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ENDGAME PRIMER

by Jared Bray

ED. NOTE: This month we resume Jared Bray's series, "Endgame Primer," which we started in April and – unfortunately – did not publish in its entirety. Here is the entire article. JM

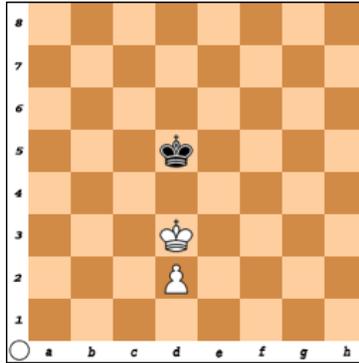
To ensure we are all on the same page moving forward, I have decided to begin with the most basic endgame – king and pawn v king. I apologize to the advanced players but don't want those less experienced to go trudging off into complicated scenarios ill-equipped. So I'll start with the most basic of examples to learn about the most important of themes in the endgame, a theme so pervasive that it could be what endgames are all about!

Before I begin, I encourage readers to abandoned your boards and calculate all through visualization only. This is an important skill for any chess player to strengthen and why not start now if you don't already do this. If you must, set up a board and visualize the moves that way. Only move the pieces when you wish to verify calculation!

"Opposition" can be defined as two kings standing on the same rank or file with one square separating them. There are many other forms of opposition but we will delay their discussion and look at the following first. *(next column)*

"Resigning is an underrated art; a timely resignation is essential to preserving the artistic value of the game."

Hugh Porter



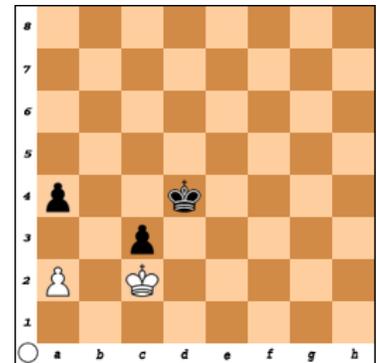
If it's White to move, Black draws easily by maintaining opposition. For example: 1.Ke3 Ke5 2.d3 Kd5 3.d4 Kd6 4.Ke4 Ke6 5.d5+ Kd6 6.Kd4 Kd7 7.Ke5 Ke7 8.d6+ Kd7 9.Kd5 Kd8 10.Ke6 Ke8 11.d7+ Kd8 12.Kd6 stalemate. Options are available to vary from this variation but if Black as a rule maintains opposition, then White can not win.

If, however, it's Black to move, then White can win by using opposition to outmaneuver Black! 1...Ke5 2.Kc4 Kd6 3.Kd4 Kc6 4.Ke5 Kd7 5. Kd5 Kc7 6.Ke6 Kd8 7.Kd6 Kc8 8.d4 Kd8 9.d5 Kc8 10.Ke7 Kc7 11.d6+ and it's clear White will queen.

It's important to note that after the White king got to the sixth rank he then, and only then, began pushing his pawn. If White attempts a push

earlier or later, things become murky and a draw may become a possibility. It is also important to note that once the white king is on the sixth rank with his pawn on the fifth rank, opposition no longer matters and White is winning with best play.

There seem to be exceptions to many of the statements we wish to make about chess. I would like to say, 'Always maintain opposition and the desired result will be attained ...' but this isn't the case. There are conditionals! Take the following position from the game Gruber-Sárközy (Budapest, 1926). I will go through the variations next time.



JB

HOW TO LOSE AT CHESS

by Dylan Mounts

Last week I broke 14,000 games on Lichess, which happened to correspond with a new rating plateau of 2000. After reaching 2023 I promptly fell to 1790, but the fact that I broke the 2K mark was a pretty big moment in my chess career!

The subsequent drop was a relief. Most of the time I play chess on my

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GAME A

*Dylan Mounts – Brian Rude
SPBCC Championship Qualifiers
March 8, 2019*

Sicilian Defense: Alapin Variation

A great push-n-shove contest between two strong players in Round 4 of the Qualifiers.

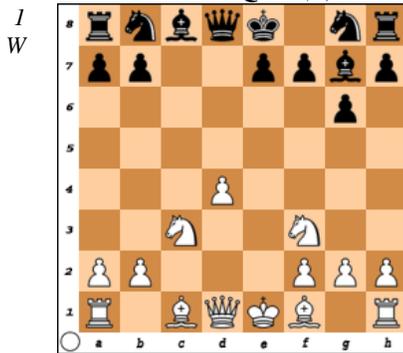
1. e4 c5
2. c3 ...

The “C3-Sicilian”, aka the Alapin Variation, one of the trendier “anti-Sicilian” systems, effectively challenges Black’s attempt to grab central control. For Black, 2. ... Nf6 is one common & effective continuation but here Black chose the (statistically) most successful line.

2. ... g6
3. d4 cd
4. cd Bg7
5. Nf3 d5

“I thought this was a strange move because it baits the queen, but it turns out Grischuk lost to this opening as recently as 2017.” DM

6. ed Qxd5
7. Nc3 Qd8 (1)



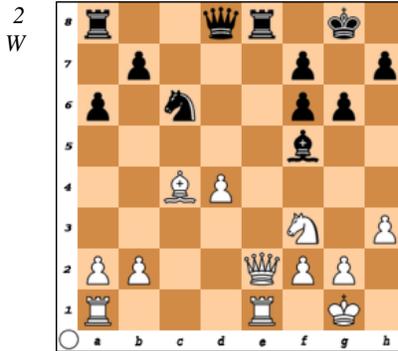
With this retreat White would seem to have an advantage in development, but it’s balanced by the fact that his isolated queen pawn that is already under heavy attack.

8. Bb5+ Bd7
9. Qe2 Nf6
10. Bg5 a6
11. Bc4 O-O
12. O-O Bg4
13. h3 Bf5
14. Rfe1 Re8?!



This would seemingly tempt White to play 15. Ne5! ... but neither player saw it! After this, 15. ... Be6 16. Bxe6 fxe6 Black’s position is in a shambles. Mr. Mounts notes: *“It was a learning moment for me. The obvious response is 15. ... e6 but then 16. g4 traps the bishop.”*

15. Bxf6 Bxf6
16. Nd5 Nc6
17. Nxf6+ exf6 (2)



White forces doubled pawns on the f-file, at the cost of a tempo on his queen.

18. Qd2 Be4!

Mr. Mounts called this *“a nasty, nasty move!”*

19. Be2? ...

Crisper defense was 19. Qf4.

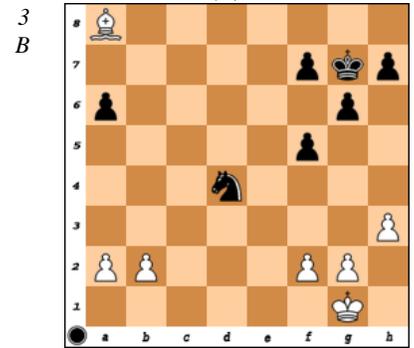
19. ... Bxf3

20. Bxf3 Qxd4?

In this complicated position, the correct sequence for Black was 20. ... Rxe1+! 21. Rxe1 Nxd4, and Black’s b7-pawn is untouchable. Instead, White can recover the lost pawn immediately. Said Mounts, *“I was happy to see this. If we’re trading queens, we’re going into the endgame, and ... doubled pawns were bad for his endgame.”*

21. Qxd4 Nxd4
22. Bxb7 Rxe1+
23. Rxe1 Ra7
24. Re8+ Kg7
25. Be4 f5
26. Ra8 Rxa8

27. Bxa8 (3) ...



The final stage is set for the endgame. Fritz gives White’s pawn structure the slight advantage.

27. ... a5
28. Kf1 Kf6
29. Bd5 ...

A temporary annoyance for Black, halting the progress of his king (because now if 29. ... Ke5 30. Bxf7). White is also having trouble advancing his king, due to the Black knight. Strap in for some slow-but-necessary readjustments to the position.

29. ... Ke7
30. Ke1 f6
31. Kd2 Kd6
32. Bg8 h6
33. Kd3 Kc5
34. a3 Nc6
35. Kc3 g5
36. Be6 f4
37. Bd7 Ne5

Before the knight and bishop settle their duel, White chooses to simplify the queenside pawn situation.

38. b4+ ab
39. ab+ Kb6

(continued on page 5)

2019 SPBCC MEMBERSHIP

Daniel Bao	Justin Lu
Ben Berger	Brayden Miao
Jared Bray	† Spencer Manchester
Jim Baumlín	Jon McClenahan
John Cardoza	Vince McClenahan
Afzal Chowdhury	CJ Moeller
Travis Dooly	Roger Pagel
Isaac Drum	Marty Phillips
Stephanie Dugan	Matthew Pratt
Ben Elliott	TJ Ross
Quentin Fitzpatrick	Brian Rude
Jeff Fuzzell	Kai Schaefer
Matt Hammonds	Ethan Stech
Peter Hansen	Billy Tropepe
Stan Horton	Adam Whitaker
John Last	Cody Whittington
James Latham	Sam Whittington
Mike Little	† 2019 Club Champion

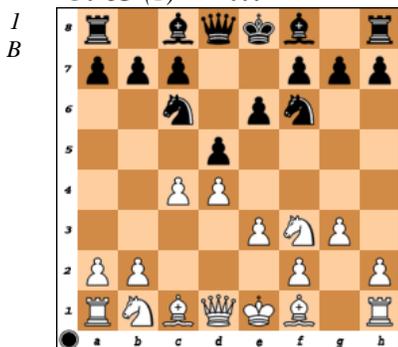
GAME B

Jared Bray – Samuel Lu
MSU Open Chess Tournament, Round 5
April 21, 2019

Catalan Opening – Closed Variation

Last year, young Samuel Lu was rated 866 and placed in the middle of the pack in the Under-1250 Section of the Mid-America Open Chess Tournament. This year he is competing against Class-A players ... and beating them! Here he is pitted against our own Jared Bray, and with seriously entertaining results!

1. g3 Nf6
2. d4 e6
3. c4 d5
4. Nf3 Nc6
5. e3 (1) ...



The Catalan System, with features borrowed from the Queen's Gambit and Reti's Opening.

5. ... Be7
6. Bg2 O-O
7. Nbd2 Bd7
8. O-O Re8

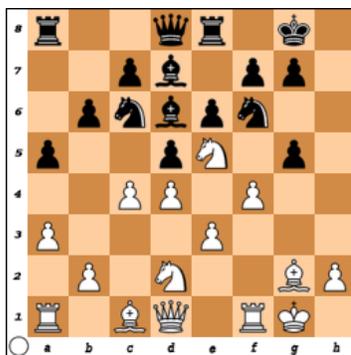
This move anticipates more activity on the e-file than actually occurred. Mr. Bray points out that the rook may have been better off at f8 where it was.

9. a3 a5
10. Ne5 Bd6
11. f4 b6?

Said Mr. Bray, "My light-squared bishop was all too happy to see this move." Here 11. ... a4 may have been worth consideration.

12. g4 h6
13. g5! hg (2)
(diagram next column)

2
W



14. Nxf7!? ...

Mr. Bray, in retrospect, didn't like this move: "In a hurry to get the tournament over, I played an inferior move. 14. Nxd7 was best and 14. ... Qxd7 15. fg Nh7 16. g6 Nf6 17. cd ed 18. Rxf6! gxf6 19. Qh5 fg 20. Qxg6+! Kh8 21. Qxf6+ Qg7 22. Qxg7+ Kxg7 23. Bxd5 and now the best Stockfish can offer for Black is 23. ... Nxd4." Fritz, on the other hand, thought it worked well. As we shall see, White will recover the piece, but not without complication.

14. ... Kxf7
15. fg Rh8
16. h3 Qg8?

"16. ... Ke7 was best for Sam, getting off the f-file." JB

17. cd Nd8 (3)

3
W



The stage is set for the devastation of Black's game, as we can all see ...

18. Nc4! ...

Huh?! As Mr. Bray points out, "Going after the exchange would be a mistake. After 18. de+ Nxe6 19. Bxa8?? Qxa8 20. Qf3 Bc6 21. Qg4 Nxe5!" The point is that if the White queen is lured away from the h-pawn (22. Qxg5) the Black rook enters the battlefield with a vengeance! All of Black's pieces are

aimed at the White king, while White's pieces are still looking for an assignment! Hence, 18. Nc4! achieves some important maintenance of White's position.

18. ... Ke7

19. gxf6+ gf

White is now a pawn up ... but his king is in a shooting gallery!

20. Nxd6 cxd6

This exchange actually favors Black, as it turns out.

21. Qf3 Qg7

22. e4 ed

23. e5? ...

Opening the e-file now with 23. ed would've been better; better still would've been 23. Kh2. White needs to consolidate.

23. ... de

24. de fe

25. h4?! (4) ...

4
B



Black's immediate, serious threat is his open lines of attack on White's king, and two passed pawns in the center! The "sound" way to proceed from here – for White – is to continue consolidating his position with 25. Rf2. But instead, White throws him a big fat curveball.

Bray had noticed something about his opponent: "He had been making his moves quickly all game. I could only assume he thought 25. h4 was a desperate move, and didn't analyze it." A trap had been set.

In baseball, when you're ahead in the count, you should let the curveball go and wait for the fastball.

(continued on page 7)

GAME C

James Latham – Vince McClenahan
Springfield Ladder Tournament
March 22, 2019

Queen's Pawn Game

A bar-room brawl between two up-and-coming chess talents.

1. d4 d5
2. Bf4 Nf6
3. e3 Bf5
4. c3 e6
5. Nd2 Bd6
6. Bg3 Qe7 (1)



An unusual hybrid, “Colle-London-esque” opening. White has the solid Colle set-up without the burden of an inactive queen’s bishop.

7. Ngf3 c5
8. Nh4 Bg4
9. f3 Bh5
10. Qa4+ Nc6
11. Bxd6 Qxd6
12. g4 Bg6
13. O-O-O-O-O-O?! (2)

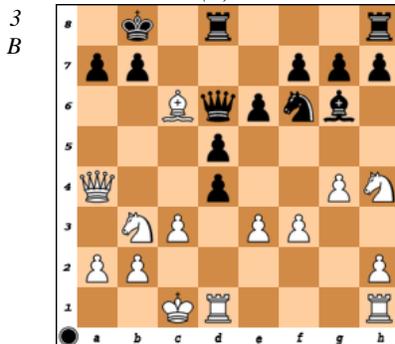


Black probably didn’t like the looks of short castling, but the long castle isn’t without its drawbacks either! At this juncture, 13. ... cd could’ve put a new complexion on the game.

14. Bb5! Kb8

As per GM Ben Finegold: “Always play Kb8.”

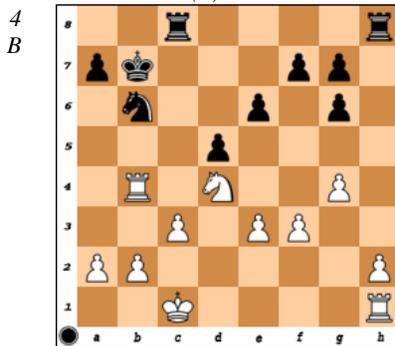
15. Nb3 cd
16. Bxc6 (3) ...



16. ... Rc8?!

This has merit, but in the end, Black is getting too fancy for his own pants. If instead 16. ... Qxc6 17. Qxc6 bxc6 18. cd Kc7 the game continues on an even keel. As it is, White sees the dangers and decides to run with a free pawn.

17. Bxb7! Kxb7
18. Rxd4 Nd7
19. Qb4+ Qxb4
20. Rxb4+ Nb6
21. Nxc6 hxc6
22. Nd4 (4) ...



22. ... a6?

Perhaps a prophylactic move to discourage a future Nb5→Nd6+, forking the rook. However, 22. ... a5 might achieve better overall results for Black.

23. Kd2 Rc4
24. b3! Rc5
25. Kd3? ...

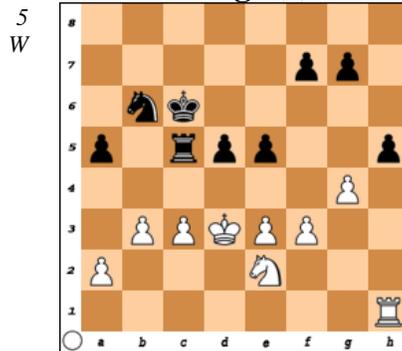
White should start mobilizing his kingside, e.g. 25. f4.

25. ... a5
26. Rb5 Rbc8
27. Rxc5 Rxc5
28. h4 e5
29. Ne2 Kc6

Springfield Park Board Chess Club Board of Governors

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Traffic Director	Brian Rude
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Dream Publisher	Brian Rude
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Big, Old, and Ugly	Jon McClenahan

30. h5 gh (5)



31. Rxh5 ...

31. gh was a more promising way to recapture, despite the apparent drawback of isolating a pawn.

31. ... Nd7
32. Rh7 e4+! ...

Offering a pawn, but there will be a winning fork for Black: in the end: 33. fe de+ 34. Kxe4?? Nf6!+. As we shall see, this move pays dividends anyway.

33. fe de+
34. Kc2! ...

Avoiding the trap! But the 5th rank is now open for the Black rook to jump onto the g-file!

34. ... Rg5!
35. Nd4+ Kc5
36. Nf5 g6
37. Rxf7 Ne5?

If instead 37. ... gxf5 38. Rxd7 fg! and Black gives White something new to think about!

38. Nd4?? ...

Saving the wrong piece. After 38. Re7 and after 38. ... Nxc4 39. Nd4 Nxe3+ 40. Kd2 Nf1+ 41. Ke1, the worst is over and White stands well.

38. ... Nxf7

Now White can in turn fork Black’s king & rook, but he loses his knight.

(continued on page 7)

Blast From the Past!

Walter Ressmeyer – Hugh Porter
Springfield Ladder Tournament
April, 1998

Sicilian Defense: Najdorf Variation

A quicky, with characteristic fun commentary by the victim, Hugh Porter.

1. e4 c5
2. Nf3 d6
3. d4 cd
4. Nxd4 Nf6
5. Nc3 a6

“I really didn’t want to play the Najdorf because I knew I was playing into his strength, but I’ve lost confidence in my Dragon.” HP.

6. Bg5 e6
7. f4 Be7
8. Qf3 O-O
9. O-O-O Qc7! (1)



Mr. Porter was proud of his queen’s placement: Here “she supports b7, taking the sting out of White’s e5 if the c8 bishop moves. She eyes down the enemy king and makes way for the f8-rook.”

10. g4 ...

“Crude but effective.” HP

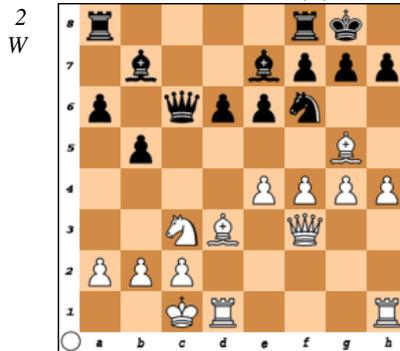
10. ... Nc6
11. Nxc6 Qxc6?

So much for the nice placement of Black’s queen! “I was being over-cautious with regard to my pawn structure. Plus, I liked pinning his c-pawn.” But “now the f6 knight is truly pinned.” Fritz concurs: after 11. ... bxc6 12. Bg2 Rb8, Black stands much taller.

12. Bd3! ...

“The absolute best square for the bishop. He eyes h7 but also serves an important defensive role, shoring up c2” HP.

12. ... b5
13. h4 Bb7 (2)



An even game, so far ... but ... is that a pawn storm a’brewin’ in the east?

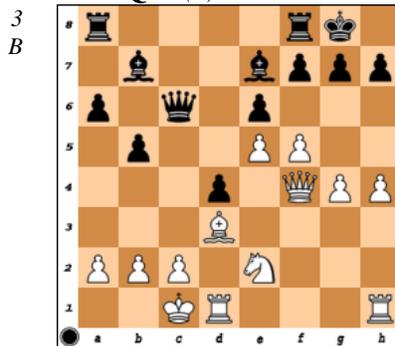
14. Bxf6 Bxf6

“I thought it was my birthday when he played Bxf6 ...” but in the face of the oncoming pawns, “the bishop will not be able to maintain himself.” HP

15. Ne2 d5
16. e5 Be7
17. f5 d4?!

Black wants a queen trade because his queenside attack is too slow. But ...

18. Qf4 (3) ...



18. ... Qb6?

There was still a chance to force that much-needed queen-trade: 18. ... Qf3 19. Rhf1 Qxf4+ 20. Rxf4 and now 20. ... Bxh4 gives Black the upper hand. Mr. Porter had feared that after 18. ... Qf3 White might win a pawn with 19. Qxd4 but this actually fails to 19. ... Rfd8 20. Rhf1 Rxd4 21. Rxf3 Rxd4, leaving Black even better than in the first variation! Now, however, the game draws to a rapid conclusion.

19. f6! Bd8?

19. ... Rfe8 was Black’s last hope.

20. Qg5 ...

Black resigned. Nothing can stop mate, e.g. 20. ... g6 21. Qh6 Bxf6 (prolonging the agony) 22. exf6 Bxh1 (a meaningless trophy?) 23. Qg7#.

1-0

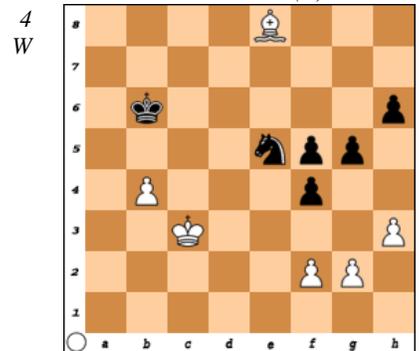
“If you wait for luck to turn up, life becomes very boring.”

Mikhail Tal

Game A

(continued from page 2)

40. Be8 f5? (4)

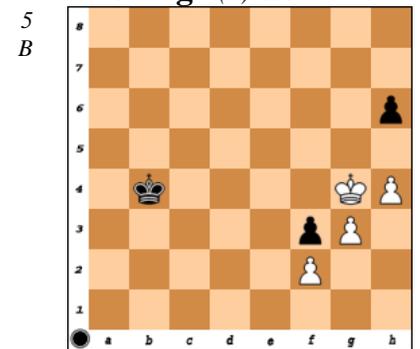


Here the immediate 40. ... g4! could’ve kept Black’s hope alive: 41. hg Nxg4 and we can call it even.

41. Kd4! f3!?

A la Henny Youngman: “Take my knight. Please.” But White wasn’t biting ...

42. g3! Nc6+
43. Bxc6+! Kxc6
44. Ke5 g4
45. h4 Kb5
46. Kxf5 Kxb4
47. Kxg4 (5) ...



Black resigned. His remaining pawns will be summarily mopped up.

1-0



GAME D

*Roger Pagel – Ethan Stech
Springfield Ladder Championship
November 18, 2018*

Blackmar-Diemer Gambit

From the 3rd Round of the SPBCC Championship, **Roger Pagel** and **Ethan Stech** squared off in this exciting chess slugfest.

1. e4 d5

2. d4 ...

Playing for a Scandinavian Defense, White transposes to the Blackmar-Diemer Gambit.

2. ... de

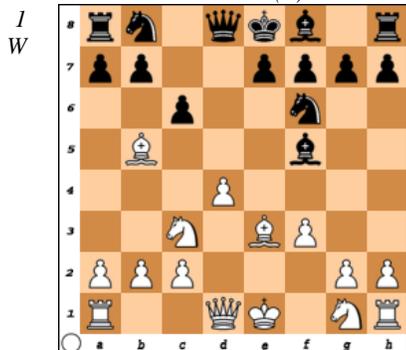
3. Nc3 Nf6

4. f3 e3

Declining the gambit.

5. Bxe3 Bf5

6. Bb5+ c6 (1)



According to Mr. Pagel, the bishop check was played in order to prompt this c6-push, hampering development of Black's queenside knight. The bishop will now settle on its preferred square.

7. Bc4 e6

8. Nge2 Nbd7

9. O-O Be7

10. a3 O-O

11. Ng3 Bg6

12. f4 Nb6

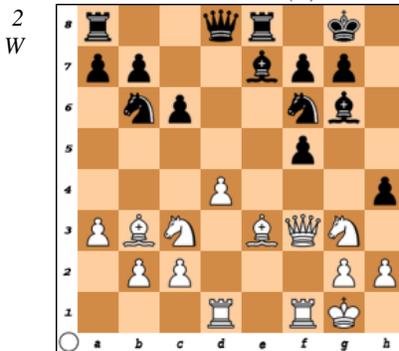
13. Bb3 Re8

14. Qf3 h5!?

A surprise for White.

15. f5 ef

16. Rad1 h4! (2)



The point of Black's 14th move is now clearer: offering a 'free' pawn (17. Nxf5) leads to a skewer of White's queen & rook with 17. ... Bh5. There's only one defense for White.

17. Nge2 Qc8

18. Nf4 Bh7

19. d5 ...

This pawn is well supported, but the purpose is unclear, other than to shake up the board. And that, it accomplishes!

19. ... Nbx d5

20. Ncx d5 cxd5

21. Nxd5 (3) ...



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Hardcopy printing courtesy of **Brian Rude**

Website

www.springfieldparkboardchessclub.com

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Black stands well in this position. He need only continue mopping up the center.

21. ... Ne4?

After 21. ... Nxd5 22. Rxd5 Qc6, Black would maintain an advantage. Instead, Black thinks he sees a better future for his knight – tactical possibilities abound – but White's d5-knight is just too dangerous to leave there. After a long think, Mr. Pagel saw the chink in Black's armor.

22. Ba4! ...

Without the rook at e8, the remaining White knight will wreak havoc! Black will have to make the best of things ...

22. ... Bd6

23. Bxe8 Qxe8

24. Bd4 Qc6

25. Ne3 Qc7

26. Qh3! f4

27. Nf5 Bc5

28. c3 g5

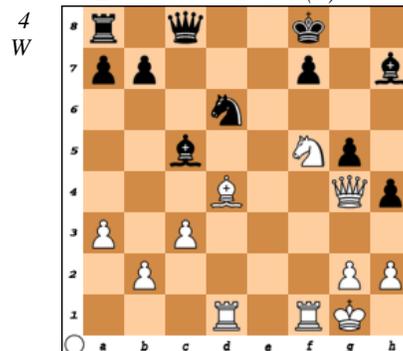
29. Qg4 Qc8

30. Rxf4! Kf8

31. Rff1 ...

Hit and run!

31. ... Nd6 (4)



White's f5-knight is vulnerable and his queen is unprotected.

32. Nh6 ...

A sufficient move, but Fritz found this romantic continuation: 32. Nxd6 Qxg4 33. Rxf7+ Kg8 34. Rg7+ Kf8 35. Rf1+ Bf5 (the bishop is a goner anyway) 36. Rxf5+ and now Black must return the queen: 36. Qxf5 Nxf5, and White can cruise to victory.

32. ... Qxg4

33. Nxd6 Bxd4+

(continued on page 7)

Game B

(continued from page 3)

25. ... Rxh4?

Mr. Bray points out the correct continuation: "After 25. ... e4 I'm in serious trouble." Indeed, after 25. ... e5 if 26. Qb3 Rxh4 27. Qxd5 Rg4 (loading the cannon) 28. Rf2 Bc6 29. Qc4 e3 30. Qe2 (pinning the rogue pawn for the time being) Ne6 (unpinning it) 31. Bxe3 Rg8 and it's lights out for White; alternately, if 26. Qf2 (to protect the h-pawn) Ne6 27. Be3 Rh5 with 28. ... Rah8 to follow.

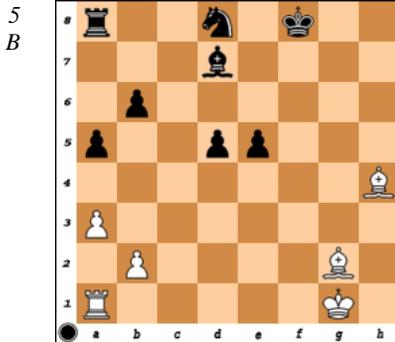
Instead Black will experience the continuation he failed to analyze.

26. Qf8+! Qxf8

27. Bg5+ Ke8

28. Rxf8+ Kxf8

29. Bxh4 (5) ...



Black is still ahead in material, but as Mr. Bray points out, his remaining pieces are inactive. Alternately, White's bishops are monsters.

29. ... Bc6?

Gives White's rook a target. 29. ... Be6 was better.

30. Rc1 Bb7

31. Rc7! Ba6

32. Bxd5 Rb8

33. Rh7 Bd3??

Attacking a rook that was headed for greener pastures anyway. 33. ... Ke8 would've given Black better chances.

34. Rh8+ Kg7

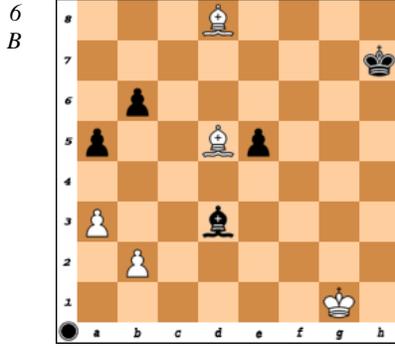
35. Rg8+ ...

Forcing the Black king to the perimeter before winning the knight.

35. ... Kh7

36. Rxd8 Rxd8

37. Bxd8 (6) ...



Mr. Lu resigned. Watch for his name in the future; he will be one of Missouri's chess stars, no doubt!

1-0



"If cunning alone were needed to excel, women would be the best chess players."

Adolf Albin

Game C

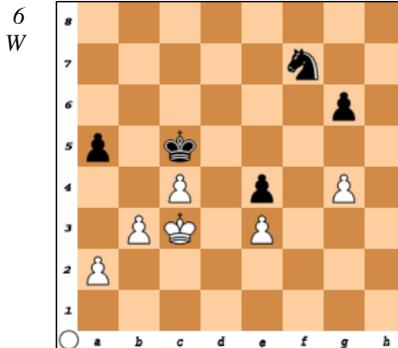
(continued from page 4)

39. Ne6+ Kd5

40. Nxd5 Nxd5

41. c4+ Kc5

42. Kc3 Nf7 (6)



Black has material; White has pawn structure. After 43. a3 Ne5 44. b4+ Kd6, there's no clear-cut winner, and the players agreed to a draw.

1/2-1/2

Game D

(continued from page 6)

34. Rxd4 Ne4

35. Nf6 ...

Mr. Pagel notes, "35. Rd7! wins the b-pawn or the f-pawn ..." and after 35. ... Bg8 36. Ne5 Ke8, the b-pawn falls and there follows a cat-and-mouse game between White's deep rook and Black's knight, but the result is heavily in White's favor (Fritz says +3.8; Stockfish puts it closer to +5 pawns).

35. ... Nxf6

36. Rxf6 Re8

37. Kf2 Kg7

38. Rfd6 Be4

39. g3 hg+

40. hg Bc6

Black has effectively hunkered down.

41. b4 Re5

42. c4 a6

43. g4 Re8

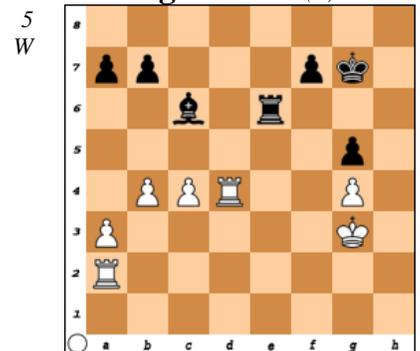
44. Rd8 Re5

45. Rd2 Re4

46. R8d4 Re6

47. Ra2 Rh6

48. Kg3 Re6 (5)



White is up the exchange and ready to advance his queenside majority.

49. Kf2? ...

Here White had the chance he'd been waiting for: 49. a4!. After this, the drama might unfold as follows: 49. ... Re3+ 50. Kh2 ... with excellent prospects, e.g. 50. ... Kf6 51. Rf2+ Ke5 52. Rd8 Rc3 53. Rf5+ Ke6 54. b5 etc. It's definitely not cut and dried, though, and Mr. Pagel admits that at

(continued on page 8)

SW Missouri Chess Calendar

Pizza Hut Chess!

Every LAST SUNDAY of the month
(this month it is on JUNE 30th)
at the Pizza Hut in Republic
(806 US Highway 60)
starting at 6:00 pm G60/d0

A great opportunity to get in some rated
games and enjoy some delicious pizza!

Participation is free but please considering ordering
a meal to thank our gracious hosts!

Springfield Park Board Club Ladder Tournament

The SPBCC Ladder Tournament for 2019
happens every Friday (except the last of the month
- see Blitz Tournament below) at 7:15 PM.
G90/d5. USCF-rated. Ongoing and cumulative.

Members only: so ...
JOIN THE CLUB (\$10 annual fee) & JOIN THE FUN!

2019 Missouri Class Championships

Sat. June 22 (10-2:30-7)
Sun. June 23 (10-2:30)

MSU Plaster Student Center, Rm 308
1110 E Madison, Springfield, MO

G115/d5, Rated. Five rounds Swiss.
CASH PRIZES

Entry fees: pre-reg \$35, on-site \$40.
Email Bob Howe (bdhowe@yahoo.com) to register

Life Master Bob Holliman will conduct a SIMUL
(\$5 to play) on Friday June 21 at 7 pm (Southside Senior Center)

Blitz Tournaments!

G10/d0. Unrated. Entry fee \$1.
All proceeds go to benefit our hosts, the
Southside Senior Center.

EVERY LAST FRIDAY of the MONTH
Be there by 7:15 pm
to register for pairings.

If you would like to notify us of any upcoming chess-related event in SW Missouri, contact ...
Roger Pagel: brevcamp@yahoo.com

Game D

(continued from page 7)

this stage of the game, he just
"couldn't figure out how to make
progress."

49. ... Rh6

50. Kg3? ...

Fritz calls the current position a toss-
up, although 50. Re2 would've put
White back in the lead. Hey, it
happens. And with the clock
becoming a factor, the players agreed
to a draw.

1/2-1/2

How to Lose at Chess

(continued from page 1)

phone because it's safe and it helps
me relax. But when I peaked at 2000
it became very stressful. Each game
was an attempt to prove I was as
good as my rating, and instead of
playing chess I was playing against
myself. So much for relaxing.

I just broke 1900 again, and in recent
OTB games I've had good results,
and it's made me ask: What's the

difference? Why on a given night will
I beat a guy who's almost an expert,
and the next night lose to a patzer?
How can this happen?

I think a lot of the problem is the
overbearing fear of losing. I've never
been a great loser. I don't yell or
cuss or make a scene, but when I
lose a game I can spend days, even
weeks, brooding over the loss. It
overcomes me, and I'm not sure
why.

Perhaps we need to consider the
Dunning-Kruger Effect. This psycho-
logical bias states that people who
are bad at something don't realize
how bad they are until they get good.
In fact, people who are bad have a
tendency to believe they're much
better than they actually are.

I would propose that a lot of my
recent ratings increase has actually
been a direct result of ac-
knowledging, accepting, and
embracing the fact that I suck at
chess! I'm really, really bad at this
game. I make one-move blunders all
the time. I miss tactics. I misevaluate

positions. I drop pieces.

Losing is hard. But once you accept
the fact – that you suck – you can
turn a corner. And look: if I suck at
this game, well, that means you
probably do, too.

When I wrote my first newsletter
article I said that chess is in my
blood and in my bones. That hasn't
changed. 15,000 games ... 20,000
... 30,000. I can't stop. What's
important is that when I hit 30K, I'll
have probably lost 15,000 times.
Probably more. And after each loss
... I have to be ready to play again!

DM

"Sacrifices only prove that someone
has blundered."

Savielly Tartakower

