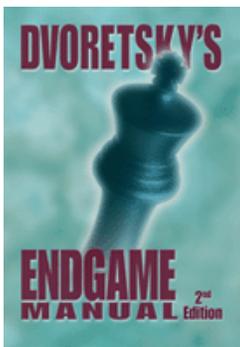




COLUMNISTS

*The Instructor*

Mark Dvoretsky



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Unjustified Greed

In 1975, the English master (soon to become grandmaster) and prolific chess author Raymond Keene published an interesting book, entitled *Learn from the Grandmasters*. He invited many well-known players to participate (I even contributed to a later edition, published in 1998). His co-authors were asked to describe the two games they found most memorable – but only one could be their own.

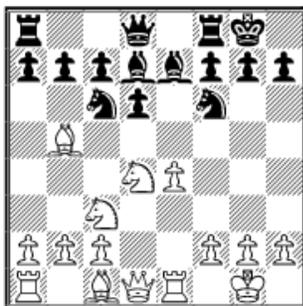
Viktor Korchnoi annotated a battle between two principal rivals: Siegbert Tarrasch and Emanuel Lasker. His choice was understandable, given that he titled his entry *My Chess Hero*. In fact, among contemporary chessplayers, Korchnoi is the one who comes closest to Lasker, both in his approach to the duel of chess and in his strong fighting character.

**Tarrasch – Lasker**  
Dusseldorf/Munchen 1908  
2nd Match Game

1 e2-e4 e7-e5 2 Ng1-f3 Nb8-c6 3 Bf1-b5 Ng8-f6 4 0-0 d7-d6 5 d2-d4 Bc8-d7 6 Nb1-c3 Bf8-e7 7 Rf1-e1

Some years later, Nimzovich would introduce into practice a different plan, beginning with 7 Bxc6 Bxc6 8 Qd3.

7...e5xd4 8 Nf3xd4 0-0



In the 4th match game, Black played 8... Nxd4 9 Qxd4 Bxb5 10 Nxb5 0-0 (see *School of Chess Excellence 2*, the chapter titled "Form Your Own Opinion").

9 Nd4xc6?!

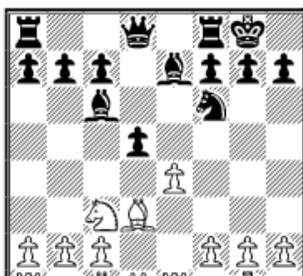
9 Bf1!? has also been played here, but taking with the bishop has been considered White's strongest: 9 Bxc6 bc, and then either 10 Qf3, 10 Qd3 or 10 Bf4.

9...Bd7xc6

It might be simpler to recapture with the pawn: 9...bc!? 10 Bd3 Re8 (Karl Schlechter suggested 10...Rb8 11 b3 Ng4 =). In a game Tarrasch – Steinitz (Vienna 1898), Black got into a difficult position after 11 h3 Bf8?! 12 Bg5 h6 13 Bh4 Rb8 14 Rb1 g5 15 Bg3 g4 16 Bh4. Savielly Tartakower's opinion was that Black could maintain the balance by 11...h6, followed by Nh7 and Bf6; later, this plan would be employed in practice.

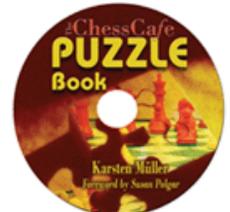
10 Bb5xc6

After 10 Bd3, Black has a choice between the restrained 10...Nd7 and Richard Réti's recommendation, 10...d5!?



Upon 11 ed Nxd5 12 Nxd5, Black will lose a pawn after 12...Qxd5 13 Bxh7+ Kxh7 14 Qxd5 Bxd5 15 Rxe7, although White would have a very hard time exploiting his small material advantage, in view of the opposite-colored bishops. But after 12... Bxd5 13 Bf4, White's temporary initiative, based on the shaky positions of the enemy

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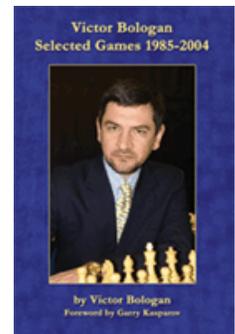


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bishops, should be neutralized with careful play.

Nor does White get any advantage with 11 e5 Ne4 12 Qg4 (12 Bxe4 de 13 Qg4 Qd4! =>) 12...f5 13 ef Nxf6 14 Qe6+ Rf7, followed by 15...Bd7 and 16...c6.

### 10...b7xc6 11 Nc3-e2!?

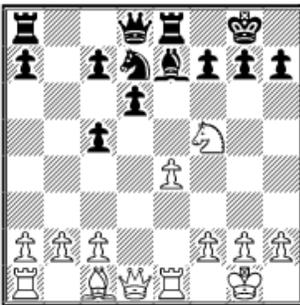


White intends to manoeuvre the knight to f5 and exert pressure on the king's wing. There is also an element of psychology in the move chosen by White, who prevents Black from following the natural plan of development for his pieces. If, for example, White plays the natural 11 b3 or 11 Bf4, then Black replies 11...Nd7 and 12...Bf6. The knight move to d7 is normal, but after 11 Ne2, it is no longer sufficient: 11 Ne2 Nd7?! 12 Nd4 c5 13 Nc6 Qe8 14 e5, and White has a clear advantage (Korchnoi).

### 11...Qd8-d7?

The pawn on e4 is of course taboo: 11...Nxe4? 12 Nd4+-; but the text move is also a mistake: it was precisely this move that placed Lasker in a difficult situation.

Zak (and Korchnoi after him) recommends **11...Re8!?** 12 Nd4 c5 13 Nf5 (13 Nc6 Qd7 =>) 13...Nd7.



After 14 Qg4 Bf6, Black equalizes, according to the annotators. In my opinion, a non-standard means of adding the queen's rook to the attack is more dangerous: 14 a4! Bf6 15 Ra3, with 16 Rh3 or 16 Rg3 to follow, leaves Black in a seemingly scary situation.

The principled response to Tarrasch's knight maneuver would be an advance in the center: **11...d5!**

12 e5 Ne4 13 Nd4 Qd7 = (Zak) doesn't offer White an advantage; so **12 Nd4** suggests itself. If Black doesn't want to calculate complex variations, he can certainly reply 12...de!? 13 Nc6 Qe8 14 Nxe7+ Qxe7, without fear of 15 Bg5 Qe5 (attacking the pawn at b2). On the other hand, either 15 Bf4 or 15 Be3 would leave White with the preferable position.

**12...Qd7 13 Nf5 Bc5** leads to a more complex game (13...Rfe8?! 14 Bg5 would be inferior – Korchnoi).



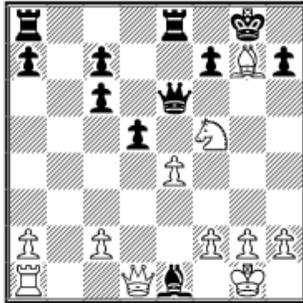
A) Having followed Korchnoi's notes to this position, I immediately spotted a sharp forcing attempt: **14 b4!? Bxb4 15 Bb2** Unfortunately, it offers White no objective advantage.

**A1) 15...d4?! 16 Bxd4 Bxe1 17 Qxe1 Qe6**



Now the tempting 18 Qe3? doesn't work, in view of 18...Nxe4! 19 Nxg7 Qg6. On the other hand, the simple 18 f3 maintains excellent compensation for the sacrificed exchange.

**A2) 15...Bxe1 16 Bxf6 Qe6 17 Bxg7 Rfe8**



White must refrain from the obvious 18 Qd4?, since Black has the only but sufficient defense 18...c5!-+. And **18 Qxe1 Qxf5! 19 ef Rxe1+ 20 Rxe1 Kxg7** would lead to an approximately equal endgame. White might sharpen it considerably with 21 Re7 Rb8 22 g4 Rb2 23 g5 Rxc2 24 Kg2, hoping to bring off a small-forces kingside attack, but the outcome of such an attack would be difficult to predict.

**A3) 15...Qe6!?**

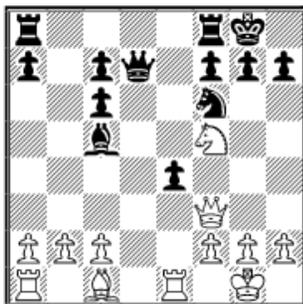


If 16 Re3, hoping for 16...de? 17 Nxg7! Kxg7 18 Rg3+ Kh8 19 Qg4+-, then Black replies 16...Nxe4! 17 Nxg7 Qg6 18 Nh5 Be7 or 18...f5, with a position that may be difficult to assess, but which can hardly be considered good for White.

In the other line, **16 Nxg7!? Kxg7 17 Re3** (17 Qh5? d4! 18 Bxd4 h6+- is a mistake) **17...d4! 18 Qxd4 Be7 19 Rg3+ Kh8**, White must take the draw after **20 Rf3**, while Black may either accept the repetition

of moves by 20...Kg7 21 Rg3+ Kh8, or play on in a complex endgame after 20...Rfb8 (but not 20...Rab8? 21 Qxf6+! Bxf6 22 Bxf6+) 21 Rxf6 Bxf6 22 Qxf6+ Qxf6 23 Bxf6+ Kg8.

**B) 14 Qf3!?! de**



Now Korchnoi examines 15 Rxe4? Nxe4 16 Qg4 Bxf2+ 17 Kf1 Qxf5 18 Qxf5 Rfe8, when Black has sufficient compensation for the queen. But he could get more by 16...g6! 17 Nh6+ Kg7 18 Qxd7 Rad8 19 Nf5+!?! (19 Qg4 Nxf2 loses immediately) 19...gf (the most likely outcome of 19...Kh8 20 Qd3! is a draw) 20 Bh6+! Kxh6 21 Qxf5 Rfe8, with an obvious advantage.

White therefore continues **15 Qf4!**, and if **15...Rfd8**, then not 16 Qg5 Bf8, but **16**

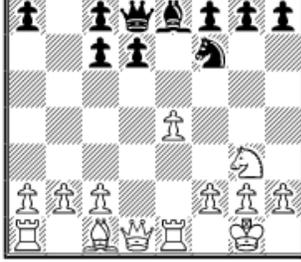
**Nxg7**, keeping somewhat better prospects after either 16...Qd6 17 Nf5 Qxf4 18 Bxf4, or 16...Nd5 17 Nh5 Nxf4 18 Nf6+ Kg7 19 Nxd7 Rxd7 20 Bxf4 f5 21 Rad1 Rad8 22 Rxd7+ Rxd7 23 Kf1. On the other hand, his winning chances would be insignificant; and Black might also defend himself differently: 15...g6!?! 16 Ng3 Nd5 17 Nxe4! Rfe8 18 Bd2 Bd4! 19 Qh4 Bxb2 20 Rab1 Bg7, with complete equality.

**12 Ne2-g3**



**12...Rf8-e8**

In Réti's opinion, 12...Rfd8 was preferable,



preparing Rab8 and d6-d5 (after e4-e5, the knight could retreat to e8).

### 13 b2-b3 Ra8-d8

The attempt to free himself by 13...Ng4? 14 Nf5 Bf6? does not work, because of 15 Qxg4 Bxa1 16 Nh6+ (Zak).

Korchnoi believes that Black had to admit his mistake from two moves back, and retreat the queen: 13...Qc8!?. Now 14 Nf5 Bf8, attacking the e4-pawn, is not dangerous for Black (who can also play an immediate 14...Nxe4), and on 14 Bb2, he plays 14...Nd7. On the other hand, continuing this variation by 15 Nh5 g6 14 Qd4 f6 17 Qc4+ Kh8 18 Nf4 makes it clear that Black's position is not easy.

### 14 Bc1-b2



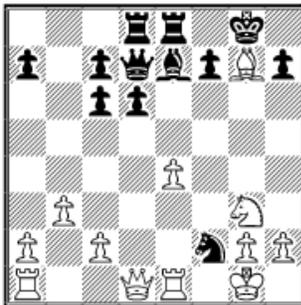
What is Black to do against White's plan of straightforwardly strengthening his position (Nf5, Qf3, etc.)? On 14...Qe6, Korchnoi considers 15 Qf3 strongest, but that's not wholly convincing, in view of 15...Nd7. A more uncomfortable reply may be 15 Qd4!, preparing Nf5, while also attacking the weak pawn at a7. If 15...c5, then 16 Qc3, intending Rad1 and also Qa5 in some lines.

*Any other player would probably have lost this game. But Lasker, correctly assessing the position, once again followed his beloved psychological path. His next move looks like an oversight; but in fact, it's a deliberate pawn sacrifice, with the aim of isolating the e4-pawn... The chief benefit that comes from saddling the opponent with an isolated pawn is not the chance to attack it, but control of the strong square that lies in front of it (here, e5), which may be occupied with pieces. In the further course of the game, Lasker makes skillful use of this resource. But since a game filled with various opportunities for both sides would be more alien to Tarrasch's style than the straightforward weakening of the enemy position, followed by a decisive assault, without any counterplay for the opponent, then Lasker's next move, which would objectively be considered a mistake, turns out, from a psychological point of view, to be unexpectedly masterful (Réti).*

### 14...Nf6-g4!? 15 Bb2xg7!

*One well-known grandmaster says that on 14...Ng4, he would have replied 15 Nf5 without a second thought (Vainshtein). This grandmaster was in error: after 15...Bf6, White loses most of his advantage.*

### 15...Ng4xf2!



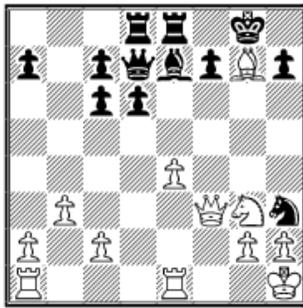
A typical "desperado" counterstroke. 15...Kxg7 16 Nf5+ and 17 Qxg4 would have been just awful. On the other hand, the text move doesn't change the evaluation: from a positional standpoint, the pawns exchanged are not at all equivalent. *I must say...that of the three pawns protecting the king, the most important one is the g-pawn, and to exchange it for the f- or h-pawn is a poor deal (Korchnoi).*

### 16 Kg1xf2?

White could have gone after the a7-pawn by a more effective means – one which has escaped the notice, as far as I can tell, of all the annotators: **16 Qf3!?** Kxg7 (16...Ng4? 17 Nf5+-) 17 Qxf2+/- . Considering the threat of 18 Nh5+, Black has no time to save the vulnerable rook's pawn, leading to a more favorable version (for White) of the situation in the game.

True, White would have to consider yet another “desperado”-type move: 16... Nh3+!?. After 17 gh Kxg7, White’s advantage is not great: 18 Nh5+ Kh8 19 Nf6 (19 Qxf7? Rg8+ and 20...Rdf8) 19...Bxf6 20 Qxf6+ Kg8 21 Re3 Qe6 22 Rg3+ Kf8 23 Qh4 (23 Qg7+ Ke7 24 Rf1 Rg8+/-) 23...Re7! 24 Qxh7 Ke8+/-.

But he doesn’t have to take the knight: 17 Kh1! is far stronger.



Now 17...Ng5 18 Qc3 Qe6 19 Nf5 Nxe4 20 Rxe4 Qxf5 21 Rae1 d5 (21...Bf8 22 Bxf8 Rxf8 23 Qxc6) 22 R4e3 Rd6 23 Bd4 leads to a lost position. So Black must defend by 17...Kxg7 18 Nf5+ Kh8 (18...Kg8 19 gh! is just bad) 19 Qc3+ f6 20 Qxh3 Bf8 (21 Qh6 was the threat). Although Black’s position remains difficult after 21 Qh4, he can still carry on the fight.

*Instead of winning the pawn, White could have obtained a powerful, irresistible*

*attack after 16. Qd4. A player with an attacking style would doubtlessly have won this game from Lasker. But it would be more accurate to say that, against an attacking player, Lasker would probably never have selected the double-edged continuation 14...Ng4! (Réti).*

Réti continues to insist upon the idea that Black’s risky decision was primarily due to his hope of exploiting the specific nature of Tarrasch’s playing style. This assertion seems questionable to me. The World Champion undoubtedly took into account whom he was playing, but I doubt that this was the overriding factor. I suggest that he would have played exactly the same against any – or practically any – opponent. Lasker’s position, after all, was completely hopeless, and the complications would produce definite practical chances. *Lasker’s vast tactical talent finds the only possible way of complicating the game* (Korchnoi).

Let’s see what would have happened after the strongest move, **16 Qd4!**

**A) 16...c5?!**



In my view, White’s simplest course would be **17 Qc3!?** Ng4 18 Nf5 (threatening 19 Qg3) 18...Qe6 19 h3 Ne5 20 Re3+-.

Another good line is **17 Qxf2 Kxg7 18 Nh5 + Kh8** (18...Kh6 19 Nf6+-; 18...Kg6 19 Re3+-).



Korchnoi continues with 19 Qxf7, but after 19...Bh4!? 20 Qxd7 Rxd7 21 g3 Re5 22 Nf4 Bf6+/-, Black can defend himself, while after the stronger **19 Nf6!** Bxf6 20 Qxf6+ Kg8 21 Re3 Qe6 22 Rg3+ Kf8 23 Qh4!?, with threats of 24 Rf1 or 24 Qxh7, it doesn’t seem as though Black’s game can be saved. We reached almost the same position in our analysis of the variation 16 Qf3 Nh3+ 17 gh variation – but there, White’s advantage was considerably

lessened by his ruined kingside pawn structure.

**B) 16...Ng4 17 Nf5 Qe6**



White’s task would be simpler after 17...c5 18 Qc3 (a position we have already



examined), or 17...f6 18 h3 Ne5 19 Re3+-, or 17...Bg5 18 h3 Ne5 19 h4!+-.

Here, White has a wide and mostly pleasant choice:

**B1)** In Zak's opinion, the direct **18 Re3?** wins (expecting 18...Nxe3? 19 Nh6+). But Korchnoi found a strong retort: 18...c5! 19

Qc3 Bf6 unclear.

**B2)** Nor is **18 h3 Bf6 19 Bxf6 Nxf6** wholly convincing (Korchnoi): White may have the advantage, but his success isn't guaranteed.

**B3)** On **18 Qc3!?**, Black loses, as Korchnoi notes, after 18...Bf6? 19 Bxf6 Qxf6 20 Qg3 Qg6 21 Qxg4!, or 18...d5? 19 h3. 18...Qg6!? is a little better – then, White could continue either with 19 Qxc6 d5 20 Qxc7, or with 19 h3 Bf6 20 Bxf6 Nxf6 21 Qxc6 d5 22 Qxc7 Rd7 23 Qf4. And finally, in reply to 18...Ne5, Korchnoi recommends 19 Bxe5, with an overwhelming positional advantage, but 19 Re3! reaches the goal more quickly.

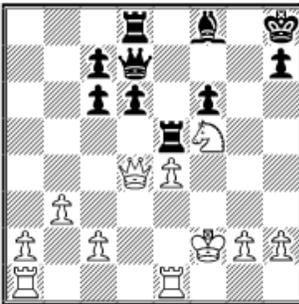
**B4)** Another recommendation of Korchnoi's is **18 Qxa7!?** d5 19 h3 Nf6 20 Nxe7+ Qxe7 21 ed. Let's extend this variation: 21...Ne4 22 Bb2 cd 23 a4+/- . If this isn't enough for White, he could also play 21 Bxf6!? Qxf6 22 ed Qc3 23 Qf2+-.

*The move chosen by Tarrasch also wins a pawn, but after the exchange of the important bishop on g7 for the knight, Black succeeds in creating counterchances (Korchnoi).*

**16...Kg8xg7 19 Ng3-f5+ Kg7-h8 20 Qd1-d4+ f7-f6**

The intermediate check by the knight on the previous move forced Black to advance the pawn to f6, depriving his bishop of that square.

**19 Qd4xa7 Be7-f8 20 Qa7-d4 Re8-e5**



It looks as though White has succeeded, and the assessment of the position is obvious: He's a pawn up, and his knight is far more active than the opposing bishop. In this kind of situation, it's a very difficult task psychologically to pull oneself together, and examine the contours of the opponent's threatened counterplay, in order to take accurate measures to neutralize it.

**The slackening and sense of well-being that sometimes overtakes the stronger side, after a sharp and apparently**

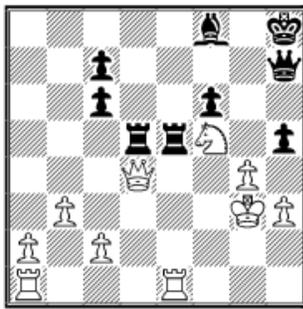
**favorable turn of events, is fraught with heavy consequences And exactly the reverse can also happen: an excessive tenseness and indecision, brought about by the dangers of throwing away one's advantage and letting slip the win, multiple rechecking of variations, and as a result – the inescapable time-pressure.**

The more so, in that actually matters are not so simple here. The e4-pawn is weakened, Black's rook occupies an excellent post at e5, the break d6-d5 is looming; and if the knight retreats, in order to defend the pawn, Black's bishop comes irrepressibly back into the game.

Clearly, it's not yet time to shepherd the a-pawn to the queening square: first White must consolidate. And if he succeeds in this, then he must simplify. But it's not that obvious precisely what plan White should follow.

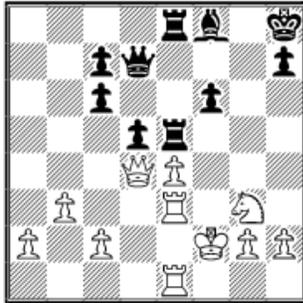
Here are some rough variations, illustrating Black's counterattacking resources.

21 g4 h5!? 22 h3 Qh7 23 Kg3?! d5 24 ed? Rxd5



White's injudicious play has rendered his position difficult. Zak continues: 25 Qf2 hg 26 hg Rxf5! 27 Rh1 Bd6+ 28 Kg2 Rxf2+ 29 Kxf2 Bh2+-. No better is 25 Qf4 Rxf5! 26 gf Rxf5 27 Qd2 Qg8+ (or 27...Qg6+) 28 Kh2 Rf3!-+.

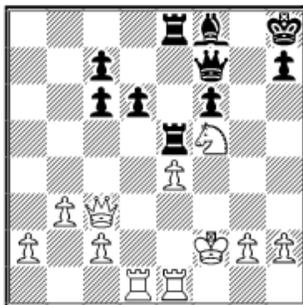
21 Re3 Rde8 22 Rae1 (22 c4 d5 23 Rd1 Qf7) 22...d5 23 Ng3



Black could win the exchange by a small combination: 23...Bc5! 24 Qxc5 d4. Another good line is 23...Qg4!? 24 c3 (24 Kg1 de 25 Rxe4 Bc5 26 Qxc5 Rxc5 27 Rxe8+ Kg7 leads to an unclear position) 24...Bh6! (Zak's move, 24...de?, would be a mistake in view of 25 Rxe4+/-) 25 R3e2 Bf4, with sufficient counterplay.

Perhaps it would have made sense for White to play c2-c4 here or on the next move. But the path he actually chose should not be criticized either.

**21 Ra1-d1 Rd8-e8 22 Qd4-c3 Qd7-f7**

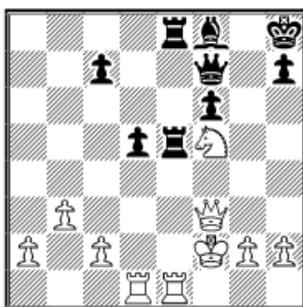


With the f6-pawn protected, Black was now threatening to take on e4. But I think that 22...d5! would have been stronger.

**23 Nf5-g3?!**

White loses the thread of the game. Trading off the c-pawns with 23 Qxc6 Rc5 24 Qa6 Rxc2+ 25 Re2 Rc5 apparently didn't appeal to him, even though 26 Qd3, followed by 27 Qf3, would have retained the upper hand.

As Korchnoi pointed out, the simplest approach was to shore up the position with 23 Qf3!, so that after 23...d5 (otherwise 24 c4), he could start mass exchanges by 24 ed cd



25 Rxe5 Rxe5 (25...fe 26 Rxd5 e4 doesn't work, in view of 27 Qc3+ Kg8 28 Qc4 or 28 Re5!?) 26 Re1 Bc5+ 27 Kf1 Qe6 28 Rxe5 Qxe5 (28...fe was more stubborn; White would continue 29 g4+/-) 29 a4+/- (29 c3!? is more accurate, preventing the queen check at a1). Black's position would remain nearly lost.

Now the black bishop gets into the game.

**23...Bf8-h6 24 Qc3-f3 d6-d5 25 e4xd5?**

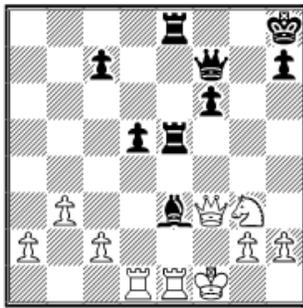
White's "swimming." Why let the bishop into e3? 25 Nf5 suggests itself. On 25...Bf8 26 ed, we've transposed into the variation favorable to White examined earlier. 25...Qg6 isn't much better: 26 Nxf6 Qxf6 27 ed cd 28 Rxe5 fe 29 Qxd5 Qxh2 30 Qf7 Qh4+ 31 Kg1 Rg8 32 Qf5+/-.

And, by the way, White could have returned the knight to f5 on the previous move.

**25...Bh6-e3+ 26 Kf2-f1 c6xd5**



**27 Rd1-d3?**



27 Nf5! was necessary. In Tarrasch's opinion, he would still have had the better chances. But Korchnoi considers Black would have equality after 27...d4, thanks to the activity of all his pieces.

**27...Qf7-e6 28 Re1-e2 f6-f5!**

Playing with enormous energy, Lasker has outplayed his opponent, and now has an obvious advantage, in spite of the pawn minus.

**29 Rd3-d1**

29 Ke1? f4 30 Nf1 Bf2+! would be bad (Korchnoi).

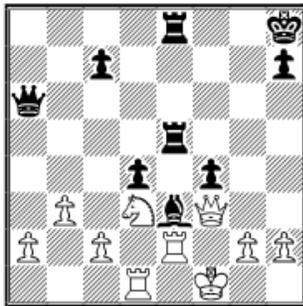
**29...f5-f4 30 Ng3-h1**

Look how far the mighty knight on f5 has fallen!

**30...d5-d4 31 Nh1-f2 Qf6-a6**

Threatening 32...Bxf2.

**32 Nf2-d3**



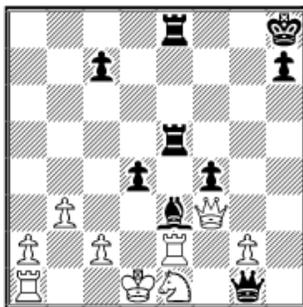
**32...Re5-g5!**

It's bad enough that the a2-pawn is hanging – Black is also threatening 33...Qh6!, against which there is no satisfactory defense.

**33 Rd1-a1 Qa6-h6 34 Kf1-e1**

On 34 h3 Rg3 35 Qd5 f3! is decisive (Korchnoi). Réti's 35...Qxh3? is weaker: at the end of the following forced sequence – 36 Qxd4+ Kg8 37 Qd5+ Kg7 38 Rxe3 Qh1+ 39 Kf2 fe+ 40 Kxg3 Qxa1 – White retains some hope of drawing.

**34...Qh6xh2 35 Ke1-d1 Qh2-g1+ 36 Nd3-e1 Rg5-e5**



*In order to force the win Black needs to move the bishop from e3 to f2, or some other square after a preparatory ...d3 or ...f3. White can only prevent this temporarily by attacking one of the black rooks with the queen (Korchnoi).*

Lasker quickly solves the problem, but not without some help from his opponent, who loses his way completely in time-pressure.

**37 Qf3-c6 Re5-e6!? 38 Qc6xc7 Re8-e7 39**

**Qc7-d8+?**

39 Qc8+ (keeping an eye on the rook at e6) 39...Kg7 40 a4 was more stubborn.

**39...Kh8-g7 40 a2-a4**



And here too, 40 Qc8! was necessary.

**40...f4-f3! 41 g2xf3 Be7-g5!**

White resigned, in view of 42 Rxe6 Rxe6 43 Qa5 Qe3.



*I ought to be ashamed of this game. As far back as the 15th move, after the stroke on g7, my advantage was so great that Lasker, who had a habit of walking around the hall, told the spectators, while I was considering*

*my moves, that "I always lose the second game." But here, the effects of my previous loss came to bear. On the 16th move, I could not decide whether to play for a continuation of the attack or the win of a pawn, and chose the second possibility, telling myself that my opponent might be able to withstand the attack, and then I would regret not taking an easy pawn, which would be enough to secure me the win. Had I not lost the first game, I would certainly have played for the attack, since even if I had not won the game, I would not have been in an inferior position. But the concern was to equalize the match score and catch up with my opponent. On the other hand, this plan should also have been enough for victory. But my indecisiveness about which was the best defensive plan, and the terrible time-pressure it induced, led to my making a whole series of weak moves, which ruined a won position (Tarrasch).*

*With my back to the wall, I decided to allow a powerful attack against the position of my king, intending to seek compensation in other factors Had I hesitated, I would have lost the initiative completely Tarrasch took the opportunity offered him, drove my king to an exposed square, maintained his threats, and even gained the material advantage of a pawn He thought that he had assured himself an advantage sufficient for victory; but in fact, as later became clear, he had only equality at best Had he, like Pillsbury or Steinitz, taken himself in hand, refused the insignificant material advantage, and thrown himself into the whirlwind of attacking combinations, he would have won He was not to be allowed the quiet, risk-free exploitation of his material advantage I gave him a choice, and he made a mistake His pieces were driven back from their strong positions, and by the 41st move, he was beaten (Lasker).*

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