



SKITTLES
ROOM

From the Archives

Hosted by
Mark Donlan



From the Archives...

Since it came online many years ago, ChessCafe.com has presented literally thousands of articles, reviews, columns and the like for the enjoyment of its worldwide readership. The good news is that almost all of this high quality material remains available in the [Archives](#). The bad news is that this great collection of chess literature is now so large and extensive – and growing each week – that it is becoming increasingly difficult to navigate it effectively. We decided that the occasional selection from the archives posted publicly online might be a welcomed addition to the regular fare.

Watch for an item to be posted online periodically throughout each month. We will update the [ChessCafe](#) home page whenever there has been a “new” item posted here. We hope you enjoy *From the Archives*...

Interview with Vladimir Kramnik from Linares 2000 by Alexander Roshal, Editor-In-Chief, *64 Magazine*.

"Always" – Never Happens!

Vladimir Kramnik: I suppose I was rather obvious about my intentions of winning the Linares super-tournament. It probably came about subconsciously: I've really gotten tired of not winning, even when tournaments seem to be going well. It's possible that I still do not possess some secret of preparation, or maybe realization. Even with me giving 100% to my preparation and at the tournament, still fortune eludes me, first at the decisive moments of individual games, and then in the tournament. Like it or not, you learn to expect the past to repeat itself. And although I have not yet become a fatalist, I can assure you that, once again, I let slip a couple of half-points here. It's a good thing that what I did collect was enough to share first place. So it looks as though “Tournament Luck” has rewarded me, at least partially, for my sufferings and lengthy trials.

If I had been only a half-point behind Kasparov, I would have been terribly, terribly upset. Fortunately, it didn't happen. Yes, I still have a few negative feelings, now that the tournament's over. I could've gone “plus-4”; but once again, I didn't get it all. On the other hand, of course, there's food for thought; and I didn't actually blow first place entirely. In Linares, I managed to outplay Shirov rather subtly, and our second game was also a thing of nuance. With

Khalifman, I played well with Black; it's a shame I didn't manage to win the game with White as well. And then I transposed moves without thinking against Leko, and lost another half-point there...

You know, I thought to myself: No wonder there's so many draws toward the end of a tournament – people just don't have enough strength left to overcome that resistance (defending is still easier than attacking). I had promising positions at the end, too; but I lacked the strength – and besides, you could say there really was no reason to try harder...

Alexander Roshal: Exactly a year ago, we had this conversation after Linares, and you said you thought fourteen games was too many – “better twelve or ten.” I spoke in favor of a rest day, to which you responded, that in super-tournaments there really was no such thing, since you still had to prepare for your next game with a powerful opponent. And this year, you got ten games, with two days off.

VK: I'd like to add this to what I said last year: We play a lot these days – there was that hard Wijk aan Zee tournament only three weeks before this one. What you have is a sort of “forced preparation” no breaks, no real vacations. Of course, you pay attention to your physical training as well; but when you have to work 8-10 hours on chess, there's not much left for physical culture. So you have a choice: either come to the tournament rested, with a clear head, or with new opening ideas. It's a vicious circle.

AR: Which was it this time?

VK: I went to Pod Moscovye for a training camp with Evgeny Bareev, since the second I had planned on had other plans of his own. Zhenya hardly plays in tournaments anymore. Our mutual interest in working on chess came together (good thing we've also analyzed together from time to time). Bareev is a strong partner; together, we worked like draft horses, which bore fruit in this tournament. Well, there was a downside, too. Curiously, Bareev, who only played one tournament in the past half-year, also admitted he was tired. Well, you don't get very tired, if your goal in the tournament is to score 50%, and you generally finish at “minus-1.” I'm not trying to insult people like Piket or van Wely – they have other priorities. But the man who fights for first place... I know Kasparov; I watch him, and hear him – this man is tired, too! And Anand gets very tired, even though he hides it under that inscrutable Indian exterior. When you have to take the top places all the time, it's impossible *not* to get tired.

But there are different kinds of tiredness. In Linares, I was in very acceptable physical shape. But the added energy you need to calculate everything through to the end just wasn't there, finally. Even Kasparov, to look at the big picture, came up short in the last round against Anand.

AR: Is there something happening to Anand?

VK: I almost said, “Fortune doesn’t knock at his door anymore.” Seriously, your results aren’t going to be that brilliant when you lose your taste for chess. It happens to all of us from time to time. But he still had to prepare for the match with Kasparov, and come fully armed.

AR: Yes, and Elizbar Ubilava [Anand’s second -Tr.] talked to me about all the work they’d done...

VK: But in Wijk aan Zee and in Linares, Anand showed no fresh ideas whatever; nor did he show us anything new in his game. True, he did very well at the finish. Shirov, on the other hand, played very interesting chess; on that alone I would have given him third place (which is where he ended up on tie-break). Leko didn’t have a good tournament. He should really play more complicated chess. I and another GM here analyzed his playing style, and concluded that Peter’s chess is too “computerish” – make no unnecessary errors, and just wait for your opponent to slip up. If he doesn’t get an advantage with White out of the opening, he will very rarely outplay his opponent. And you can’t expect too many blunders in this level of tournament.

AR: All that talk about the rising influence of the White pieces in super-tournaments wasn’t supported by the statistics in Linares.

VK: That’s really because of Anand’s two losses – he was not in good form.

AR: And was Kasparov really in worse shape than he was in Wijk aan Zee?

VK: It’s hard to compare the two; they’re completely different tournaments. Here, “plus-2” is quite a high result, about a 2800 performance. You couldn’t get anybody in the opening here. In Wijk, the second-echelon players not only play weaker, but are also less well-prepared theoretically. Kasparov won a number of “home-cooked” games in Holland.

Right from the start in Linares, I was convinced nobody would score higher than “plus-3.” Kasparov holds the advantage in various playing aspects over, say, Khalifman or Leko; but if he doesn’t get a significant advantage from the opening, then their defensive technique will be enough to draw him.

AR: For a number of reasons – the introduction of computers, the proliferation of draws at the highest level, etc. – isn’t it time to go to “Fischer Chess,” before the regular kind vanishes completely?

VK: No, I think our game is still complex enough – although it is finite, as the mathematicians like to say. For now, we have only worked out a few percent of it; as we advance further, we shall encounter new problems. One of them is the rapid growth in defensive technique. That’s why, when the top four play, every win becomes an event.

AR: Now, are you excluding Leko or Shirov?

VK: Now that's a question of style. Shirov is not weaker; he's just more vulnerable, so to speak. You could say the same thing about Morozevich, who is getting close to this level. Or take Ivanchuk, who on his best days could crush anybody, but who loses too often to remain a super-grandmaster. And Topalov is unstable.

AR: I don't care what you chessplayers say, or the journalists who support you – the general public, including potential and current sponsors, sighs with irritation when they see a crosstable with nothing but “halves” on it. And the mass-media editors say, “Readers are not interested in tournaments with wall-to-wall draws.” What's to be done?

VK: Well, it's a problem, all right; but it's not our fault. Kasparov didn't shirk from a fight, and neither did I. All my games from the second round were very combative.

AR: But the most combative of these, your game with White against Kasparov, could have ended in a repetition right out of the opening. What would the people have said then?!

VK: The people often fail to understand that there really is nothing left to fight for sometimes, or that a handful of moves can conceal a great deal of work. We may not agree with the criticism, but we still have to listen. Besides, no self-respecting grandmaster will waste a White by repeating moves right out of the opening – that's demeaning!

AR: Now what if it doesn't work out? I've heard the first move in chess compared to the serve in tennis – there, too, you don't always serve an ace. After a few strokes, the two players are on an even footing again. And yet, I said, the player on serve will still try a little harder to win the point, because he feels he's under a sort of moral obligation. Does that sound right?

VK: Very close; the psychology is the same in chess. And even the relative strengths of the players will become less important.

AR: Returning to your game, I want to “knock” (as do some of my colleagues) a few of the denizens of the press-center (some grandmasters among them). They were offering bets that the game would be drawn, regardless of what sort of position arose. Some of them were spouting arrant nonsense, and I had to get tough with them.

VK: I don't know how they regard me in there; but for some reason, nobody likes Kasparov – not in the West, not in Russia – and they “dump” on him full force.

AR: What?! Who's “dumping” on Kasparov? The Russian press organization has practically outlawed such a thing even if an author wants to insult him, his editor will prevent it. The only specialized magazine I can think of that hasn't tried to flatter Kasparov is ours, *64*. Or are there specific accusations against us?

VK: At home, all our Komsomoltsi are arrayed against him. I don't think there can be any accusations against *64*; but your foreign colleagues, and especially the most influential ones, *New In Chess*, *Schach...*

AR: Now that's a surprise! Kasparov has said more than once that only in Russia – how did he put it? – is he not respected, somehow. During international tournaments, he greets the foreign chess correspondents like long-lost pals; for example, at the concluding press-conference in Linares, he was demonstratively friendlier with the “Dirk Brothers” – ten Geuzendaam and Poldauf, the directors of the two journals you just cited. The former's sympathies are pretty well-known; and the latter has told me that only in a match with Kramnik could he fail to root for Kasparov.

VK: But these are not the owners, only editors. And you ought to read some of those publications more carefully. Ree, Salov, Dvoretzky ... readers' letters – all sorts of “dumping.” Of course, there are some positive articles, too.

AR: So it appears that other journals, too, attempt to maintain their objectivity.

VK: Objectivity consists in understanding that the only one who never makes a mistake is the one who never does anything. Kasparov has his own opinion on everything. Whether it's right or not is pretty subjective. He does as he says he will, and in accordance with his own opinion. That's democracy, in fact that a man has the right, within the law, to do whatever he wants and considers right.

AR: Long ago, I suggested a different name for such actions – demokratura.

VK: I've heard that... But that's not what I'm talking about. Take the fact that Kasparov wants to play a match for the world championship, and tries to organize one himself. He has the connections, the name – well, let him try it. Don't interfere with him, don't attack him for it, don't insult him for it. The fact that the match with Shirov fell apart is not just the champion's fault.

Yes, there are many people who don't like the way he behaves. But where has this conviction come from in our circle – and remember, I have close relations with chessplayers and with chess journalists – that Kasparov is destroying, or has already destroyed chess? Of course, bad things have resulted from his actions – but there have been so many good things as well! For instance, take the Intel sponsorship which gave many chessplayers – not just myself and Anand – the chance to earn some real money. Then there was the PCA version of the World Championship – once again, there were additional opportunities. Of the GMA's history, people only remember the bad ending; everybody wants to forget the good things that happened. They've already started looking for bad things in the Internet tournaments on the Kasparov website. And so on, and so forth. Somebody's ambitions fall short, so that's blamed on the “tyranny” of the elite, with Kasparov at the head; personal insults... But all this is at the emotional level; once you look at the facts, a different picture emerges. And democracy – the right to act as you see fit, as long as you don't break the law –

is being trampled by someone else.

AR: Well, I have my own opinion on this subject, but I don't want to get too far away from Linares. But it's easy to understand why world-class grandmasters would feel wounded when one tournament participant ignores everyone else's greetings in the Anibal hotel restaurant or at most gives a barely perceptible nod.

VK: If Kasparov wanted to, he could probably address this matter concretely. For instance, Shirov has insulted him; Khalifman (with whom I have, as you know, excellent relations) has done worse. But, I repeat, the gaggle of grandmasters – to which I belong, and he does not – should not mix the two; there is Kasparov when he is playing chess and Kasparov when he is not. If you're careful to keep the two separate, then everything falls into place. Fine, tell me Kasparov is insulting us, tell me you don't respect him; but don't try to tell me that Kasparov is destroying chess!

AR: You can't really make that exact a separation. Everybody plays and lives in the same general country of chess, a place where one good turn still deserves another.

VK: Now, here Kasparov will not forgive those who have, in his opinion, disrespected him – it makes no difference whether they are chessplayer or journalist. I, too, will not fraternize with those publications whose representatives have insulted me. Now, he has a much more combative, categorical character than I have. And he can be just as forceful in matters of a completely opposite nature. I remember, for example, that in 1994 Kasparov insisted that the Linares organizers invite myself and Shirov – they're strong kids, he said they should play!

AR: So it's true – he *can* influence the composition of a super-tournament?

VK: As could I, especially whenever I play in a tournament where the average rating is 100 points lower than mine. Even in Linares, if I am the one they want to see here, I have the possibility of a little whispering campaign well, invite Adams instead of Topalov, or vice versa even. Anand could do it, Shirov too... On the other hand, as far as I know, nobody has ever taken advantage of this, or engages in this sort of politicking.

AR: So you are apolitical?

VK: Yes, in the sense that I consider politics a dirty business in general. I don't accept the comparison of chess, where we have honest struggle, with political games, where it is certainly not necessarily the wiser or more distinguished who wins. This goes contrary to my life principles. All I see is some functionaries using chess terminology for economy and for the image, even when they don't understand it very well themselves. For someone who views life itself as a game, then chess too is only a game. That's not my point of view.

AR: There's also politics in chess. Is it hard to talk about Khalifman, because you feel somewhat uncomfortable about the conflict between Champion, the best player, and the Champion according to FIDE?

VK: This conflict is not a real one. It exists only in the press; in reality, there is no conflict. Khalifman says, I am the official FIDE World Champion – and he's right. Kasparov declares, I am the strongest player in the world, and therefore I am the real Champion – and he's right, too. Both of them are right – such things happen sometimes. But your fellow journalists have to light the flames of a personal war between them, and blow up a scandal. Returning to the so-called “chess elite question,” let me say this: Right now, there's not enough evidence to put Khalifman squarely in the top ten. Especially considering his two completely opposite results, after winning the championship in Las Vegas, the horrible match loss to Leko, followed by a completely acceptable performance in Linares against the strongest players in the world. That doesn't happen to everybody! Let's give Alexander the chance to play in a few more super-tournaments, and then we can draw some conclusions about the real level of his playing strength.

AR: “Let's give him the chance...” Does that mean that there is someone who decides, “to give or not to give”? Or does this flow from the general opinion?

VK: Sasha and I have taken frequent walks together, and talked a lot about this subject. Some things we agreed on, some things we disagreed. Whaddya want?! There is a group of players who are objectively better than the rest by rating, by their play, and even by reputation – by everything. They get invited to the major tournaments (in fact, they *are* the major tournaments) a priori. Every organizer and host wants to see just these players at his tournament.

Then, there is another group of grandmasters, who play well from time to time, and on those occasions get invited to the elite tournaments. There are very few prestige events, and there are many good players. And there's the conundrum.

Khalifman is dead set against inviting grandmasters for reasons other than their results. I became interested in this, did a little investigating, and found that such a group of grandmasters does, in fact, exist. But they are generally connected with the countries where the major events are organized. In Holland, it's customary to invite Piket and van Wely; in Spain, you invite Illescas; and Germany has its own, too. And even if you have players on hand who are no weaker than Timman or Korchnoi, still you like to make up a tournament that represents the entire epoch. Now, Judit Polgar is a case unto herself...

The problem does not lie in the players themselves, but in the fact that there are so few events. The hosts are financially limited to ten participants, so they want to invite seven of the top-rateds, a couple from the host country, and somebody else who's otherwise well-known – call him (or her) “the exotic.”

Our conversations with Khalifman concluded that, first of all, we need to increase the number of tournaments. FIDE will have to work on this as well.

They have mistakenly decided that their sole responsibility will be to hold an irregularly scheduled World Championship for the one-time care and feeding of a small group of grandmasters. This is important, yes; but what we need is a series of tournaments, and the support of traditional tournaments. If these perish, then we will have no need of any world championship.

AR: While we're on the subject, who do *you* think deserves the title of World Champion these days?

VK: I consider Khalifman the official World Champion according to FIDE. Even in Las Vegas, I insisted that they should add that four-letter abbreviation to their title.

AR: Is that because of Kasparov?

VK: It's because the strongest chessplayer in the world today took no part in the FIDE Championship. I see nothing in that statement to denigrate the official title; I would wear such a title with pride myself, had I been fortunate enough to win it. For the moment, I am neither the world's strongest chessplayer, nor the FIDE World Champion. But I will try...

AR: Could you not foresee a situation where a match for Kasparov's title is postponed until someone starts beating him in tournaments, or until he himself starts playing badly?

VK: At least for the moment, a Kasparov-Anand match would look strange, and even stupid (and I don't want to say anything to offend the brilliant Indian grandmaster, who is also a brilliant "untangler"). A match with me? – I have not, perhaps, fully demonstrated my right to it. As for the match with Shirov, unfortunately for Alexei, that has already been "played out" the chance for that match has come and gone. The problem lies in the lack of a selection process. Well, there is the FIDE World Championship, which could yet take place – who knows?! Now, if everyone knew exactly the what and where and when of this system, put it up on a chart – then, they could make a few corrections, and everybody would be happy with it. But neither the Kasparovian, nor the "FIDE"-rovia system has been fully laid out for us. All we can do is play the best we can, and then – we'll see.

Yes, Kasparov, whom, we had expected to catch, has once again moved out in front. Some of it, of course, is a refined method of working with the most current computer, as well as the opportunity to hire specialized people for such work. But he appears to be giving his assistants most of the ideas himself; and he now spends more time on chess than before.

AR: So Kasparov will always be Number One?

VK: No, because "always" never happens! I believe that I can keep up with him in tournaments, and even more so in a match.

AR: Even more so?

VK: Well, the score between us is quite even.

AR: Including that blitz match, whose even outcome was predicted, smilingly, by some experts...

VK: Well, that's chess-related paranoia. There's nothing like that over the chessboard. I can assure you from the depth of my being that there are no such pre-arrangements, at least among the top-level grandmasters. Our world is not so bad as that!

(Before commenting on his biggest game of the tournament, Vladimir Kramnik shared the following reminiscence with *64's* correspondent)

VK: Sasha Khalifman, who assisted me before my 1994 match with Kamsky, had a funny story to tell me, which seems apropos here:

Sometime in 1988-89, when Khalifman was performing his military service, but was already quite a strong player, just under GM strength, he was invited to the training camp of Gata Kamsky, who was already showing great promise. On the second day, after breakfast, while his son was still sleeping, Rustam Kamsky (whose name is also well-known in chess circles) came and sat down with Sasha. He said, "We like to play the Catalan Opening; but we keep running into the Grünfeld Defense. You, as a top openings specialist, will show us, please, how we can turn this Defense into a Catalan." Shrugging his shoulders in disbelief, Khalifman attempted to explain to the senior Kamsky – an amateur-strength player himself – that these are, in fact, two different openings; and that no matter how hard you try, you can't get anything closer than the variation of the Grünfeld with the white king's bishop fianchettoed...

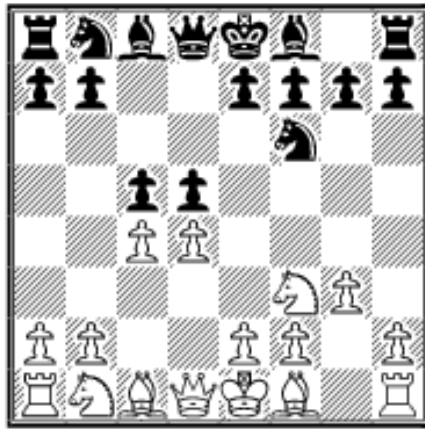
Rustam's response was a cynical stare (Aha, so you don't want to give up your little secret?), and the announcement, that evening, that Sasha was no longer on the team.

With that incident in mind, one may put the following epigraph on my game with Kasparov: "Time for all secrets to be revealed." However, that wouldn't be fair to Miguel Illescas, a very fine gentleman and my faithful assistant, to whom I am indebted for his ideas – in my game against Shirov, for example; and also here, against Kasparov..

Vladimir Kramnik - Gary Kasparov

Linares Super Tournament, 2000 English [A30]

1.Nf3 Nf6 2.c4 c5 3.g3 d5 4.d4!?



A rare move, which Illescas brought to my attention. While analyzing this system for Black, I noted that it was not easy for him to equalize; so I started looking at it from White's perspective, especially since this amounts to a sort of "anti-Grünfeld." Chess has begun to consist more and more of forced sequences. And the Grünfeld is a good opening to use whenever you really want to slam out a draw without giving your White opponent the chance to get even into the middlegame. This is one reason the

Grünfeld is so popular today.

Although in this tournament, even such dyed-in-the-wool "Grünfelders" as Shirov and Leko (who never play anything else) avoided this defense against me – presumably, because they thought I would be well-prepared. But for this game, I myself wanted to avoid the Grünfeld. This is a position I have played many times, with knights on c3 and c6. Without the knights, this version is not quite as good for White, but it's an interesting move, nonetheless.

4...dc

4...cd deserves serious consideration, but that's another story.

5.Qa4+

Practically forced. 5.Bg2 is bad – after 5...Nc6, the d-pawn hangs, and Black's just better.

5...Bd7

If 5...Nc6 6.dc, although this too gives Black a wealth of possibilities. But it was this type of game that I was aiming for.

6.Qxc4 Bc6

An unexpected move, which has its points. I had looked at continuations I considered more logical 6...cd and 6...e6, with ...Bc6 to follow. I had not given much thought to 6...Bc6, since the c-pawn hangs.

7.dc

After 7.Qxc5 Na6, Black gets serious counter-chances because of the unfortunate position of the white queen. And now we do have a form of Catalan – or it would be, if Black's pawn were on e6. Black has kept the possibility of sending the pawn to e5 in one move; he also may try a plan with ...g7-g6 and ...Bf8-g7.

7...Bd5

Kasparov finds an interesting resource: Black is going to chase the queen, who will find it difficult to select a good retreat square. Kasparov didn't like 7...e6 (and for good reason), because of 8.Nc3!? Nbd7 9.Be3 – White intends simply to complete his development by Bg2 and 0-0, retaining the extra pawn, which Black will not find it easy to recover.

8.Qa4+

A little test: 8...Nbd7?! leads to the position mentioned above after 9.Nc3 Bc6 10.Qc4; therefore –

8...Bc6 9.Qc4 Bd5 10.Qc2



10.Qh4!? was worth a look; but I didn't like the option for Black of playing without ...e7-e6 for now, as in 10...Nc6 11.Bg2 Ne4 (or even 11...e5) 12.0-0 e6 13.Ng5! – it looks like White's ahead here, but there might be stronger options for Black. So I decided to force Black to play ...e7-e6.

10...e6

If Black continues the pursuit by 10...Be4, 11.Qd2! is quite unpleasant – trading queens at d2 is unfavorable, as the bishop ends up *en prise* at e4. If 11...e6, then 12.Qxd8+ Kxd8 13.Nc3, and the bishop will soon be traded off (13...Bc6 12.b4), which would give me a pleasant, lasting endgame advantage. And after 11...Nbd7 12.Nc3 Black once again has problems with his light-squared bishop (11...Nc6 12.Bg2 e6 13.Nc3 Bxc5 14.0-0 0-0 15.Nxe4 Nxe4 16.Qc2).

11.Bg2

We both used a lot of time in the opening over this complex and intricate position. 11.Nc3 looked interesting, but didn't seem clear enough to me 11...Bc6 (11...Bxc5 can't be good 12.Nxd5 Qxd5 13.Bg2 guarantees White a small advantage) 12.b4 a5 13.b5 Bxf3 14.ef Bxc5 15.Bg2 Nbd7 16.f4. White is weak on the dark squares, while Black's pieces are well-posted, and there is an uncomfortable pin looming on the c-file. 11.Bg2 seemed like a meatier move to me.

11...Be4!

11...Nbd7 12.Nc3 is worse: Black can't play 12...Bc6, owing to 13.b4 a5 14.b5 Bxf3 15.Bxf3 Nxc5 16.0-0, with a clear advantage; or 11...Qa5+ 12.Nc3 Bxc5 13.0-0, and the queen stands poorly at a5 (13...Bc6 14.Bd2).

12.Qc4

Now 12.Qd2 is unfortunately not so strong 12...Bxc5 13.Qxd8+ Kxd8 14.Nc3 Bc6 15.0-0 Nbd7, and after the further ...Ke7, Black succeeds in retaining his pair of bishops, leaving White with nothing.

12...Bd5

12...Qd5!? should be looked into.

13.Qh4 Bxc5 14.Nc3 Bc6 15.0-0

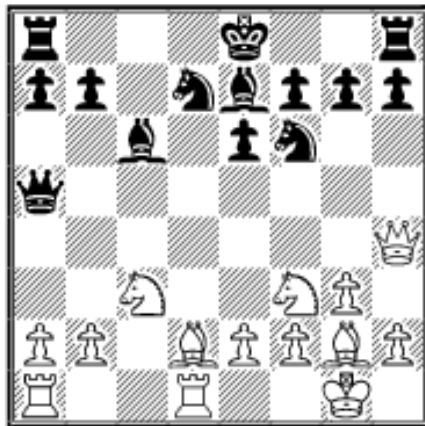
15.Qg5 doesn't work, because of 15...Nbd7 16.Qxg7? Rg8 17.Qh6 Bxf2+. By this point, Kasparov was running short of time (with 25 moves to make); so he automatically played the "solid"...

15...Be7?

15...Nbd7 was better 16.g4!?, and Black has a completely normal position. 16.b4 Be7 17.b5 doesn't work, because of 17...Bxf3 18.Bxf3 Nd5, followed by Nxc3 and Bf6; while after 16.Rd1 Black has 16...Qb6 17.e3 Be7, winning a vital temp. 16.Bg5 0-0 isn't dangerous either.

16.Rd1 Qa5

Apparently Kasparov hadn't seen that 16...Nbd7 is bad here, because of 17.Ne5 Bxg2 18.Kxg2 Qc7 (18...Nd5 19.Qa4) 19.Nxd7 Nxd7 20.Bg5 Bxg5 21.Qxg5 0-0 22.Rac1. Also risky is 16...Qb6!? 17.Be3!? Qxb2 18.Bd4 Qa3.

17.Bd2 Nbd7

I was a bit ashamed to go for the slightly better ending after 17.Qg5 Qxg5 18.Bxg5 Nbd7 19.Rac1. Worth looking into was 17.Rb1!?, with the idea b4-b5, a possible continuation might be 17...Ne4 18.Qg4 Nxc3 19.0-0 20.Nd4 – I'm not sure that White has anything serious here.

18.g4!

The correct way to develop White's initiative. White has to act quickly – Black has no weaknesses, and if he succeeds in castling and withdrawing his queen from a5, then it's hard to see what basis White can use to claim any advantage.

18...h6

18...0-0 19.g5 Ne8 20.Ne4 and 21.Bc3 gives White a dangerous initiative.

19.Qg3 (19.g5? Nh7) **19...Qa6!?**

An analogous idea: to improve the queen's position.

20.h4

The most natural approach; although 20.Rac1!? wasn't bad, either.

20...Qc4

Neither I nor my partner approved of 20...h5 21.g5 Ng4, when Black may have problems with this knight. White would be free to choose between 22.Bf4!? 0-0 23.Bd6, and 22.Bh3!?, and 22.Ne1!?

21.Bf4 Qb4!?

22.Rd4 was threatened. After 21...g5 22.hg hg 23.Be5! (23.Bxg5 Qxg4 is toothless; while after 23.Nxg5 e5!, White's kingside structure is trembling.) 23...Bxf3 24.Bxf3 Nxe5 25.Qxe5 Qc5 26.Qxc5 Bxc5, Black's position looks very dangerous.

22.a3!

The beginning of a forcing sequence that is very dangerous for Black. 22.Rd2 would allow 22...g5.

22...Qxb2 23.Nd4 g5!

All other tries fail: 23...Bxg2? 24.Rdb1 (24.Na4 Qxa1 25.Rxa1 Bd5 is weaker, as Black gets some kind of play) 24...Ne4 25.Rxb2 Nxg3 26.Kxg2 e5 27.Bxg3 ed 28.Nd5; or 23...Qb6? 24.Rab1 Qa6 25.Ncb5, with the awful threat of 26.Nc7+.

24.Nxc6! gf

24...bc is bad – 25.hg hg 26.Bxg5 or 26.Bd6.

25.Qd3 bc (25...Nc5 26.Qc4) **26.Bxc6!**



On 26.Rdb1, the only way for Black to hold the position is 26...Ne5 27.Qd4 Qc2 28.Qxe5 0-0.

26...0-0 (26...Rd8? 27.Rdb1) **27.Bxa8 Ne5!**

27...Nc5? 28 Qf3 leaves White up the exchange. However, 27...Rxa8 28.Rdb1 Ne5 29.Rxb2 Nxd3 30 ed Nxc4 looked OK for Black, too – White's pawns are broken up, leaving Black with quite enough for the exchange.

28.Qd4 Rxa8 29.Qxe5

Black has a good game after 29.Rab1 Qxe2! 30.Nxe2 Nf3+ 31.Kh1 (31.Kg2 Nxd4 32.Rxd4 e5 33.Ra4 Nxc4) 31...Nxd4 32.Rxd4 (32.Nxd4 Ne4) 32...f3 33.Ng1 Bxa3 34.Rf4 Nd5 35.Rxf3 Be7 36.h5 a5.

29...Rc8

White retains winning chances on 29...Nd5 30.Rab1 Qxc3 31.Rxd5 Qh3 32.Rd3 Qxg4+ 33.Kf1 Qxh4 34.Qe4, although the position remains too complicated for a simple evaluation.

30.Rac1

White gets nothing out of 30.Rdc1 Nd5 31.Rab1 Qxa3 – how does he defend the pinned knight?

30...Nd5!



I saw this move in my calculations, but underestimated it. After all, doesn't White have a huge material advantage? 30...Rc5 is insufficient: after 31.Qd4 Nxc4 32.Qb4 (32.Qxf4 Bxh4 must still be checked), there's no question White's winning.

31.Nxd5 Qxe5 32.Nxe7+ Kg7

Objectively speaking, the game is even here. The only line that might still be worth looking at is 32...Kh7!. Then 33.Nxc8 Qxe2

34.Nd6 Qxg4+ 35.Kf1 f3 36.Nxf7 Qxh4 (36...Qg2+ 37.Ke1 Qg1+ 38.Kd2 Qxf2+ 39.Kc3 appears to allow White to play for the win a little longer) 37.Ke1 Qe4+ 38.Kf1 Qh4, with a draw.

33.Rxc8!

After 33.Nxc8 Qxe2, White could be the one in danger, as the queen sets about harvesting his pawns.

33...Qxe2 34.Rg8+ Kf6 35.Rd7 Qe1+

Computer analysis shows a draw after 35...f3 36.g5+ hg 47.hg+ Ke5 38.Nc6+ Ke4 39.Rxf7! Qe1+ 40.Kh2 Qxf2+ 41.Kh3 Qg2+ 42.Kh2 f2 43.Rgf8 Qh1+ 44.Kg4 Qd1+!, and 45.Rf3? fails to 45...f1Q 46 R8f4+ Kd5. But calculating such a variation in time trouble is a difficult thing.

36.Kg2 Qe4+ 37.Kh2 Qc2 38.Kg2 Qe4+ 39.Kh2 Qc2

This accurate move answers all questions. The queen takes away the c6-square from the knight, and the draw becomes inevitable.

40.g5+ hg 41.Rxg5

White also gets nothing out of 41.hg+ Ke5 42.Kg2 Qe4+, since 43.Kf1? would be quite dangerous for him after 43...f3.

41...Qxf2+ Draw.

VK: I'll admit that everything I've shown and described here is incomplete, not yet sufficiently analyzed. So my evaluations are also probably not finalized. Like any sort of artist, I am satisfied with this game's content. It's fun to be able to play, with Kasparov, such a non-standard, battle-filled game for the masses. I was somewhat disappointed at the outcome, since emotionally at least it seemed that I was very close to winning. But after we had analyzed it together, I came to the conclusion that both of us had played well, and the drawn result was wholly justified. I hope it pleases chess fans no less than it did the spectators, who voted this game the most interesting of all those played at Linares. I would not have traded it for some of my victories.

AR: But, but, but...

VK: No, of course not my victories over Kasparov – I meant, over anyone else!



[\[ChessCafe Home Page\]](#) [\[Book Review\]](#) [\[Columnists\]](#)
[\[Endgame Study\]](#) [\[Skittles Room\]](#) [\[Archives\]](#)
[\[Links\]](#) [\[Online Bookstore\]](#) [\[About ChessCafe\]](#) [\[Contact Us\]](#)

Copyright 2006 CyberCafes, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

"**The Chess Cafe®**" is a registered trademark of Russell Enterprises, Inc.