay encounter in Moscow) I played 8 \(\text{\textit{e}}3\).’ \textbf{(Kramnik)}

```
1 \text{\textit{\textsc{f}}}3 \text{\textit{f}}6 2 c4 g6 3 \text{\textit{c}}c3 \text{\textit{g}}7 4 e4 d6 5 d4 0–0 6 \text{\textit{d}}d2 \text{\textit{e}}5 7 d5 \text{\textit{d}}d7 8 \text{\textit{g}}g5 \text{\textit{h}}6 9 \text{\textit{h}}h4 g5 10 \text{\textit{g}}g3 \text{\textit{h}}5 11 h4 g4 12 \text{\textit{h}}h2 \text{\textit{x}}xg3 13 fxg3 h5 14 0–0 f5
```

15 \text{\textit{\textsc{x}}}f5

15 \text{\textit{\textsc{x}}}f5!? is interesting.

```
15 \ldots \text{\textit{c}}5
16 b4
```

Here 16 \(\text{\textit{d}}\text{d}3\) was the alternative.

```
16 \ldots e4
17 \text{\textit{c}}c1
```

And here 17 \(\text{\textit{d}}\text{d}2\) was possible.

```
17 \ldots \text{\textit{d}}d3
18 \text{\textit{\textsc{x}}}d3 exd3
19 \text{\textit{f}}6!
```

Caution is already necessary: 19 \(\text{\textit{\textsc{x}}}d3?\) \(\text{\textit{f}}6\) would have given Black the advantage.

```
19 \ldots \text{\textit{\textsc{x}}}f6
20 \text{\textit{\textsc{x}}}d3 \text{\textit{f}}8
```
21 \( \text{b5}! \)

Intending a highly risky exchange sacrifice, which Black cannot decline without making serious positional concessions. The quiet alternative does not promise White any advantage: 21 \( \text{e4} \text{xf1} + 22 \text{xf1} \) (or 22 \( \text{xf1} \text{xf5} \), and it will be a long time before the knight comes into play) 22...\( \text{xf5} \) 23 \( \text{e3} \text{xe4} \) (the waiting move 23...\( \text{g6} \) leads to difficulties after 24 \( \text{xf1} \text{e7} 25 \text{xf5} \) 24 \( \text{xe4} \text{e8} 25 \text{d3} \text{e7} \) and Black has good counterplay. Here 25...\( \text{h6} \) is less good in view of 26 \( \text{e1} \) (or 26 \( \text{g6} \)) 26...\( \text{g7} 27 \text{h2} \).

21...\( \text{xf5} \)

22 \( \text{xf5} \text{xf5} \)

23 \( \text{e4} \text{xe7} \text{c8} \)

24 \( \text{e6} \)

White has quite good compensation.

24...\( \text{xf6} \)

25 \( \text{xf1} \)

It is time to liberate the incarcerated knight: if 25 \( \text{f1} \) Black has the brilliant rejoinder 25...\( \text{h6}!! \) 26 \( \text{xf8} \) (the Greek gift cannot be declined: 26 \( \text{xf4} \text{h6}! \) 26...\( \text{d4} + 27 \text{xd4} \text{xd4} + 28 \text{h1} \text{xf8} \), and despite White’s two extra pawns, without his king the ending is unpromising for him. An unclear position arises after 25 c5?!

25...\( \text{e5} \)

26 \( \text{d1}! \)

An important prophylactic move. Bad is 26 \( \text{d2} \text{f5} 27 \text{xf5} \text{xf5} \), when the pawn pair c4-d5 is rather weak, as illustrated by 28 \( \text{e4}? \text{xd5} \). And the immediate 26 c5 runs into a counter-exchange sacrifice: 26...\( \text{xe6} \) (here it is unfavourable to exchange queens, as after 26...\( \text{xf5} 27 \text{xf5} \text{xf5} \) White has time to play 28 \( \text{d1} \) 27 \( \text{dxe6} \text{d4} + 28 \text{xd4} \text{xd4} + 29 \text{h2} \text{dxc5} \), and the white king is again out of play.

26...\( \text{xf5}! \)

Black too must not delay. After 26...\( \text{h6} \) I could now have advanced my c-pawn: 27 c5 \( \text{dxc5} 28 \text{bxc5} \text{e8} 29 \text{d2}! \text{e3} 30 \text{b5} \text{e7} 31 \text{f1} \text{e5} 32 \text{b1} \), and the queen’s threatened invasion secures White the advantage. 31...\( \text{g6} \) would appear to be stronger.

27 \( \text{xf5} \text{xf5} \)

28 c5 \( \text{f8} \)

Weaker is 28...\( \text{e5} \), when White gains an enduring advantage after 29 \( \text{e3} \text{f7} 30 \text{h2} \), while 28...\( \text{dxc5} \) loses immediately to 29 d6.

29 \( \text{e3} \text{f6} \)

30 \( \text{c4} \text{dxc5} \)

31 \( \text{b5} \)

This pawn sacrifice was part of White’s plan, since 31 \( \text{e5} \text{xb4} 32 \text{d7} \text{f5} 33 \text{dxg8} \text{cxf8} 34 \text{e8} \text{xf8} \) was unacceptable.

31...\( \text{h6}? \)

Here Kasparov should have prepared a counter exchange sacrifice – 31...\( \text{e8} \), when 32 a4? \( \text{xe6} 33 \text{dxe6} \text{xe6} \) is bad for White. He is forced to retreat 32 \( \text{f4} \), with the following branches:
(a) 32...\(\texttt{xe}4\) 33 \(\texttt{d}6\) and now:

(a1) 33...\(\texttt{xc}4\) 34 \(\texttt{d}7\) \(\texttt{e}7\) 35 \(\texttt{xd}5\) \(\texttt{d}8\) 36 \(\texttt{xf}6\) \(\texttt{xf}6\) 37 \(\texttt{d}8\) \(\texttt{w}+\) \(\texttt{xd}8\) 38 \(\texttt{xd}8\) \(\texttt{f}7\) 39 \(\texttt{d}7\) \(\texttt{e}6\) (39...\(\texttt{fx}6\)?) 40 \(\texttt{xb}7\) \(\texttt{xa}4\) 41 \(\texttt{h}7\) \(\texttt{xa}2\) 42 \(\texttt{h}5\) with the advantage:

(a2) 33...\(\texttt{xf}4!\) 34 \(\texttt{gxf}4\) \(\texttt{xc}4\) 35 \(\texttt{d}7\) \(\texttt{e}7\) 36 \(\texttt{d}8\) \(\texttt{w}+\) \(\texttt{xd}8\) 37 \(\texttt{a}5\) \(\texttt{f}7\) 38 \(\texttt{h}5\) (but not 38 \(\texttt{d}7\) \(\texttt{e}6\) 39 \(\texttt{xd}7\) g3!, and the roles are suddenly reversed) 38...\(\texttt{xf}4\) 39 \(\texttt{d}7\) \(\texttt{e}6\) 40 \(\texttt{xb}7\) \(\texttt{a}4\) 41 \(\texttt{h}7\) \(\texttt{xa}2\) 42 \(\texttt{h}5\) with an equal ending;

(b) 32...\(\texttt{d}6\)!!? 33 \(\texttt{d}5\) \(\texttt{h}6\) 34 \(\texttt{f}4\) (things are more complicated after 34 \(\texttt{f}1\)?) \(\texttt{h}5\) 35 \(\texttt{c}5\) \(\texttt{e}5\) 36 \(\texttt{d}4\) \(\texttt{d}5\) 37 \(\texttt{xg}4\) \(\texttt{f}8\) 38 \(\texttt{xb}7\) \(\texttt{d}4\), when Black's pawn may cause his opponent considerable anxiety).

If I wished, I could have gone in for a repetition of moves: 32 \(\texttt{e}1\) \(\texttt{f}5\) 33 \(\texttt{d}1\) (33 \(\texttt{d}6\) \(\texttt{d}5\)) 33...\(\texttt{f}6\), but here 33...\(\texttt{b}6\) is unclear.

32 \(\texttt{e}1\)

A move that kills two birds with one stone: control is taken of the e3 square, and the rook plans to move to e5 (32...\(\texttt{f}5\)? 33 \(\texttt{d}6\)), attacking the kingside pawns.

32 ... \(\texttt{e}8\)

33 \(\texttt{e}5\)

Not the only way – also good was 33 \(\texttt{h}2\) (threatening 34 \(\texttt{d}6\)) 33...\(\texttt{f}8\) 34 \(\texttt{e}5\) \(\texttt{h}6\) 35 \(\texttt{g}5\)+, and after the white knight goes to e5 Black has problems.

33 ... \(\texttt{e}7\)

34 \(\texttt{h}5\) \(\texttt{e}7\)

35 \(\texttt{h}2\) \(\texttt{c}1\)

36 \(\texttt{e}5\)

But not 36 \(\texttt{c}5\) \(\texttt{f}5\)!

36 ... \(\texttt{f}1\)

37 \(\texttt{e}4\) \(\texttt{d}1\)

38 \(\texttt{xg}4\) \(\texttt{h}7\)!

A blunder, after which Black loses quickly. In fact he was obliged to move his king into the corner – 38...\(\texttt{h}8\), after which 39 \(\texttt{e}4\) \(\texttt{xd}5\) (39...\(\texttt{ff}1\) 40 \(\texttt{h}3\) \(\texttt{xd}5\) would have changed little) 40 \(\texttt{e}5\)! \(\texttt{f}6\) 41 \(\texttt{f}3\) was possible, followed by the advance of the g-pawn. White's chances are much better, although Black's counterplay associated with his strong passed c-pawn also cannot be underestimated, so that in principle any of three results is still possible.

39 \(\texttt{c}5\) \(\texttt{e}7\)

39...\(\texttt{ff}1\) 40 \(\texttt{g}7\)+.

40 \(\texttt{f}8\)+

Black resigns – after 40...\(\texttt{h}6\) 41 \(\texttt{g}6+\) \(\texttt{h}5\) 42 \(\texttt{g}4+\) \(\texttt{h}4\) 43 \(\texttt{g}3\) he is mated.

No.161
Shirov–Kramnik
Novgorod 1994
Sicilian Defence

Contrary to the axiom...

Once upon a time, novice players, not yet familiar with the castling rule, used to bring their rooks into play by advancing their a- and h-pawns. In this game Kramnik did exactly that, violating the textbook axiom about evacuating the king from the centre. But this chess canvas differs, in the same way that pictures by the great primitivism artist Pirosmani differ from drawings by children, whose depiction of people in houses is also in a flat plane...

1 \(\texttt{e}4\) \(\texttt{c}5\)
2 \(\texttt{f}3\) \(\texttt{d}6\)
3 \(\texttt{b}5\) \(\texttt{g}6\)
The immediate 18...\#h7 also came into consideration.

19  \$f1  \$c4
20  \$xd7  \$xd7

After the exchange of queens (20...\$xe2 21 \$xd8+ \$xd8 22 \$xd4!) it would have been easier for White to maintain the balance.

21  \$d2

21 \$e1 is dangerous – 21...g4 22 h4 \$f3+! 23 gxf3 gxf3, and Black`s attack is very strong: 24 \$f4 \$h3 25 \$xe3 \$g8+ 26 \$g3 \$c5 27 \$d2 \$xg3+ 28 fxg3 \$g3+ 29 \$h1 f2, and White`s extra rook does not protect him against mate.

The attempt to gain a tempo – 22 \$d1 does not greatly change matters: 22...\$d3! 23 h4 \$f3+ 24 gxf3 gxf3 25 \$d4 (25 \$f4 \$g4+ 26 \$g3 \$xc2) 25...\$h3 26 \$xf3 \$xf1 27 \$xf1 \$xf3, with a strong attack.

22  \$c3

The b6 pawn is taboo: 22 \$xb6? \$xf1, winning a piece.

22...\$xe4

23  \$g3

White also sharpens the position. After 23 \$xb6 g4 24 h4 \$d3 25 \$xd3 \$xd3 26 \$e1 a4 Black has a stable advantage in the endgame.

23...\$d5

By retaining his extra pawn – 23...\$xc2 24 \$xc2 c5 25 \$d1 \$e6, Black would have allowed his opponent good drawing chances.

24  \$xb6  h4
25  \$e2  g4
26  \$f4  \$e4

26...\$g8 looked quieter, and after 27 \$xd5 cxd5 28 hxg4 \$xg4 29 \$e3 Black can, for example, force a draw – 29...d4 30 \$xg4 dxc3 31 \$xe5 exb2 32 \$b1 fxe5 33 \$xb2 \$xa3 (since 29...\$e6 is extremely absurd in view of 30 \$b3 or even 30 \$xa5), but in a superior, although sharp position one does not think about such a result. Even with only about five minutes on the clock! In the end I managed to outcalculate Shirov, who had some forty minutes remaining...

27  \$e1!  \$f5
28  \$e6

Here White could have forced a ‘universal disarmament’ – 28 \$d4 \$xf4 29 \$e6 \$f3+ 30 gxf3 \$xf3 31 \$xf3 \$xf3 32 \$d4 \$f7 33 \$xf3 gxf3 34 \$xa5, and neither side any longer has the means to win. Now it is as though the black pieces in the centre acquire additional energy.

28...\$g8
29  \$d4

Little would have been changed by 29 \$c7+ \$f8 30 \$d4 \$f3+!
This sets White, like the famous Russian folklore hero, a choice of three roads. And, as often happens, only one of them leads to salvation. Shirov had apparently begun playing on my time deficit (I had only about two minutes left!), and he took the most ruinous path.

30 $\text{Qe1}?$

White could still have defended himself with 30 $\text{wxg3!} \text{gxf3} 31 \text{Qxf5 Qxf5} 32 \text{Qd4! Qxg2+} 33 \text{Qh1 Qd7} 34 \text{Qc5 Qg7} 35 \text{Qxf3} (chasing after material – 35 \text{Qxe7} \text{Qxe7} 36 \text{Qxe7+} \text{Qxe7} 37 \text{Qh2 Qd6} 38 \text{Qxf3 Qd5} 39 \text{Qxh4 Qc4 leaves White on the verge of defeat) 35...Qxh3 36 Qxh4 Qd7, and after the exchanges on e7 the draw is obvious.}

However, the other king move – 30 \text{Qh1?} would also have lost: 30...\text{Qxd4} 31 \text{Qxd4 Qg2+} 32 \text{Qh2} \text{Qxg2} 33 \text{Qf1} (33 \text{Qh2? g3+) 33...gxh3, and in view of the threats of ...Qg1+ and ...h3-h2 White is not saved even by the numerous checks available to him, or by other possibilities, for example:

(a) 34 Qe4 Qxe4 35 Qxe4 f5! 36 Qe3 h2;
(b) 34 Qf4 Wh1+! 35 Qe2 Wh1+ 36 Qxe1 h2 37 Qe4 Qg1+;
(c) 34 Qd8+ Qxd8 35 Qg5+ Qd7 36 Qxf3 Qxb6 37 Qe4 Qg2;
(d) 34 Qg5 Qg2+ 35 Qe2 Qxg5;
(e) 34 Qg7+ is the most interesting, with the idea if 34...Qxg7 of playing 35 Qd8+, but – 34...Qf8! Now if 35 Qe6+ there follows 35...Qf7, or 35 Qh4 Qxg7 36 Qh8+ Qg8 37 Qh6+ Qe8 38 Qxc7+ Qxe7 39 Qh7+ Qd6 40 Qc7+ (the rook is immune in view of mate at d1) 40...Qc5 41 Wh7+ Qb5 42 a4+ Qa6 and the pursuit of the king concludes, while 35 Qc5 is met by the cool 35...h2! 36 Qxe7+ Qxg7 37 Qxf6+ Qg6.

30...Qd3+ 31 Qe2 Qxe2+ 32 Qxe2 Qe4+ 33 Qe3 Qxd4+ 34 Qxd4 Qxe3+ 35 Qxe3 Qxh3 36 Qxh3 Qg5!? 37 Qxc6 Qc5+ 38 Qxc5 Qxc5 39 Qd4 a4 40 Qd3 Qc1!

Black has successfully reached the time control, helped by a lengthy series of moves with checks and captures. Since if 41 Qf3 or 41 Qf5 there follows 41...Qh1, and the h4 pawn is retained, whereas the h3 pawn is lost, White resigned.

At this point things were not going well for the Russian team. Their leader Garry Kasparov was finding it hard to get into his stride, and problems suddenly flared up on the other boards, where the Russian grandmasters were clearly superior in class to their opponents. Only Vladimir Kramnik was setting a victorious pace. He won four games in a row (including Nos.43 and 44), then... was indisposed, missed two rounds, and... then played perhaps his best game at the Olympiad. The intuitive sacrifice of two pawns provoked doubts even among his fellow team members, to say nothing of the spectators. But...
An idea of the former USSR Champion Mikhail Gurevich, now a Belgian grandmaster. Even so, the main theoretical continuation 11...bxc6 seems to me to be more promising.

12 ♕b3

Probably 12 b5 also retains for White a slight advantage.

12 ... ♗e4!?

After 12...♗h8 13 ♗b2 White has an obvious advantage.

13 ♗b2

Slightly careless. Had Malaniuk foreseen White's 15th move, he would have achieved his aim by 13...♕xc3 14 ♕xc3 ♕xc3 15 ♕xc3.

14 ♕xc3 ♕xc3

15 c5+?!

White would not have had this possibility if Black had taken on c3 first with his bishop, and only then with his knight. True, I was not convinced that 15 c5+! was objectively stronger than the simple 15 ♕xc3 (after which White retains a slight, but stable advantage), but I suddenly felt the urge for some 'creativity'.

15 ... e6

It is obviously dangerous to take the pawn on a2: 15...♕f7 16 ♕xc3 ♕xa2?! 17 cxd6 exd6 18 ♕a1! (18 b5?! ♕xf3 19 ♕xf3 ♕c5 20 ♕d4 ♕e4, and Black holds on) 18...♕f7 (18...♕xe2 19 ♕d4; 18...♕e6 19 ♕d4; 18...♕d5 19 ♕a5) 19 ♕g5, and although for the moment Black maintains material equality after the only move 19...♕c7, his position is obviously worse.

16 ♕xc3 dxc5

If 16...♕e4 White could have advantageously sacrificed the exchange: 17 cxd6!? ♕xb1 18 ♕xb1 with a strong initiative.

17 b5!

A purely intuitive sacrifice. Of course, White did not play 15 c5?! in order after 17 bxc5?! ♕c8 to think of how to defend his c5 pawn. Now, however, despite the fact that White does not achieve any forced dividends, Black's pieces are so badly placed that his opponent can begin developing his initiative with simple moves.

17 ... ♕xb5

18 ♕e5

After the seemingly powerful 18 ♕g5 ♕c6 19 ♕xb7 ♕xb7 20 ♕xb7 Black has 20...♕e7! (here I cannot help remembering the words of some well-known player: 'The most important tactical device in chess is the double attack!').

After 21 ♕xa8 ♕xa8 (21...♕xg5? 22 ♕b7) 22 h4 White has compensation sufficient for equality, but not more.

18 ... ♕b8

19 ♕e1!

I spent masses of time searching for a 'forced win', but variations such as 19 ♕a5 ♕xe2 20 ♕e1 ♕b6! 21 ♕a3 ♕b5 22 ♕xb5 ♕xb5 23 ♕f1 ♕b4, 19 ♕fd1 ♕a4!, and 19 g4 ♕xe2 20 ♕e1 ♕xg4 21 ♕xb7...
\( \text{\textbullet} \) convinced me that the sacrifice of two pawns was purely positional.

19 ... b6

After 19...\textit{c}6 20 \( \text{\textbullet} \)xc6 bxc6 White gradually regains the pawns, remaining with a positional advantage: 21 \textit{a}5 \( \text{\textbullet} \)b4 (or 21...\textit{x}b1 22 \textit{x}b1 \textit{c}8 23 \textit{e}3 followed by \( \text{\textbullet} \)f1) 22 \( \text{\textbullet} \)xc5 \textit{b}5 (22...\( \text{\textbullet} \)xa2? 23 \textit{c}4, or 22...\( \text{\textbullet} \)d5 23 \textit{x}b8 \textit{xb}8 24 \textit{xc}6) 23 \textit{xa}7 \textit{f}7 24 \textit{a}4.

20 e4

Beginning an attack in the centre and on the kingside. At this point I liked White’s position, but I was seriously concerned about the fact that, out of the two hours allotted for my first 40 moves, I had only a ‘pitiful’ 20 minutes remaining.

20 ... \( \text{\textbullet} \)c7

I think that during the game the majority of players would not have even bothered seriously to consider 20...\( \text{\textbullet} \)b4! However, it would seem that this dubious-looking move was the best defensive resource. The tactical trick 21 \textit{a}3 \( \text{\textbullet} \)c6! (22 \textit{xb}5 \( \text{\textbullet} \)xe5 23 \textit{xc}5 \textit{xb}5 24 \textit{xe}6+ \textit{f}7 25 \textit{xf}5 \textit{d}7!) allows Black to activate his knight.

Many hours spent analysing the position after 20...\( \text{\textbullet} \)b4! have not in fact led me to any definite conclusion. I will give a few variations: 21 \textit{xf}5 \textit{xf}5 22 \( \text{\textbullet} \)a3 (initially I thought that 22 \textit{d}2 was very strong, but Black has a defence: 22...\textit{d}8!), and here:

(a) 22...\( \text{\textbullet} \)c6 is now bad on account of 23 \textit{xb}5 \( \text{\textbullet} \)xe5 24 \textit{xe}5 \textit{xb}5 25 \textit{xe}6+ \textit{f}7 (25...\textit{g}7 26 \textit{e}5+ \textit{h}6 27 \textit{d}6+ and White wins) 26 \textit{d}5 \textit{f}8 27 \textit{xf}5 with an obvious advantage to White;

(b) 22...\( \text{\textbullet} \)d5 23 \textit{d}2 (after 23 \textit{xd}5 \textit{ex}d5 24 \textit{d}2 \textit{c}6 nothing decisive is apparent, e.g. 25 \textit{g}5+ \textit{h}8 26 \textit{h}6 \textit{a}8 27 \textit{h}4 \textit{d}4 28 \textit{h}5 \textit{e}4!) 23...\( \text{\textbullet} \)f6 24 \textit{g}5+ (24 \textit{d}d1??) 24...\textit{h}8 25 \textit{h}6 \textit{a}4 (25...\textit{a}6 26 \textit{bd}1) 26 \textit{be}1! (with the idea of switching the rook via c4 to h4; also possible is 26 \textit{f}3 \textit{d}8 27 \textit{e}3 followed by \textit{be}1 and White retains the initiative) 26...\textit{h}5 (26...\textit{g}8??) 27 \textit{f}4 with an active position.

At c7 the black knight is more ‘solidly’, but more passively placed.

21 \textit{ex}f5 \textit{fx}f5

If 21...\textit{xf}5, then 22 \textit{h}3! \textit{h}5 (22...\textit{d}5 23 \textit{b}2; 22...\textit{f}8 23 \textit{g}4) 23 \textit{g}4! \textit{d}5 24 \textit{f}6+ \textit{xf}6 25 \textit{xe}6+! \textit{g}7 26 \textit{g}4 \textit{c}6 27 \textit{e}6 or 27 \textit{e}7+?

Now it is hard for Black to find an active move, since his uncoordinated pieces constantly come under threat:

(a) 22...\textit{e}7 23 \textit{c}6! \textit{a}6 (23...\textit{a}6 24 \textit{xb}5 and 25 \textit{c}6) 24 \textit{d}7;

(b) 22...\textit{d}5 23 \textit{g}5+ \textit{h}8 24 \textit{xd}5 \textit{ex}d5 25 \textit{f}3 \textit{g}6 (25...\textit{c}6 26 \textit{e}7 \textit{g}8 27 \textit{h}4 \textit{g}7 28 \textit{e}5) 26 \textit{xf}6 \textit{hx}g6 27 \textit{xb}5 with advantage to White;

(c) 22...\textit{d}8 23 \textit{g}5+ \textit{h}8 24 \textit{h}6 (24 \textit{f}3?!) 24...\textit{g}8 (24...\textit{a}6 25 \textit{f}3) 25 \textit{xb}5!? \textit{xb}5 26 \textit{c}6 \textit{f}8 27 \textit{xf}8 \textit{gxf}8 28 \textit{xb}5,
(d) 22...\textit{a}a4!? is probably the strongest, when White has several ways of developing his initiative: 23 h4!?, 23 \textit{w}f4!? or 23 \textit{h}f3!? I like most of all 23 \textit{b}bc1!? followed by \textit{e}c4-h4, and if 23...\textit{w}e7 White again has 24 \textit{c}c6! In short, even after 22...\textit{a}a4!? Black’s defence would have been difficult.

After the following natural move:

\begin{align*}
22 & \ldots \textit{a}6! \\
23 & \textit{g}5+ \textit{h}8 \\
24 & \textit{bd}1
\end{align*}

Black is almost in zugzwang.

\begin{align*}
24 & \ldots \textit{g}8 \\
\text{After 24...\textit{d}d5} & 25 \textit{xd}5!? \textit{exd}5 26 \textit{xd}5 White’s threats are very dangerous (26...\textit{d}d8 27 \textit{g}6+! \textit{g}7 28 \textit{c}c7+).
\end{align*}

25 \textit{f}4!

Firstly, this aims at the knight at c7, and secondly, there is a possible threat of a2-a4, trapping the bishop.

\begin{align*}
25 & \ldots \textit{e}7 \\
\text{The greatest resistance could have been offered by} & 25...\textit{g}7, \text{although even here after} 26 \textit{xd}6 \textit{d}d8 27 \textit{xb}6 Black’s position begins to collapse.
\end{align*}

26 \textit{c}6!

Prosaically winning material. For brilliance seekers I can suggest 26 \textit{d}6!?, which also retains a dangerous initiative. But, being short of time, I decided for the moment to take what was on offer.

26 \ldots \textit{g}4?

This loses by force. Of course, Black’s position after 26...\textit{bd}8 27 \textit{xd}8 \textit{xd}8 28 \textit{xb}5 \textit{xb}5 29 \textit{c}c6 \textit{d}7 30 \textit{xd}8 \textit{xd}8 does not inspire optimism, but there was nothing else.

\begin{align*}
27 & \textit{xg}4 \textit{xc}6 \\
28 & \textit{d}6! \textit{e}8 \\
\text{If} & 28...\textit{d}5 29 \textit{xd}5.
\end{align*}

29 \textit{h}6?!

In principle this move does not spoil anything, but with time trouble imminent (I had about five minutes left) White misses an instant win: 29 \textit{d}xe6! \textit{xe}6 30 \textit{e}5+! (this is stronger than the immediate 30 \textit{xb}8) 30...\textit{g}7 30...\textit{g}8 allows mate in two moves) 31 \textit{xb}8, and further major loss of material for Black is inevitable.

29 \ldots \textit{c}8!

This prolongs the resistance, although it does not change the evaluation of the position.

\begin{align*}
30 & \textit{xb}6 \textit{g}7 \\
\text{If} & 30...\textit{f}6, \text{then} 31 \textit{g}4 \textit{g}7 32 \textit{e}3, \text{if there is nothing better.}
\end{align*}

31 \textit{b}7 \textit{c}6

32 \textit{a}7 \textit{d}5?!

Black seems to have gained some counterplay, but after White’s accurate reply it all becomes clear.

\begin{align*}
33 & \textit{e}5! \textit{xe}5 \\
34 & \textit{f}7+! \textit{g}8 \\
35 & \textit{xe}5 \textit{h}5 \\
36 & \textit{a}4 \textit{xa}4 \\
37 & \textit{xa}6 \textit{b}5 \\
\text{If} & 37...\textit{b}3 38 \textit{xe}6.
\end{align*}

38 \textit{xe}6 \textit{c}4

39 \textit{d}6 \textit{b}4
40 \( \mathbf{b6} \) \( \mathbf{c2} \)
41 \( \mathbf{b1!} \)

After 41...\( \mathbf{a3} \) (41...\( \mathbf{a4} \) 42 \( \mathbf{b8} \)) there is a simple win by 42 \( \mathbf{1xb5} \) \( \mathbf{xb5} \) 43 \( \mathbf{xb5} \) e3 44 \( \mathbf{b1} \).

Now White’s time trouble was over, and Black resigned.

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{No.163} & \\
\textbf{Topalov–Kramnik} & \\
\textbf{Belgrade 1995} & \\
\textbf{Sicilian Defence} & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

If not I...

'This game won me a crystal vase – the prize "For the best game of the tournament".' It was indeed a very unusual encounter. At any rate, it is a long time since I played such an entertaining game. This, briefly and rather routinely, is how Kramnik himself commented on this sixth round game, with which he began his finishing sprint for first place. But it also makes sense to draw attention to something else. It is said that complete creations, such as the Doric Column and the hexameter, were conceived by the perceptive calculation of their authors, and in this case checking the harmony by algebra is by no means a mechanical process. The second part of this action – the checking – is within the capabilities of many, the first part – a breakthrough into the unknown – of very few. And only those chosen by God can manage both one and the other, recognising as they do so their own audacity and the right to it. 'If not I, then who else'...

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|}
\hline
1 & \textbf{e4} & \textbf{c5} \\
2 & \textbf{d3} & \textbf{c6} \\
3 & \textbf{d4} & \textbf{cxd4} \\
4 & \textbf{dxd4} & \textbf{d6} \\
5 & \textbf{dxd4} & \textbf{d6} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

In the penultimate round, so as not to repeat myself, I chose 5...e5 6 \( \mathbf{db5} \) d6 7 \( \mathbf{g5} \) a6 8 \( \mathbf{a3} \) b5 9 \( \mathbf{xf6} \) gxf6 10 \( \mathbf{d5} \) \( \mathbf{g7} \) 11 g3 f5 12 e5 c4? 13 f6 \( \mathbf{xf6} \) 14 \( \mathbf{xf6}+ \) \( \mathbf{xf6} \) 15 \( \mathbf{d5} \) 0–0! 16 c3? b4! 17 \( \mathbf{c4} \) bxc3 18 \( \mathbf{wd6} \) \( \mathbf{e6} \), and I gained an overwhelming advantage against Ljubojevic (No.47).

6 \( \mathbf{c4} \)

Veselin’s third attempt: against me he had already tried 6 f3 (Linares 1994) and 6 \( \mathbf{g5} \) e6 7 \( \mathbf{d2} \) \( \mathbf{e7} \) 8 0–0–0 \( \mathbf{xd4} \) (8...0–0 9 f4 h6 10 \( \mathbf{h4} \) \( \mathbf{b6} \) 11 \( \mathbf{xe6} \) \( \mathbf{bxc6} \) 12 e5 dxe5 13 fxe5 \( \mathbf{e4} \) 14 \( \mathbf{x e4} \) \( \mathbf{h4} \) 15 \( \mathbf{f4} \) \( \mathbf{e7} \) 16 \( \mathbf{d3} \) \( \mathbf{b8} \), Leko-Kramnik, eighth round) 9 \( \mathbf{xd4} \) 0–0 10 f4 \( \mathbf{wa5} \) 11 \( \mathbf{c4} \) (Novgorod 1995).

6 \( \mathbf{c4} \)

7 \( \mathbf{db5} \) a6
8 \( \mathbf{e3} \) \( \mathbf{wa5} \)
9 \( \mathbf{d4} \) \( \mathbf{e5} \)
9...\( \mathbf{xe4}?! \) 10 \( \mathbf{f3} \) is dangerous for Black.

10 \( \mathbf{\neg d3}?! \)

10 \( \mathbf{d3} \) \( \mathbf{c7} \) 11 \( \mathbf{e2} \) e6 12 f4 \( \mathbf{c4} \) 13 \( \mathbf{xc4} \) \( \mathbf{xc4} \) 14 \( \mathbf{f3} \) \( \mathbf{d7} \) 15 0–0–0 \( \mathbf{xc8} \) 16 \( \mathbf{d4} \) b5 17 a3 \( \mathbf{e7} \) also leads to a complicated, double-edged, typically Sicilian game (Ivanchuk-Kramnik, Paris Rapidplay 1995).

10 \( \mathbf{...} \) \( \mathbf{de4}?!? \)

Launching into wild complications. This attack looks illogical, and perhaps that is what it indeed is. In principle the normal move is 10...e6, but I did not like the potential or even the immediate 11 f4 \( \mathbf{xd3}+ \) 12 cxd3 (in the 'Scheveningen'...
Black is not usually in a hurry to exchange on d3, strengthening White’s centre).

11  
  
Not 11  a2? !

11  g6

Now if 11...b6 White has the reply 12 0–0!, with the threat of h2-h3: after all, 12...xd4 is bad because of 13  b5+!

12  b3!

The immediate 12  f4 would have run into the counter 12...e5! 13  b3 b6 14  e2 exf4. White wants nevertheless to play f2-f4 and then by h2-h3 to drive the knight back to h6.

12  b6

The voluntary 13...e5 14  e3 would have signified the total failure of Black’s opening strategy.

14  f4  
  
There is nothing else!

15  

An amusing situation: neither 15  h3?  g3 nor 15  f3?  xh2! will do, but possibly stronger was 15  d2!?  xxc3 (15...0–0? 16  d5  d8 17  a5 and White wins) 16 bxc3 0–0 17  c4 with a promising position for White.

15  
  
With the idea of  a5, which looks murderous.

16  e6!

After 16...b6?! 17 0–0–0 all Black’s preceding play would have been pointless.

17  
  
If 19  hxe3, then not 19...xh1+? 20  d2 and  c7+, but 19...xg3+ 20  d2 exd5 21  af1! (with the intention of trapping the queen by 22  f3; less good is 21 exd5  d7! 22  af1  e8! 23  b5+ axb5 24  xb5+  e7 25  e1+  e5) 21...f6 22 exd5+  f8 23  b4  g4! 24  xd6+  g8, and each side has numerous problems of his own.

19  ...  
  
After 22  c1  xh1 23  xxa8  xf4+ 24  d2  e5 25  c3  g5+ 26  d2  g1+ 27  e1  xe1+ 28  xe1 h5 Black, with three pawns for a piece, stands better.

22  ...  
  
A strange decision. It was time to force a draw: 23  xh1  xf4+ (23...b8 24  f1) 24  d1  b8 25  d2  g3 (25...e5? 26  c3) 26  e1!  f4 (26...g5? 27  h4) 27  d2. Now Black could have forced it.

23  ...  
  
Black could also have considered 24...h6!? 25  xf4  xf4+ 26  e2  g3+ with a complicated game.

24  
  
25  e2  
  
26  e3  
  
27  e2
After repeating moves to gain time on the clock (I had little left), I decided to play on — with completely unclear consequences.

Too passive was 28 d1 g1+ 29 e1 (29 e1? e5!, intending 30 g4) 29...g4+ 30 e2 xe4, or 30 e2 e5!, planning the following development of events: 31 xg4 xg4+ 32 e2 xxa8 33 xg4 f2+.

Quieter was 28...xe2!? 29 xe2 g3 with some advantage.

Not allowing the black bishop to go via c3 to c5.

There is no time for 30...xb2 31 b1 xe5 32 b6! and c4. Black has to play energetically, otherwise White himself will begin an attack with a3, c4 and b4.

White loses in spectacular fashion after 31 b6? xb2! 32 xg3 (or 32 b1 xa2 33 xg3 d7) 32...c3+! 33 c4 d7 34 c7 d2!! with irresistible threats: if 35 xd2 there follows 35...b5+ 36 xb5 axb5 mate (suggested by the program Fritz3). On the other hand, he could have considered 31 b1!!? d7 32 b6 c6 33 a3 xxe4 34 c4 b5 35 b6 e5 (35...f5!? is risky) 36 c4.

Complicating the position still further.

It is hard to believe that this active move, allowing the white queen or bishop to invade at b4, is the decisive mistake. The saving line, again suggested by Fritz, was the inhuman 32 exd5 d6+ 33 e4! (33 c5 d4!; 33 a4? d7+ 34 xd7 b5+! 35 xb5 axb5+ 36 xb5 xd7+) 33...f4+ 34 c5, and now Black can give perpetual check by 34...d6+, whereby attempts to play for a win are not without danger:

(a) 34...e5, when White has 35 c4! d6+ 36 b6 c7+ 37 a7 b8+ 38 a8, and his king, deep in the enemy rear, feels quite comfortable.

(b) 34...d7 is parried by the only, but perfectly adequate 35 a4!! (35 c4? is bad in view of the virtually forced 35...c8+ 36 b4 b5 37 e7 xc7 38 d6+ f8 39 xc7 bxc4 40 e8++xc8 41 xc4 d6+ 42 a5 c7+ 43 b4 b6+ 44 a3 d6+ 45 a4— 45 b4 xb2+— 45...d7+ 46 a5 f6, mating) 35...xb2 36 b1 (the play is even more complicated after 36 a2!!?) 36...a3+ 37 b4 d6+ 38 c4 with a completely unclear position.

A very important intermediate check.

Including the bishop in the attack.
Making way for the king. No better is 35 \( \text{\textit{f}c}5+ \text{\textit{c}e}6 \) 36 exd5+ \( \text{\textit{w}x}d5 \) 37 \( \text{\textit{e}4} \) (37 \( \text{\textit{w}x}g3 \text{\textit{w}d}4+ \)) 37...\( \text{\textit{d}xe}4 \) 38 \( \text{\textit{w}x}e4 \) \( \text{\textit{f}f}8+ \) 39 \( \text{\textit{w}x}d5+ \text{\textit{ex}d}5 \) and 40...\( \text{\textit{d}xc}5 \).

35 ... \( \text{\textit{w}x}b2? \)

Time trouble and... a pity! Much cleaner was 35...\( \text{\textit{d}xe}4 \)!! 36 \( \text{\textit{d}xe}4 \) \( \text{\textit{w}x}b2 \)!! (36...\( \text{\textit{d}xe}4 \) 37 \( \text{\textit{w}x}e4 \) dxe4, leaves Black with the advantage – five(!) passed pawns, but there is still much play to come), with, for example, the following fantastic finish: 37 \( \text{\textit{b}1} \) (if 37 c4, then 37...\( \text{\textit{b}c}4 \) 38 \( \text{\textit{f}f}8+ \) 39 \( \text{\textit{c}e}5 \) \( \text{\textit{d}xc}5+ \) 40 \( \text{\textit{d}xc}5 \text{\textit{d}c}8+ \) 41 \( \text{\textit{d}f}6 – \text{\textit{ma}t}e \) follows after 41 \( \text{\textit{d}b}4 \text{\textit{b}8+} \) 42 \( \text{\textit{c}e}5 \) \( \text{\textit{b}b}5 – \) 41...\( \text{\textit{w}a}3 \), and White cannot save his king) 37...\( \text{\textit{c}8} \)!! 38 \( \text{\textit{c}c}5 \) (38 \( \text{\textit{d}xb}2 \text{\textit{a}c}4+ \) and 39...\( \text{\textit{d}d}4 \) mate!) 38...\( \text{\textit{d}c}3+!! \) 39 \( \text{\textit{w}xc}3 \text{\textit{d}a}5+.

36 exd5

36 \( \text{\textit{w}x}g3? \) allows 36...\( \text{\textit{c}c}3+ \) 37 \( \text{\textit{c}c}5 \) \( \text{\textit{d}a}3 \) mate, but better was 36 \( \text{\textit{d}xb}5+!? \) axb5 37 \( \text{\textit{w}x}g3 \text{\textit{e}c}8 \) 38 \( \text{\textit{f}f}1 \) \( \text{\textit{e}c}8 \) 39 \( \text{\textit{f}f}3 \) f5! 40 exf5 \( \text{\textit{w}a}2 \) 41 \( \text{\textit{d}xb}5 \text{\textit{c}c}3 \) 42 \( \text{\textit{f}f}2 \text{\textit{d}xc}2 \) 43 \( \text{\textit{w}c}3 \text{\textit{d}e}2 \), and although Black is not in danger of losing, it is not so clear.

36 ... \( \text{\textit{c}c}8! \)

37 dxe6+

At first sight White even seems to be winning...

37 ... \( \text{\textit{d}c}8! \)

If 37...\( \text{\textit{d}xe}6 \) 38 \( \text{\textit{d}xb}5+! \) axb5 39 \( \text{\textit{d}d}1+! \) \( \text{\textit{e}c}7 \) 40 \( \text{\textit{w}x}g3 \text{\textit{d}c}4+ \) 41 \( \text{\textit{d}xb}5 \) with a powerful counterattack. Therefore the black king runs away from the rook check at d1.

38 \( \text{\textit{c}a}5? \)

The decisive mistake. After 38 c4?! \( \text{\textit{d}e}4!! \) 39 exf7+ \( \text{\textit{k}f}x7 \) 40 \( \text{\textit{d}c}1 \) (the knight is immune on account of mate) 40...\( \text{\textit{w}xa}2 \) 41 \( \text{\textit{a}b}1 \) \( \text{\textit{w}b}2 \) (41...\( \text{\textit{d}c}3+ \) 42 \( \text{\textit{w}xc}3 \) \( \text{\textit{d}xc}3 \) 43 \( \text{\textit{d}xa}2 \) \( \text{\textit{d}xa}2+ \) 44 \( \text{\textit{w}a}3 \) bxc4 is also good enough to win) 42 \( \text{\textit{d}c}1 \text{\textit{f}f}8+ \) 43 \( \text{\textit{d}c}5 \text{\textit{a}5+} \) 44 \( \text{\textit{d}xa}5 \) \( \text{\textit{d}xc}5+ \) 45 \( \text{\textit{d}xc}5 \text{\textit{d}xc}5 \) Black is close to a win.

It was essential to continue 38 \( \text{\textit{d}xb}5+! \) axb5 39 exf7+ \( \text{\textit{k}f}7 \) 40 \( \text{\textit{w}x}g3 \text{\textit{d}c}3+! \) 41 \( \text{\textit{w}xc}3 \) \( \text{\textit{d}xc}3+ \) 42 \( \text{\textit{w}xb}5 \text{\textit{d}a}1 \) 43 \( \text{\textit{d}xa}1 \) \( \text{\textit{d}h}5! \), and something of a textbook ending is reached. White does not manage to retain his pawns and begin advancing them: 44 a4 h4 45 a5 h3 46 \( \text{\textit{d}g}1 \) \( \text{\textit{d}b}8+ \) 47 \( \text{\textit{w}a}6 \) \( \text{\textit{b}1} \), or 44 c4 h4 45 \( \text{\textit{d}c}2 \) h3 46 \( \text{\textit{d}g}1 \) \( \text{\textit{d}b}8+ \) and 47...\( \text{\textit{d}b}1 \). He must immediately bring his knight into play: 44 \( \text{\textit{d}b}3! \) h4 (44...\( \text{\textit{d}c}2 \) 45 a4! \( \text{\textit{d}c}5 \) h3 47 \( \text{\textit{d}c}7 \) h2 48 \( \text{\textit{d}h}2 \text{\textit{d}h}2 \) 49 a5 with a draw, or 45...\( \text{\textit{d}b}2 \) 46 \( \text{\textit{d}h}4 \) 47 a5 h3 48 \( \text{\textit{d}c}7 \) h2 49 \( \text{\textit{d}h}2 \text{\textit{d}h}2 \) 50 a6) 45 \( \text{\textit{d}d}4 \) \( g5! \) (45...\( h3 \) 46 \( \text{\textit{d}f}3 \) 46 \( \text{\textit{d}f}3 \) \( g6 \) – Black’s advantage may not be sufficient for a win. Although there is one trap that White must avoid: 47 \( \text{\textit{d}e}3 \) \( \text{\textit{d}c}3 \) 48 \( \text{\textit{d}x}g5 \) \( h3! \) and Black wins.

After making his move, Topalov gave me a puzzled look, as if to say that it was time for me to resign (White threatens 39 exf7+ etc.). But Veselin had in fact overlooked a couple of checks.

38 ... \( \text{\textit{d}c}3+! \)

39 \( \text{\textit{w}xc}3 \) \( \text{\textit{a}5+!} \)

40 \( \text{\textit{d}xb}5 \) \( \text{\textit{w}c}3 \)

White resigns: 41 exf7+ \( \text{\textit{k}f}7 \) 42 \( \text{\textit{d}c}4+ \) \( \text{\textit{d}e}8! \)

No.164

Kramnik–Topalov

Amsterdam 1996

English Opening

‘Russians don’t retreat!’

‘My thirteenth move in this game was made quite in accordance with
grandmaster Alexander Ivanov! On one occasion he played $\text{f3-g5}$ and in reply to $... \text{h7-h6}$ gave up his knight for the $f7$ pawn, without the slightest justification, with the words: "Russians don’t retreat!" But in this particular case the pawn sacrifice was sufficiently justified, and besides, I am not yet so old as to take my knight back to $f3$..." (Kramnik)

1 $\text{f3}$

I do not think that this move came as a surprise to my opponent, since at that time, in games with a 'normal' time control, I only used to open in this way.

1 $\ldots$ $\text{d6}$
2 $\text{c4}$ $\text{c5}$
3 $\text{f3}$ $\text{e6}$
4 $\text{g3}$ $\text{b6}$
5 $\text{g2}$ $\text{b7}$
6 0-0 $\text{d6}$

7 $\text{b3}?!$

Taking account of Topalov’s lack of any great practical experience in this variation, I decided on a rather rare continuation. The usual 7 d4 or 7 $\text{e1}$ is more often played.

7 $\ldots$ $\text{bd7}$
8 $\text{b2}$ $\text{e7}$
9 $\text{d4}$ 0-0?!

A bold and risky decision. Obviously Veselin was not satisfied with passive defence in the variation 9...$\text{cxd4}$ 10 $\text{xd4}$ $\text{xg2}$ 11 $\text{xg2}$ $\text{c7}$ 12 $\text{c3}$ $\text{a6}$ 13 $\text{f4}$! followed by $\text{f3}$ and $\text{g3-g4-g5}$.

10 $\text{d5}$!

The only way of ‘punishing’ Black is not to allow him the possibility of exchanging on d4. After 10 $\text{e3}$ $\text{e4}$! White’s opening advantage would be lost.

10 $\ldots$ $\text{exd5}$
11 $\text{h4}$

The most critical decision. The alternative was 11 $\text{cxd5}$, planning $\text{f3-d2-c4}$.

11 $\ldots$ $\text{g6}$

This weakening of the castled position is practically forced, unless Black wants to allow the white knight to comfortably establish itself at $f5$.

12 $\text{cxd5}$ $\text{e8}$

The most logical plan: the knight goes to $c7$ to create counterplay on the queenside, and the bishop to $f6$ for the defence of the kingside.

13 $\text{f4}$! $\text{e7}$

I think that Black should have accepted the challenge – 13...$\text{xh4}$ 14 $\text{gxh4}$ $\text{xh4}$, although White would have gained sufficient compensation: 15 $\text{d2}$ $\text{e7}$ 16 $\text{e4}$ $\text{f6}$ 17 $\text{a1} \text{g7}$ 18 $\text{h3}$ with the initiative. Now, however, he creates unhindered a strong and mobile pawn centre.

14 $\text{e4}$ $\text{b5}$
15 $\text{e5}$

This advance could also have been deferred – 15 $\text{f3}?!$, but I decided that it could not be bad.

15 $\ldots$ $\text{f5}$!

Depriving the white pieces (in particular the knight) of the very important $c4$ square. It becomes evident that the sole target of
Black’s counterplay is the d5 pawn, and that it is not so easy for me to suppress it. For example, 16 \( \text{f2} \) \( \text{b6} \) 17 \( \text{d2} \) b4 18 \( \text{c2} \) c4 etc.

After some reflection I found the key to this position.

16 \( \text{a4!} \)

There was an opportunity to try and... give mate – 16 \( \text{e4!} \)?? \( \text{fxe4} \) 17 \( \text{cxd6} \) \( \text{hxg6} \) 18 \( \text{g4} \), but I decided to defer this aim to a more convenient moment: firstly, I was not convinced about the success of such an enterprise, and secondly, I did not like the reply 16...\( \text{dxe5} \).

16 ... \( \text{b4} \)

16...\( \text{a6?!} \) was completely bad: 17 a5! (depriving the black knight of the important \( \text{b6} \) square) 17...\( \text{b4} \) 18 \( \text{a4} \) \( \text{b5} \) 19 \( \text{c6} \) \( \text{a6} \) 20 \( \text{b6} \). and there is simply nothing that Black can move.

17 \( \text{b5} \) \( \text{xb5} \)

18 \( \text{axb5} \) \( \text{b6} \)

Intending to at least gain a pawn to compensate for his sufferings. After 18...\( \text{b6} \) 19 \( \text{e2}! \) White would have securely supported his d5 outpost with his queen's rook.

19 \( \text{e1!} \) \( \text{xb5} \)

After 19...\( \text{dxe5} \) 20 \( \text{fxe5} \) c4+ 21 \( \text{h1}! \) c3 22 \( \text{c1} \) the pawn pair in the centre is very dangerous, while 19...c4+ 20 \( \text{d4} \) \( \text{xb5} \) 21 \( \text{bxc4} \) \( \text{xc4} \) 22 \( \text{c1} \) \( \text{b5} \) 23 \( \text{exd6!} \) \( \text{f6} \) (23...\( \text{xd6} \) 24 \( \text{e6} \) with the threat of 25 \( \text{cxd6} \) leaves White with numerous possibilities, for example 24 \( \text{c7}! \))

20 \( \text{f1!} \)

Activating the bishop with gain of tempo. White had no reason to hurry: 20 \( \text{exd6?!} \) \( \text{f6}! \) would have given Black some counter-chances.

20 ... \( \text{b6} \)

21 \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{d8} \)

The only sensible move in this position.

22 \( \text{exd6}!? \)

The unhurried 22 \( \text{f3} \) was also good, but I decided that the moment had arrived.

22 ... \( \text{f6} \)

22...\( \text{xd6} \) was certainly bad in view of 23 \( \text{e6} \) \( \text{f6} \) (after 23...\( \text{b6} \) the white knight, which for a long time has been sleeping on the edge of the board, would have woken up – 24 \( \text{cxd6} \)!) 24 \( \text{e5}! \), and the blockade at \( \text{d6} \) collapses – 24...\( \text{e8} \) 25 \( \text{cxd6} \), or 24...\( \text{exe5} \) 25 \( \text{fxe5} \) \( \text{xd5} \) 26 \( \text{d6} \).

23 \( \text{d2} \)

If 23 \( \text{c5} \) Black can begin the manoeuvre \( \ldots \text{d7-b6-c8} \); in addition, I wanted to leave the c-file open for the invasion of my rook.

23 ... \( \text{xb2} \)

Or 23...\( \text{b6} \) 24 \( \text{e6} \) \( \text{c8} \) (24...\( \text{xb2} \) 25 \( \text{xb2} \) \( \text{d5} \) 26 \( \text{cxd6} \) and wins) 25 \( \text{f6} \) \( \text{xf6} \) 26 \( \text{ae1}! \) \( \text{exe6} \) 27 \( \text{dxe6} \) \( \text{xc4} \) 28 \( \text{bxc4} \), and the white pawns are irresistible.

24 \( \text{xb2} \) \( \text{f6} \)

25 \( \text{f2}! \)

Attacking the \( \text{c5} \) pawn, which in the given case is very important.

25 ... \( \text{b6} \)
After 25...\textit{fe8} 26 \textit{xe8+} \textit{xe8} 27 \textit{xa7} White has the advantage.

26 \textit{ad1}

Not allowing Black counterplay after 26 \textit{xc5} \textit{ac8}.

26 \textit{fe8}!?

A reasonable practical chance, given White’s shortage of time: I had about five minutes left. After 26...\textit{xc4} 27 \textit{bxc4} \textit{xd6} Black would have got rid of the annoying d6 pawn, but would have encountered another dilemma: 28 \textit{e6} \textit{c7} 29 \textit{e3} \textit{f7} (parrying the threat of 30 \textit{e7}) 30 \textit{f3}!, and White’s attack is irresistible.

27 \textit{xe8+} \textit{xe8}

Black burns all his boats behind him. However, the strongest move 28...\textit{d8} would also not have left him any real hopes of saving the game – 29 \textit{xb4}! \textit{xd6} 30 \textit{xd6} \textit{xd6} 31 \textit{g2}! \textit{g7} 32 \textit{e3}, and White must gradually win.

29 \textit{g2}!

With this inclusion of the knight in the defence, Black’s aggression is nipped in the bud.

29 ... \textit{e2}

29...\textit{c2} would have been met by the simple 30 \textit{e1} \textit{e1}+ 31 \textit{xe1} \textit{d2} 32 \textit{f3} \textit{d1}+ 33 \textit{g2}.

30 \textit{d7}! \textit{xd7}

31 \textit{b5}!

There are simultaneously three black pieces \textit{en prise}!

31 ... \textit{g2+}

32 \textit{xb2} \textit{c2+}

33 \textit{e2}

This is why the white queen had to go to b5. The remainder is clear.

33 ... \textit{b6}

34 \textit{f2} \textit{g7}

35 \textit{d6} \textit{c6}

36 \textit{xb4}

I still had about two minutes left, which in such a position is more than sufficient. Black resigns.

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\textbf{No.165} \\
Topalov–Kramnik \\
Linares 1997 \\
Queen’s Gambit \\
\hline
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\end{center}

‘Inhuman move’

‘To this day I regret somewhat that in this particular tournament I did not take first place – my form was quite sufficient both to aspire to and count on it. The fact is that I arrived in Linares in that state which is very hard to express in words, but which will be very familiar to all professional chess players: my brain was working excellently, I felt enthusiastic, all my ideas worked out, and winning positions were won! This is why it was especially annoying that in the last two games my reserves of strength ran low. Well, I received an “order” – on what I should be working... As confirmation of what has
been said, I can offer the following game. Veselin did not play it too well, but even so the battle proved to be very interesting.

(Kramnik)

To this it can be added that when, on returning home, Vladimir showed this game to his colleagues, Alexander Khalifman had this to say about Black’s decisive rejoinder: ‘An inhuman move!’

1 d4 d5

In Las Palmas two months earlier I had played the King’s Indian against the Bulgarian grandmaster, and none too successfully. And so here I chose my well-tested opening.

2 c4 c6
3 Qf3 Qf6
4 Qc3 e6
5 g3

A rare, and at the same time critical, gambit move. Black is practically obliged to take the pawn on c4, otherwise he will simply stand worse.

5 . . . Qbd7
6 Qg2 Qxc4

Now Black has adequate chances, in view of the position of the white knight at c3. Here it would be better placed at b1, which would afford White certain additional possibilities.

7 a4

More or less radically preventing ...b7-b5, which Black could have played, for example, in reply to 7 0-0. A couple of years before someone had played this against me in the Bundesliga, and I suddenly sensed that Topalov’s preparations were aimed at this very game, which I had... forgotten!

I recalled that at some point my bishop had gone to b4, preventing e2-e4, and after spending a great deal of time I ‘calculated’ that theory apparently recommends a more restrained development of the bishop. Alas, there are now so many side variations that it is very, very difficult to remember them all.

8 0-0 0-0
9 e4

If Black can capture on e5, he will stand better, but to do this is not so simple.

10 dx e5 Qg4
11 Qf4 Qa5
12 e6 fx e6
13 Qe2 Qge5
14 Qd4

After exchanging twice on e5 White would have regained his pawn, but without his dark-square bishop he cannot hope for anything. Therefore he continues on his gambit course, especially since all this had already been played before. But I, by this time, was a full forty minutes behind on the clock...

14 . . . Qd3!

In the game Gelfand-Timman (Tilburg 1990) Black played 14...Qb6 15 Qd2 Qb4
with very complicated play, and he went on to win, although in the course of the struggle his position looked suspicious. I realised that I had to seek something new, and it would appear that I managed to find a fairly decent move. Without the e6 pawn my light-square bishop comes into play and, more important, my knight is excellently placed in enemy territory.

15 \( \text{Qxe6} \) \( \text{f6} \)

16 \( \text{c7} \)

Topalov had already caught up with me on the clock, which is not surprising, since he also had to calculate the variation 16 \( \text{c7} \) \( \text{xf4} \) 17 \( \text{xc4+ h8} \) 18 \( \text{xa8 e5} \) 19 \( \text{b3 xg2} \) 20 \( \text{xf2 f3} \) and convince himself that Black has a very strong initiative.

The return of the knight also has to be evaluated: 16 \( \text{g5 xf4} \) 17 \( \text{gxf4+ h8} \) 18 \( \text{a8 e5} \) 19 \( \text{b3 xg2} \) 20 \( \text{xf2 f3} \) and if now 20 \( \text{c4+} \), then Black is alright: 20 ... \( \text{h8} \) 21 \( \text{xf4 xf4} \) 22 \( \text{f1 e3+} \), but 20 \( \text{xf4} \) \( \text{xf4} \) 21 \( \text{f1 d6} \) 22 \( \text{xc4+ h8} \) 23 \( \text{f7} \) gives White the advantage. Of course, after 16 \( \text{g5} \) there is also the 'normal' 16 ... \( \text{h6} \), after which Black is alright, but in general we both had plenty to think about. Incidentally, in order to establish the true value of the new move 14 \( \text{d3} \), it is this position that must be analysed...

16 ... \( \text{b4} \)

17 \( \text{d4} \)

A poor decision, instead of which White should have chosen between 17 \( \text{g5} \) and 17 \( \text{f4} \). If 17 \( \text{g5} \) I must take – 17 ... \( \text{xb2} \), and after 18 \( \text{xb2} \) \( \text{xb2} \) 19 \( \text{f4} \) followed by e4-e5 (or immediately 19 e5) White has some compensation. After 17 \( \text{f4} \) it is roughly the same. With the move in the game White is aiming to advance his e- and f-pawns in comfort, but...

17 ... \( \text{c5}! \)

It is hard for the white knight to find an acceptable square. Moving to f3 is passive, and to f5 means running into 18 ... \( \text{f8} \).

That only leaves the move played.

18 \( \text{c2} \) \( \text{xb2} \)

19 \( \text{d1} \) \( \text{b3} \)

The white knights look rather forlorn, but in fact things are not so clear. Black has problems with his queen, which after

20 \( \text{de3} \)

White is dreaming of trapping by \( \text{a5} \) and \( \text{b1} \), or in some cases \( \text{b1} \) and \( \text{d1}! \).

In addition, he wants to carry out the strategic advance f2-f4 and e4-e5.

20 ...

\( \text{e5} \)

In order to answer 21 f4 with 21 ... \( \text{g4} \) (for the moment 21 \( \text{b1} \) runs into 21 ... \( \text{xf2} \) 22 \( \text{d2} \) e3). The alternative was the quieter 20 ... \( \text{f8} \).

21 \( \text{h3} \) \( \text{e6} \)

22 \( \text{h2} \)

22 f4 would have been strongly met by 22 ... \( \text{b4}! \) 23 \( \text{h2} \) \( \text{d3} \) with the advantage. Now f2-f4 has become a real threat, and I fell back on a tactical resource.

22 ...

\( \text{h6}!? \)

23 \( \text{ab1} \)
Here 23 f4 would have been parried by 23 ... \( \text{\texttt{g4}} \)+, with the forced continuation 24 \( \text{\texttt{xf4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xf4}} \) 25 \( \text{\texttt{xf4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xc2}} \), although objectively this was White's best chance. But Vesel in possibly thought that he was seizing the initiative, and...

23 \( \text{\texttt{... \ g4!!}} \)

A pretty counter, which White had not anticipated.

24 \( \text{\texttt{xf4}} \)

It stands to reason that 24 \( \text{\texttt{d2}} \) is bad on account of 24 ... \( \text{\texttt{xd3}} \), when White is either mated (25 \( \text{\texttt{g1}} \) \( \text{\texttt{f3}} \) + 26 \( \text{\texttt{xf3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xf3}} \), or loses material (25 \( \text{\texttt{xd3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xf3}} \) +). I considered the main reply to be 24 \( \text{\texttt{xf3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xf3}} \) + 25 \( \text{\texttt{xf3}} \) (25 \( \text{\texttt{f1}} \) loses to 25 ... \( \text{\texttt{xf3}} \), and if 26 \( \text{\texttt{xb3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{g4}} \) + 27 \( \text{\texttt{g3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xc3}} \) + 28 \( \text{\texttt{g2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{h2}} \) mate, or 26 \( \text{\texttt{xd3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xc3}} \) + 27 \( \text{\texttt{g2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{h2}} \) +) 25 ... \( \text{\texttt{xf3}} \)+, and in a 'draughts'-like way, on the light squares, Black intends to reap a rich harvest. After the only move 26 \( \text{\texttt{g2}} \) (if 26 \( \text{\texttt{g1}} \), then even 26 ... \( \text{\texttt{xc2}} \) 27 \( \text{\texttt{xf2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xe3}} \) + 28 \( \text{\texttt{f2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xf2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xf2}} \) is good) at the board I was intending not 26 ... \( \text{\texttt{g4}} \) + 27 \( \text{\texttt{h4}} \), but simply 26 ... \( \text{\texttt{xc3}} \), when the b7 pawn is immune.

For the artistic among you I should point out that there is another interesting possibility: 26 ... \( \text{\texttt{xf2}} \)!?, and if 27 \( \text{\texttt{xb3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{g4}} \) +, with the idea of 28 \( \text{\texttt{h1}} \) ? \( \text{\texttt{xf2}} \) + 29 \( \text{\texttt{g2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{h2}} \) +.

24 \( \text{\texttt{... \ g4}} \)
25 \( \text{\texttt{f4}} \)
26 \( \text{\texttt{g5}} \)

White's counterplay against \( g7 \), beginning with 26 \( \text{\texttt{xb7}} \), is hindered by his own bishop at \( c7 \), and he does not have time to move it away in view of 26 ... \( \text{\texttt{xf2}} \), when \( h3 \) is immediately under attack, and after 27 \( \text{\texttt{xf2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xf2}} \) he is threatened with mate at \( g1 \). 26 \( f4 \) would also have been answered by 26 ... \( \text{\texttt{xf2}} \).

Topalov's decision in the game apparently involved an oversight. He thought that by attacking the bishop at \( c5 \) he was indirectly defending \( f2 \), but nevertheless...

26 \( \text{\texttt{... \ g2}} \)

It turns out that 27 \( \text{\texttt{xc5}} \) leads to mate. But not one that Veselin saw – 27 ... \( \text{\texttt{xc7}} \) + 28 \( \text{\texttt{xc7}} \) \( \text{\texttt{g4}} \) + 29 \( \text{\texttt{b1}} \) \( \text{\texttt{h2}} \), but the one that after 28 \( \text{\texttt{g1}} \) he overlooked – 28 ... \( \text{\texttt{h1}} \)+! 29 \( \text{\texttt{h1}} \) \( \text{\texttt{h2}} \)! And after 27 \( h4 \) Black has the simple 27 ... \( b6 \), keeping his extra material. Hence White tries a desperate but inadequate counterattack.

27 \( \text{\texttt{xf2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xf2}} \) 28 \( \text{\texttt{h1}} \) \( \text{\texttt{d4}} \) 29 \( \text{\texttt{e5}} \) \( \text{\texttt{d7}} \) 30 \( \text{\texttt{e1}} \) \( \text{\texttt{e6}} \) 31 \( \text{\texttt{xc7}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xc7}} \) 32 \( \text{\texttt{g5}} \) + \( \text{\texttt{g6}} \) 33 \( \text{\texttt{xc5}} \) \( \text{\texttt{d6}} \) White resigns

\textbf{No.166}  
\textit{Kramnik–Kasparov}  
\textit{Novgorod 1997}  
\textit{King's Indian Defence}

\textbf{Adequate inadequacy}

'After the tournament, in an interview in a popular Russian newspaper, Kasparov said that in the games against him in Novgorod I had played badly. I will not offer my undoubtedly subjective opinion regarding this, but will leave it to the readers to judge for themselves. And if they decide that this was indeed so, there is only one thing I can say in reply: well, even this was good enough... ' (Kramnik)

1 \( \text{\texttt{xf3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{xf6}} \) 2 \( \text{\texttt{c4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{g6}} \) 3 \( \text{\texttt{c3}} \) \( \text{\texttt{g7}} \) 4 \( \text{\texttt{e4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{d6}} \) 5 \( \text{\texttt{d4}} \) 0–0 6 \( \text{\texttt{e2}} \) \( \text{\texttt{e5}} \) 7 0–0 \( \text{\texttt{xd8}} \) 8 \( \text{\texttt{c7}} \) 9 \( \text{\texttt{b4}} \) \( \text{\texttt{h5}} \) 10 \( \text{\texttt{f1}} \) \( \text{\texttt{f4}} \) 11 \( \text{\texttt{f1}} \) a5
12 bxa5

The only way to fight for an advantage. After 12 a3 axb4 13 axb4 g4! 14 h3 (14 e3 has been played, but it is extremely dubious) 14...xf3 15 xf3 c5! 16 dxc6 cxc6 Black equalises, as was shown by Kramnik-Gelfand (Dortmund 1996), and confirmed by Bareev-Topalov (Novgorod 1997).

12 ... cxa5
13 d2 c5
14 a4
14 b1 deserves serious consideration.
14 ... a6

Simply a useful move.
15 a3

The start of a sound plan, probably the best in the given position, as confirmed by subsequent games. White intends to place his knight at b5 and bishop at b2, then play g2-g3, and since Black's counterplay will be hindered by the position of his knight at h5, gradually (after pushing back the knight from h5 by f1-c2) prepare the advance f2-f4. Moreover, he has the possibility of intensifying the pressure on the long dark-square diagonal by the 'ambush' manoeuvre d1-a1.

15 ... g5?!

It would appear that my opponent guessed the latent point of White's last move, and his sense of danger suggested to him this original, but rather risky decision: after the 'normal' course of the game Black was in danger of ending up in a complete bind. 15...f5 was not an alternative, in view of 16 g3 h5 17 exf5, when White gains control of e4, the key square in the King's Indian Defence. However, 15...h8 followed by ...g8 was possible, giving the queen access to the kingside.

16 g3

A highly committing move. Other continuations were also possible, e.g. 16 b5!? with a complicated game.

16 ... a5
17 xh3 xh3
18 h5 d7

18...g4? was obviously bad in view of 19 f3! f6 (or 19...gxf3 20 xh3 f5 21 h5 with advantage) 20 d1 f5 21 xh4, when the bishop at h3 is 'resting'.

19 xg5

I spent a long time calculating the consequences of 19 f3!?, but unfortunately nothing comes of it: 19...g4 (the only move) 20 d1 f5! (20...gxf3 21 g3 f5 22 xf3 xf3 23 xf3, and the concentration of white pieces on the kingside becomes threatening) 21 f2 (bad is 21 e3? gxf3! 22 xf3 f2+! 23 xf2 fx4+ 24 g2 f2+! or 22 xf3 fx4 23 g5 f5) 21...xa4 22 xa4 xa4, and Black is certainly no worse.

19 ... h6

The immediate 19...f5 was an interesting alternative.

20 e3 f5
21 e2!
Selected games

Weaker is 21 f3 f4, when it is hard to find a post for the rook at a3.

21 ... f4

After 21 ... fxe4 22 \textit{\texttt{Qdxe4}} \textit{\texttt{Qf5}} 23 \textit{\texttt{Qb5}} (23 \textit{\texttt{Qe3}?!}) 23 ... \textit{\texttt{Qd4}} 24 \textit{\texttt{Qxd4}} exd4 25 \textit{\texttt{Wh5}?!} \textit{\texttt{Qg4}} 26 \textit{\texttt{Wh4}} the white pieces become very active.

22 \textit{\texttt{Qb5}} \textit{\texttt{Qh7}}

22 ... \textit{\texttt{Qg6}} is slightly more accurate, not allowing White an additional possibility (of which I in fact made use), but after 23 \textit{\texttt{Qh1}} \textit{\texttt{Qh7}} 24 \textit{\texttt{Qg1}} the position remains just as unclear and difficult to assess, as after 22 ... \textit{\texttt{Qh7}}.

23 gxf4!?

As I have already mentioned, 23 \textit{\texttt{Qh1}} \textit{\texttt{Qg6}} 24 \textit{\texttt{Qg1}} was a roughly equivalent continuation.

23 ... exf4!

24 \textit{\texttt{Qh1}} \textit{\texttt{Qg4}!}

After 24 ... \textit{\texttt{Qg6}} 25 \textit{\texttt{Qg1}} problems arise with the bishop at h3 (\textit{\texttt{Wh5}} is threatened).

25 \textit{\texttt{Qf3}!}

This looks risky, but after 25 f3?! \textit{\texttt{Qh5}} White’s pieces are totally immobilised, and his position is inferior.

25 ... \textit{\texttt{Qg6}}

26 \textit{\texttt{Qg1}}

The culminating point of the game has been reached. The position has become very sharp, and the value of each move extremely high. We both sensed this. Kasparov thought for some fifty minutes (since, in contrast to me, he had ample time), and I too spent all this time on the calculation of variations, in which, compared with Black, I was clearly more successful.

26 ... \textit{\texttt{Qh4}?} is completely bad: 27 \textit{\texttt{Qg5+}} \textit{\texttt{Hxg5}} 28 \textit{\texttt{Wxg4}} \textit{\texttt{Wxg4}} 29 \textit{\texttt{Wxg4}} \textit{\texttt{Qg6}?!} 30 \textit{\texttt{Qe7}} \textit{\texttt{Qb6}} (30 ... \textit{\texttt{Qh5}} 31 h3) 31 \textit{\texttt{Qe6}} and White wins.

The strongest move was 26 ... \textit{\texttt{Qh8}}! Kasparov rejected this because of 27 \textit{\texttt{Qc7}}, not noticing 27 ... \textit{\texttt{Qb6}}! with strong counterplay, e.g. 28 \textit{\texttt{Qe6}} \textit{\texttt{Qxe6}} 29 \textit{\texttt{Qxg6}} \textit{\texttt{Qg4}}. I did not like 27 \textit{\texttt{Qb2}}, since this is not at all clear after either 27 ... \textit{\texttt{Qh4}?!} 28 \textit{\texttt{Qxh4}} \textit{\texttt{Qxe2}} 29 \textit{\texttt{Qxg7}} \textit{\texttt{Wxg7}} 30 \textit{\texttt{Qxg7}+} (30 \textit{\texttt{Qg6+}} \textit{\texttt{Qh7}} 31 \textit{\texttt{Qxg7}} \textit{\texttt{Qf7}} 30 ... \textit{\texttt{Qxg7}} 31 \textit{\texttt{Qc7}} \textit{\texttt{Qxc4}}, or 27 ... \textit{\texttt{Qxb2}} 28 \textit{\texttt{Qxb2+}} \textit{\texttt{Qh7}} 29 \textit{\texttt{Qd2}} (29 \textit{\texttt{Qxd6}?!} \textit{\texttt{Qxd6}} 30 e5 \textit{\texttt{Qxf3}+} 31 \textit{\texttt{Qxf3}} \textit{\texttt{Qg7}}) 29 ... \textit{\texttt{Qe5}}. Also possible is 27 ... \textit{\texttt{Qg8}} with an unclear game (28 \textit{\texttt{Qc7}} \textit{\texttt{Qb6}}!).

In the end I decided to play simply 27 \textit{\texttt{Wc4}?!}, and if 27 ... \textit{\texttt{Qe8}} 28 \textit{\texttt{Qd2}} or 28 \textit{\texttt{Qe1}?!} with a position that is very complicated and difficult to assess. But my thoughts were interrupted by my opponent’s reply...

26 ... \textit{\texttt{Qxf3}+}?

To be honest, this came as a complete surprise to me – I had not even considered it. And I was right – it is an extremely unfortunate decision. White’s pieces immediately come alive and ‘fall upon’ the black king.

27 \textit{\texttt{Qxf3}} \textit{\texttt{Qe5}}

28 \textit{\texttt{Qh5}} \textit{\texttt{Qf7}}
Or 28...\( \square x c 4 \) 29 \( \square g 6 + \) \( \square g 8 \) 30 \( \square h 3 ! \), and mate is not far off.

29 \( \square h 3 ! \)

This move was apparently underestimated by my opponent: now Black's position does not inspire much confidence.

29 ... \( \square x c 4 \)

Otherwise \( \square b 2 \) when, apart from having an attack, White is also simply a pawn up.

30 \( \square f 3 \) \( \square e 5 \)

30...\( \square d 7 \) was somewhat more tenacious, although here too after 31 \( \square w e 6 ! \) \( \square x e 6 \) 32 \( d x e 6 \) \( \square x a 4 \) 33 \( \square c 7 \) \( \square f 6 \) 34 \( \square x f 4 \) Black is lost.

To win, White is lacking just a little something: firstly, 31 \( \square w x h 6 + ? \) \( \square x h 6 \) 32 \( \square h 3 + \) does not work on account of 32...\( \square h 5 \), and secondly, there is one piece that for the moment is not taking part in the attack (you can guess for yourself which one). But what if these two ideas are combined?

31 \( \square c 7 ! \)

Simple, but pretty. Back in my childhood I was taught that such a motif is called "overloading" (in this case – of the black queen).

31 ... \( \square x a 4 \)

32 \( \square x f 4 ! \)

The simplest, although 32 \( \square e 6 \) \( \square g 8 \) 33 \( \square g 5 + \) \( \square x g 5 \) 34 \( \square x g 5 \) \( \square a 1 \) 35 \( \square g 1 \) followed by \( \square e 6 \) was also good. But now Black does not have even this resource (\( \ldots \) \( \square g 8 \)): 32...\( \square x f 4 \) 33 \( \square e 6 \) \( \square g 8 \) 34 \( \square x g 8 \) \( \square x g 8 \) (or 34...\( \square x g 8 \) 35 \( \square x f 4 \) with a rapid mate) 35 \( \square f 5 + \) \( \square h 8 \) 36 \( \square f 6 + \) \( \square h 7 \) 37 \( \square f 8 + \) winning the queen. It is not hard to see that everything else also loses: the rook at a4 and knight at c4 have been too carried away by the battle for domination of the queenside, and are very much missed on the other side of the board.

Because of all this, Black resigned.

No.167

Piket–Kramnik

Tilburg 1997

King`s Indian Defence

The aim dictates the means

'The King's Indian Defence occurs rarely in my "Black" games. But at this moment in the tournament race, after three successive draws, I needed to play only for a win, to try and catch Kasparov and Svidler who had gone ahead, and I put aside my current main repertoire (the Nimzo-Indian Defence) until better times.' (Kramnik)

1  \( d 4 \)  \( \square f 6 \)
2  \( c 4 \)  \( g 6 \)
3  \( \square c 3 \)  \( \square g 7 \)
4  \( e 4 \)  \( d 6 \)
5  \( \square f 3 \) 0–0
6  \( \square e 2 \)  \( e 5 \)
7 0–0 \( \square a 6 \)

Studying this move ‘for White’, I came to the conclusion that it is not at all bad.

8  \( \square e 3 \)  \( \square g 4 \)
9  \( \square g 5 \)  \( \square e 8 \)

As was shown by game No.172, Kramnik-Topalov (Novgorod 1997), Black does not have complete equality after 9...\( f 6 \) 10 \( \square c 1 \) \( c 6 \) 11 \( h 3 \) \( \square h 6 \) 12 \( d x e 5 \) \( d x e 5 \) 13 \( \square x d 8 \) \( \square x d 8 \) 14 \( \square e 3 \), and there is no question of him hoping for a win.

10  \( d x e 5 \)  \( d x e 5 \)
11  \( h 3 \)  \( h 6 \)
12  \( \square d 2 \)  \( \square f 6 \)
13  \( \square e 3 \)  \( \square e 7 \)
Selected games

An idea of Shirov, who has twice played this against Van Wely.

14 \( \text{d}d5 \) \( \text{d}8 \\
15 \( \text{x}f6+ \) \( \text{x}f6 \\
16 \( \text{c}5 \\

16 \ldots \text{b}8! \\

A significant improvement. In the game Kramnik-Shirov (Monaco 1997) after 16...b6?! 17 \( \text{c}e1 \) White gained a big lead in development.

17 \( \text{w}b3?! \\

Better was 17 b4 with some advantage, although the game is complicated and Black has his trumps.

17 \ldots \text{c}6 \\
18 \( \text{ad}1 \) a6 \\
19 \( \text{d}2 \) \( \text{w}e7 \\
20 \( \text{fd}1 \) \( \text{h}7 \\

20...\text{h}8!? should also be considered. Black needs to play ...f7-f5, and I thought for a long time about where the king would be better placed: after ...\text{h}7 it can end up in a diagonal pin, while after ...\text{h}8 it is possible that \( \text{h}4 \) will be unpleasant.

21 \( \text{d}e1! \\

In order to meet ...f7-f5 with either the quiet but somewhat passive f2-f3, or the more critical f2-f4.

21 \ldots \text{a}5!? \\

A multi-purpose move, which forced Piket to think: Black wants advance his pawn to a4 with the possibility of play against the c5 pawn, or, after ...\text{e}6, against the a2 pawn. After 21...\text{d}d4 (21...f5 22 \text{exf}5 \text{gxf}5 23 f4) 22 \( \text{xd}4 \) \text{exd}4

23 \( \text{d}d3 \) White is definitely not worse: 23...\text{xe}4 24 \( \text{f}3 \) \text{f}5 25 \( \text{xb}7 \) \text{b}8 26 c6.

22 \( \text{c}4 \) \( \text{f}5 \\

22...a4!? came into consideration, and if 23 \( \text{c}2 \) \text{d}4 24 \( \text{xd}4 \) \text{exd}4, when the c5 pawn is hanging, or 23 \( \text{a}3 \) f5 24 \text{exf}5 \text{gxf}5 25 f4 \( \text{c}6! ? \\

with a double-edged position.

23 \text{exf}5 \text{gf}5 \\
24 f4 \text{exf}4 \\
25 \text{f}2 \\

After 25 \( \text{xf}4! ? \) \text{xe}5+ 26 \( \text{c}3 \) \text{w}e7 with the idea of ...a5-a4 White has insufficient compensation for the pawn.

25 \ldots \text{a}4 \\
26 \text{w}a3 \\

Serious consideration should have been given to 26 \( \text{c}2! ? \\

'eyeing' the black king.

26 \ldots \text{d}5 \\
27 \text{e}2 \text{e}6! \\
28 \text{xe}6 \text{w}e6 \\
29 \( \text{f}3 \) \text{ad}8 \\
30 \text{de}1 \\

30 \text{xd}8!? \text{xd}8 31 \text{xe}5 \text{d}1+ 32 \text{h}2 \text{xe}5 33 \text{f}3 \text{d}5 is also unclear – Black has some initiative, but most probably it is a draw.

30 \ldots \text{f}3+ \\
31 \text{xf}3 \text{xa}2 \\
32 \text{e}7! \\

An accurate move. Less good was 32 \text{xb}7? \text{f}7 33 \text{e}7 \text{d}7! 34 \text{xd}7 \text{xd}7 with a clear advantage to Black.

32 \ldots \text{f}7
33 \textit{\texttt{xf4}} \textit{\texttt{xe7}}??

Very risky – much safer was \texttt{33...c6}, but in this game I was not aiming for a safe position.

34 \textit{\texttt{xe7}} \textit{\texttt{xb2}}

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

35 \textit{\texttt{g3}}!

An excellent chance for White in his own time trouble: he suddenly begins a dangerous counterattack. Incorrect was \texttt{35 \textit{\texttt{xf5+}} \textit{\texttt{h8}} 36 \textit{\texttt{g3}} \textit{\texttt{f6}}! when the a-pawn rapidly advances, while after \texttt{35 \textit{\texttt{xa4}}} Black could have played for a win without any risk.

35 \ldots \textit{\texttt{f6}}

After \texttt{35...\texttt{d5}}!? (\texttt{35...\texttt{d4+?}} \texttt{36 \textit{\texttt{xd4}} \textit{\texttt{xd4}} 37 \textit{\texttt{e5}} loses immediately, as does \texttt{35...a3?! \texttt{36 \textit{\texttt{xf5+}} \textit{\texttt{h8}} 37 \textit{\texttt{g7}}} while \texttt{35...\texttt{d1+?!}} \texttt{36 \textit{\texttt{h2}} \textit{\texttt{b1}} 37 \textit{\texttt{f2!}} \textit{\texttt{h1+}} \texttt{38 \textit{\texttt{g3}} \textit{\texttt{d3+}} \texttt{39 \textit{\texttt{e3}} would have given White a strong attack; for the moment he is threatening \texttt{40 \textit{\texttt{xb6+}} with mate}) \texttt{36 \textit{\texttt{xc7}}} \texttt{a3} 37 \textit{\texttt{e5 \textit{\texttt{xe5}}}} \texttt{38 \textit{\texttt{xe5 \textit{\texttt{xe5}}}} \texttt{39 \textit{\texttt{a5}}} Black is not in danger of losing, but he is hardly in danger of winning.

36 \textit{\texttt{xc7}} \textit{\texttt{d1+}}

37 \textit{\texttt{h2}} \textit{\texttt{a1}}

37...\texttt{d4} 38 \textit{\texttt{f2}!}

38 \textit{\texttt{f4}}

Bad is \texttt{38 \textit{\texttt{e5? h1+}} 39 \textit{\texttt{g3}} \textit{\texttt{e1+}}, when White is mated.

38 \ldots \textit{\texttt{h1+}}

39 \textit{\texttt{g3}} \textit{\texttt{c3+?!}}

This may not give an advantage, but it continues the battle for first place in the tournament. \texttt{39...a3} \texttt{40 \textit{\texttt{e5}} \textit{\texttt{e1+}}! 41 \textit{\texttt{xe1 \textit{\texttt{xe1}} 42 \textit{\texttt{xe1}} a2 would have led to an immediate draw.}}

40 \textit{\texttt{e3}} \textit{\texttt{f6}}

41 \textit{\texttt{xb7}} \textit{\texttt{h5}!}

Otherwise Black simply stands worse.

42 \textit{\texttt{e7}??}

White wants to play as safely as possible. It would appear that he could have drawn by \texttt{42 \textit{\texttt{e5?}} \textit{\texttt{f4+}} (less good is \texttt{42...\texttt{g6+}} \texttt{43 \textit{\texttt{f2}} f4} \texttt{44 \textit{\texttt{c3}!}}, when Black’s passed pawn is stopped, whereas White’s is ready to advance) \texttt{43 \textit{\texttt{f3}} (or \texttt{43 \textit{\texttt{xf4 g6+}} 44 \textit{\texttt{f2 c2+}} 45 \textit{\texttt{g3 g6+}})} \texttt{45 \texttt{xf6 g6}} \texttt{44 \textit{\texttt{xf4 f1+}} 45 \textit{\texttt{f3 h6+}} \texttt{46 \textit{\texttt{f5 g6+}} 47 \textit{\texttt{f4}} \textit{\texttt{h6+}}.}

42 \ldots \texttt{h4+}

43 \textit{\texttt{f2}} \textit{\texttt{c1}!}

Black takes the initiative, and now White has to play accurately.

44 \textit{\texttt{e8}}

Bad is \texttt{44 \textit{\texttt{xf6 xf6}} 45 \textit{\texttt{a3 c4}} with the very unpleasant threat of \texttt{46...\texttt{b2}}.

44 \ldots \textit{\texttt{c2+}}

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

45 \textit{\texttt{f1}?!}

But this is a serious, although not very obvious mistake. White also does not appear to have a draw after \texttt{45 \textit{\texttt{e2}}? \textit{\texttt{xe2+}} 46 \textit{\texttt{xe2 a3}?!} \texttt{47 \textit{\texttt{h5+}} \textit{\texttt{g8}} 48 \textit{\texttt{e8+}} \textit{\texttt{f8}}}, but essential was \texttt{45 \textit{\texttt{f3}} \textit{\texttt{g6}} 46 \textit{\texttt{xf6+}} \textit{\texttt{xf6}} 47 \textit{\texttt{a3}} \textit{\texttt{c4}} 48 \textit{\texttt{c6}} \textit{\texttt{b2}} 49 \textit{\texttt{a2 a3}} 50 \textit{\texttt{c7 f7}} 51 \textit{\texttt{d6}}, maintaining the balance.

45 \ldots \textit{\texttt{a6}+!}

Luring the king to \texttt{g1}, in order to gain an important tempo by \ldots\texttt{d4} with check..
Selected games

No.168
Anand–Kramnik
Wijk aan Zee 1998
Sicilian Defence

A draw, which was more interesting...

Genuine art is a search for truth. And the value of work performed is determined not so much by the approach to the truth, as by the correctness of this search and the persistence with which it is carried out. This is what many philosophers, beginning with de Motaine, have thought. If one accepts their point of view, it is easy to understand why this drawn game seemed to its creator to be more interesting than many wins. Both players searched fervently for the truth, and they can hardly be reproached for the fact that, because of their equivalence in strength...

1 e4 c5 2 d3 cc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 xd4 cc6 5 cc3 e5 6 db5 d6 7 gg5 a6 8 da3 b5 9 xf6 gxf6 10 dd5 gg7 11 dd3

In recent years 11 c3 has become very popular.

11 0–0 0–0

52 g3?

White becomes rattled in time trouble, but he would also have stood badly after 52 cg3+ cd5 53 xh4 xc5 in view of the extremely unfortunate position of his king.

52 . . . dd5
53 xh4 de4
54 de2 cc2+
55 dd1 ca2

Threatening 56...dd3 with mate. Here Piket sank into thought, used up nearly all his remaining time before the second control, and resigned.
14  \textit{W}f3!? \\
A new try for an advantage. After 14 c3 or 14 c4 Black usually solves successfully his opening problems.
14  \ldots  \\
f5 \\
There is no other sensible move.
15  \textit{ex}f5  \\
d5 \\
This sacrifice of a second pawn is practically forced – the variation 15...\textit{b}7 16 \textit{e}e4 \textit{d}5 17 \textit{xd}5 \textit{e}4 18 \textit{f}6 \textit{xf}6 19 \textit{g}3+ \textit{g}7 20 \textit{xb}7 \textit{xb}7 21 c3 merely leaves Black with some drawing chances, but not more.
16  \textit{xd}5  \\
\textit{b}7 \\
At the cost of two pawns Black has driven the enemy queen to an extremely bad post, and has also won a couple of tempi, which is very important for the further development of his initiative.
17  \ldots  \\
e4 \\
Otherwise White moves his rook from f1 and puts his bishop there, where it is much better placed than at e2, for example: 17...\textit{fd}8 18 \textit{fd}1 \textit{d}4 19 \textit{fl} \textit{b}4 20 \textit{d}7! If 17...\textit{g}5 there follows 18 \textit{f}3.
18  \textit{e}2  \\
\textit{g}5!

The only move. Other continuations lead to a clear advantage for White: 18...\textit{e}5 19 \textit{c}4!, 18...\textit{f}6 19 c3 \textit{xf}5 20 \textit{c}2, or 18...\textit{ad}8 19 \textit{ad}1 \textit{g}5 20 \textit{c}4!

The idea of Black’s last move is that now if 19 \textit{c}4 he has 19...\textit{e}3!! 20 \textit{xe}3 (20 \textit{f}3? \textit{d}5 21 \textit{xe}3 \textit{xe}3+ 22 \textit{xe}3 \textit{d}4 23 \textit{f}2 \textit{fe}8) 20...\textit{ae}8, and the

Despite the apparent attractiveness of Black’s position, I was unable to find any direct way to gain an advantage. White is everywhere saved by the possibility of \textit{c}4!, which follows after 20...\textit{h}8 or 20...\textit{ad}8. The variation 20...\textit{xf}5 21 c4! is also not fully clear. Therefore, with time trouble approaching, I thought it best to
force a draw, although the implementation of the idea was not altogether correct.

21 \textcolor{red}{\text{d}c4}! \\
Here too this tactical possibility secures a draw for White. There is simply nothing else – after 21 \textcolor{blue}{\text{b}4} (otherwise 21...\textcolor{blue}{\text{h}4}) 21...\textcolor{blue}{\text{h}8} Black’s attack is irresistible.

21 ... \textcolor{yellow}{\text{d}f4} \\
Of course, not 21...\textcolor{red}{\text{b}xc4}? 22 \textcolor{blue}{\text{x}b7} \textcolor{blue}{\text{h}4} 23 \textcolor{blue}{\text{f}4} \textcolor{red}{\text{x}f4} 24 \textcolor{blue}{\text{g}3}.

22 \textcolor{red}{\text{d}d4} \\
Again the only move. 22 \textcolor{red}{\text{d}6}? would have lost to 22...\textcolor{blue}{\text{h}6}.

22 ... \textcolor{blue}{\text{d}5}!!?

A pretty and correct idea in an inexact formulation. The move played does not spoil anything, but rather more accurate was 22...\textcolor{red}{\text{d}8}! 23 \textcolor{red}{\text{d}f1} and only now 23...\textcolor{red}{\text{d}5}!, practically obliging White to force a draw by 24 \textcolor{red}{\text{x}d5} \textcolor{red}{\text{x}d5} 25 \textcolor{red}{\text{x}d5} \textcolor{blue}{\text{h}4} 26 \textcolor{blue}{\text{g}3}! (bad is 26 \textcolor{red}{\text{xe}3}? \textcolor{red}{\text{x}e}3+ 27 \textcolor{red}{\text{xe}3} \textcolor{red}{\text{e}1}+) 26...\textcolor{red}{\text{x}g3} 27 \textcolor{red}{\text{xe}3} \textcolor{blue}{\text{x}h2}+ 28 \textcolor{blue}{\text{f}1}, when Black has to give perpetual check by 28...\textcolor{blue}{\text{h}3}+, since in the variation 24 \textcolor{red}{\text{x}f4} \textcolor{red}{\text{x}f4} 25 \textcolor{red}{\text{xe}3} \textcolor{red}{\text{x}f5} it is only White who may have problems.

23 \textcolor{red}{\text{x}f4} \\
23 \textcolor{red}{\text{x}d5} \textcolor{blue}{\text{h}4} 24 \textcolor{blue}{\text{g}3} \textcolor{red}{\text{x}g3} 25 \textcolor{red}{\text{hxg}3} \textcolor{red}{\text{x}g3}+ 26 \textcolor{blue}{\text{h}1} \textcolor{blue}{\text{h}3}+ 27 \textcolor{blue}{\text{g}1} \textcolor{blue}{\text{h}8}!? 28 \textcolor{red}{\text{c}3}+ \textcolor{red}{\text{f}6} 29 \textcolor{red}{\text{xe}3} \textcolor{red}{\text{g}8}+ 30 \textcolor{red}{\text{g}4} \textcolor{red}{\text{g}3}+ 31 \textcolor{blue}{\text{h}1} \textcolor{blue}{\text{h}3}+ would have led to a draw. 23 \textcolor{red}{\text{g}3}? does not work because of 23...\textcolor{red}{\text{x}c}4 24 \textcolor{red}{\text{x}c}4 \textcolor{red}{\text{b}xc4} 25 \textcolor{red}{\text{xc}4} \textcolor{red}{\text{c}2}!

23 ... \textcolor{red}{\text{x}f4} \\
Not 23...\textcolor{red}{\text{x}c}4? 24 \textcolor{red}{\text{xc}3}! \textcolor{red}{\text{fe}8} 25 \textcolor{red}{\text{c}1}!, and in view of the threat of \textcolor{red}{\text{g}4}, White wins.

24 \textcolor{red}{\text{xe}3} \textcolor{red}{\text{xf}5} \\
Of course, not 24...\textcolor{red}{\text{xe}3}+ 25 \textcolor{red}{\text{xe}3}, when White has too many pawns.

25 \textcolor{red}{\text{d}3} \textcolor{red}{\text{f}6} \\
After 25...\textcolor{red}{\text{e}6} 26 \textcolor{red}{\text{g}5}+! \textcolor{red}{\text{h}8} 27 \textcolor{red}{\text{h}4} Black has serious problems, for example: 27...\textcolor{blue}{\text{f}5} 28 \textcolor{red}{\text{d}4}+ \textcolor{red}{\text{g}8} 29 \textcolor{red}{\text{xe}3}! \textcolor{red}{\text{ad}8} 30 \textcolor{red}{\text{x}f5}!

26 \textcolor{red}{\text{b}6} \textcolor{red}{\text{ad}8} \\
27 \textcolor{red}{\text{xd}5} \textcolor{red}{\text{xd}5} \\
28 \textcolor{red}{\text{e}4} \textcolor{red}{\text{d}4}+ \\
28...\textcolor{red}{\text{h}5}?? has no particular point.

29 \textcolor{red}{\text{xd}4} \textcolor{red}{\text{xd}4} \\
30 \textcolor{red}{\text{e}1}

Despite White’s slight advantage, the ending is drawish. White could have played on for a long time yet, trying to ‘squeeze’ something out of this half-empty position, but Vishy decided not to expend effort in vain (all the same the game would most probably have ended peacefully), and he offered a draw immediately. I had no reason to decline.

This was perhaps the most interesting game that I played in this tournament.

\hspace{1cm} No.169 \\
\hspace{1cm} Kramnik–Topalov \\
\hspace{1cm} Dortmund 1999 \\
\hspace{1cm} Queen’s Gambit \\

Something like a rehearsal
"This would be my résumé on Dortmund: the tournament was a short one, without any warm-up, and just before the FIDE World Championship in Las Vegas it was hard to expect of the participants any opening revelations or forceful play. They were testing, warming up... And nevertheless in some games, including this one, the battle was interesting and even critical in its way: after all, Veselin and I have met many times in major tournaments over the past few years, and no competitor is indifferent to his score against his strongest rivals..." (Kramnik)

1 d4 d6
2 c4 c6
3 e4 g6
4 e2 e7
5 c5 f6
6 f4 bd7
7 e3 e6
8 f5

Apparentlly a new plan. White deprives his opponent of possibilities involving ...h5, and in some cases he intends to play f2-f4.

9... g6

In the event of 9...0-0 Black was rightly afraid of the swift pawn attack 10 g4 g5 11 h4, and he waits until White himself castles.

10 b4 c8
11 0-0 d8

12 e1

Incomprehensible at first sight, but a subtle and necessary move. If White had immediately begun play with 12 a4, then after 12...c7 13 xc7 xc7 14 f4 (the advance...e6-e5 must be prevented) Black would have gained quite good counterplay on the queenside with 14...b6. Now, however, he is deprived of this resource: the rook begins pressing on the c6 pawn.

12... c7
13 xc7 xc7
14 f4 g8

A correct and interesting move. The obvious 14...0-0 would have allowed White to begin a pawn offensive – 15 g4 h6 16 h4, and Black has no way of opposing it.

15 e4

The only real chance of fighting for an advantage, as otherwise Black will play his knight to e7 with an equal position.

15... e7

16 f5!?

A very risky decision that was not obligatory, but I wanted to make the play sharper. A quieter continuation was possible, 16 we1 for example – in this case it is hard to say whether White has anything. Now the play is practically forced.

16... exf5
17 exd5 cxd5

If 17...xd5 18 c4 0-0 (18...xc3 19 xc3 0-0 20 d5 gives White a strong
Selected games

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initiative) 19 \( \text{cxd5 } \text{cxd5} \) 20 \( \text{d6} \) with a clear advantage.

18 \( \text{b5} \) 0–0

19 \( \text{b6} \) \( \text{d8} \)

19...\( \text{wc8} \) came into consideration – here the queen seems to stand slightly worse, but on the other hand it defends the b7 pawn.

20 \( \text{b3} \) \( \text{f6} \)

21 \( \text{a5} \) \( \text{b8} \)

22 \( \text{a4} \) \( \text{e4} \)

23 \( \text{a2} \)

Initially I had been intending to sacrifice a piece here – 23 \( \text{xb7} \) \( \text{xb7} \) 24 a5, and after 24...\( \text{c6} \) 25 \( \text{a4}! \) Black cannot maintain the blockade on the queenside, but on approaching close to this position I saw that Black has counterplay, for example 24...\( \text{f4}! \) 25 \( \text{xa6} \) \( \text{b8} \) 26 \( \text{xe4} \) dxe4 27 c6 \( \text{xe6} \) 28 \( \text{xc6} \) f3. Therefore for the moment the white knight is transferred to b4.

23 ... \( \text{f6?} \)

A serious mistake, in my opinion. This move is too passive. During the game it seemed to me (and this was later confirmed) that Black should have decided on a counter pawn sacrifice – 23...\( \text{f4}! \), in order to gain counterplay. A possible variation is 24 \( \text{xf4} \) \( \text{f5} \) 25 \( \text{d3} \) \( \text{g5} \) 26 \( \text{c1} \) \( \text{f8} \) (26...\( \text{fg3}! ?? \) 27 \( \text{d1} \), and the position is hard to assess. This idea did not appeal to Topalov, and he preferred passive defence while retaining his extra material. After 23...\( \text{f6} \) White has the advantage: for the moment there are no specific threats (at some point the threat of the knight sacrifice is 'hanging'), but Black has difficulty in gaining any counterplay, and the (apparently) well-placed knight at e4 is effectively unemployed. I set about preparing the sacrifice on b7, while Topalov did not make use of all his defensive possibilities, although it was not at all easy to oppose it.

24 \( \text{b4} \) \( \text{e8} \)

25 \( \text{c2}! \)

An important move. After the immediate 25 \( \text{xb7} \) \( \text{xb7} \) 26 \( \text{xa6} \), apart from 26...\( \text{b8} \) with an unclear game there is also 26...\( \text{xb6} \) 27 \( \text{xb6} \) \( \text{xb6} \) 28 \( \text{b5} \) \( \text{xb5} \) 29 \( \text{xb5} \), when the game should end in a draw. After 26 a5 \( \text{c6} \) 27 \( \text{xa6} \) \( \text{e7} \) 28 \( \text{xc6} \) \( \text{xc6} \) it is very hard to drive the bishop from c6 (the knight hinders the preparation of \( \text{a6-b5} \)). The move played is essentially the key one, precisely as it prepares a future \( \text{a6-b5} \).

25 ... \( \text{g6} \)

Stronger and more interesting was 25...\( \text{g5} \), when White was planning 26 \( \text{d3} \), for the moment holding back the black pawns.

26 \( \text{f1} \) \( \text{f7} \)

Black's problem is that it is hard for him to find a useful move.

27 \( \text{xb7}! \) \( \text{xb7} \)

28 a5 \( \text{c6} \)

29 \( \text{xc6} \) \( \text{xc6} \)

30 \( \text{xa6} \) \( \text{b8} \)
Now, five years later, kingside castling had become more popular. However, back in my game with Haba (Bundesliga 1993) I was able to demonstrate an advantage for White (after the well-known continuation 15...0-0 16 \text{\textit{We}}5 \text{\textit{Fd}}8 17 \text{\textit{Ce}}2 \text{\textit{f6}} 18 \text{\textit{Wxd}}5 \text{\textit{Exd}}5) with the help of a shuttle manoeuvre by my knight: 19 \text{\textit{Da}}5! \text{\textit{Dc}}8+ 20 \text{\textit{Db}}1 \text{\textit{Db}}4 21 \text{\textit{Xb}}7 \text{\textit{Xb}}8 22 \text{\textit{Da}}5!, but very serious consideration should be given to 16...\text{\textit{Xb}}8!?, and in my game with Van Wely (Tilburg 1998) Black obtained excellent play after 17 \text{\textit{Je}}.e2 \text{\textit{Xb}}4+ 18 \text{\textit{Xc}}3 \text{\textit{b}}5! Another move that has been played is 15...\text{\textit{We}}5+. What other way is there of surprising White? But in chess, as in life, there is always scope for fresh ideas.

15 ... \text{\textit{De}}7!?

An innovation in the style of Karpov's discovery in his well-known Caro-Kann game against Kamsky (Dortmund 1993). The king allows the rook to go to d8, and after the standard transition into the endgame after \text{\textit{We}}5xd5 it will be in the centre of events.

16 \text{\textit{We}}5 \text{\textit{Xd}}8
17 \text{\textit{Ce}}2 \text{\textit{f6}}

It is dangerous to open files for the rooks: 17...\text{\textit{Xg}}2 18 \text{\textit{Dg}}1 \text{\textit{Wd}}5 19 \text{\textit{Xf}}5+! 18 \text{\textit{We}}3!

With the black king insecure, it is better to continue play in the middlegame. Here I expected 18...\text{\textit{We}}5+ 19 \text{\textit{Cc}}3 (weaker is 19 \text{\textit{Db}}3 \text{\textit{b}}5!? 19...\text{\textit{Dc}}7 20 \text{\textit{Xg}}3 \text{\textit{Dd}}5+ 21 \text{\textit{Cb}}3 and I was prepared for a lengthy struggle. But Hodgson was attracted by another route for his knight.

18 ... \text{\textit{Db}}4+?
19 \text{\textit{Db}}3 \text{\textit{a}}5

Black is obliged to go in for this weakening of his queenside. However, the position of the knight at b4 is insufficiently secure.

20 \text{\textit{Ad}}1 \text{\textit{Wf}}5
21 \text{\textit{Cc}}3

Black's threat of 21...\text{\textit{Wc}}2+ 22 \text{\textit{Aa}}3 \text{\textit{Xc}}4! 23 \text{\textit{Xc}}4 \text{\textit{Cc}}2+ had to be parried.

21 ... \text{\textit{b}}5
21...\text{\textit{Xd}}5 22 \text{\textit{Xg}}3 \text{\textit{g}}5 was the only defence.

22 \text{\textit{Da}}5!

Without particular necessity White should not open lines, since for the moment his king too has not found a quiet post. 22 \text{\textit{Xb}}5 \text{\textit{Xb}}5 23 \text{\textit{Dx}}a5 \text{\textit{Dd}}3+ 24 \text{\textit{Cc}}2 \text{\textit{Wd}}4+! 25 \text{\textit{Ab}}1 \text{\textit{Xa}}5 26 \text{\textit{Xxd}}3 \text{\textit{Wd}}1+ was not altogether clear.

22 ... \text{\textit{c}}5

Black was apparently pinning his hopes on this move, but a surprise awaits him. 22...\text{\textit{Xxa}}4+ would no longer have saved him after 23 \text{\textit{Xxb}}4 \text{\textit{Db}}8+ 24 \text{\textit{Aa}}3 \text{\textit{Db}}3+ (24...\text{\textit{Xxa}}5 is also inadequate on account of 25 \text{\textit{Wc}}6) 25 \text{\textit{Xxb}}3 \text{\textit{Xxb}}3+ 26 \text{\textit{Xxb}}3 \text{\textit{Db}}8+ 27 \text{\textit{Aa}}2 \text{\textit{Xa}}8+ 28 \text{\textit{Wd}}3+ \text{\textit{Xa}}3+ 29 \text{\textit{Dxa}}3, when White has every chance of winning.

23 \text{\textit{Xxb}}5! \text{\textit{Xxa}}5

The exchange of rooks also does not ease the situation: 23...\text{\textit{Xd}}1 24 \text{\textit{Xd}}1 \text{\textit{Xxa}}5 25 \text{\textit{Dd}}7+. 
Black has to exchange queens, since if 25...\textit{g}5 there follows 26 \textit{h}4. But now White has an easily won ending, thanks to his pair of connected passed pawns.

26 \textit{w}xe5 \textit{fxe}5
27 \textit{a}d8 \textit{xd}8
28 \textit{c}4 \textit{e}7
29 \textit{xc}5 \textit{d}5
30 \textit{b}4 \textit{a}8
31 \textit{c}6 \textit{c}8
32 \textit{b}5 \textit{e}4
Black resigns

16... \textit{d}c5

My reaction to 16...\textit{b}8?! is seen in game No. 146 with Kiril Georgiev from the 1994 Olympiad in Moscow.

17 \textit{e}2 \textit{w}xg2
18 \textit{h}gl \textit{w}xh2

The first critical position. Up till then it was thought that White had to choose between 19 \textit{h}4, 19 \textit{b}4 and 19 \textit{c}3, but...

16 \textit{d}c5

An innovation. This move, rejected in \textit{Informator} because of 19...\textit{d}3, was brought to my attention by Konstantin Sakaev roughly a year before this game. In fact White then has the excellent counter 20 \textit{h}1!, and the evaluation of the position changes radically in his favour: 20...\textit{w}xh1 21 \textit{x}d3 \textit{w}d5 (no better is 21...\textit{w}h2+ 22 \textit{e}2 or 21...\textit{d}xd3 22 \textit{w}xd3 \textit{w}h2+ 23 \textit{b}3, while 22...\textit{d}8? gradually loses after 23 \textit{d}6+ \textit{b}8 24 \textit{g}3! \textit{a}8 25 \textit{g}8) 22 \textit{xf}7 \textit{b}5 23 axb5 exb5 24 \textit{d}d2. It would

19 \textit{d}xg7!

Against Ivanchuk in Linares 1994 I tried 16 \textit{w}e5 \textit{f}6 and only then 17 \textit{w}e3, and after 17...\textit{b}8 18 \textit{c}2 Black rejected the capture on g2 in favour of the more solid 18...e5.
seem that 19 \( \text{h} \text{g7} \) conclusively rules out this variation for Black. Shirov realised that he had fallen into a prepared variation and he thought for some 45 minutes. As a result he found an interesting, but inadequate reply.

\[
\begin{align*}
19 \ldots & \text{d4?!} \\
20 & \text{wxd4} \text{exe2+}
\end{align*}
\]

After some thought I managed to refute Black’s idea. And the fact that it was by no means ephemeral is emphasised by the following variations:
(a) 21 \texttt{b1? w}e1+ 22 \texttt{a2 wxa1}+ 23 \texttt{xa1 \text{b}3}+;
(b) 21 \texttt{c3 wf3}+ 22 \texttt{e3} (22 \texttt{c}3 \texttt{f6}+ 23 \texttt{e}5 \texttt{f3}+ with a repetition of moves, or 22 \texttt{b4? a6}+ 23 \texttt{a5 \text{d}8})
22...\text{d}8! 23 \texttt{xc5} (here the counter-threat 23 \texttt{f1} is rendered futile: 23...\texttt{e}4+ 24 \texttt{b3 \text{xd}4} 25 \texttt{xf3 \text{d}2}+ 26 \texttt{e3 \text{xf}3} 27 \texttt{g3 \text{f}4}! 23...\texttt{f6}+ 24 \texttt{b3 \text{g}7} 25 \texttt{xa7 \text{d}3}+ 26 \texttt{a2} (26 \texttt{a}2 \texttt{g}6) 26...\text{d}4! White’s position is preferable, but not more.

\[
\begin{align*}
21 & \ldots \text{d}8 \\
22 & \text{wxc5} \text{xd}2+
\end{align*}
\]

There is no perpetual check – 22...\text{d}3+ 23 \texttt{c1 \text{xd}2}+ 24 \texttt{b1 \text{d}1}+ 25 \texttt{e1}!

\[
\begin{align*}
23 & \texttt{b3} \texttt{xb}2+ \\
24 & \texttt{a3} \texttt{d}2
\end{align*}
\]

Otherwise 25 \texttt{w}f8+

\[
\begin{align*}
25 & \texttt{g}3 \texttt{e}4?! \\
26 & \texttt{dxg}7 \texttt{e}4+ \\
27 & \texttt{d}1 \texttt{e}4+ \\
28 & \texttt{xd}2+ 28 \texttt{b}3 \texttt{d}3+ 29 \texttt{c}3 \texttt{d}5+ 30 \texttt{b}2 \texttt{g}2+ 31 \texttt{a}3.
\]

After the game Shirov suggested 26 \texttt{w}b4?!

\[
\begin{align*}
26 & \ldots \text{b}6! \\
27 & \text{w}f8+ \texttt{b}7
\end{align*}
\]

An inaccuracy. It was time to include the reserve – the queen’s rook – in the attack: 28 \texttt{f1}? f5 29 \texttt{g}1 \texttt{d}7 30 \texttt{g}7 \texttt{d}4 31 \texttt{xd}7+ \texttt{xd}7 32 \texttt{g}3 \texttt{a}6 33 \texttt{w}b4 with a technically not very difficult win.

\[
\begin{align*}
28 & \ldots \texttt{a}6 \\
29 & \texttt{w}f3!
\end{align*}
\]

Now White has to be extremely accurate. In the event of the impulsive 29 \texttt{f1}+ an unpleasant surprise would have awaited me – 29...\texttt{b}5! 30 \texttt{xb}5 (30 \texttt{xb5}?? \texttt{a}5! and Black gives mate) 30...\texttt{e}2!! 31 \texttt{b}4 \texttt{e}3+ 32 \texttt{b}3 \texttt{c}5+ with perpetual check.

\[
\begin{align*}
29 & \ldots \texttt{xf}3?!
\end{align*}
\]

Of course, Black should not have exchanged queens. Better was 29...\texttt{d}4 30 \texttt{w}d6+ 31 \texttt{b}4 \texttt{d}6 (31...c5 32 \texttt{c}4 \texttt{b}7 33 \texttt{e}1! \texttt{d}4 34 \texttt{xe}6) 32 \texttt{c}1 \texttt{d}4 33 \texttt{c}3 \texttt{e}5 34 \texttt{b}2! (34 \texttt{a}5? \texttt{c}4) 34...\texttt{xa}4 35 \texttt{a}3 \texttt{xa}3 36 \texttt{xa}3, when White still has to work very hard for his win. In the ending with three rooks Black has practically no chances of resisting.

\[
\begin{align*}
30 & \texttt{xf}3 \texttt{a}5 \\
31 & \texttt{f}4?+ \texttt{d}3+
\end{align*}
\]
32...\textit{b2}  
\textit{h3}  
32...\textit{e3}!? should have been considered, in order to advance the e-pawn and prevent the white rook from defending its last pawn along the fourth rank.

33 \textit{e1}  
34 \textit{b3}  
35 \textit{c2}  
36 \textit{d3}  
37 \textit{e4}  
38 \textit{x6}  
39 \textit{e3}  
40 \textit{e4}  

Even the capture of the last white pawn does not help, since then, exploiting mating threats, White reduces the black pawn mass on the queenside: 41...\textit{xa4} 42 \textit{e1} \textit{a3} (42...\textit{h4+} 43 \textit{e4}) 43 \textit{e7} a6 44 \textit{b1} \textit{a5} 45 \textit{b7}.

41 \textit{c4!}  
\textit{g3}  

This attack on the vulnerable b6 pawn ties down the opponent’s forces.

42 \textit{h6}  
43 \textit{h7}  
44 \textit{g5}  
45 \textit{b7}  

Black resigns.

He is in zugzwang: 49...\textit{b1} 50 \textit{xe5}+ \textit{xa4} 51 \textit{c6} etc.

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\textbf{No.172}  
\textit{Kramnik–Topalov}  
\textit{Novgorod 1997}  
King’s Indian Defence  
(\textit{notes by Dolmatov})

\textbf{Indicator of competitive form}

The first game of any event is very important for a player’s subsequent tournament fate. It entails a great deal of nervous energy. On the one hand, it is desirable to win, but on the other hand, no one wants to begin a tournament with a loss. What degree of risk is acceptable? Here, on top of everything, this was a game between the two youngest participants, the most promising players in the world, and so there was no doubting is crucial importance.

1 \textit{f3} \textit{f6} 2-c4-g6 3 \textit{xh3} \textit{g7} 4 e4 d6 5 d4 0-0 6 \textit{e2} e5 7 0-0 \textit{a6} 8 \textit{e3} \textit{g4} 9 \textit{g5} f6

10 \textit{c1}

White has another, seemingly more promising possibility: 10 \textit{h4}, but it leads to excessively complicated play, which did not come into Kramnik’s plans in the first round.

10 ... \textit{h8}  
11 h3 \textit{h6}  
12 dxe5 dxe5

The seventh game of the Karpov-Kasparov match (New York/Lyon 1990)
went 12...fxe5 13 ♘e3 ♘f7 14 ♙d2 ♗c5 15 ♘g5 ♗xg5 16 ♗xg5 ♗f6 17 ♘e3 ♘e6 18 ♘g4 with slightly the better game for White.

13 ♙xd8

White has to hurry with this move, as after 13 ♘e3 ♘f7 14 ♙xd8 Black acquires an additional and interesting possibility - 14...♕xd8.

13 ... ♘xd8
14 ♘e3 ♘e6
15 a3 ♘f7
16 b4 c6?!

If 16...f5 Topalov was concerned about 17 c5?! but 16...♗h6?! came into consideration, when neither 17 b5 ♘xe3 18 bxa6 ♘b6 19 axb7 ♘ab8 20 ♘ab1 ♘d6 nor 17 c5 ♘xc3 18 fxe3 c6 is dangerous for Black. White would probably have had to fight for the initiative with 17 ♘d5!? ♘xe3 18 fxe3.

17 ♘fd1 ♘xd1+
18 ♘xd1 ♘c7
19 ♘d2 ♘f8

19...♗h6, trying to get rid of the ‘bad’ bishop, did not work on account of 20 ♘xh6 ♘xh6 21 ♘b3 b6 22 ♙d6 with a powerful initiative.

I think that, when Topalov made his 19th move, he overlooked the opponent’s strong reply.

A brilliant positional decision. Firstly, it defends against 20...a5. Secondly, it plans the pawn advance a3-a4-a5. and finally, it prepares 21 ♗b3, when in reply to the almost obligatory 21...b6 White can begin an attack on the queenside with 22 c5. In general, an excellent ‘mysterious’ rook move.

20 ... b6?!

An unsuccessful attempt. 20...f5 was essential, in order after 21 exf5 gxf5 22 f4 ♘h6 to try and divert White from his play on the queenside, although here too he would retain an appreciable advantage with 23 g3 followed by ♗f2.

21 c5 b5
22 a4 ♘xa4

Extremely risky. More circumspect was 22...a6 23 ♘b3 ♙xb3 24 ♙xb3 ♘h6 25 ♘h6 ♘xh6 26 ♘a3, although here too after both 26...♕f7 27 ♘g4 and 26...♗g7 27 axb5 axb5 28 ♘xa8 ♘xa8 29 ♘xb5 cxb5 30 ♘xb5 Black’s position is unenviable.

23 ♘c4?
23 ♘c4? was dubious on account of 23...♗b5 24 ♘xa4 ♘xc4 25 ♘xc4 ♘a3 26 ♘c1 ♘xc4 27 ♘xc4 ♘b8 with equality, but 23 ♘c4 also came into consideration.

23 ... f5
24 exf5 gxf5
25 ♘c4 ♘d5
26 ♘d2 e4
27 ♘a5 ♘c8

27...♗e5 is dangerous on account of 28 ♘a6.

28 ♘a6 ♘c7
29 ♘c3 ♘xc3

Bad was 29...♗g7 30 ♘c2 with the idea of 31 ♘f4.

30 ♘xc3+ ♘g7
31 ♘d2 ♘a2
32 ♘c1

32 ♘d1 was perhaps even better, not fearing the pin 32...♗d7 on account of 33 ♘c8 ♘d3 34 ♘f1 ♘h6 35 ♘e1.

32 ... ♘e5
33 ♘c4!
33 ♘c4 was weaker in view of 33...♗xc4 34 ♘xc4 ♘b8 35 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 36 ♘f4 ♘d3.
33 \[\ldots\] \(\mathcal{A}xc4\)
34 \(\mathcal{A}xc4\) \(g7\)
35 \(b5\) \(xb5\)
36 \(\mathcal{A}xb5\) \(\mathcal{A}d4?!\)

Black should have switched to passive defence by 36 ... \(\mathcal{A}e7\) 37 \(c6\) \(\mathcal{A}c7\).
37 \(c6\) \(\mathcal{A}f6\)
38 \(\mathcal{A}d1\) \(\mathcal{A}e5?\)

The final mistake in the game. 38 ... \(\mathcal{A}e5\) did not work because of 39 \(g3!\). Only with 38 ... \(\mathcal{A}c8\) could Black have still tried to hold on.
39 \(\mathcal{A}a5\) \(\mathcal{A}e7\)
40 \(\mathcal{A}c4\) \(f4\)

Black would also have lost after 40 ... \(\mathcal{A}d6\) 41 \(\mathcal{A}d8\) \(\mathcal{A}xc4\) 42 \(\mathcal{A}d7\).
41 \(\mathcal{A}d7\)
Black resigns

Playing through such a game provides enormous aesthetic pleasure. White’s play was exceptionally consistent.

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In the mystification genre

'I have often begun noticing that the commentaries of certain well-known (and not so well-known) players would be correctly characterised as “frankly hackwork”, by no means aimed at searching for the truth. Reflecting on the reasons for this phenomenon, I compiled the following list:

Reason No.1: image projection (an attempt to create the impression that the opponent was doomed in the given game even before the first move);

No.2: unrecognised genius complex (a stubborn unwillingness to acknowledge one’s own mistakes or to point them out);

No.3: “high degree of professionalism” (an unwillingness to waste one’s precious time and effort on such a “trifling matter” as a game commentary);

No.4: anything else.

'It seems to me that reason No.3 occurs much more often than the rest. Unfortunately, the conviction “Plato is dear to me, but dearer still is the truth” is increasingly rare in our time, which is rapidly progressing in the direction of total pragmatism... The point of this unusual introduction will become clear from the second part of the notes to this game.’ (Kramnik)

---

Part 1

1 \(\mathcal{D}f3\) \(c5\) 2 \(c4\) \(\mathcal{A}f6\) 3 \(\mathcal{C}c3\) \(\mathcal{C}c6\) 4 \(g3\) \(d5\) 5 \(d4\) \(cx\) \(d4\) 6 \(\mathcal{D}xd4\) \(dxe4\) 7 \(\mathcal{D}xe6\) \(\mathcal{W}xd1+\) 8 \(\mathcal{D}xd1\) \(bxc6\) 9 \(\mathcal{A}g2\) \(\mathcal{D}d5\) 10 \(\mathcal{D}e3\) \(e6\) 11 \(\mathcal{A}xc4\) \(\mathcal{A}a6\) 12 \(\mathcal{A}a5!\)
hypothesised, played 12 b3 (see also game No.178). Meanwhile, after 12 \( \text{Q}a5! \) Black faces serious problems...

12 \ldots \text{\( \text{Q}c5!? \)}

For those wishing to improve on (or worsen?) Timman’s play, I can suggest two other sensible moves: 12...\( \text{b}4 \) and 12...\( \text{Q}b4 \).

13 \text{d}2 \text{0–0}
14 \text{c}1 \text{d}4
15 \text{b}4!

After 15 \text{xc}6 \text{b}5 16 \text{c}2 \text{f}c8 or 15 b3 c5 16 e3 \text{b}2 17 \text{c}2 \text{a}3 Black gains reasonable counterplay.

15 \ldots \text{\( \text{Q}b5 \)}

Jan sacrifices a pawn (strictly speaking, he did this back on his 12th move) in the hope of creating counterplay on the c-file, sufficient for a draw.

16 \text{xc}6 \text{b}2
17 \text{c}5!?

White could also have picked up a second pawn: 17 \text{c}2 \text{a}3 18 \text{xd}5 \text{exd}5 19 \text{c}7+ \text{h}8 20 \text{xd}5, but after 20...\text{ac}8 it would be very difficult to convert the material advantage.

17 \ldots \text{xc}6

It is doubtful whether 17...a6 was any stronger, as White has a pleasant choice between 18 \text{xd}5 \text{exd}5 19 \text{c}7+ \text{h}8 20 \text{xd}5 and 18 0–0!? \text{xe}2 19 \text{b}1 \text{f}6 20 a4, with good winning chances in both cases.

18 \text{xc}6 \text{ac}8

I cannot avoid boasting about the fact that here I calculated a variation some 10-15 moves ahead (often a calculation of even five moves ahead is a task beyond my powers). Other continuations allow Black sufficient counterplay: 19 \text{a}6 \text{f}d8!, or 19 \text{xd}5 \text{exd}5 20 \text{a}6 \text{c}2 21 \text{d}1 \text{f}c8 22 \text{xa}7 \text{a}4 23 \text{a}4 \text{b}2.

19 \ldots \text{xc}8
20 \text{xd}5

The immediate 20 f4 is met by 20...\text{b}6!, when the knight becomes very active.

20 \ldots \text{exd}5
21 f4!

The only move that leaves White with any real chances of winning. Let us consider the alternatives: 21 e3 \text{a}3 22 \text{e}2 \text{c}2 23 \text{d}3 \text{xa}2 24 \text{c}3!? \text{b}2! with equality, or 21 0–0 \text{c}2 22 \text{d}1 \text{d}4 23 \text{e}3 \text{g}6 24 \text{xd}4 \text{xd}4 25 \text{xd}4 \text{xa}2 26 e3 a5 and I am not yet strong enough to win such an ending against a strong grandmaster.

21 \ldots \text{a}3

Or 21...\text{c}2 22 \text{d}1 \text{c}4 23 \text{f}1.

22 \text{f}1! \text{c}4

After 22...\text{c}2 23 \text{f}3 \text{xa}2 24 \text{d}3 White will be a healthy pawn to the good.

23 \text{f}3 \text{xb}4
24 \text{xb}4

25 \text{a}3!

The point of White’s plan. Jan clearly underestimated how difficult the resulting rook ending would be (to be fair, I should mention that he hardly had any better
option). After 25 $b3$? Black is able to draw the pawn ending: 25...$xb3$ 26 $xb3$ $f8$ 27 $d2$ $e7$ 28 $c3$ a5!

25 ... h5!

A player of Timman’s calibre required only a couple of minutes to realise that Black has to give up a pawn immediately.

Significantly weaker was 25...$b7$? 26 $a5$ $d7$ (26...d4 27 $d2$) 27 $d2$ $f8$ 28 $d3$ $e7$ 29 $d4$ $e6$ 30 g4, when the pawn has to be given up under much worse circumstances. It was this variation that I worked out when I played 19 $x8$ (if you don’t praise yourself, no one will).

26 $xa7$

An extra pawn by no means always guarantees a win in a rook ending, but in the given case, despite all Jan’s efforts, he is unable to save the game.

26 ... $b2$

27 a4 $ta2$

The only sensible move.

28 f5!

A very important move, cramping the black king. Now Black loses after 28...f6 (28...h4?! 29 gxh4) 29 a5 $h7$ 30 a6 $h6$ 31 h4 g6 32 fxg6 $xg6$ 33 $a8$ $g7$ 34 a7 (see the note to White’s 41st move). Therefore my opponent tries to stir up trouble, but White is on the alert.

28 ... $a1+$

29 $f2$

It was not yet too late to blunder away a pawn: 29 $d2$? $f1$.

29 ... d4

30 a5 $f6$

31 $f3$!

Otherwise Black saves the game: 31 a6? $a5$, or 31 h3? $h7$ 32 a6 $a5$ 33 g4 $xg4$ 34 $xh6$ 35 $a8$ $g5$.

31 ... $h7$

32 a6 $h6$

33 h4 g6

34 $xg6$ $xg6$

35 $a8$ $a2$

36 $f4$!

Avoiding the last trap: 36 a7 $f5$!, and White’s winning chances are highly problematic in view of zugzwang. Now, however, it is all over.

36 ... $f7$

Or 36...$a4$ 37 $e4$ $a2$ 38 $d3$ and wins.

37 a7 $g7$

38 $f5$

Black is in zugzwang, and is forced to allow the enemy king into his position.

38 ... $a5+$

39 $e4$ $a4$

40 $d5$ $a1$

The d-pawn cannot be held, as if 40...h7 there follows 41 $c5$ with the threat of 42 $b6$, and the black rook is forced off the fourth rank.

41 $x4 d4$

Black resigns

The simplest winning plan is as follows: White plays e2-e4, and then takes his king to b6, say, after 41...$a4$ 42 $c5$ $a2$ 43 e4 $a1$ 44 $b6$, and then 44... $b1+$ 45
\[ \text{\textit{\textbf{Part 2}}} \]

I will begin with the fact that I must disillusion those who have examined this game, fully believing the comments. Because the second half of the first part is... a parody.

I chose this genre, one that is not very traditional for chess commentaries, for the reasons explained in the introduction. Now, however, ‘let’s be serious’, and try to delve into the subtleties of the rook ending, without paying attention to the result of the game.

\[ \text{\textbf{Position after 26 Rxa7}} \]

26...\textbf{b2} Serious consideration should have been given to the attempt to exchange pawns by 26...h4!? 27 \textbf{f2} hxg3+ 28 hxg3 g6. The drawback to this exchange is that White begins advancing his kingside pawns: 29 \textbf{f3}! \textbf{g7} 30 \textbf{g4} \textbf{f6} (30...\textbf{b2} 31 \textbf{a6+} \textbf{e7}. It is hard to say whether White’s advantage is sufficient for a win. Interesting, for example, is 32 \textbf{a3}!?

\[ \textbf{b2} 33 \textbf{e3+} \textbf{d6} (33...\textbf{f6}?! is passive: 34 \textbf{g5+} \textbf{g7} 35 \textbf{a3}) 34 \textbf{a3}. \]

27 \textbf{a4} Initially I considered this move to be a serious mistake, but now I no longer think so. Even so, it was probably worth playing 27 f5!, although here too Black retains good drawing chances: 27...h4! (the only move) 28 g4! (28 gxh4 \textbf{b4} or 28 \textbf{f2} hxg3+ 29 hxg3 \textbf{f6} 30 \textbf{a4} \textbf{h7} 31 \textbf{a5} \textbf{a2} 32 \textbf{e3} \textbf{a4} 33 \textbf{a6} \textbf{h6} is not good enough to win) 28...\textbf{b1+} 29 \textbf{f2} \textbf{h1} 30 \textbf{g2} \textbf{h1} 31 \textbf{e7} (31 \textbf{a8+} \textbf{h7} 32 \textbf{c8} \textbf{h6}?! 31 \textbf{f3} \textbf{h1}) 31...\textbf{a1} 32 \textbf{h3} \textbf{xa2} 33 \textbf{g4} (or 33 \textbf{e8+} \textbf{h7} 34 \textbf{g5} \textbf{f6}?! 35 \textbf{g6+} \textbf{h6} 36 \textbf{h4} \textbf{a4}+ 37 \textbf{g3} \textbf{g5} with a probable draw. 34 \textbf{h4} \textbf{f6} 35 \textbf{h5} d4 36 h4 \textbf{a5} 37 \textbf{e7} \textbf{d5} also leads to equality) 33...d4 (33...\textbf{f8}?! 34 \textbf{e3} d4 35 \textbf{e4} \textbf{f6}) 34 \textbf{h3}, and despite the fact that White retains practical winning chances, a draw is the most likely outcome.

27...\textbf{a2}?! A blunder. Essential was 27...g6! (now or never), after which there are no real winning chances (White is short of one tempo): 28 a5 \textbf{a2} 29 a6 \textbf{g7} 30 \textbf{a8} \textbf{f6} 31 a7 (31 h3 \textbf{f5} 32 \textbf{e3} \textbf{e4}!) 31...\textbf{f5} 32 h3 (32 c3 \textbf{g4}!) 32...h4! (otherwise e2-c3, and the march of the white king decides) 33 \textbf{gxf6} \textbf{xf6} 34 \textbf{d1}, and now the simplest is 34...\textbf{f5}! 35 \textbf{c1} \textbf{f6} 36 \textbf{b1} \textbf{a5} 37 \textbf{b2} \textbf{g7} with a draw. Perhaps it is better not to force events, but to play 29 \textbf{f2}, but even here after 29...\textbf{g7} or 29...\textbf{a3}?! Black should be able to hold on.

29 \textbf{f2}?! If this does not throw away the win, then at the least it makes it much more difficult. ‘Blundering away a pawn’ would have won easily – 29 \textbf{d2!} \textbf{f1} 30 a5 \textbf{xf5} 31 \textbf{d7}! \textbf{f6} (no better is 31...d4 32 a6 \textbf{a5} 33 \textbf{a7} \textbf{h7} 34 \textbf{xf7}) 32 \textbf{xd5} g6 33 \textbf{d3}! \textbf{a6} 34 \textbf{a3}. The strange thing is that I saw this variation during the game, but on the threshold of time trouble I wanted to play ‘more safely’.

31...\textbf{h7} 31...\textbf{a3}+ fails to save Black after 32 \textbf{e4} \textbf{e3}+ 33 \textbf{xd4} \textbf{xe2} 34 \textbf{a6} \textbf{hxh2} 35 \textbf{c7} \textbf{a2} 36 a7 \textbf{h7} 37 \textbf{c5} \textbf{h6}
38 b6 g5 39 xg7+ xf5 40 b7 b2+ 41 c8 a2 42 b8 b2+ 43 b7 a2 44 bb4! and wins.

34 fxg6? This mistake could have had unpleasant consequences. White would have won by 34 e4! gxf5+ (or 34... a2 35 fxg6 xxe2+ 36 bd4 xg6 37 cc7) 35 xf5 f1+ 36 c4 f2 37 xd4 xxe2 38 cc7 a2 39 a7 gg6 40 cc5 ff5 41 b6 gg4 42 ee5.

35...a2? Only the activation of the king offered chances of a draw: 35...ff5! 36 ff2 (after 36 a7 cc4! White cannot win) 36...a2 37 ee1 gg4! 38 a7 hh3. Now after 39 dd1 f5! 40 cc1 gg2 41 cc1 gg4 42 cc2 cc4+ 43 cc3 cc7! or 43 dd3 cc4! 42...bb4+! 43 cc3 bb7 44 cc4 gg7! 45 bb5 xg3 46 bb6 gg6+ 47 cc5 gg7 48 xd4 xh4 49 ce5 gg5 Black gains a study-like draw (pointed out by GM Alexander Baburin). However, White retains some practical winning chances after 39 ff1! hh2 40 ff2 d3 41 cc8 xa7 42 aa6.

36...ff7?! At this point we both considered Black’s position to be completely hopeless, and it was only a few days later that I discovered that after 36...gg7! things are not so simple:

(a) 37 a7 hh7 38 ff5 gg7 and the white king cannot escape from its ‘cage’. In the end a win was found, but would I have been able to do this at the board?

(b) however, White also wins by 37 cc4 xxe2+ 38 cc4 cc6 (or 38... a2 39 cc5 cc3 40 bb5!! xg3 41 cc8 cc3 42 ee4) 39 dd5 bb6 (39...ee5 also fails to save the game: 40 cc6 cc5 41 cc6 bb3 42 bb8 cc3+ 43 cc7 cc3+ 44 bb7 bb3+ 45 aa8 xg3 46 cc7 cc4 47 dd5 cc6 48 bb7 and wins) 40 cc5 cc6 41 cc5 bb5! ee5+ 42 cc6 ee6+ 43 dd7 bb6 (43...ee3 44 bb8 cc3 45 cc6 xg3 46 cc7 cc4 47 bb7 cc6 48 a7 xh7+ 49 cc7 ff5 50 bb4) 44 cc7 cc6 45 a7 ee7+ (45...aa6 46 bb7) 46 dd6 bb7 47 gg8+.

After all that has been said, it becomes clear that the play of both players in this game was far from ideal. Nevertheless, I gained great pleasure from analysing this genuinely very complicated rook ending...

**From the Opening into the Endgame**

No.174

Kramnik–Nunn

Olympiad, Manila 1992

King’s Indian Defence

A new ‘K’ on Olympus

‘On 25th June, during the Olympiad, Vladimír celebrated his 17th birthday. For those who are interested in astrology, I should
add that by the Chinese Calendar he was born in the Year of the Cat, like Karpov and Kasparov - a third “K” had appeared on the chess Olympus. You do not need an oracle to predict great chess achievements by the future hero of the nineties.

‘Kramnik has a good chess “touch”. His playing style is based on the strict harmony of strategy and tactics. He already has his own view on practically every opening, and he is literally overflowing with new ideas. In addition, it is good that he also feels at home among people, and he has numerous friends among his contemporaries. We await with impatience his future tournaments and victories. Here is an example of his brilliant style.’ (Grandmaster Yuri Razuvaev)

\[\begin{array}{ll}
1 & d4 \\
2 & c4 \\
3 & \text{c}3 \\
4 & e4 \\
5 & f3 \\
6 & g3 \text{c}3 \\
7 & \text{d}xc5 \\
\end{array}\)

An earlier game of mine went 7 \text{g}e2 \text{c}6 8 d5 \text{c}5 9 g3 e6 10 \text{e}2 exd5 11 cxd5 a6 12 0–0 b5 with chances for both sides (Kramnik-Har Zvi, Oakham 1992).

\[\begin{array}{ll}
7 & \ldots \\
8 & \text{xd}8 \\
9 & \text{xc}5 \\
10 & \text{a}3 \\
11 & \text{d}1 \\
\end{array}\)

11 \ldots \text{e}6

For the pawn Black has fully completed his development, whereas all White’s kingside pieces are still dozing, but... A few rounds earlier, in a game with Nenashev (Uzbekistan), my opponent tried 11...\text{xd}1+ 12 \text{xd}1 \text{b}4 13 \text{g}e2 b6 and... failed to equalise.

\[\begin{array}{ll}
12 & \text{d}5 \\
13 & \text{c}xd5 \\
14 & \text{b}5 \\
\end{array}\)

15 \text{f}2!

After 15 \text{e}2 Black achieves the desired counterplay: 15...\text{xa}3 16 bxa3 \text{ac}8 17 \text{h}3 \text{h}6, and the c-file is in his possession.

\[\begin{array}{ll}
15 & \ldots \\
16 & \text{bxa}3 \\
17 & \text{d}6 \\
\end{array}\)

16...\text{ac}8 17 \text{e}2 \text{c}2 was better.

The only move, otherwise White himself plays e4-e5.

\[\begin{array}{ll}
18 & \text{e}2 \\
19 & \text{d}7 \\
\end{array}\)

15...\text{xa}3!

This capture should have been deferred by one move, by interposing the check 19...\text{c}5+, in order to prevent White from playing g2-g4. After 20 \text{g}3 \text{xa}3 21 \text{hd}3 \text{c}5 22 a4 b6 23 \text{hd}1 \text{a}7 24 \text{h}3 \text{h}5! it is not so easy to breach Black’s defences.

20 \text{g}4!

A new move at such a late stage of the battle. Right up to this point we had been repeating the game Van der Sterren-Shirov (Kerteminde 1991), which continued 20
\[ \text{Kramnik: my life and games} \]

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20 \ldots h6 \\
21 h4 a4?!

If White himself plays a2-a4, Black will be unable to breathe. Nunn seeks counter-chances with his customary resourcefulness.

22 g3

After 22 g5 White would have had to reckon with 22...\( \text{e}5 \).

22 \ldots \text{b}2!

The best practical chance. After 22...\( \text{c}5+ \) 23 g3 \( \text{a}5 \) 24 \( \text{b}1 \) b6 25 g5 hxg5 26 hxg5 \( \text{h}7 \) 27 \( \text{d}5 \) \( \text{x}g5 \) 28 \( \text{e}5 \) \( \text{c}6 \) 29 \( \text{c}6 \) it is very hard for Black to hold the position.

23 g5!

Played after 40 minutes' thought. Initially I was inclined towards 23 \( \text{b}1 \) a3 24 \( \text{bd}1 \) \( \text{a}5 \) 25 \( \text{b}3 \), but this would have brought White only an insignificant advantage. I realised that for the moment the black pieces were not in their optimal positions, and that this was the time for decisive action.

23 \ldots \text{hxg5} \\
24 \text{hxg5} \text{h7} \\
24 \text{a5} 25 \text{fxe6} \text{xe6} 26 \text{d}1 \text{e}5 is bad for Black; if 26...\( \text{b}6 \), then 27 \( \text{d}6 \).

25 f4!

With the idea of preventing the black knight from coming into play in the variation 25...\( \text{fxe4} \) 26 \( \text{d}5 \). After 26...f6 27 \( \text{xf4} \) \( \text{xe5} \) 28 \( \text{e}3 \) \( \text{g}7 \) 29 \( \text{g}1 \) despite Black's extra pawn his position is cheerless. Nevertheless, this was his best chance.

25 \ldots \text{a}5? \\
26 \text{d}5 f6

This loses by force, but it is already hard to offer Black any good advice.

27 \text{d}h7! \text{d}h7 \\
28 \text{gxf6} \text{xf6} \\
29 e5

The white pawns are now irrepressible.

29 \ldots \text{h}6 \\
30 \text{xf4} \text{xe5} \\
31 \text{xe5} \text{xd7} \\
32 \text{xd7} \text{xe5} \\
33 \text{f7}

In view of the simple 33...\( \text{g}7 \) 34 \( \text{f}8 \text{+} \) \( \text{x}f8 \) 35 \( \text{x}g6+ \) Black resigned.

No.175

Kramnik–Damljanovic

Olympiad, Moscow 1994

Queen’s Gambit

Plan in action

It is rightly said that the most difficult thing in chess is winning a won position. In this game the dilemma appeared to be
solved easily and simply, but only because at the board Kramnik found an extremely accurate arrangement of the white forces.

1 d4 d5 2 f3 f6 3 c4 dxc4 4 c3 c6 5 a4 g4 6 e5 h5 7 f3 f4 8 xc4 e5 9 e4 b4+ 10 d2 e7 11 xb4 wb4+ 12 d2 xd2+ 13 xd2 exd4 14 ed6+ e7 15 f5+ f6 16 xd4 d8 17 e4

This ending had already occurred in practice. White has somewhat the better prospects thanks to his slight territorial advantage in the centre. Black faces problems bringing his bishop at h5 into play. and his decision to simplify the position does not change its evaluation.

17 ... e5
18 c3 xd4
19 xd4 b3+
20 c3 xa1
21 e2 e7
22 xa1 d7
23 b4 f6

White's main idea is to attack the b7 and c6 pawns with a5, with the intention after ... b8 of exploiting the geometric placing of king and rook by a6!, transposing into a favourable ending with rook and pawn against two minor pieces. But for the moment it would appear to be rather early for this. as after 24 a5 b8 the king succeeds in reaching c7 after 25 a6 bxa6 26 xc6+ Kd6 27 xb8 xb8 28 d1+ c7 with a probable draw.

Therefore...

24 d1!? b6
25 a5! xa4+

Black decides once and for all to be done with the problem of his b7 pawn, but in so doing he acquires other pawn weaknesses on the queenside. If 25 b8, then 26 a6 was now possible, and after 26 ... xa4+ the most accurate is 27 b3! c5+ 28 xc5 bxa6+ 29 c3 c8 30 d6 c8 (30 b5 31 xc6+ xc6 32 xc6 d7 33 d6+ c7 34 c4 a5 35 d5 leads to a difficult rook ending) 31 f4, and it is very hard for Black to defend, whereas after 27 c2 c5 28 xb7 c8 29 c6+ xc6 30 xc6 xb4 31 d7+ f8 32 xa7 b6 with correct defence he should be able to save the game.

26 b3 b6
27 xb7 f7+
28 c3 b8

29 a6
A useful manœuvre, as after 29 \( \text{Qc5} \) \( \text{Ec8} \) 30 \( \text{Aa1} \) \( \text{Ec7} \) Black succeeds in defending his weaknesses. By that time I had discovered the correct piece set-up. It consists in playing the knight to d4, the bishop to b3, the rook to a5 and the e4-e5 breakthrough, when White begins carrying out his plan. Perhaps Black could have hindered somewhat its implementation, had he not marked time in the next few moves, but he was not able to prevent it completely:

29 \( \ldots \) \( \text{Ae8} \)
30 \( \text{Aa1} \) \( \text{Ad7} \)
31 \( \text{f4} \) \( \text{Ab6?!} \)
32 \( \text{Ac5} \) \( \text{Ad7} \)
33 \( \text{Ab3} \)

This is stronger than 33 \( \text{Ac4} \) \( \text{Qxc5} \) 34 \( \text{bxc5} \) \( \text{Ab7} \) 35 \( \text{e5} \), and besides, White has no reason to deviate from his overall plan.

33 \( \ldots \) \( \text{g6} \)
34 \( \text{Ad4} \) \( \text{Ab6} \)
35 \( \text{Ac4!} \)

Initially I was planning to play my bishop to b3 via d3 and c2, but why not exploit in passing a tactical opportunity? — after all, the bishop is immune in view of the intermediate capture on a7.

35 \( \ldots \) \( \text{Ab7} \)
36 \( \text{Ab3} \)

It appears that everything is ready for 36 \( \text{e5} \), but then Black unexpectedly frees himself: 36...\( \text{c5!} \) 37 \( \text{bxc5} \) \( \text{Qa4+} \).

36 \( \ldots \) \( \text{Ad7} \)

The final stroke, creating complete harmony in the actions of the white pieces. Now any tactical chance for the opponent involving ...\( \text{c6-c5} \) is ruled out, and the further strengthening of the position is possible both by \( \text{h2-h4-h5-h6} \), and by 38 \( \text{Ec5} \) with the threat of answering 38...\( \text{Qd6} \) with 39 \( \text{e5+} \) \( \text{fxe5} \) 40 \( \text{fxe5+} \) \( \text{Ec7} \) 41 \( \text{Qxc6} \) \( \text{Qxc6} \) 42 \( \text{b5} \). Black’s position seems hopeless, and his following time trouble move merely hastens the end.

37 \( \ldots \) \( \text{Qa8} \)
38 \( \text{Qa4} \) \( \text{Ec7} \)
39 \( \text{Ec5} \) \( \text{Qb6} \)

Here my opponent did not manage to press his clock in time...

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**You live and learn**

This will never be proved, but from a number of minor chess and other indications, one gained the impression: while moving confidently towards the top of the world rating list, Kramnik quite consciously — or intuitively? — continued to learn. In particular, from his own experience. He was constantly expanding his range: not only and not so much opening variations, but rather middlegame set-ups which he had not previously played. Instructive is the given game against an opponent who became USSR Champion almost in the year that Vladimir was born. Black voluntarily went into a slightly inferior ending of middlegame character, in order to endeavour in it to seize the initiative. That is, in one sitting to test himself in the most varied roles: defender, ‘midfielder’, and finally, out-and-out attacker.
3 .gf3  gc6
4  g3  g6
5  d4  exd4
6  xd4  gg7
7  xc6  dxc6

A rarely employed continuation. The usual reply 7...bxc6 leads, according to theory, to a slight advantage for White. The move played leads by force to an ending, which seems slightly worse for Black. But it seems to me that the resulting rather interesting position, with complicated and unusual play, fully justifies my choice.

8  wxd8+  xd8

9  e4
For the moment White avoids deciding where to develop his queen's bishop: 9  f4  e6 10 0-0-0+  c8 11 e4  g4 was quite good for Black.

9 ...  g4!??
The other bishop move seemed less good to me: 9...e6 10 e3  d7 11 0-0-0  c8 12 f4 with a marked spatial advantage for White.

10  e2  xe2
11  xe2  e8
12  f3  d7
13  g5+  c8
14  ac1  a5
After 14...f5?! 15  hd1  fxe4 16  xe4  xb2 17  c2 with the threat of 18  cd2 Black's position is very dangerous.

15  hd1  a4
16  d2

Up to this point Gulkho has played logically and perfectly correctly, but here 16  c2 was stronger with the same idea of doubling on the d-file. On c2 and d1 the rooks would have been better placed and less liable to attack by the black pieces.

16  df8
16...a5?! 17  cd1! was bad for Black, and 16...e5 17  cd1 b6 18 c5!  b7 19  f4 was little better.

17  e3  a5
White has a slight advantage. True, it is hard to exploit, since he has no realistic plan to play for a win.

18  a3?
I think that this is a serious positional mistake. Against the sole plus of this move - the black pawn at a4 is fixed - there are two minuses: the chronic weakness of the b2 pawn (which is emphasised by the bishop at g7) and the b3 square, which I promptly exploit. Had the white rooks been at c2 and d1, 18  d4 would have looked quite good, but here this is answered by 18...h6! 19  f4 g5.

18  d6
19  f2
White would have lost a pawn after 19 f4?  c5 20  xc5  xc5 21  xa4  xe4+ 22  d3  d4+, while if 19 h4 Black has the unpleasant 19...f5! I think it was here that my opponent offered a draw. I have no real advantage, but that day I was in a fighting mood. The peace negotiations were curtailed, my
opponent grew nervous, and he made a mistake with his very next move.

19 ... g5!?
20 cxd1?

This leads by force to a better ending for Black. White's problem is that it is hard for him to find any concrete plan. In this respect things are slightly easier for Black: he is aiming for ...f7-f5. Therefore the prophylactic 20 g2! was correct, removing the king from the f-file in good time. Then it is not easy for Black to strengthen his position; possibly he would have had to do something like 20...e5! (in principle, 20...f5 is also possible) 21 exd2 exf5 with chances for both sides.

Now, however, I was able to carry out my plan unhindered. and in addition White's pawns on the queenside were badly compromised.

20 ... f5
21 exf5 xf3
22 bxc3 exf5
23 d7

After 23 g4 f7 24 g3 e8 my opponent would have had to switch to passive defence.

23 ... h5
24 d7 h4
25 f4 g5
26 g7 e4+
27 f1 d6!

This move gave me pleasure. The coordination of the white pieces is disrupted.

28 b6?!

Over-active. 28 f2! was better, since unattractive was 28 c5? x3 29 exd6 cxd6 30 x6d6 c3 31 d7 b5 with a quick win.

28 ... f7
29 x7 f7 x7 f7
30 c4

Apparently the decisive error: 30 f2 would have maintained some chances. Now my knight reaches c4, and the game can no longer be saved.

30 ... d6
31 c5 c4!
32 c2

The rook ending after 32 f5 c3+ 33 x3 e3 34 g2 x3 35 f1 d7 is hopeless for White.

32 ... b5!

Another very precise move, effectively deciding the outcome – White no longer has any realistic defence. In addition
Gulko was short of time and at the finish he did not put up any particular resistance.

33 cxb6
No better was 33 a1 a8 34 c2 d7 35 d3 f5 36 c4 c6 37 a2 d5, after which White is forced to make fatal concessions: in particular the manoeuvre ...c4-a5-b3xc5 is threatened.

33 ... cxb6
34 f6 b5
35 d4 xa3
36 e5 d4
37 e6+ d7
White resigns

No. 177
Kramnik–Lautier
Horgen 1995
English Opening

Different strengths of the bishops
'It is impossible even to understand at what point Black made a mistake. It is quite possible that there was not one, and that Lautier's defeat was merely the consequence of an unpleasant position, which was simply very hard to defend. For the reason that my opponent did not make any bad oversights, this game gave me satisfaction. It is not every day that one is able to win so cleanly.' (Kramnik)

1 f3 c5
2 c4 f6
3 e3 d6
4 g3 d5
5 d4

Now this position is quite fashionable. Earlier 5 cxd5 cxd5 6 g2 c7 was normally played: there was very much theory following this, but White was not able to demonstrate anything in particular.

5 ... e6
The variation 5...cxd4 6 xd4 dxe4 7 xec6 xd1+ 8 xd1 bxc6 9 g2 is still quite popular, but complete equality for Black has not yet been found.

6 cxd5 xd5
7 g2

Now 7...e7 is considered the main theoretical move. I have played this position several times both with White, and with Black, and I am very familiar with it.
11...\textit{h}b4+ is usual, as was played, for example, by my opponent in game No.53. Here I thought for half an hour and found what was probably the correct plan, revealing the negative aspects of Black's set-up.

12 0-0 \textit{h}b8

Although this move is logically linked with the preceding one, there was no need to hurry with it. 12...0-0 was more flexible. Then if 13 e4 Black could have replied 13...e5 14 d5 f5 or 13...\textit{d}d8.

13 e4

It unexpectedly transpires that it is not so easy for Black to complete his development. White's idea is to break through with his rook on the c-file, against which it is no simple matter to defend.

13 ... 0-0

Played after a long think. 13...b6 14 \textit{b}2 \textit{b}7 would also not have given equality after 15 \textit{a}c1 with the threat of e4-e5 and \textit{c}7, and the attempt to prevent this by 15...\textit{d}7 would have unexpectedly led to an attack on the king - 16 d5!, e.g. 16...exd5 17 exd5 f6 18 \textit{h}3+ or 16...e5 17 f4 with the advantage.

14 \textit{e}5

A fairly simple decision. It is clear that Black cannot hold the c-file, but he has no obvious weaknesses, and his position is hard to breach, provided, however, that he defends accurately. Thus for tactical reasons 14...\textit{c}7 does not work (of course, it would not be bad to place this bishop at b6 and then develop the other at d7) in view of 15 \textit{a}3 \textit{d}8 16 \textit{a}c1 \textit{b}6 (16...\textit{d}7 17 \textit{x}c7 \textit{xc}7 18 \textit{d}6) 17 \textit{d}6, practically paralysing Black.

14 ... \textit{e}7
15 \textit{e}3 \textit{d}7

After 15...b6 16 \textit{f}c1 \textit{d}8 White has the very strong manoeuvre \textit{e}3-d2-b4-d6, after which it is probable that loss of material for Black is inevitable.

16 \textit{f}c1 \textit{f}8
17 \textit{x}e8+ \textit{x}c8
18 \textit{c}1 \textit{f}8

For want of something better, the black king heads for the centre.

19 \textit{h}3

Here I had a choice between two very tempting continuations, and even now I cannot say which of them is stronger. In the game I 'automatically' advanced my pawn from d4 to d6, but I could also have played 19 d5, forcing events. Black is obliged to take - 19...exd5 20 \textit{x}d5 \textit{e}6 21 \textit{x}e6 fxe6 22 \textit{c}7. Here he retains drawing chances, although the position is certainly highly unpleasant (for example, 22...\textit{d}8 does not work: 23 \textit{d}7 \textit{b}6 24 \textit{xb}6 axb6 25 \textit{d}d6). But intuition suggests that to all appearances I was right to give preference to 19 \textit{h}3.

19 ... \textit{e}8
20 d5 \textit{d}7
21 d6

As yet there is no forced win - 21 \textit{xa}7 \textit{a}8 or 21 \textit{c}7 \textit{d}8 - and so White has to
be content with a small, but also significant achievement.

21 \ldots \  \text{d}8
22 \text{g}2 \  \text{b}6
23 \text{f}4 \  \text{c}8
24 \text{f}2 \  \text{x}c1
25 \text{x}c1

And so, an opening with four bishops has been reached. At first sight Black has good drawing chances, but on closer inspection it all turns out to be not so simple: the picture is spoiled for him by the very bad bishop at d8. White’s other trump is the strong d6 pawn. The only problem is how to plan and carry out a breakthrough. For this reason Black should if possible avoid moving his pawns. Generally speaking, it is hard to give an accurate evaluation of this ending – whether or not it is won. I think that the position is pretty much a practical one.

In the next few moves White’s plan is fairly clear: he must place his king within the vicinity of b4, and perhaps try to advance a4-a5 or take some other action. It would seem that Black has no real way of opposing this, and he must simply, but submissively, stand and wait.

25 \ldots \text{b}5
26 \text{e}4

Frankly speaking, this is not a move of any great chess sense, but it is extremely unpleasant psychologically. Black has to decide how to arrange his kingside pawns, and this costs both time, and nerves.

26 \ldots \text{h}6
26..g6 has its drawbacks. In some variations the white bishop penetrates to e8 towards the weakened f7 pawn. In addition, White has another active plan, involving direct play on the kingside. It would seem that the move in the game was more accurate.

27 \text{e}3 \  \text{d}7
28 \text{e}1 \  \text{c}6
29 \text{d}3

Here the exchange of bishops would certainly have favoured Black.

29 \ldots \text{d}5
30 a3

30 \ldots \text{f}6

A decision that is hard to evaluate: it has both pluses and minuses. Black’s f7 pawn was potentially weak, and my opponent simply gets rid of it, at the same time exchanging a pair of pawns. On the other hand, the infantryman at e6 is slightly weakened, as well as Black’s entire kingside pawn structure, although it appears improbable that White can exploit this. But, once again, the resulting position is very hard for Black to play. I myself would probably also have gone 30...f6, because to stand and wait passively is extremely unpleasant. However, I think that it is a matter of taste.

31 \text{d}2 \  \text{fxe}5
32 \text{fxe}5 \  \text{c}6

There is no point in playing 32...\text{g}5 because of 33 \text{f}4, after which it is
extremely unfavourable for Black to exchange on f4, whereas I can always play h2-h4 and drive the bishop back into imprisonment at d8.

33 \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{f3} \)
34 \( \text{c4} \) \( \text{d5} \)
35 \( \text{a6} \) \( \text{f3} \)
36 \( \text{d4} \)

Defending against a possible \( \ldots \text{d5} \), although this prophylaxis is by no means essential. White can make as many moves as he wants, since Black is unable to strengthen his position and is obliged to await his fate.

36 \( \ldots \) \( \text{d5} \)
37 \( \text{a4} \)

For the moment my objective is to drive the king from c6.

37 \( \ldots \) \( \text{b3} \)

In the event of 37...\( \text{d7} \) 38 \( \text{b5+ c6} \) 39 \( \text{c4} \) Black ends up in zugzwang, and here is no way to save the game: 39...a6 40 \( \text{xa6 cxa4} \) 41 \( \text{b5+} \).

38 \( \text{b5+} \) \( \text{b7} \)
39 \( \text{d7} \)

White has cut off the black king. Although for the moment there are no concrete threats, nevertheless Black has only 2-3 moves: with his bishop to b3-d5, or with his king to b7-b8. But Black’s position is still hard to breach. The advance a4-a5 is still a long way off, and the attempt to break through with the king into the enemy rear is prevented halfway: if \( \text{g4} \) Black always has \( \ldots \text{d1+} \). Here I was faced with the problem of choosing a subsequent plan, and it would appear that I found a very interesting solution, but for the moment I had to reach the time control.

39 \( \ldots \) \( \text{d5} \)
40 \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{a2} \)

I did not like the fact that after the appropriate preparation and carrying out of the a5-a5 breakthrough, in some variations the black bishop at d8 would finally become active. I had still not abandoned the idea of somehow breaking through on the kingside. I noticed that the pawns at g7 and h6 could be attacked by the bishop from f8, and the only problem was how to reach there. Initially I marked time...

41 \( \text{b4} \)

Checking whether or not Black will play \( \ldots \text{a7-a5+} \), which loses, since White can calmly exchange the light-square bishops, and this ending, as is easy to see, is lost on account of zugzwang.

41 \( \ldots \) \( \text{d5} \)

Possibly, in the light of subsequent events, Black should have decided on 41...g5, exploiting the fact that I myself did not play 41 h4. The technical process of converting White’s advantage would then have been more laborious. However, this advance looks rather strange, and I do not think that many players would have made it. Even so, despite the apparent weakening of Black’s kingside and his pawns, this was probably the best chance. I would apparently have had to revert to the plan with a4-a5.

42 \( \text{h4} \) \( \text{a2} \)
43 \( \text{d2} \)

White wants to obtain the position with his bishop at a3 and king at c3, when Black’s king is at b7 and his bishop at d5. Why this is important will be seen later.

43 \( \ldots \) \( \text{d5} \)
44 \( \text{c1} \) \( \text{a2} \)
45 \( \text{c3} \) \( \text{d5} \)
46 \( \text{a3} \)

A kind of zugzwang position has arisen. White’s plan has taken shape: \( \text{e8}, \text{d6-d7} \).
and $\mathcal{g}f8$, getting through to the kingside pawns.

![Chess Diagram]

I should mention that, if in this position it were White’s move, $\mathcal{g}e8$ would be answered by ...$\mathcal{g}c6$, when he loses a tempo compared with what happens in the game.

However, it is Black to play, and he has no useful move: 46...$\mathcal{g}c6$ 47 $\mathcal{g}xe6$ $\mathcal{g}xa4$ 48 $\mathcal{g}f7$, while after the waiting move 46...$\mathcal{g}a6$ I too do not have to hurry – 47 $\mathcal{g}b4$. The impression is that after 46 $\mathcal{g}a3$ Black’s position is no longer defensible.

46 ... $\mathcal{g}a2$
47 $\mathcal{g}e8$ $\mathcal{g}d5$
48 $\mathcal{g}d7$ $\mathcal{g}c6$
49 $\mathcal{g}f8$

The $h4$ pawn will cost Black a piece, and so I did not see any point in defending the ‘common’ $a4$ pawn.

49 ... $\mathcal{g}xa4$
50 $\mathcal{g}xg7$ $\mathcal{g}c7$
51 $\mathcal{g}xh6$ $\mathcal{g}xd7$
52 $\mathcal{g}f7$

Now White’s $g$- and $h$-pawns cannot be stopped, whereas the black $a$- and $b$-pawns are not at all dangerous.

52 ... $\mathcal{g}c6$
53 $\mathcal{g}h5$

Joyfully played in anticipation of a quick win, but 53 $\mathcal{g}g5$ $\mathcal{g}c7$ 54 $\mathcal{g}d4$ was more accurate, depriving the black king of any activity.

53 ... $\mathcal{g}d5$
54 $\mathcal{g}g7$ $\mathcal{g}g5$

Even the indifferently-placed bishop at $f7$ does not give Black any saving chances.

58 ... $\mathcal{g}f5$
59 $\mathcal{g}g6$ $\mathcal{g}f6$
60 $\mathcal{g}g5+$ $\mathcal{g}g7$
61 $\mathcal{g}d4$ $\mathcal{g}a4$
62 $\mathcal{g}e5$ $\mathcal{g}c2$
63 $\mathcal{g}f6+$ $\mathcal{g}f8$
64 $\mathcal{g}f4$

Black resigns

![Chess Diagram]

No. 178
Kramnik–Hjartarson
European Cup Semi-Final
Clichy 1995
English Opening

Double value of a point

In European Club competitions victory on the first board virtually ensures success for the entire team. Even if in the remaining five games the opponents gain three points, all the same if the match is drawn the team to go forward will be the one whose leader was able to win. These are the rules, which impose a particular burden on the two players, and give particular significance to a win.
Kramnik: my life and games

1. The starting position of a quite fashionable variation, which I have played with both colours. For the moment Black has not managed to gain full equality.

14. c1  
15. xxb4+  
16. a3  
17. a5  
18. 0-0

Later I tried 14...hxh8, and I have also played against this move with White...

19. xg7  
20. xg6

If 20...d1? 21. xbd8 xc2 22. e2  
23. e3  
24. c2 with some counterplay. And, generally speaking, in this position White should not exchange rooks, since Black’s pieces are rather scattered.

At first sight White has nothing, but in fact it is all rather different. The knight at d5 is tied to its post – it is defending the c6 square against a knight check, and the c5 pawn may gradually become a real weakness. For the moment White exploits the fact that his e2 pawn is immune, to complete the mobilisation of his forces: 18...xex2? 19. fxe1 and 20. xd5.

18.  
19. e2

Here my opponent was let down by his sense of danger. I was most afraid of... a sacrifice: 19...c4! 20. xxc4 (20 bxc4 c5)  
20. ab6 21. xf1 xc4 22. bxc4 c5. Of course, White is a healthy pawn to the good, and perhaps somewhere around the hundredth move he might even have been able to convert it, but even so Black’s drawing chances are pretty considerable. Black apparently decided that he would always be able to part with the pawn at some in the future, but... he never gains another opportunity.

20. c7

If 20...d1 I would have had to reckon with 20...dxe3?! 21. xbd8 xe2 22. e2  
23. e3  
24. c2 with some counterplay. And, generally speaking, in this position White should not exchange rooks, since Black’s pieces are rather scattered.

20.  
21. e4

It is time to seize some space!

21.  
22. d4  
23. e5

A little tactical resource.

23.  
24. b2!
A very precise move. Black had reckoned only on 24 \text{\underline{d}2}, after which he was intending to play 24...\text{c}4 25 \text{bxc}4 (25 \text{\underline{f}2} \text{exb}3 26 \text{\underline{x}c}7+ \text{\underline{x}c}7 27 \text{\underline{xd}5} \text{b}2 28 \text{\underline{x}b}2 \text{exd}5 with an imminent draw) 25...\text{\underline{xc}4}. Now 26 \text{\underline{dc}2} runs into 26...\text{\underline{b}5}, and after the exchange of rooks and of knight for bishop (27 \text{\underline{xc}7+} \text{\underline{xc}7} 28 \text{\underline{xc}7+} \text{\underline{xc}7} 29 \text{\underline{c}6+}) White remains with a theoretical advantage of bishop over knight with pawns on both flanks, but Black does have drawing chances. The rook ending after 26 \text{\underline{xc}4} \text{\underline{xc}4} 27 \text{\underline{xc}4} \text{\underline{xc}4} 28 \text{\underline{xd}5} \text{exd}5 29 \text{\underline{xd}5} \text{\underline{a}4} 30 \text{\underline{d}3} \text{f}6 31 \text{exf}6+ \text{\underline{xf}6} is also drawish.

29 \ldots \text{exd}5
30 \text{\underline{xa}7} \text{d}4
31 \text{\underline{f}1} \text{d}3

Alas, Black is unable to exchange his d-pawn for the a-pawn, and his counterplay after 31...\text{\underline{c}1}+ 32 \text{\underline{e}2} \text{\underline{c}2}+ 33 \text{\underline{d}3} \text{\underline{hx}2} 34 \text{\underline{xd}4} \text{\underline{g}2} is terminated by 35 \text{e}6!, when White wins after both 35...\text{fxe}6 36 \text{\underline{xg}7}, and 35...\text{\underline{hx}g}3 36 \text{\underline{fx}f7}.

32 \text{\underline{e}1} \text{\underline{c}2}
33 \text{a}4 \text{\underline{hx}h}2
34 \text{a}5

34 \ldots \text{h}5

A sensible decision, but just as inadequate as 34...\text{g}6 35 \text{a}6 \text{\underline{f}8} 36 \text{\underline{b}7} \text{\underline{g}7} 37 \text{a}7 \text{\underline{a}2} 38 \text{e}6, or 35...\text{\underline{a}2} 36 \text{\underline{a}8+} \text{\underline{e}7} 37 \text{a}7 and \text{e}5-e6, opening the seventh rank in typical fashion for \text{\underline{a}8-h}8.

35 \text{a}6 \text{\underline{a}2}
36 \text{f}5 \text{\underline{f}8}

Black would also have lost after 36...\text{\underline{e}2+} 37 \text{\underline{d}1} \text{\underline{xe}5} 38 \text{\underline{b}7} \text{\underline{xf}5} 39 \text{a}7 \text{\underline{a}5} 40 \text{\underline{d}2} etc.

37 \text{\underline{d}1} \text{g}5
38 \text{f}6 \text{\underline{g}8}
39 \text{\underline{a}8+} \text{\underline{h}7}
40 \text{e}6

Black resigns
In the first few months of the new millennium, Vladimir Kramnik continued his appearances in top-level events. At the tournament in Wijk aan Zee he kept pace with Garry Kasparov over the first eight rounds, but was unable to match the World Champion's finish and had to be content with a share of second place. But then in Linares, which this year featured five of the top-rated players plus FIDE Champion Alexander Khalifman, the two 'Ks' finished as joint winners with 6/10, one and a half points ahead of the rest. In both of these ultra-strong events Kramnik again went through unbeaten...

The traditional rapidplay/blindfold event in Monaco found him in less sure form, losing several games in the first few rounds, but a strong finish pulled him up to joint second place overall, and his first place in the blindfold event again confirmed his prowess in this unusual form of the game.

Then came the welcome news that Kramnik had agreed to meet Kasparov in a match for the crown in the Autumn of 2000! It is to be hoped that the following magnificent battle is a foretaste of what is to come:

No.179
Kramnik–Kasparov
Linares 2000
English Opening

1 e4 c5 2 c4 c6 3 d4 d5 4 e3 dxe4 5

\text{\texttt{a4+}} \texttt{d7} 6 \text{\texttt{xc4 c6}} 7 \text{\texttt{xc5 d5}} 8

\text{\texttt{a4+ c6}} 9 \text{\texttt{xc4 d5}} 10 \text{\texttt{e2 e6}} 11

\text{\texttt{g2 e4}} 12 \text{\texttt{c4 f5}} 13 \text{\texttt{h4 c5}}

14 \text{\texttt{c3 c6}} 15 0–0 \text{\texttt{e7}} 16 \text{\texttt{d1 a5}}

17 \text{\texttt{d2 bbd7}}

18 g4 h6 19 \text{\texttt{g3 a6}} 20 h4 \text{\texttt{c4}} 21

\text{\texttt{f4 b4}} 22 a3 \text{\texttt{xb2}} 23 \text{\texttt{d4 g5}} 24

\text{\texttt{xc6}} \text{\texttt{xf4}} 25 \text{\texttt{d3 bxc6}} 26 \text{\texttt{xc6}} 0–0

27 \text{\texttt{xha8 e5}} 28 \text{\texttt{d4 xa8}} 29 \text{\texttt{xe5}}

\text{\texttt{c8}} 30 \text{\texttt{ac1 d5}}

31 \text{\texttt{xd5 xe5}} 32 \text{\texttt{xe7+ g7}} 33 \text{\texttt{xc8}}

\text{\texttt{xe2}} 34 \text{\texttt{g8+ f6}} 35 \text{\texttt{d7 e1+}} 36

\text{\texttt{g2 e4+ 37 h2 e2}} 38 \text{\texttt{g2 e4+}}

39 \text{\texttt{h2 c2}} 40 \text{\texttt{g5+ hgx5}} 41 \text{\texttt{c5}}

\text{\texttt{xf2+ \frac{\text{1}}{2}–\frac{\text{1}}{2}}}

Ken Neat
Durham, April 2000
Vladimir Kramnik’s Career

Born 25th June 1975. World Cadet Champion. World Junior Champion. Three-times Olympiad winner as a member of the Russian team. Russian Honoured Master of Sport. From 1995-2000 has occupied places 1, 2 or 3 in the world rating list.

Main Tournament and Team Matches

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<th>Score</th>
<th>Placing</th>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Chalkidiki</td>
<td>7½/11</td>
<td>I</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>World Olympiad, Manila – 1st Reserve (overall best score)</td>
<td>8½/9</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>European Team Championship, Debrecen Board 3</td>
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<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Linares</td>
<td>7½/11</td>
<td>V</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Dortmund</td>
<td>4/7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Interzonal Tournament, Biel</td>
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<td>II-IX</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>6/9</td>
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<tr>
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<td>7/11</td>
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<tr>
<td>1994</td>
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<td>Tal Memorial Tournament, Riga</td>
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<td>VI</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Horgen</td>
<td>7/10</td>
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<td>Amsterdam</td>
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<td>1996</td>
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<td>I-II</td>
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<td>4½-1½</td>
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<td>v. Yudasin (FIDE Candidates Match)</td>
<td>4½-2½</td>
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<td>v. Kamsky (PCA Candidates Match)</td>
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<td>v. Gelfand (FIDE Candidates Match)</td>
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<td>v. Shirov (World Chess Council Candidates)</td>
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<td>1999</td>
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<td></td>
<td>v. Tiviakov</td>
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<td>v. Korchnoi</td>
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<td>v. Topalov</td>
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Since he first burst onto the world chess scene in 1992, displaying a maturity of play far beyond his sixteen years, Vladimir Kramnik has been tipped as a future World Champion. Still only in his mid-twenties, he is now firmly consolidated in the world's top three. He has won numerous tournaments in many countries, and is one of the very few players regularly to hold his own with Kasparov.

This book, Kramnik's first, describes his life and chess career, beginning with his unusual childhood. It features more than 50 of his best games, deeply annotated, plus numerous additional games and game extracts, including some from quickplay and blindfold events.

Co-author Iakov Damsky is an experienced radio and TV commentator and chess author, whose previous publications for Everyman/Cadogan include The Art of Defence in Chess (with Lev Polugayevsky), Attack with Mikhail Tal (with Mikhail Tal), and The Heavy Pieces in Action, all also translated by Ken Neat.