

Games from the State Championship under the microscope

Benjamin Francis and Daniel Gurevich

(1) Studen, Damir (2272) - Francisco, Richard (2226)
E20

2009 State Championship (4), 03.05.2009

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4

The Nimzo-Indian Defense. Black controls the center with his pieces rather than his pawns.

4.Bf4!?

This unusual move is rarely played, but anyone who knows Damir knows he never plays theory.

4...0-0 5.e3 Bxc3+ This move may have been premature because White has not forced Black to take yet. Another good move is 5...b6.

6.bxc3 d6 7.Nf3 Nbd7 8.Be2 Qe7

Preparing...e5

9.0-0 h6

This move has no obvious purpose. It may have been an attempt by Black to play a "Karpov move." Black shouldn't be afraid of the pin after 9...e5 10.Bg5 h6 11.Bh4 b6=

10.c5!?

[see diagram, next column]

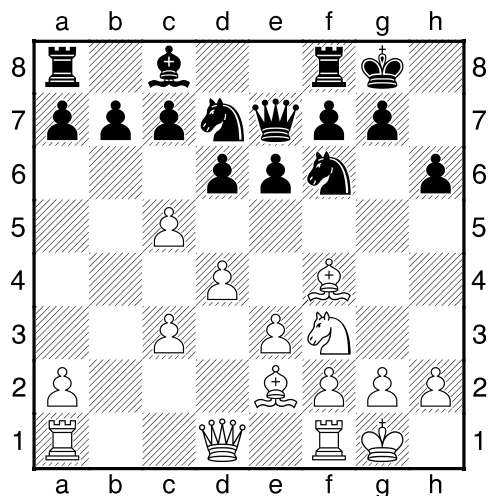
White wants to destroy Black's pawn structure, as well as intimidate his opponent. Objectively, this move may not be the best.

10...dxc5

Risky in light of 10...e5 11.cxd6 cxd6 12.dxe5 dxe5

13.Bg3 Ne4, after which Black neutralizes White's bishop pair and maintains a better pawn structure.

11.Bxc7 Nd5



Forking c7 and c3.

12.Ba5 b6 13.c4

This is the only move, opening up the diagonal for the bishop and attacking the knight. 13.e4?? Nf4+ Oops.

13...Nxe3!

This is the best, an in-between move that wins a pawn. After 13...bxa5 14.cxd5 exd5 15.dxc5 Qxc5 16.Rc1 Qd6 17.Qd2 White has more than compensation because of the weak d5

and a5 pawns, plus advantage in development.

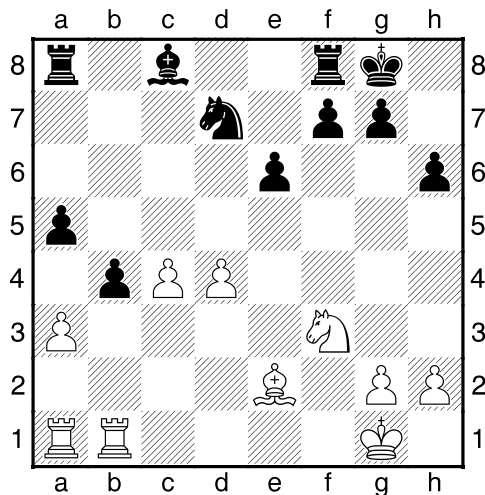
14.fxex3 bxa5 15.Qa4 cxd4 16.exd4 Qb4?!

This move is fine, but Black could get a large advantage with 16...e5! 17.Qxa5 (17.dxe5 Nxe5 18.Qxa5 Ng4! Attacking the bishop and threatening smothered mate. 19.Qc3! Black can't take the bishop because of Rae1! Qxa2 Ra1! perpetual. (19.Rae1 Qe3+ 20.Kh1 Nf2+

“Now, I don't mind a microscope, but, boy, when they use a proctoscope, that's going too far.” — Richard Nixon

21.Kg1 Nd3+ 22.Kh1 Nxe1). 19...Rd8! 20.h3 Ne3 and Black's pieces are more active.) 17...exd4 and if 18.Nxd4?? then 18...Qe3+ winning the knight.

17.Qxb4 axb4 18.Rfb1 a5 19.a3



19...b3?

Richard probably thought this move was the best way to give up the pawn, but instead 19...Bb7! 20.axb4 Be4 21.Rb2 axb4 22.Rxa8 Rxa8 23.Rxb4 Ra2 and Black is fine since his pieces are more active. 19...bxa3? 20.Rxa3 Black can't hold on to the pawn because of Rba1; compared to the previous line, Black's pieces aren't nearly as active. After 19...Rb8 20.axb4 axb4 21.Ra4 b3 22.Ra3 b2 23.Ra2 Black can't defend his pawn in this line either.

20.Rxb3 Ba6

Trying to attack the pawn on c4.

21.Kf2 Bringing the king into the center and defending the bishop. **21...e5!** A nice move, separating the pawns under the premise that one of them will be lost.

22.Nxe5 Nxe5 23.dxe5 Rfe8 24.Rb6

Trying to get Black's pieces all mixed up and awkward. 24.Re3 Rac8 25.Rc1 Rc5 and the pawn can't be saved.

24...Rxe5 25.Bf3 Ra7 26.Bd5 Bc8

This move has the simple goal of bringing the bishop one step closer to freedom.

27.Rb8 Rc7 28.Re1

The attempt to win a pawn, 28.Ra8 Rc5 29.Re1 Rxe1 (Not 29...Rf5+?? 30.Kg1! Kh7 31.Be4 Rxc4 32.Rxc8! and Black loses material.) 30.Kxe1 backfires because after simply 30...Kh7 (the only way to stop the threat of 31.Bb7)

31.Bxf7 Bb7 32.Ra7 Bxg2 Black wins back the pawn.

28...Rf5+

Taking on e1 isn't a bad move either.

29.Ke3

If 29.Kg1, trying to win quickly, then 29...Kf8 and Black defends from all White's threats. For example, if 30.Ra8 (or if 30.Bb7 then 30...Rfc5! 31.Bd5 g6 and Black will first move his king to g7, then play...Ba6 and start attacking the c-pawn) 30...g6 31.Rxa5 Rxc4 and Black is fine, if not better.

29...g5 30.Kd4 Kg7 31.Rb6

Damir is trying to trick his opponent! Black was threatening 31...Be6 32.Bxe6 fxe6 33.Rxe6 Rf4+, equalizing.

31...Be6?

Oops, wrong move order! Instead, drawing was 31...Rf4+ 32.Re4 (If 32.Kc3 then 32...Be6 33.Bxe6 fxe6 34.Rexe6 Rfxc4+ and well, draw. 32.Ke5?? is the move that loses: 32...Re7+--+) 32...Rf2 33.Re5 Rd2+ and White's pawn is nothing to worry about because he can't move it!

32.Bxe6 fxe6 33.Rbxe6

White is just up a pawn, and likely to be winning.

33...Kf7 34.R6e5 Not Rxh6?, exchanging White's strong passer for Black's useless h6 pawn.

34...Rf2 35.R1e2 Rf1 36.R2e3 Rg1 37.g3 Rh1 38.Rxa5 Rxh2 39.Rd5?

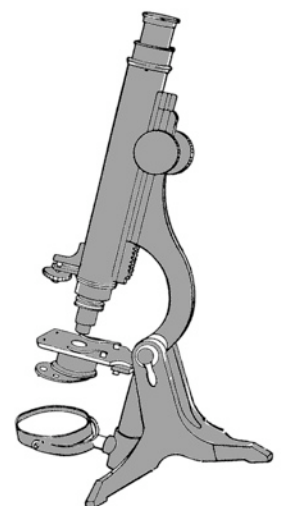
Even strong players blunder sometimes!

39...Rd2+ 40.Rd3 Rc2?

Why not just 40...Rxd3+ 41.Kxd3 Ra7 42.Kd4 Rxa3 43.c5 Ke7 with a drawn endgame? The long game had probably tired out both opponents.

41.c5 Ra7 42.Rd6 Rc7 43.Rd5 Ra7 44.Rf3+!?

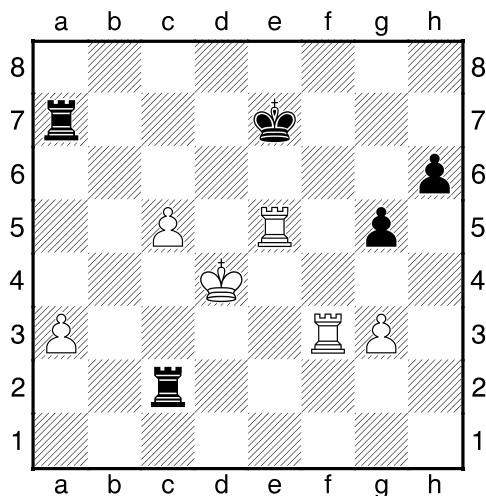
One last trick by



Damir to simplify the process of winning.

44...Ke7?? 45.Re5+

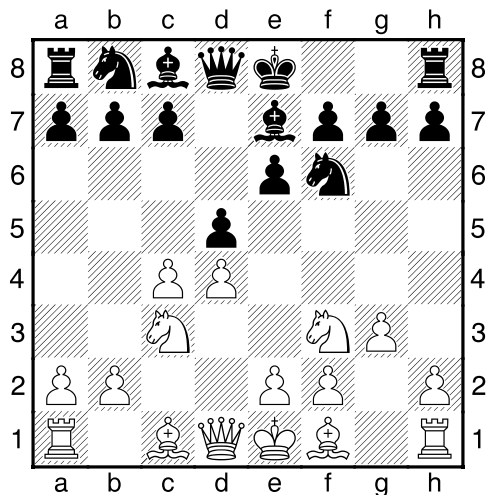
and Black loses a rook.



1-0

(2) Kuderinov, Kirill (2471) - Studen, Damir (2272) E17
2009 State Championship (3), 02.05.2009

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 Be7 5.g3



The Catalan contains a misnomer and an irony: misnamed because the Catalan was first played in Italy, not Catalonia; ironic because of White's idea: to attack e4 and d5 with his bishop, and eventually play e4, knowing that Black will neither let him attack the pawn on d5 nor let him play e4!

5...0-0 6.Bg2 b6 7.cxd5 exd5 8.0-0 Bb7 9.Bf4 c6

To defend d5 and prepare...b5.

10.Re1 Nbd7 11.a3

If 11.e4 dxe4 12.Nxe4 Nxe4 13.Rxe4 Nf6 14.Re1 Nd5 15.Qe2 Nxf4 16.Qxe7 Nxg2 17.Kxg2 Rb8 18.Qxd8 Rfxd8, then this interesting endgame results. Black will play...c5 and lose the pawn, but will play either Rd2 or Rd3, and the position is quite dangerous, if not bad, for White.

11...Ne4 12.Rc1

White shouldn't take on e4. For example, 12.Nxe4 dxe4 13.Nd2 f5 14.Qb3+ Kh8 15.Nc4 Nf6 and Black's pieces are no worse than their counterparts.

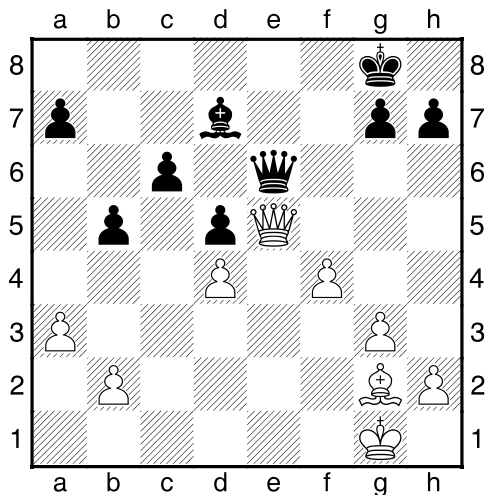
12...f5 13.Rc2 b5 14.Ne5

The start of a massive exchange operation.

14...Nxe5 15.Bxe5 Bd6 16.Nxe4 fxe4 17.Bxd6 Qxd6 18.f4 exf3

18...e3 19.Qd3 Rae8 20.Rc5 Bc8 21.Rec1 Bd7 would be similarly drawish.

19.exf3 Rae8 20.f4 Bc8 21.Re5 Bd7 22.Rce2 Rxe5 23.Rxe5 Re8 24.Qe2 Rxe5 25.Qxe5 Qe6



Black has a bad bishop, restricted as it is by the same colored pawns, but does White really have an advantage? The answer is no. White's bishop is just as bad as his Black counterpart, and the pawns aren't weak at all simply because they cannot be attacked.

26.Kf2

26.Qb8+ Kf7 27.Qxa7 Qe3+ 28.Kf1 Qc1+ 29.Kf2 Qxb2+ and Black has an easy draw.

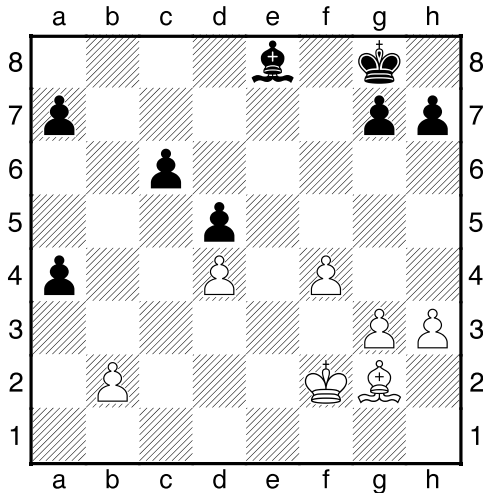
26...Qg6

Threatening Qc2+.

27.Qe2 Bg4 28.Qd2 Qe6 29.a4 bxa4 30.Qe3 Qg6 31.h3 Bd7?!

31...Qc2+!? 32.Kg1 Qd1+ 33.Kf2 Bd7 34.Qe7 Qxd4+ 35.Ke1 Qg1+ 36.Bf1 Qxg3+ 37.Ke2 Qh2+ 38.Kf3 Qh1+= is simpler. White has no chances to win.

32.Qe7 Qe8 33.Qxe8+ Bxe8



The draw is obvious by now.

34.f5 g6 35.fxg6 Bxg6 36.Ke3 Kf7 37.Kf4 Ke6 38.h4 Kd6 39.g4 c5 40.Ke3 Bb1 41.Bf3 a5 42.Bd1 a3 43.bxa3 c4 44.g5 Ke6 45.Bf3 Bg6 46.h5 Bb1 47.h6 Bg6

A draw was agreed. What can we learn from this struggle? A “bad” bishop can be better than a “good” bishop, so no one should adhere dogmatically to the general principle which we usually use to compare bishops. Always think about what the bishop is actually doing or not doing.

In general, when evaluating the position, general principles should be a major factor in your decision-making, but should never overshadow the specifics. ½–½

(3) Mundy, Jim (2012) - Marsh, Matthew (2087) B90
2009 State Championship (5), 03.05.2009

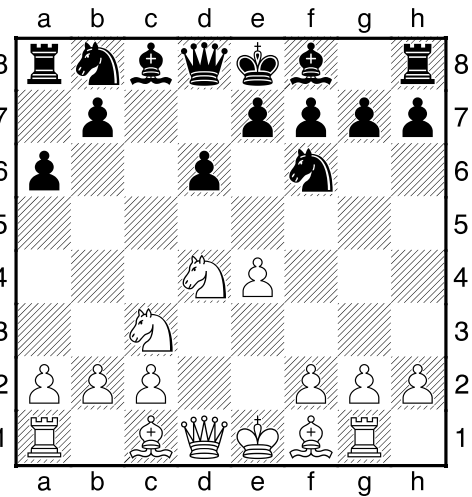
1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6 6.Rg1!?

[see diagram, next column]

An unusual, super-aggressive line, sometimes played by Morozevich and Zvjagintsev, two super-GMs. This says something good about the line, so let’s get to the specifics. White’s idea is to push g4-g5, f4-f5, and h4-h5 without wasting a tempo to play f3.

6...b5 7.f3?

Didn’t I just say what White’s idea was *not* to play this? Either White had accidentally touched his rook, or he



clearly did not understand the idea of this line. He should have played g4 immediately.

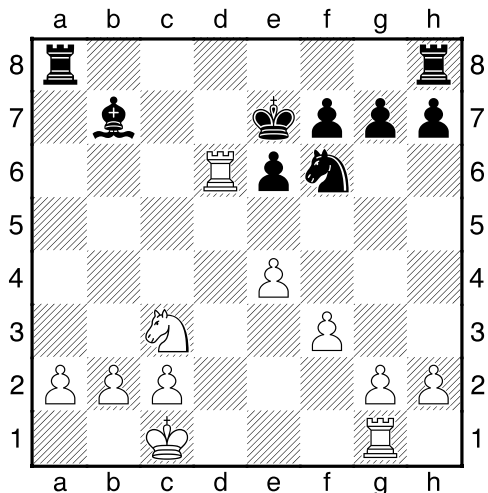
7...Nbd7 8.Be3 Bb7 9.Qd2 e6 10.Bd3 Qc7 11.0–0–0 Nb6 12.Bxb5+!?

White must have thought that he would get away with this because his opponent would have no idea how to play the resulting endgame. In this case, he was right, but it won’t work against every opponent! 12.g4 was the alternative.

12...axb5 13.Ndxb5 Qc6 14.Bxb6

This is better than 14.Nxd6+ Bxd6 15.Qxd6 Qxd6 16.Rxd6 Nc4 17.Rd3 Nxe3 18.Rxe3 Ke7

14...Qxb6 15.Nxd6+ Bxd6 16.Qxd6 Qxd6 17.Rxd6 Ke7



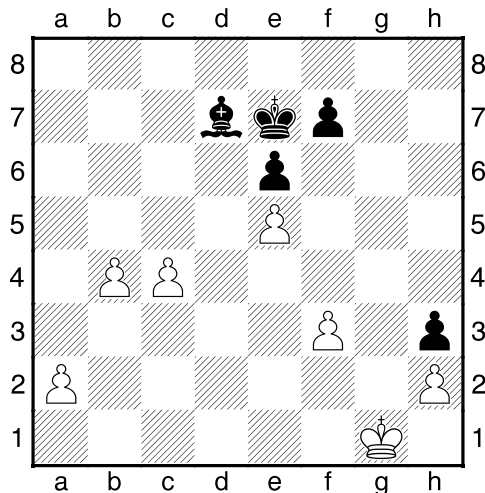
The endgame is much better for Black if he succeeds in

stopping the pawns, but near lost if not. With best play, he should be able to.

18.Rb6 Rhb8 19.Rd1 Ba6 20.Rxb8 Rxb8 21.Na4 Bb5 22.Nc5 g5 23.b3 Rc8 24.Nd3 h5?

Strike one, strike two, and strike three, all in one. Absolutely necessary was 24...Bxd3 25.Rxd3 Nd7 26.a4 Ne5 27.Rd1 h5, exchanging the knight, the critical piece for White. Without it on the board, Black is almost guaranteed not to lose.

25.c4 g4 26.Kd2 Ba6 27.Ke3 gxf3 28.gxf3 Rg8 29.Nc5 Bc8 30.Kf2 h4 31.b4 h3 32.Rg1 Rxf3 33.Kxf3 Nd7 34.Nxd7 Bxd7 35.e5!



A brilliant move. White fixes Black's pawns on light squares and slows down the progress of Black's pieces. White is now winning. Bad was the straightforward 35.Kf2? Kd6 36.Kg3 e5 37.Kh4 f6 38.a4 Be6 39.c5+ Kc6 40.Kh5 Bb3 41.Kg6 Bxa4

42.Kxf6 Bd1 43.Kxe5 Bxf3 44.Kf4 Bg2 45.Kg3 Bxe4 46.Kxh3 Kb5 47.Kg4 Kxb4, leading only to a draw.

35...f6 36.f4!

Not 36.exf6+? Kxf6 37.Kf2 e5 38.b5 Ke7 39.a4 Kd6 40.a5 Kc5 41.a6 Bc8 42.Kg3 Kxc4 43.a7 Bb7 44.Kxh3 Bxf3 45.Kg3 Be4 46.h4 Kxb5 47.Kf2 Kb6 48.Ke3 Bd5! 49.h5 Kxa7 50.h6 Bg8 51.Ke4, again only a draw.

36...fxe5 37.fxe5 Bc6 38.Kf2

Now the win is simple and straightforward.

38...Kd7 39.b5 Bg2 40.a4 Kc7 41.a5 Kb7 42.Ke3 Bf1 43.Kd4 Be2 44.Kc5 Bf1 45.Kb4 Bg2 46.c5 Bd5 47.c6+ Kc7 48.Kc5 Bf3 49.a6 Kb8 50.Kd6 Be2 51.c7+ Kc8 52.a7 Bf3 53.b6 Bd5 54.Ke7 Kb7 55.a8Q+ 1-0

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(4) Daniel Gurevich (2106) – Jerry Wheeler (2200) Georgia Championship 2009. (4)

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 Nc6 6. Bc4 Bb4 7. O-O O-O 8.Bg5 h6 9. Bh4 Be7

Also interesting is the dangerous 9... g5 10. Bg3 Bxc3 11. bxc3 Nxe4 12. Qh5 Nfg3 13. fxg3 Kg7 14. h4 f5 15. g4 Nxd4 (15... Qf6 16.Nxf5+ exf5 17. Rxf5 Qe7 18. hxg5) 16. cxd4 Qf6 17. hxg5 hxg5 18. gxf5 Qxd4+ 19. Kh1 Qh4+ 20. Qxh4 gxh4 21. fxe6 dxe6 22. Rxf8 Kxf8 If Black is careful and makes no mistakes (which is unlikely) a drawn endgame results. In practice, 9...Be7 is of course better.

10. Ndb5

An interesting sacrifice.

...Nxe4

Risky pawn grabbing. The best reply is 10... d6 11. a4 a6 12. Nd4 d5 13. exd5 exd5 14. Bb3 with equality.

11. Bxe7 Nxc3

What I expected. Probably better was 11... Qxe7 12. Nxe4 d5 13. Bd3 (If 13. ...Bxd5 then 14.exd5 14. Qxd5 Rd8 15. Qc4 Be6 16. Qe2 a6.) 13...dxe4 14. Bxe4 Qb4 15. Qe2 a6 16. Nc3 Qxb2 17. Qe3 Qb4 18. Rfd1 The position is roughly equal because White's active pieces and Black's bad bishop and rooks compensate for the extra pawn.

12. Bxd8 Nxd1 13. Raxd1 Rxd8 14. Nd6

White's outpost on d6 outweighs the pawn deficit. White is a bit better.

...Kf8 15. f4 Ke7 16. Rf2 b6 17. f5

threatening 18.fe

...f6 18. Rfd2 Rb8

A blunder. Better is 18... Ne5 19. Be2 exf5 20. Nxf5+ Kf8 21. Nd6 Rb8 22. Bf3 Nxf3+ 23. gxf3 b5 24. Kf2 The d-pawn will be captured eventually, so the position is equal.

19. Bb5

Winning is 19. fxe6, an unthinkable move to free Black's pent-up pieces. There is in fact a concrete tactical idea behind it: ...dxe6 20. Bb5 The Black knight can't move; Black has to defend it. Bd7 21. Nf7 A wonderful move. If ...Kxf7 then Bxc6 wins, and if ...Ne5 22. Nxd8 Bxb5 23. Rd6 Rc8 24. Rxe6+ Kf8 25. c3 Be2 26. Rdd6 Bg4 27. Rxe5 fxe5 28. Nc6 Bf5 29. Nxe5 and White is simply up a pawn.

19...Ne5 20. fxe6 Kxe6 21. Re1 Ke7 22. Bc4 Kf8 23. Bd5 b5 24. Rf2 Nc4 25. Nxc4

Also possible was 25. Bxc4 bxc4 26. Rfe2 Bb7 27. c3 Bd5 28. Rd2 Bg8 29. Re4 Rb6 30. Nxc4 and White's position is much better. 25... bxc4

26. Bxc4

I had misjudged Black's rook on b2 and thought this a simple transposition. Much better was 26. c3 Bb7 27. Bxc4 and White's position is still much better.

26...Rxb2 27. Bb3 a5 28. a4 d5 29. Rf4 Kf7

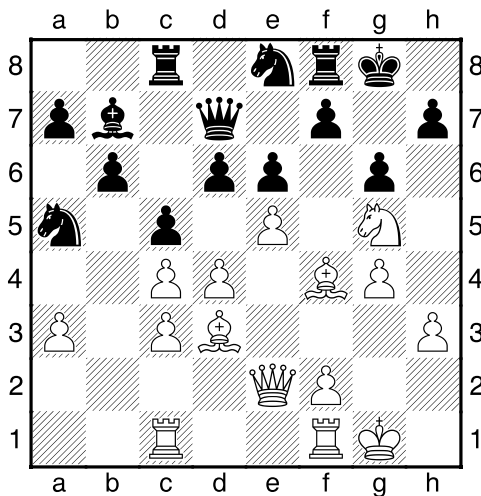
Of course, much better was the simple 29... d4 30. Rd1 d3 and Black is winning. After Kf7, the position is drawn.

30. Rd4 Be6 31. Kf2 Bf5 32. Re2 Kg6 33. g4 Bc8 34. Bxd5 Kg5 35. Kg3 f5 36. Red2 fxg4 37. Bb3 Rxd4 38. Rxd4 Bf5 39. Rd5 Kf6 40. Rc5 h5 41. Kf4 g5+ 42. Ke3 h4 43. Rc6+ Ke7 44. Rc5 Kf6 45. Rc6+ Ke7 46. Rc5 1/2-1/2



(5) Grier, Calvin (1653) - Kilgore, Chris (1789) [E24] 2009 State Championship (1), 02.05.2009

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.a3 Bxc3+ 5.bxc3 Another Nimzo-Indian, this time the main line. 5...b6 6.Bf4 0-0 7.Nf3 d6 8.e3 Nc6 9.Bd3 Na5 Black makes an, at first thought, unnatural-looking move. However, this move is quite logical. Black wants to attack the c4 pawn, continuing with ...Ba6, ...Rc8, and soon ...c5 and even eventually ...d5. 10.0-0 Bb7?!



18.h4?!

18.Ne4! cxd4 19.cxd4 Nb3 20.Rcd1 d5 (20...Nxd4!?

21.Qe3! f5! 22.exf6 Nxf6 23.Bxd6 Nf3+! 24.Qxf3 Nxe4 25.Bxf8 Nd2! 26.Qe3 Nf3+ (26...Nxf1? 27.Bxg6! Nxe3 28.Rxd7 hxg6 29.Rxb7 Kxf8 30.fxe3 Rxc4 31.Rxa7 with the result still unclear: possibly a win for White, possibly a draw.) 27.Kg2 Nd2+ 28.Be4! Nxf1 29.Rxf1 Bxe4+ 30.Qxe4 Rxf8) 21.cxd5 exd5 22.Bb5 and White is slightly better. Either response for Black gives immense practical chances.

18...dxe5?

18...cxd4! 19.cxd4 Nb3 20.Rb1 Nxd4 21.Qe3 Nc6=/+ and Black has a slight advantage.

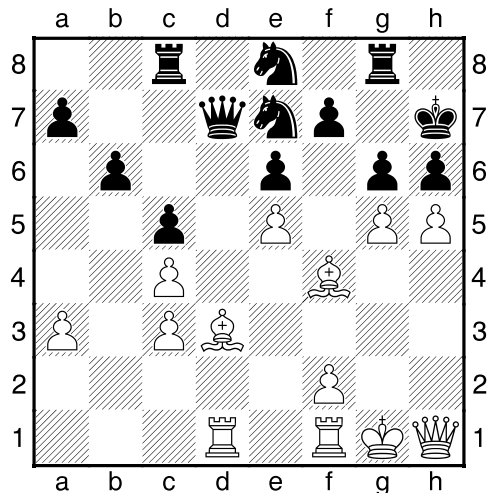
19.dxe5 h6 20.Ne4+/-

White is almost winning. Still, Black could have fought back more than he did.

20...Bxe4 21.Qxe4 Kh7 22.h5 Rg8 23.g5 Nc6?

This move is nearly equivalent to resignation. The only chance was 23...Kh8 24.gxh6 gxh5+ 25.Kh2 f5 26.exf6 Nc6, hoping for a miracle. One such possible miracle could have been 27.Rg1 Nxf6 28.Be5 Nxe5 29.Qxe5 Qc7 30.Rxg8+ Kxg8 31.Qxc7 Ng4+ 32.Kg3 Rxc7 33.h7+ Kh8=. Though White's moves might have all seemed logical, in this line, Black has already equalized!

24.Rcd1 Ne7 25.Qh1!



A picturesque move.

Qc7 26.hxg6+ 1-0

What went wrong? Well, even though all Black's mistakes seem isolated blunders, the real problem was that Black had lost the battle for the initiative never as much as even getting counterplay! This is an object lesson in the need to play more actively, take more chances, and fight! Don't become the easy victim. ♣