



Grandmaster Technique, Part Three

When a fruit is ripe, then it must be picked, or else it grows overripe and inedible. The same applies to the realization of an advantage. It's important not to miss the right moment for the favorable transformation of an advantage leading to immediate victory, or else to a situation in which further play is practically automatic. Hesitate, and such a favorable circumstance may never come again.

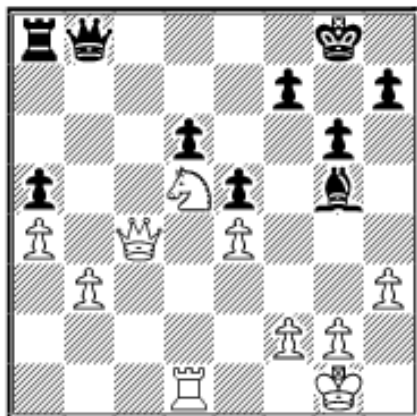
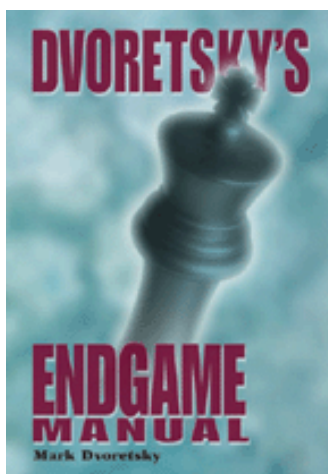
COLUMNISTS

The Instructor

Mark Dvoretsky

Unfortunately, even very strong chessplayers, having achieved overwhelming positions, sometimes stop and smell the roses – they stop playing concretely, and no longer wish to endure the tension or calculate even the least complex of variations, waiting for the fruit to drop from the tree by itself. The following is a very good example of what comes of this:

Anand – Kamsky
Sanghi Nagar 1994
5th Candidates' Match Game



1.?

White's position is strategically won, thanks to the overwhelming superiority of his powerful knight over Black's "bad" bishop.

Another important point is that, for the moment, White's pieces are active, while his opponent's are scattered. Given time, Black could improve the placement of his pieces (with Bd8, Kg7, Qb7, and Rb8, for example), which would of course not alter the

assessment of the position, but would increase Black's defensive resources. And that means that right now, before any of this occurs, White should look for a concrete way to capitalize on the advantages of his position.

Ljubomir Ftacnik examined a plan of creating a queenside passed pawn: 35.Rb1!? Qd8 36.b4 ab 37.Qxb4 Ra5 – his opinion was that White has just a minimal advantage. In my opinion, White's advantage is huge – he might continue 38.g3!?, for example, with 39.h4 to follow, practically eliminating any chance of the bishop's participation in the defense of his queenside.

But it was Vishwanathan Anand himself who demonstrated a still more



convincing method after the game: 35.Nc7! Ra7 36.Nb5 when 36...Rd7 37.Qc6 leads to the loss of a pawn; and if 36...Ra6, then 37.Qd5 Be7 38.Rc1 leaves Black practically without a useful move.

Note that, in such situations, the knight only *looks* good on d5 – it does not attack the weak d-pawn itself, while also protecting it from pressure on the d-file. So a typical plan is to transfer this knight to c4 or to b5.

Anand didn't want to change the character of the position, so he continued his unhurried maneuverings.

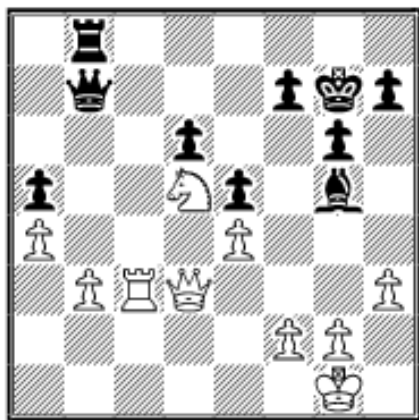
35.Rd1-d3? Qb8-b7

35...Qc8? would be altogether bad: 36.Nb6 Qxc4 37.Nxc4 Be7 38.Rd5 (Ftacnik). In his *Informant* notes, Anand rewards the text move with an exclamation mark, and the assessment: “+/=” (a slight advantage to White). This is, of course, an overly pessimistic appraisal, no doubt influenced by the outcome of the game.

36.Rd3-c3 Ra8-b8 37.Qc4-d3 Kg8-g7

Anand considered 37...Bd8!? subpar in view of 38.Rc4 followed by 39.b4 (not 38...Qxb3?, because of 39.Qxb3 Rxb3 40.Rc8). But I am not so sure that White has a guaranteed win after 38...Kg7 39.b4 ab 40.Rxb4 Qa7 41.Rxb8 Qxb8±. We saw a similar situation in Ftacnik's variation (35.Rb1), but there the bishop was unable to return to the queen's wing.

I consider the following position exceptionally important and instructive.



1.?

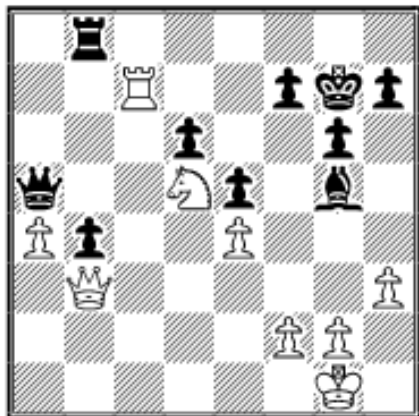
38.g2-g3?

Following the principle of “not hurrying,” White gradually improves his position. Unfortunately, the useful move he makes here is, in fact, a serious error, which puts his win in doubt.

What's the problem? How to explain this – and, more importantly, how to understand this while one is playing a tournament game?

The problem is that, along with the long-term plusses of his position, White also has one temporary plus: the chance to occupy the 7th rank with his rook (an immediate 38.Rc7 may not work, because of 38...Qxb3; but there is the pawn sacrifice 38.b4 first). Combined with an attack by the queen on f7, the idea looks attractive, and should therefore have been carefully analyzed; because any delay will allow Black to cover the c7-square by 38...Bd8, and the possibility will disappear. Of course, all of White's other advantages remain – but who knows whether they'll add up to a win?

So let's analyze: **38.b4! ab 39.Rc7 Qa8**. In the *Informant*, Anand gives only 40.Qf3?! Rf8 (and White has nothing special after 41.Qb3 Bd8). An immediate **40.Qb3!** is more logical, blockading the enemy passed pawn, while zeroing in on f7. Black's only reasonable reply is **40...Qa5!** – the queen ties the knight to the defense of the rook.



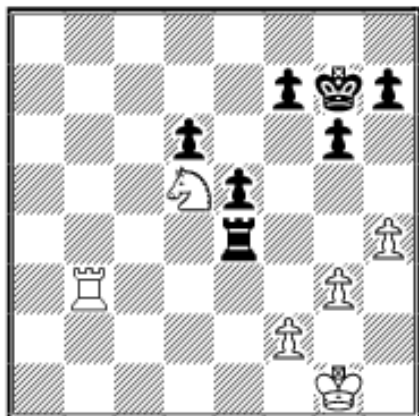
1.?

White gains nothing from 41.Nb6 Rf8 42.Rc6 h5!?, when 43.Nc4? Qa8 44.Rxd6 would even lose to 44...Qxe4 45.Rd1 Rd8. The correct attacking scheme was demonstrated by Igor Zaitsev: **41.g3!**, intending 42.h4. Black's bishop is at a crossroads – no matter which diagonal it chooses to retreat on, serious concessions must be made.

On 41...Bd2?, White has an instant mating attack: 42.Qf3 Rf8 43.Qf6+ Kh6 44.Ne7!. On 41...Bd8 comes 42.Rd7, when there is no satisfactory defense against a knight move, now that the rook's path to f8 is blocked by his own bishop.

If Black plays 41...Rf8!? immediately, then White picks up the b-pawn by 42.Rb7, with a decisive queenside superiority: the enemy rook can offer no assistance, since it's tied to the f7-pawn. And 42...Bd2 is useless: 43.Qf3 Bg5 (43...Qd8 44.a5+-) 44.h4 Bd8 45.Qb3, etc.

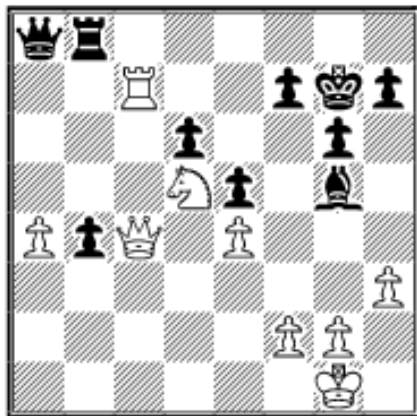
Black's best practical chance may be the bishop sacrifice: **41...Ra8!?** **42.h4 Bd8 43.Rd7 Qxa4 44.Qxa4 Rxa4 45.Rxd8 b3 46.Rb8 Rxe4 47.Rxb3**



1...

Black has two pawns for the knight, which in more suitable circumstances might offer him decent saving chances. But here, thanks to his ongoing central blockade, White seems to me to be assured of capitalizing on his material advantage.

Note that White has still another, sharper attacking method: instead of 40.Qb3, he might try **40.Qc4!?**



1...

Now, after 40...Qa5, the rook is protected, and the knight could move to almost any square it wants. On the other hand, the a4-pawn is hanging, and the black passed pawn is free to move on to queen. Let's look at the variations:

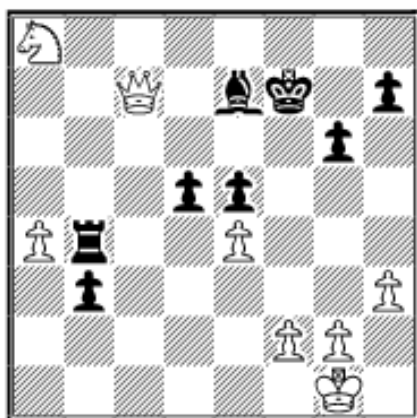
40...Qxa4? is very bad: 41.Rxf7+! Kh6 (41...Kxf7 42.Nb6+) 42.Rxh7+! Kxh7

43.Qc7+ Kh6 44.Qxb8.

40...Bd8 is met by 41.Rd7, and if 41...b3, then 42.Nb4 Kh6 (42...d5 43.Qxb3 – and Black is tied hand and foot) 43.Qxf7 Qxe4 44.Qxh7+ Kg5 45.Rxd6, threatening 46.h4+ – White has an irresistible attack. And after 41...Qxa4, White can choose between 42.Rxf7+!? Kh8 43.Rf8+ Kg7 44.Rg8+ Kh6 45.Ne3!+-, and 42.Nf6! Qd1+ 43.Kh2 Kxf6 (43...d5 44.Rxd5+-) 44.Qxf7+ Kg5 45.Qf8!+- (or 45.f4+! ef 46.h4+ Kg4 47.Qxh7+-).

Black's relatively best chance for defense is 40...Qa5!? 41.Nf4 (41.Nxb4? d5! 42.Nxd5 Qe1+) 41...d5; however, after 42.Nxd5 b3 (or 42...Rf8 43.Qb3!+) 43.Nc3 Rf8 44.Rb7, White comes out a healthy pawn up.

The line **40...b3!? 41.Nb6 d5! 42.Rxf7+! Kxf7 43.Qc7+ Be7 44.Nxa8 Rb4!** leads to amusing complications:



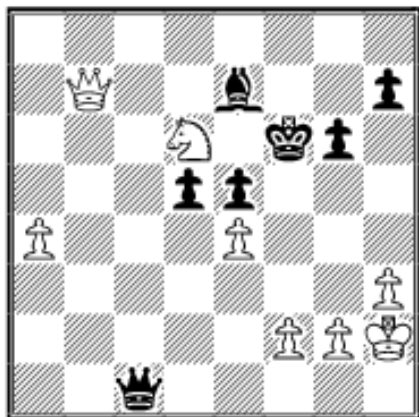
1.?

White faces a choice: should he blockade the pawn with his queen, or ignore it in favor of his attack?

A) 45.Qc1 b2 46.Qb1 Bc5! (threatening 47...Bd4 and 48.Rc4) 47.a5! Bd4 48.Nb6 de! (the position after 48...Rb5 49.Na4 Rxa5 50.Nxb2 Rb5 is probably lost for Black) 49.Kf1 Bxb6!? 50.ab Rxb6, and it's not clear how White can make progress: the rook and

b2-pawn are apparently enough to neutralize White's queen.

B) **45.Nb6! b2 46.Nc8 b1Q+ 47.Kh2 Rb7** (Black can hardly have anything better here: White's queen + knight tandem can create too many dangerous threats) **48.Nd6+ Kf6** (48...Ke6 49.ed+ Kxd5 50.Nxb7) **49.Qxb7 Qc1!?** (49...Qxb7 50.Nxb7 d4 51.Kg3 Ke6 52.Kf3 leads to a hopeless minor-piece endgame.)



1.?

The threat is 50...Qf4+, with a perpetual check. On 50.Qb6 d4!, White has to defend himself once more against the same threat: oddly enough, there doesn't seem to be any discovered check with sufficient force. But he does have **50.Qc7! Qxc7** (50...Qf4+ 51.Kg1 de 42.Qc6!+- is no better) **51.Ne8+ Kf7** **52.Nxc7**, and White must win, for example: 52...de 53.a5 Bc5 54.Nb5 Bxf2 55.g3!+-.

Thus, 38.b4! ab 39.Rc7 Qa8 40.Qb3! or 40.Qc4!? would have given White tremendous winning chances. But now, let's see how the game went.

38...Bg5-d8!

Black, of course, covers the c7-square.

39.Qd3-f3 Qb7-d7

I am not sure that White would have been able to capitalize on his advantage after 39...Rc8 40.Rxc8 Qxc8, either. Gata Kamsky preferred to keep the rooks on, hoping to tie White's pieces down with pressure on the b3-pawn.

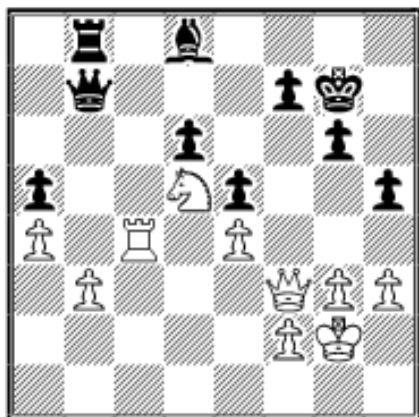
40.Kg1-g2

On 40.Qg4, Black has a good reply: 40...Qe6!; additionally, White has to consider 40...f5!? 41.ef Qxf5.

40...h7-h5!?

Taking away the g4-square is useful; and under some circumstances, the pawn might also advance to h4.

41.Rc3-c4 Qd7-b7



1.

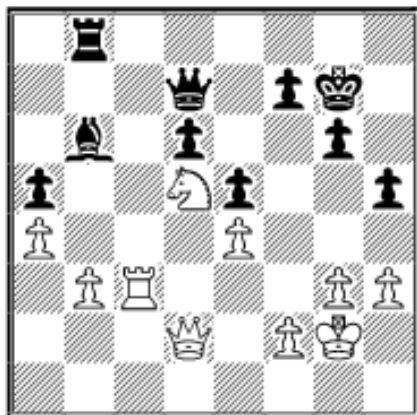
42.Rc4-c3

Creating a queenside passed pawn turns out to be not so simple after all. Anand declined to play 42.b4 ab 43.Rxb4 because of 43...Qxb4! (43...Qa8 44.Rxb8 Qxb8 was also possible, for instance: 45.Qc3 Qb1 46.Qb4 Qd3 47.a5 f5 [Ftacnik] 48.h4 f4 49.gf Qe2) 44.Nxb4 Rxb4. 45.Qd1 would then be met by 45...Rd4 46.Qc2 (46.Qb3 Rxe4) 46...h4!?, or

46...Bb6!?, when Black should not lose.

42.h4!? had some point to it. Black could wait and see; but in my view, he could also take the pawn, even though it is risky. After 42...Qxb3 43.Qxb3 Rxb3 44.Rc8 Bf6, Iosif Dorfman gives 45.Rc6, with an exclamation point, which is hardly justified. Black need only avoid playing 45...Rd3 (hoping for 46.Rxd6? Be7!, when the bishop is freed), which runs into 46.Ra6 Rd4 47.f3, when 47...Rxa4 48.Rxd6 loses the bishop. The correct continuation is 45...Rb8 46.Rxd6 Bd8, with Kf8-e8 to follow, when White's advantage is not that great. A more natural line would be 45.Ra8 g5! 46.hg Bxg5 47.Rxa5 Ra3 (47...Rd3) 48.Ra6 Bd2+, but here too, Black can fight on.

42...Qb7-d7 43.Qf3-e2 Bd8-b6 44.Qe2-d2



1...?

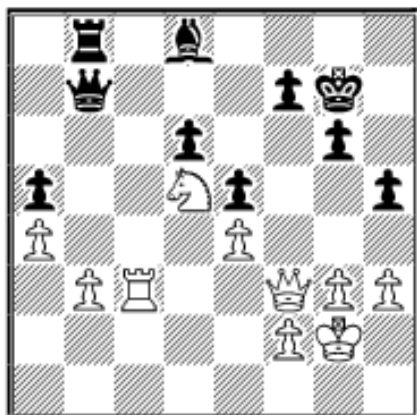
44...Bb6-d8!

David Bronstein was once asked how he had managed to save a game where he had stood badly for so long.

“Very simple,” the grandmaster replied, “I tried only to keep my position from becoming worse – and still more important, I didn’t try to make it better.”

Thus it is here: Black must learn patience, and wait. Any active move on his part will only make his opponent’s task easier. For example, 44...f5? 45.ef Qxf5 would grant White a decisive attack by 46.Nxb6 Rxb6 47.Rc7+ Kf6 48.Qd5 Qe6 49.Qf3+ Qf5 50.Qa8. And the attempt to activate the bishop by 44...Bc5?! turns out poorly because of 45.Qg5! Qd8? (45...Qe6 is better, and on 46.Rf3 Bb6 47.Rf6 Qd7) 46.Ne7! Kf8 47.Nxg6+ fg 48.Qxg6, and wins (Anand).

45.Qd2-c2 Qd7-b7 46.Qd2-d3 Bd8-b6 47.Qd3-f3 Bb6-d8



1.

How is White to make progress? It would be good to trade the h-pawn for his g-pawn by playing g3-g4 and recapturing on g4 with a piece, and then use the h-pawn as a battering ram against the enemy king’s defenses by h3-h4-h5. But there seems to be no easy way to bring this plan to life. And besides, White must always be alert for the central break f7-f5 (which could apparently be played in response to 48.h4).

48.g3-g4?! h5xg4 49.h3xg4

It would have been preferable to recapture on g4 with the queen, but 49.Qxg4 would be met by 49...f5!, with an unclear game.

49...Rb8-c8!

Now that White has weakened his kingside, Kamsky willingly trades off the rooks. He liquidates a potential threat to transfer the white rook to the h-file, and also forces his opponent to keep an eye on the black queen's attempts to infiltrate the kingside from now on. This will tie White's hands, leaving him unable to develop any kingside activity of his own.

Although Black could also have played 49...Qd7 50.Qg3 Bg5 51.Rc7 Qe6, or 50.Rc1 Qb7 51.b4 ab 42.Qh3 Bg5!.

50.Qf3-e3 Rc8xc3 51.Qe3xc3 Qb7-a6 52.Qc3-c2

Covering e2. It's a draw after 52.b4 ab 53.Qxb4 Qe2 54.Kg3 Bh4+ 55.Kxh4 Qxf2+ 56.Kh3 Qf3+ (Ftacnik).

52...Qa6-a7

And now, Black's queen threatens to infiltrate via d4.

53.Qc2-d2 Qa7-b7

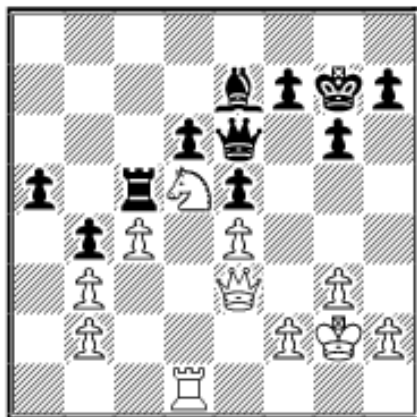
Yasser Seirawan thinks White could have maintained winning chances by playing 54.b4!? ab 55.Qxb4. I think not – 55...Qc8! assures Black sufficient counterplay.

54.Qd2-d3 Draw.

Four years later, Anand once again had a complex position to play – but this time, he represented the defending side.

Polgar – Anand

Wijk aan Zee, 1998



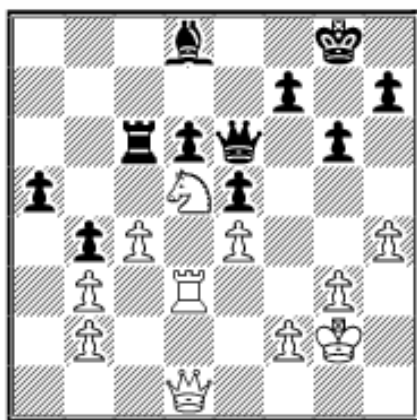
1.

The main difference between this example and the previous one lies in the queenside pawn structure. There, White's rook could operate along the c-file, and one promising plan was to create a passed a-pawn. Here, the queenside is nearly closed up; thus, play must be created on the opposite side of the board. Still, the closed nature of the queenside has its pluses for White: she does not need to worry about her backward pawn at b3, and

her opponent is unable to force the exchange of rooks, as Kamsky managed to do at the proper moment.

To begin, Judit Polgar resorts to a well-known technique – arranging her heavy pieces correctly on the half-open d-file, with the rook in front of the queen.

32.Rd1-d3 Be7-d8 33.Qe3-d2 Rc5-c6 34.Qd2-d1 Kg7-g8 35.h2-h4!



1...?

Judit understands that she will not win by working only on the central file. So she opens a “second front” on the kingside – in complete accordance with the well-known method of realizing one's advantage, the “two weaknesses principle.”

Black had to prevent the h-pawn's further advance by replying 35...h5! Polgar had intended to persist, continuing with: 36.f3

Kg7 37.Qe2, followed by Rd1-h1 and g3-g4. But such a plan is not easy to carry out: once the white king's protection is weakened, she would have had to consider the maneuver Bb6-d4, followed by f7-f5.

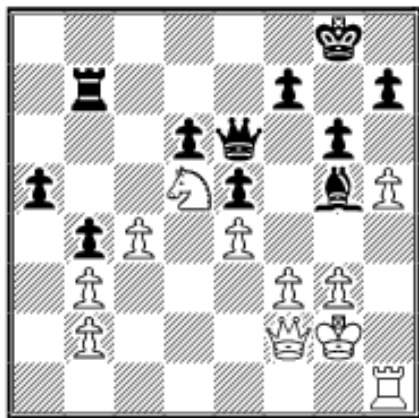
35...Kg8-g7? 36.h4-h5 Bd8-g5 37.Qd1-f3 Rc6-c8 38.Rd3-d1

White prepares to slide her heavy pieces over to the h-file, creating threats against the enemy king.

38...Rc8-c6 39.Qf3-e2 Rc6-c8 40.Rd1-h1 Kg7-g8 41.f2-f3!

Outstanding play, not only clearing the second rank for the maneuver Kf1 and Qh2, but also the f2-square, from which the queen will threaten to invade along the g1-a7 diagonal. Yet another appearance for the “two weaknesses principle”: in order to make the opponent's defense as difficult as possible, it is necessary to create problems for him over the entire board.

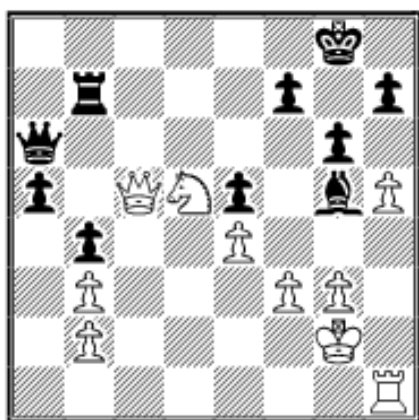
41...Rc8-b8 42.Qe2-f2 Rb8-b7



1.

Black has defended against the white queen's invasion on the diagonal, but at a steep price: White now has the additional possibility of c4-c5!

Before playing this, Polgar exchanged pawns on g6 – a sensible decision, which would require no comment, were it not for the variation **43.c5?! dc 44.Qxc5 Qa6**, which the grandmaster alluded to as the reason behind the move she played.



1.?

Now there's no longer time for 45.hg? in view of 45...Qe2+ 46.Kh3 Qxf3. However, then comes the spectacular **45.Nf6+!!** Black cannot reply 45...Bxf6?, because it's mate: 46.Qc8+ Kg7 47.h6#; and on 45...Qxf6 46.Qc8+ Qd8 47.Qxb7 Qd2+ 48.Kh3, Black doesn't get enough for the exchange.

That leaves 45...Kg7 46.Ne8+ Kg8; but after 47.Qxe5, Black's position is tough. Here are some variations: 47...Kf8 48.Qxg5 Qe2+ (48...Kxe8 49.Qe5+ Kf8 60.hg+-) 49.Kh3 Rb5 50.Qf6! Rxf6 51.Kg4 Rxf6 (51...Kxe8 52.Rc1+-) 52.Nd6 Rh4+ 53.Kxh4 Qh2+ 54.Kg4 Qh5+ 55.Kf4, when the checks soon run out; or 47...f6 48.Qd5+ Kf8 49.hg Qe2+ 50.Kh3 Qxf3 51.Qc5+ Kg8 (51...Re7 52.g7+ Kg8 53.Qc4+ Rf7 54.Rf1 Qh5+ 55.Kf2+-) 52.Qc4+, followed by 53.Rf1 (and there's also 52.Nxf6+!?).

43.hg fg

Now the black king's cover is significantly weakened; in return, he hopes to use the opened f-file for a counterattack – a chance he never gets.

Anand rejected 43...hg because of 44.Qg1!?, with an attack down the h-file. Perhaps he ought to have risked it – after 44...f5 45.Qh2 Bf6, the attack is not so simple. On 46.Qh6 Bg7 47.Qg5 (47.Qh7+ Kf7 48.Ra1 Ra7 with the threat of Ra8-h8) 47...Rf7, I don't see a mate; and taking his queen to the other side doesn't work, because of the counter-threats to his own king: 48.Qd8+ Bf8 49.Qxa5? fe 50.fe? Qg4, and now it's Black who's winning.

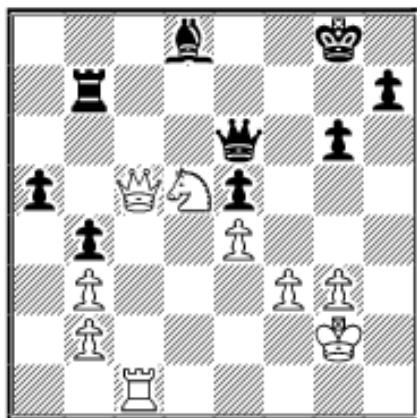
Artur Yusupov found the right idea: 46.Qh3!, and bringing the g-pawn into the assault on the enemy king's fortifications. For example, 46...Rf7 47.g4! fe (47...f4 48.Qh6+- is hopeless) 48.fe Rb7 49.Kg3 Rf7 50.Qh6 Bg7 51.Qh7+ Kf8 52.g5 (Black's in zugzwang!) 52...Ra7 (52...Rd7 53.Ra1) 53.Nf6 Qf7 54.Rf1

Bxf6 55.Qh6+ Qg7 56.Rxf6+ Rf7 57.Rxg6, or 57.Rxd6, with an easily won rook endgame.

And Polgar might also have played as in the game: 44.c5!? It's not clear which of the two plans she might have selected.

It usually makes sense to give the opponent this kind of choice. Over the board, it's very hard to determine which continuation is objectively stronger, or at least more promising from a practical standpoint. After 43...fg, White's task is simple: there's no need to hesitate now.

44.c4-c5! d6xc5 45.Qf2xc5 Bg5-d8 46.Rh1-c1!



1...?

The rook no longer has any business on the h-file, so White slings it over to the opened c-file. Polgar wants to carry out the same regrouping of the heavy pieces with which we began: queen behind the rook (Rc4 and Qe3-c1), and then infiltrate with the rook at c8.

46...Kg8-f7?!

A loss of time. 46...Kg7 was more accurate.

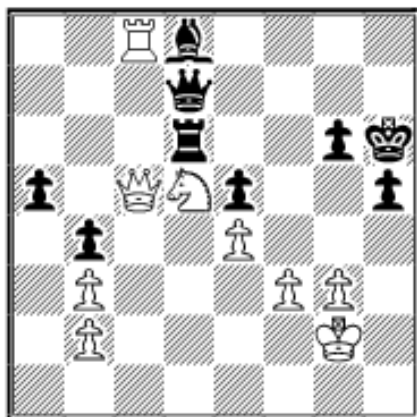
47.Qc5-e3 Kf7-g7

Otherwise, Black would have had 48.Qh6 to deal with.

48.Rc1-c4 Rb7-d7 49.Qe3-c1 h7-h5 50.Rc4-c6 Rd7-d6

50...Qf7 51.Qc5 is no better.

51.Rc6-c8 Qe6-d7 52.Qc1-c5 Kg7-h6



1.

53.Rc8-b8

White probably had no reason to reject the natural move 53.Ra8!? (intending 54.Ra7), since 53...Bb6 is strongly met by 54.Qc1+ Kg7 55.Qg5 (Polgar). On the other hand, that possibility won't go away, either.

53...Bd8-f6

The counterattacking try 53...g5?! is dubious, in view of the weakening of the f5-

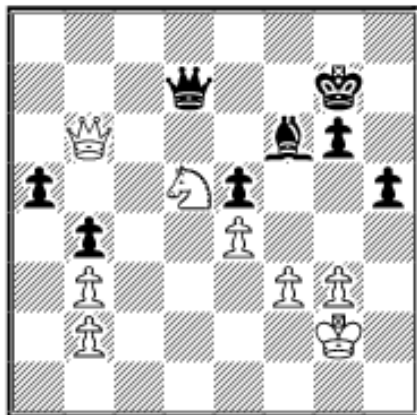
square. White would answer 54.Ra8! Qe6 (54...g4 55.fg hg 56.Qf2! Kg6 57.Qf8) 55.Ne3 Rd2+ 56.Kf1+- (but of course not 56.Kg1?? Bb6).

Tibor Karolyi, who has written an interesting book on Judit Polgar's career, believes 53...Kg7 was more stubborn. In that event, White could choose between simplifying the position with 54.Rb7 Qxb7 55.Qxd6, or the more energetic 54.Ra8!?, with a continuation similar to the variation given above by Polgar: 54...Bb6 55.Qc1 Bd8 56.Qe3 Bb6 57.Qg5+-.

54.Qc5-e3+ Bf6-g5?

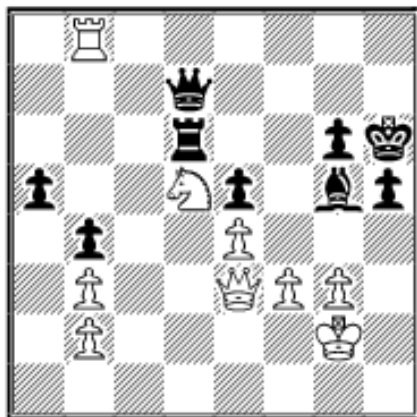
This allows the Hungarian a spectacular finish. Another quick loss was 54...g5? 55.Nxf6 Rxf6 56.Rh8+.

54...Kg7 was necessary. Polgar gives the continuation 55.Ra8 Qb5 56.Ra7+ (56.Nc7 is inferior: 56...Rd3 57.Qc1 Qd7 58.Nd5 Bd8 59.Qc2 Rd4 – Karolyi) 56...Rd7 (56...Kg8 57.Nxf6+ Rxf6 58.Qh6 Qe2+ 59.Kh3 Qf1+ 60.Kh4+-) 57.Rxd7+ Qxd7 58.Qb6.



1...

Black's position is difficult: 58...Bd8 (58...Be7 59.Qxa5; 58...Qd8 59.Qc6) 59.Qb8 (the e5-pawn hangs) 59...Qe8? 60.Nc7 and 51.Qxd8!



1.?

Now comes the final combination.

55.f3-f4! e5xf4 56.Rb8-h8+!

Black resigned before his opponent could demonstrate the pretty conclusion: 56...Kg7 57.Qd4+ Bf6 58.Qxf6+!! Rxf6 59.Rh7+! Kxh7 60.Nxf6+.

Comparing the two games, we may say that Polgar handled the white pieces more purposefully and consistently than did Anand. Conversely, she also encountered much weaker resistance from the Indian grandmaster than Kamsky put up in the first example.

Well, every chessplayer has his off days. Equally likely is another explanation: that no one stands fully complete – even gifted grandmasters find themselves in

situations (to each, his own), in which they feel uncertain. So for everyone, there is always room for further creative growth.



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