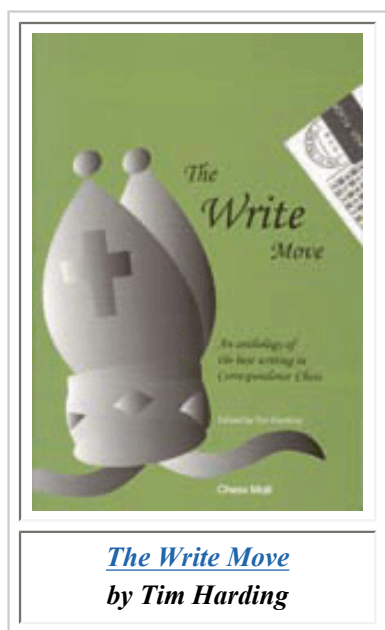




COLUMNISTS

The Kibitzer

Tim Harding



The Write Move
by Tim Harding

The Poisoned Pawn Lacked Venom

In [July 2006](#), I wrote about the Najdorf Sicilian poisoned pawn variation, and promised a follow-up article. Back then I did not realise how long it would take to finish the correspondence game this article is centred upon, which was largely my fault as other commitments (work and family) meant that I played the latter part of the game very slowly.

To recap briefly, the Poisoned Pawn arises via **1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bg5** (no longer the almost automatic choice it was at one time) **6...e6 7 f4 Qb6** (an old favourite of Bobby Fischer's) **8 Qd2** (White can play 8 Nb3 to avoid giving up the pawn.) **8...Qxb2**.



White now has two ways in which to follow up this gambit, 9 Rb1, which gains an immediate tempo, but does not necessarily put the rook on its best file, or 9 Nb3, to protect the rook and hem in the black queen. White aims to castle rapidly on the kingside, possibly sacrificing another pawn or two if necessary, and then launch an attack in the centre and on the kingside. Black hopes to out-calculate his opponent in the complications, or just win in the long run with the extra queenside pawn.

The [July 2006](#) article was based on two games I had in 2005-2006 with Wolfgang Kund, both drawn in the end, but not without a fight. I played 9 Nb3 in the first game and 9 Rb1 the second time. It seems pretty clear now that the line I played in the second game, i.e. the old main line 9 Rb1 Qa3 10 f5 Nc6 11 fxe6 fxe6 12 Nxc6 bxc6 13 e5 dxe5 14 Bxf6 gxf6 15 Ne4, is White's safest course. If Black plays safe, as Kund did, with 15...Qxa2, a forced draw arises. If Black blunders, takes an unjustified risk, or just plays some alternative moves, White has some winning chances at little risk.

Unfortunately, in the game we are looking at today, I did not play that line. Generally speaking, in a correspondence tournament where several games start simultaneously, I rarely like to put all my eggs in one basket by playing the same sharp line twice, so when I had two Poisoned Pawns in the one event, I chose 9 Nb3 in one. As I had played that previously against Kund, I switched to 9 Rb1 for him in the 15th ICCF Olympiad Final and played 9 Nb3 against my Norwegian opponent. In the long run, unfortunately, this has cost me the game.

Maybe some reader can discover where I could have improved. I asked my opponent for his opinion afterwards, but he rather rudely sent me no final message in the game at all, after I resigned. This made me rather sorry that I had not dragged out the game for some more weeks.

Tim Harding – Tor Arne Klausen (Norway)

ICCF Olympiad XV Final, bd. 6

ICCF webserver, March 2006-March 2007

Najdorf Sicilian [B97]

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6 6 Bg5 e6 7 f4 Qb6 8 Qd2 Qxb2 9 Nb3 Qa3 10

Bxf6 gxf6 11 Be2

For the options up to here, please refer back to [Kibitzer 71](#).

11...Nc6

For 11...Nd7!?, see [Kibitzer 122](#) with my first game against Kund.

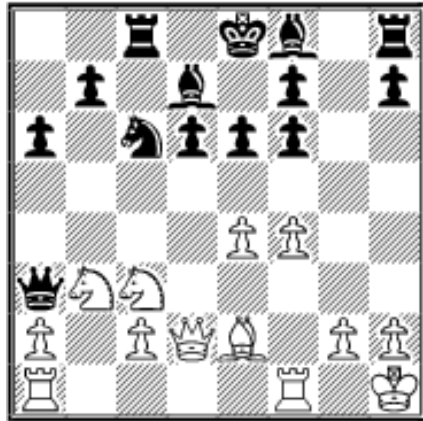
11...h5 is also possible.

I had met 11...Nc6 before, when Joerg Kracht played it against me in 2002 and I won; that game was featured in [Kibitzer 71](#). One problem with being a chess writer is that opponents see what you play and can use some of your own ideas against you, especially if you write honestly and do not hide discoveries.

12 0-0 Bd7

Klausen continued to play quickly, no doubt because he has had this position before and won, and he doubtless knew my games too. See [Kibitzer 71](#) for alternatives around this stage of the game.

13 Kh1 Rc8



When I played Kracht almost five years ago, this sub-line was not so well known, and I played 14 Bh5, but I no longer trusted it. I was sure Klausen must have a big improvement in mind.

So I decided I should play here either 14 Nd1 or 14 Rf3. But which? Maybe I made the wrong call, or maybe Black is just better already.

14 Nd1!?

This is the move preferred by Fritz8 in overnight analysis, but 14...Bg7, 14...Qb4 and 14...Be7 were not considered and needed to be examined. See various analyses done elsewhere.

14...Be7

He decided on this after only one day, following Guseinov-Lupulescu, Gothenburg 2005, which White won in the end.

15 Ne3

Guseinov played this, but the Fritz program doesn't like it.

The alternative, and perhaps superior, is 15 c4, but I didn't trust this in the end; I like my rooks to be linked rather than start a fight with my knight on the back row.

15...b5!

As expected, and he answered quickly.

Guseinov-Lupelescu went 15...Qb4 16 c3 Qb6 17 Bh5 Na5 18 f5 Nxb3 19 axb3 Qxb3 (or 19...0-0 20 c4 Bc6 21 Ng4 Bxe4 22 Nh6+) 20 c4 Qb6 21 fxe6 Bxe6 22 Nd5 Bxd5 23 exd5 Rxc4 24 Rael Qd4 25 Qh6 and three pawns have been sacrificed, but White has a strong attack with opposite-coloured bishops.

16 Rad1

If White wanted to play c4, the last move was the time to do it.

16...h5

This pawn often proves awkward for White, as it threatens to advance and break up the white king's position. There were several other moves to consider.

Not 16...Qxa2?? 17 Ra1 Qb2 18 Rfb1, but 16...Rc7, 16...Rb8, 16...Nb4 and even 16...Qb4 also came into consideration.

17 c4

This doesn't seem to lead to a happy outcome. But maybe there are no good alternatives.

17...Qb4

17...Nb4 was another possibility, but Klausen seemed to know what his plan was.

18 Qd3

18 cxb5 axb5 19 Qd3 Rc7 also came into consideration.

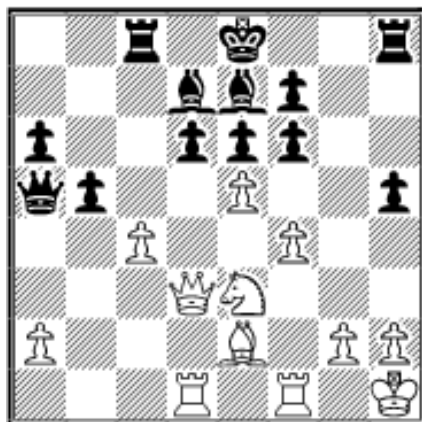
18...Na5!

Probably critical, but I looked at other lines including 18...Rc7, 18...h4 19 c5!?, 18...bxc4 19 Nxc4 (aiming to take on d6); 18...0-0?! 19 c5 and 18...Rd8.

19 Nxa5

19 cxb5 Bxb5 looked awkward.

19...Qxa5 20 e5



White tries to make something happen now that all his pieces are in play whereas the h8-rook stands idle and Black cannot take with the d-pawn.

Black has a wide choice here, but he made up his mind rather quickly. If 20...fxe5 21 fxe5, Black is under pressure, and most other moves (20...h4; 20...Bf8; 20...Qxa2) allow White to capture on d6.

20...d5

White has a tricky choice now; can he hold the balance in either line?

21 cxd5

21 exf6!? bxc4 was a wild line, which I was perhaps wrong to reject.

a) 22 Nxc4 Rxc4 23 fxe7 Qc3 is obviously good for Black, e.g. 24 Qxc3 Rxc3 25 Bxa6 Ra3 26 Bd3 Rxa2 27 Ra1 Rxa1 28 Rxa1 Kxe7 with a clear passed pawn extra in the endgame.

b) 22 Qd4! Bc5 (22...Bb4 23 Nxc4! is less clear.) 23 Qe5 Bxe3 24 Qxe3 h4 25 Bf3 Qc5 26 Qc3 h3 27 g3 Bc6 28 f5 (Black stays a pawn up, but is not out of the woods yet.) 28...Rd8 (best?) 29 Qe5 (threat fxe6) 29...Qd6 30 Qd4 exf5 (30...e5 31 Rfe1 e4 32 Bxe4) 31 Be2 (threatening Rxf5; 31 Qe3 +!? is also worth a look.) 31...Kf8 32 Rxf5 Re8 33 Bf3 (threatening to take on d5) 33...Rh6 (Black counterattacks on f6 and prepares Kg8-h8.) 34 Kg1 Rg6 and the problem now is what happens if there's a big swap on d5. Maybe the rook ending can be drawn after 35 Bxd5 Bxd5 36 Qxd5 Qxd5 37 Rxd5 Kg8 (to give his king a flight square; not 37...Rc8 38 Rd6 c3?? 39 Rc5.) 38 Kf2 (38 Rc5!?) 38...Re6 39 Rd8+ Kh7 40 Rc8 Rgxf6 41 Rxf6 Rxf6+ 42 Ke3.

21...Rc3!

This looks like another critical position. Instead, 21...Qc3 22 Qe4 definitely promised chances for White.

22 Qe4

Black has at least two possibilities here.

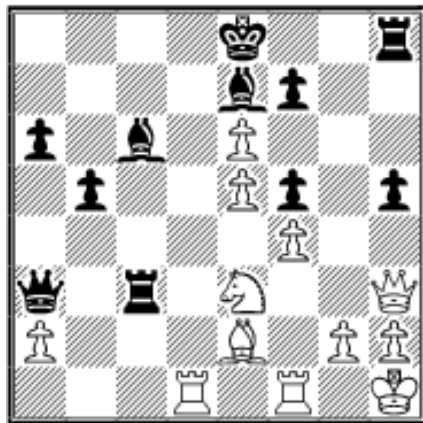
22...f5

Black solidifies the centre rather than take a risk with 22...Qb4 23 Qf3 or 22...Qa4 or 22...Qxa2?!. White has to submit to a self-pin on the third rank.

23 Qf3 Qa3

This threatens ...Rxe3, but White has resources still.

24 dxe6 Bc6 25 Qh3



Black does not have time to take the e3-knight (25...Rxe3?? 26 Qxf5). We now have a very sharp position with two main lines.

25...fxe6!

Well played. Most of my analysis had concentrated on the alternative 25...Be4 to which White has the surprising counter 26 Rf3!, a very sharp exchange sacrifice not seen by Fritz8:

a) One possibility is 26...Qxa2 27 Qg3! Qxe2 28 Qg7 Rf8 29 exf7+ Rxf7 30 Qh8+ Bf8 31 e6 Rxe3 32 exf7+ Kxf7

33 Qxh5+ Kf6 34 Qh8+ Kf7 with a perpetual.

b) 26...Bxf3 gives White some tactical choices after 27 Qxf3 (probably better than 27 Qxf5).

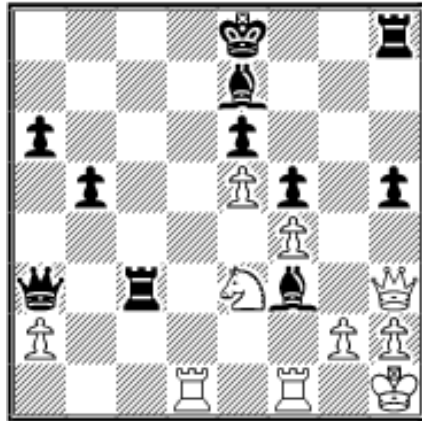
c) 26...fxe6 27 Nxf5 and now:

c1) 27...Bxf5 28 Rxc3 Bxh3 29 Rxa3 Bxg2+ (29...Bxa3 30 Rd3 Bxg2+ 31 Kxg2=) 30 Kxg2 Bxa3= is pretty obviously a draw.

c2) 27...Rxf3 28 Nd6+ (or 28 Ng7+) is at least not worse for White.

c3) 27...Bxf3?! 28 Nd6+ Bxd6 29 Qxe6+ Be7 30 Bxf3 (White is a rook down, but Black is in danger of losing.) 30...Rxf3 31 Qc8+ Kf7 32 Qxh8 Rxf4 33 Qh7+ Ke6 34 Qg6+ Kxe5 35 Re1+ Kd4 36 Qe6! etc.

26 Bf3 Bxf3!





play to break the stranglehold of his h-pawn on my kingside, but, of course, it does open up my king position. In hindsight, maybe it was worth a try; it is certainly what I would have played in an over-the-board or blitz game.

After 32 g4 hxg3+ (32...fxg4 33 hxg4 could give White the prospect of an f4-f5 break soon.) 33 Qxg3 Black has two lines:

a) 33...Bh4 34 Qf3 (forced, but maybe OK) and now:

a1) 34...Kf8? (to play ...Rg8 without allowing Qh5+) 35 Rg1 needs more analysis but seems to draw, and if Black is not careful it can even be good for *White*!

a11) For example, 35...Bd8?! 36 Rg3!? Bb6 looks bad for me, but 37 Rc2! Rxe3 38 Rc8+ Kf7 39 Rxh8 Rxf3 40 Rh7+ Kf8 41 Rh8+ is perpetual (*don't* take the black queen!). Even better, 36 Rg6! could have Black in difficulties.

a12) The main line runs 35...a5 36 Qg2 a4 37 Rc2 (35...Rh7 36 Rg6 also seems equal.) 37...Rxc2 38 Qc2 Qxe3 39 Qc8+ Kf7 40 Qxh8 Qxf4+ 41 Kh1 Qf3+ and this time it is Black who gives perpetual, so long as White doesn't blunder into a checkmate.

a2) 34...a5 is more problematic, however. After 35 Rg1!? Qa8, White is effectively a queenside pawn down and should lose the ending, while 35 Rd6 a4!? 36 Rd1 Be7 37 Qg3 Rg8 38 Qf3 Rg6 39 Rdd2 is a case of desperately trying to hang on with Black now controlling the g-file.

b) 33...Rg8 34 Qf3 Rg6 35 Rdd2 Kg7 is similar to that last variation. These lines show that 32 g4 does not improve White's position if met accurately.

At the time, I thought 32 Ree1 set a subtler trap than 32 g4. There was one drawing line with 32 Ree1.

32...Qa8

He replied within a few hours. (I had spent about a month on my last move, because my father was in hospital, so he had plenty of time to decide on his answer.) Unfortunately he avoided the trap: 32...Rg8? lets White off the hook. There would follow 33 Qh5+ Kg7 34 Nxf5+ exf5 35 Rd6 (35 e6 and 35 Qxf5 may also draw.) 35...Bxd6 36 exd6 Re3 37 Qg5+ etc. draws.

33 Qe2?

Here I made a quick move, trying to show confidence, but it was a mistake. I first thought 33 Qf2 was probably forced, but rejected it on the grounds that passive defence was unlikely to work, while the Qe2 line gives hope of breaking out. This was sloppy thinking and soon punished. I definitely should have played 33 Qf2, although Black can still improve the position of his pieces, exchange a pair of rooks on d8 and advance his queenside pawn majority. He can play 33...Rd8 at once or prepare it by 33...Qc8.

Here is a small trap (not the main one) that he didn't fall into: 33 Qf2 Qc6?! 34 Re2 Bc5 35 Qe1 Qa4 and now White escapes by 36 Nxf5! exf5 37 e6+ Kg7 (37...Ke8 38 Qd2) 38 e7 Re8 and now White can take perpetual check by 39 Qxh4 Qxd1 40 Qg5+ etc., or try for more by 39 Rd5!?

33...Qe4 34 Rd7 Qxf4+ 35 Kh1 a5

This was unexpected, but is one of several good moves available to Black.

There is no point in showing all the complicated alternatives. The line I was hoping for went 35... Rg8 36 Qxa6!? (sacrificing a piece!) and now:

a) 36...Rxe3? 37 Rxe7+! Kxe7 (37...Kf8 38 Re8+! Kxe8 39 Qxe6+ draws.) 38 Qa7+ Ke8 (to avoid repetition draws) 39 Qxe3 Qxe3 40 Rxe3 and with rook and four pawns each in ending, White must have fair chances to draw.

b) 36...Qg5! maintains some advantage for Black, alas, but after 37 Qb7 is certainly not worse for me than the actual game.

It was now becoming clear that White was lost unless his opponent fell into a trap – unlikely to happen in correspondence chess with my opponent probably making thorough use of a powerful computer and the latest software.

36 Nc2 Qg5

Instead 36...Qg3 37 Nd4 at last gets the knight to a square where it puts pressure on his king's position. For example, 37...Rh6 38 Qf1 Rc5 39 Rd1 Qxe5 40 Qa6 Rh8 (40...Qf6 41 Qa7) 41 Nc6 and Black forces a draw by perpetual with 41...Rxc6 42 Qxc6 Rd8 43 Rxd8 Bxd8 44 Rxd8 Qa1+ 45 Kh1 Qe5+ etc.

36...Qc4 is a kind of trap, too, although probably playable for Black. Then 37 Qd2 Rh7 38 Rxe7+ is another drawing line, but unfortunately 37...Qc8! 38 Qd6 Qxd7 39 Qxd7 Rxc2 keeps the game going by giving up his queen for random lumps. For example, 40 Rf1 Rc5 (40...Rhc8? 41 Rxf5+ seems to force perpetual.) might be met by 41 Qd4, 41 Qb7 or 41 Qa7, but maybe these are all winning for Black in the long run with care. It is, however, quite understandable that Black does not want to give up his queen, as White might have practical chances and computers could fail to judge resulting unbalanced lines correctly.

37 Nd4

I played this because everything else was obviously horrible. The knight wanted to reach d4, but in this line was unable to combine effectively with my other pieces to create real threats, because Black's play was too strong.

37...Rhc8 38 Nf3

If 38 Nb5, Black escapes the Nd6+ threat by playing 38...Rc2 39 Qf3 Rc1.

38...Qg3 39 Rg1



A miserable move to have to make.

The rest requires no comment, as Black could probably win in several ways.

39...R3c7 40 Rxc7 Rxc7 41 Nd4 Rc5 42 Qh5+ Qg6 43 Qh8 Rd5 44 Nc6 Bg5 45 Qb8 Qg7 46 Nxa5

This is a little joke: if 46...Rxa5?, White has a fork on c7.

46...Qxe5



The real point of White's last move is that 46...Bf4 47 Qb7 + Kg6 48 Qxb4 Bd2 49 Qb6 Rxa5 50 Qxe6+ Kg5 51 Qc8 might give White drawing chances.

Now although Black has lost his queenside pawn majority, he has a central majority instead, and the knight cannot get back to defend on f3. It has no anchor point any more.

47 Qb7+ Kg6 48 Nc4 Qg3 49 Qc8 Kf7 50 Qb7+ Be7 51 Rf1 Qd3 52 Rc1 Qd4 53 Nb6

All lines lose so I may as well try this.

53...Rb5 54 Rc7 Qa1+ 55 Kh2 Qe5+ 56 Kg1 Kg6! 57 Rxe7 Rc5 0-1

Feedback from Last Month

Dutch reader Joost van Winsen commented on a point in last month's [column](#). He is researching a biography of James Mason and says the database I was relying on for the item about Mason and Mackenzie was incorrect. I don't have access right now to the printed source he quoted me, but I think we can wait for his book.

On the item about castling, where I asked whether the longest delayed castling is still believed to be (as the website said) in the game Bobotsov-Ivkov, 1966 when White castled on the forty-sixth move. Another reader, Cameron Hayne, has informed me that Dutch writer Tim Krabbé, has found two examples of later [castling](#), both by Black at move forty-eight.

The obscure games involved were Neshewat-Garrison, Detroit 1994 (kingside castling), and Somogyi-Black, New York 2002 (queenside castling). My impression is that Krabbe is usually very reliable.

Greg Funaro, a Huntsville Chess Club member, wrote to say that he was disappointed that I picked their website for criticism and pointed out that Logical Chess is a web site maintained by David Hayes and *not* the Huntsville Chess Club. "David is kind enough to provide space and a link to the Huntsville Chess Club. It is inaccurate to say the chess trivia page belongs to the Huntsville Chess Club. It clearly states at the bottom of the page that it belongs to David Hayes." Sorry, I overlooked that. The fact remains that somebody has to take responsibility. I gather they have by now probably corrected the errors I highlighted. I happened to look at the *Oxford Companion to Chess* since writing that column and I noticed that this was probably where Hayes found the statement about the *Illustrated London News*, but when that book was first published, the column was still running.

If any readers have come across other websites with dubious chess-historical statements please let me know the URLs and I will take a look at them.

Death of a Chessplayer

Just before concluding this column, I was informed that the Belfast chess player Tom Clarke died on the morning of 3rd April after a two-year battle against cancer. He was forty-seven years old.

Tom was a tough, if inconsistent, competitor on the Irish chess scene for twenty years and beat me more often (at least thrice) than I beat him (once). In 1978 he nearly won the British Junior Championship (U21) at Ayr, Scotland, thanks in good measure to winning a fine game with Black in the French Defence against Julian Hodgson. Unfortunately, the event ended in a four-way tie (T. Clarke, J. Hall, A.J. Muir, and D. Shuttleworth) and in a play-off held several months later in England, Tom was unable to recapture his Ayr form.



Although he could beat anybody on his day, Tom was inclined to inconsistency. For the Irish team in the 1988 Olympiad, he beat a 2540-rated Hungarian grandmaster in the first round, but could not match this in later rounds. True, the finish was something of a swindle, but first he had to create the preconditions for the swindle. Tom's thirty-third move is not one that many players would have had the imagination to see or courage to play. Here is that game.

Tom Clarke – Istvan Csom

Thessaloniki ol 1988

Sicilian Defence, O'Kelly Variation [B28]

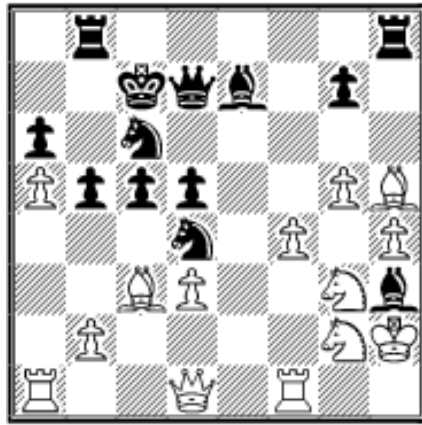
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 a6 3 c4 d6 4 Nc3 Bg4 5 Qb3 b6 6 Nd5 Nd7 7 Be2 e6 8 Ne3 Bh5 9 d3 Ne7 10 g4 Bg6 11 Bd2 Nc6 12 Bc3 Rb8 13 a4 Nde5 14 h4 h5 15 g5 Be7 16 Nd2 Nd4 17 Qd1 Nec6 18 f4 Qd7



19 0-0 f5!? 20 exf5 Bxf5 21 Ne4 d5 22 cxd5 exd5

Getting very complicated. Maybe White should just take on h5 now?

23 Ng3 Bh3 24 Bxh5+ Kd8 25 Ng2 Kc7 26 a5 b5 27 Kh2



A messy game; objectively Black should be better.

27...g6!? 28 Bxg6 Bxg2 29 Kxg2 Rxh4 30 f5 Rbh8 31 Rh1 Bxg5?

Black starts to lose his way. Why not capture on h1 and force the knight into the corner?

32 Rxh4 Rxh4 33 Rc1!?

An imaginative exchange sacrifice that aims to get counterplay on the c-file at all costs. I wasn't there but I suspect both players were in time trouble.

33...Bxc1

It's not necessary to accept the material, but Black doesn't see why not.

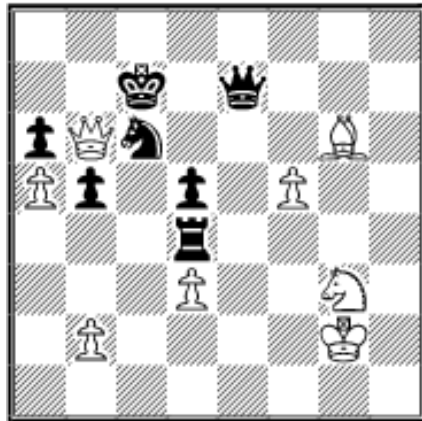
34 Qxc1 Rg4?

This throws away most of Black's advantage; the queen should have defended the c-pawn.

35 Bxd4 Rxd4 36 Qxc5

Now the cat is among the pigeons.

36...Qe7 37 Qb6+



37...Kd6?

Now White has a forced draw. 37...Kd7 had to be played. After 38 f6 (38 Qxa6 Qe5 39 Qxb5 Rg4) 38...Qxf6 39 Qb7+ Kd6 40 Be8 Nxa5, there is probably nothing better than 41 Qb6+ Ke7 42 Qxd4 Qxd4 43 Nf5+ Kxe8 44 Nxd4 Kd7 and Black has good winning chances with his extra pawn in the knight endgame.

38 f6 Qxf6 39 Nf5+ Ke5??

39...Kd7 was necessary, and the game ends in perpetual check, i.e. 40 Qb7+ Kd8 41 Qb8+ Kd7.

40 Qc7+ 1-0

I'm not sure if Black resigned or lost on time, but anyway it's mate next move.

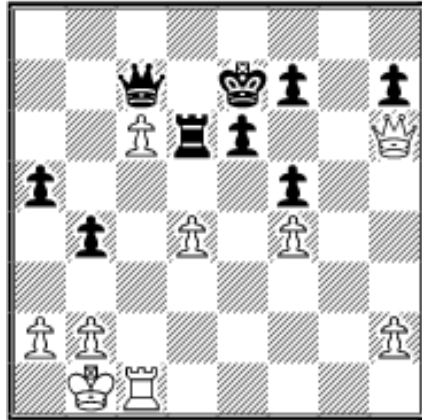
Tom never earned an international title, but he did get half-way, earning a norm for the ICCF correspondence IM title in the 5th European Team Championship preliminaries, circa 1994-6, making a big score on board 9. Here was his best game from that event. Unfortunately, he never had a good shot at a second norm to complete the title.

Tom Clarke (IRL) – Rihard Lorbek (Slovenia)
EU/MSM/V/2-09 corr ICCF, 1994-6

1 d4 Nf6 2 Bg5

One of Tom's favourite moves; he also sometimes played it against 1...d5.

**2...c5 3 Nc3 exd4 4 Qxd4 Nc6 5 Qh4 e6 6 0-0-0 b5 7 e3 b4 8 Ne4 Be7 9 Bb5 Bb7 10 Bxf6 gxf6
11 Nf3 d5 12 Nd4 Rc8 13 Nd2 0-0 14 Kb1 Kh8 15 Nxc6 Bxc6 16 Bd3 f5 17 Qh5 Rg8 18 Rhg1
Qc7 19 Nf3 Bf6 20 Rc1 d4 21 Nxd4 Bxg2 22 c4 Rg5 23 Qe2 Be4 24 Rxd4 Bxd3+ 25 Qxd3 Bxg5
26 f4 Bf6 27 c5 Rd8 28 Rc4 Rd5 29 c6 Kg7 30 Rc1 Bxd4 31 exd4 a5 32 Qg3+ Kf8 33 Qh4 Rd6
34 Qh6+ Ke7**



First it looks as if White will win it on the kingside, or else Black on the queenside. Then it looks as if White will win on the queenside. Then it looks a draw. Then, wham!

35 d5! Rxd5

If 35...exd5 36 Re1+ Re6 37 Rxe6+ fxe6 38 Qxh7+ Kd6 39 Qxc7+ Kxc7 40 h4 e5 41 h5 exf4 (or 41...e4 42 h6 e3 43 Kc2) 42 Kc2 and wins.

36 Qxh7 Qxf4 37 c7 Qe4+ 38 Ka1 Rc5 39 Qh6 f4 40 Qh4+ f6 41 Qh7+! 1-0

Rest in peace, Tom.

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