

## *Misha Interviews...*

Misha Savinov

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## Cool Wind from the North:

## Interview with Olga Alexandrova

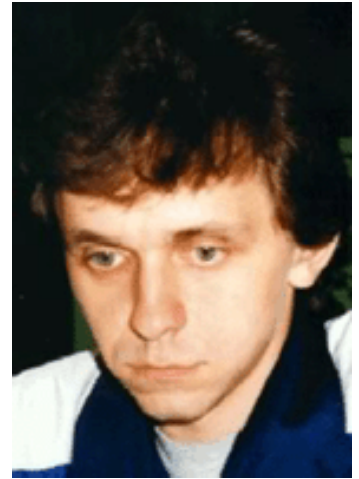
There are several great chess centers in the former USSR: Moscow, St.Petersburg in Russia; Kiev, Odessa in Ukraine; Minsk in Belarus, plus maybe a couple more. Most talented young players from other regions seek to move to those famous megalopolises in order to have best opportunities to develop their abilities. Many promising secondary school graduates stay on the beaten track by entering the chess department of the Physical Culture Academies, where one can study subjects such as biology, physiology, psychology etc, and receive proper chess training and tournament practice, as these colleges often sponsor students' participation in various events. For those who stay in the provinces, it becomes increasingly difficult to find master instruction, practice, even appropriate study materials once they are out of children's chess.

I suspect many **ChessCafe** readers can imagine the situation: someone loves chess, but does not succeed in becoming a Master; then it is time to enter the university and choose a profession. Usually this person obtains a respectable position in society, sometimes plays chess at a (naturally) decreased level of strength on weekends, and often keeps thinking of what could have happen if... In our age of early specialization, is there a reasonable chance that one who did not impress as youngster will add skills significantly in one's 20s or 30s?

I might also add that this person lives in a remote fishing town beyond the Polar Circle, and has very limited options of competing at higher levels. Not too promising a situation, I'd say.

And still, this month's guest, Russian International Master Denis Yevseev, provides irrefutable proof that even in such a deadend situation, one can find the strength not only to remain in chess, but also to improve and break into the professional level.

Denis Yevseev, born in Murmansk (1973). International Master since 1998. Current FIDE rating - 2589 (second highest-rated IM in Russia). Winner of St.Petersburg championship 2003.



**Misha Savinov:** Denis, do you know how many Grandmasters were born beyond the Polar circle?

**Denis Yevseev:** Hm, I guess, just two. Vladimir Burmakin and Alexander Rustemov. Both in Murmansk.

**MS:** I can add Ukrainian Alexander Moiseenko, who was born in Severomorsk (a small town near Murmansk, a Russian naval base - M.S.). Maybe there is also somebody I don't know. You are from Murmansk, too, right?

**DY:** Yes, as well as my parents and my elder sister. We are deep-rooted in Nordic soil.

**MS:** Did your parents have any interest in chess?

**DY:** My father plays very rarely. He never really got interested in the game, his level is like 4<sup>th</sup> category (1200-1300 USCF - M.S.). And my mom even now does not know how the pieces move.

**MS:** Did you learn the rules from you father? At what age?

**DY:** Yes, my father introduced chess to me when I was 5. At an early stage I played with my sister, who is 4 years older, but she refused to continue when I started to win regularly. So, 3 years later my father brought me to the chess study group at my school. It was basically easy-going activity, mostly playing with other boys and girls from the school and sometimes watching cartoons and movies. When I showed up the first time, the instructor, Alexander Gabidullin, asked me to play a 4-game match with every other pupil, who already were 3<sup>rd</sup> category, and I lost all the matches 1-3. So, he duly gave me 4<sup>th</sup> category, the lowest one on qualification ladder, but nevertheless quite official and honorable!

**MS:** However, it was not a "proper" chess school?

**DY:** Right - you know, involvement in study groups is more like socializing, not a serious attempt to study. It was only a couple of years later that a friend of my father, a big fan of chess, brought me to Regional Youth Sport School. My new trainer, Stanislav Krylov (back then a correspondence

Master, now also a FIDE Master), first of all stripped me of my recently received 2<sup>nd</sup> category, because study group instructors were not allowed to grant it. However, it was not difficult for me to achieve it at the Sport School, and I advanced further.

**MS:** You are just 3 days older than Alexander Rustemov, so you probably went to the same class at the chess school?

**DY:** Yes. We constantly competed at children's events, and I always stood higher than Alexander. At some point my personal record against him was 6-0! Then he began to take individual lessons from one experienced player, who had just moved to Murmansk, and his strength increased sharply. By the end of school, at age of 17, we were equals in a chess sense, although my tournament results were somewhat better. Today my score vs. Rustemov is 6-5 (laughs)!

**MS:** That's what a call a trend reversal!

**DY:** He showed his worth as chess professional much earlier than I did. Rustemov has remained a very respectable GM for several years. Our first professional encounter happened in 1998. I lost, and felt very upset, so Alexander had to console me. The rating difference was 100 points in his favor, but today we are much closer on the Elo ladder.

**MS:** After school Alexander entered Physical Culture Academy in Moscow, and later transferred to the same college in Minsk, so he has chosen the path of professional chess. And what was your choice?

**DY:** Curiously, I have always been motivated to go to St.Petersburg (Denis always uses "St.Petersburg", or "Peter", not "Leningrad", even when he talks about Soviet times - M.S.). So I wanted to go to a university there. And I liked chemistry a lot. So, I decided to enter the Technological Institute. It was in 1990.

**MS:** Was there any influence from your parents' professions?

**DY:** No, I don't think so. My mother is a kindergarten teacher, and my father is a dockmaster at the port. Far enough from my choice.

**MS:** How did you like your freshman year?

**DY:** Everything was fine in the beginning. Financially - my parents helped me a little, plus I received a small stipend, so it was enough for a decent life. And then April 1992 came. Prizes skyrocketed. And it became extremely hard for non-Petersburg students to survive. I was short on money, suffered from gastritis. Serious problems broke out, and I could not concentrate on studies anymore.

**MS:** How you were able to solve the situation?

**DY:** Once when I visited Murmansk, I accidentally found out that there is an opportunity to transfer to the Murmansk Marine Academy with only a one-year adjustment. So I did it in 1993.

**MS:** I see. Tell me what was your relation with chess during that period?



**DY:** It happened somehow that when I entered the Technological Institute, I strongly sought to become good engineer! So I sunk my teeth into my studies. During the first year even some fellow students were unhappy that I always seemed to read "Inorganic Chemistry". And I was not pretending - I enjoyed it indeed, and also I was motivated to know chemistry really well. As for chess, I almost dropped it. In 2½ years in St.Petersburg I only played in one small open tournament, and two or three games for the Institute team. The results were OK, and I received invitations to play more, but always refused. Graduating from secondary

school in Murmansk, I was strong candidate master, but then my strength noticeably declined.

**MS:** The Murmansk Marine Academy - This means a prospective career in fishing. Did you go into the sea?

**DY:** Yes, we had an obligatory practical work on the fishing vessel during the 4<sup>th</sup> year of study.

**MS:** How long was that?

**DY:** Let me remember - from June or July until November we went fishing in the open sea (the Barents Sea). As I studied at the technological faculty, I had no qualifications for any specialized position on the fishing vessel, like mechanic or fisherman, so I worked as a seaman. However, it was a relatively small boat, so after four months on it I was skilled for almost all the available positions.

**MS:** Did you play chess there?

**DY:** No, in fact, I tried to keep secret my chess ability. Seamen are sharp-tongued, and I was afraid of becoming a target for all the jokes like "This is

not chess, young man, here you have to use your head!" etc. And I succeeded! So, there were another four months completely without chess. I must say that in October and November the sea was very rough, so three other students and me struggled a lot. But we got used to it!

**MS:** So, when and why did you switch back to chess?

**DY:** After I transferred to Murmansk, I understood that chess was important to me. Once again I could compete at tournaments, and I found I couldn't live without it. Since I returned home, to my parents, to smaller town, I enjoyed extra spare time. And I had full support of my sister, who has always been an authority for me. She said that I should not quit chess, because I like it and do relatively well.

I returned to competitive chess life hungry for knowledge and practice, and devoted myself seriously to the game. Slowly, steadily I regained my past strength, then began to go upward. The turning point happened in 1995. Soon after I returned from my fishing job, one semester prior to graduation, an opportunity arose to go to Groningen and take part in its famous open tournament, thanks to efforts of "Murmansk - Groningen Society" [these two are sister cities - M.S.]. I was unsure about my future, whether I should take chess professionally, or work in the fishing industry. It happened that I came to my very first professional tournament abroad, and earned IM norm in 11 rounds! I took it as a sign, a smile of fortune. So I decided to accept chess as my profession. There was a good example right in front of me.

**MS:** Are you talking about your senior fellow Vladimir Burmakin?

**DY:** Yes. He also graduated from college being just a candidate master - well, very strong, of course, closer to master level. And then he devoted himself entirely to chess and was able to reach his goals.

**MS:** Did you know each other?

**DY:** We met in 1995, communicated a lot and became good friends.

**MS:** Could you share with us how did you study chess?

**DY:** The day after I defended my diploma and graduated from the Marine Academy, I hit the road to the Pardubice Open. How did I study chess? I had no computer. I worked on theory with opening encyclopedias available in the Murmansk Sports School and theoretical articles. It was impossible to purchase Chess Informant, so I took the games from old magazines and bulletins. And, of course, I read books. I remember there was a moment when I was so hungry for chess that in relatively short time I read 12 chess books - and read them seriously, analyzed everything in detail.

**MS:** Which books did you study?

**DY:** I attempted to catch little of everything. Middlegame, endgame, great chess players of past. I studied Alekhine - Capablanca.

**MS:** Their match?

**DY:** No - their heritage, game collections. I worked on the endgame a lot. I liked very much Mikhail Shereshevsky's book *Endgame Strategy*. Sometimes young players ask me to recommend a book - this one is very good, it helped me with my chess. I enjoyed a book by Tal and Damsky about attacking combinations. And I rigorously studied all five books by Dvoretzky that were in my possession. I think they influenced my chess above all.

**MS:** How much total time a day did you devote to chess studies?

**DY:** On average? I guess about 6 hours. Less in winter, though. You know, we have polar nights in Murmansk, and it was hard for me to work efficiently during those dark periods.

**MS:** So you read books, participated at the tournaments - and where did you work?

**DY:** I accepted a position at school. However, my bosses understood that I was directing all my efforts into becoming professional chess player, and did not overload me with duties. Nevertheless, I had certain responsibilities there.

**MS:** Still, after you earned an IM norm in 1995, it took three years to actually get the title. Did you experience any disappointments?

**DY:** There was a difficult period when I played chess passionately, but it had no influence on either my rating or tournament results, no progress. I was disappointed, of course, but I knew that chess is a fair game, and no decent work can be a waste of time. And then suddenly in 1998 I experienced a colossal boost. Still being a candidate master, I registered the last IM norm, my rating grew well above 2400. I've beaten several grandmasters, too.

**MS:** What was your most memorable result during that breakthrough?

**DY:** The 1998 Russian Championship. It was the strongest national championship in recent times (only the 2003 Russian Championship 2003 has been as strong - M.S.), with the participation of Svidler, Morozevich, Bareev, Sakaev, Khalifman etc. The average rating of my opponents was something like 2570, and I finished with 6½-4½, tied with Bareev and Rublevsky, ahead of Zvjaginsev, Khalifman and some other strong GMs. It was also my first GM norm! I accepted this result as an indication that I was

on the right track.

**MS:** But then you moved from Murmansk to St.Petersburg. You were on the right track, but nevertheless decided to change your life. Why?

**DY:** Indeed, I had no such thoughts initially. I enjoyed my Murmansk life, progressed in chess - everything was perfect. However, I then began, first, to participate in St.Petersburg tournaments regularly, and, second, met some St.Petersburg players, made friends. And at some point they came up with this idea for me to move. I started to think, pondered it for a year and a half - and decided! From a chess point of view I believed I'd attained everything one could in a place like Murmansk. It became hard to travel to tournaments, because Murmansk is so remote, travel costs are high. Here in St.Petersburg I stay as if inside some chess cloud - many fellow players, sparring partners, pupils etc.

**MS:** Do you rent a flat here?

**DY:** No, I am renting a room.

**MS:** And who were those friends of yours who inspired your decision?

**DY:** Two, actually - Valery Popov and Sergey Soloviov. We met each other at tournaments, began to communicate, watch certain positions together, visit competitions. If not for their attention, I'd probably still be in Murmansk!

**MS:** And how did your move affect tournament results?

**DY:** It is a difficult issue. In the beginning it took some time to settle down. I think I am rooted a little bit too deeply, so changes first affect me negatively. Once I had to change schools - it was a very painful process. My first tournament after I moved to St.Petersburg was disastrous, the Russian Club Championship, where I played for St.Petersburg-2. Apparently, my decline was due to social adaptation. Then slowly I recovered. And even showed some good results. My rating increased significantly. As for playing strength - it is hard to say. I am not so sure.

**MS:** Hm, interesting! How do you distinguish rating from strength?

**DY:** Well, rating gain is a fact. I netted about 60 points. Considering that I am not a child prodigy, this is a serious achievement. On the other hand, this rise may result from my active involvement in local chess - basically, it keeps me in a fighting mood all the time!

**MS:** And what would make you confident? Outstanding results, big victories?

**DY:** Yes, perhaps. On a global scale I did not display superb results, but progressed quietly. I won the most prestigious title in my career - St.Peterburg's champion, but if we were to re-play this tournament, I am not sure I'd win it again. I do not see global positive changes in my play. I still feel that other participants - grandmasters Sergey Ivanov, Valery Popov, Sergey Ionov, Alexey Lugovoy - are my equals. My rating is higher, but I am not stronger.

**MS:** What is your situation with the grandmaster title?

**DY:** The papers have been submitted, so I hope it is only a matter of time.

**MS:** I hope to congratulate you soon! Where did you score your GM norms?

**DY:** The first one was at the 1998 Russian Championship. Second and third happened in the Russian Cup cycles - in 1999 and 2000. For a long time it was a funny situation - I had only 29 games, missing the requirement by just one game. And I could not catch a fourth norm at the opens. I had rating well above 2500, often won against GMs and had a certain reputation among them. So, by 2002 I decided that this is enough, and went to the Alushta round robin with a GM norm to make things right. It turned out to be a success, but the tournament was very tense!

**MS:** Could you tell more about it?

**DY:** In the beginning I played well and had some breathing room, but then I lost one game and made several draws - I could not win. So, I had to score 5½-1½ in the last 7 rounds to make the norm. With 3 rounds to go I needed 2½-½. According to my calculations, the mission was possible, as I had two Whites and one Black. Naturally, I planned to win both games with White and to draw the one with Black.

Here we go, I play a game with Obukhov, a strong IM from Siberia, I will not be surprised if he becomes GM soon. And we have a terrible struggle at the board. I caught him in the opening and at some point, as analysis showed, I missed a forced win. OK, we continue playing, the position becomes unclear, then I stand worse and, then he misses the win. The last time control, time is running out, and we have absolutely insane ending - two Queens vs. Queen, Knight and several pawns. I had the Knight. Finally we agreed to a draw, which was a fair result, bearing in mind all that had happened.

**MS:** Sound like you could easily go off the deep end after that!

**DY:** Yes, 6 hours of very tense calculation. But it was not over! We had to play two rounds that day, and my next game was scheduled to start just a few minutes after. I am grateful to my opponent, Israeli IM Sergey Erenburg, who agreed to delay the game, so we could have at least some rest

time. I fought for 6 hours, he did too, but he had lost an important game and his last chance for GM norm. We started our encounter, however, and I felt that despite a short rest period I had almost no strength left. Luckily, Sergey was probably very disappointed by his loss the previous round, and blundered right in the opening.



Here I played **11...Ng4**. The idea is dead simple: the threat is Rxf3. Sergey replied with **12.h3**, planning on 12...Rxf3 to take on g4. I looked at the board and wondered - how is he going to play after **12...Nd4**? Isn't it simply mate? Not fully convinced, I nevertheless executed the move (my head almost refused to calculate anymore). **13.hxg4? Nxf3+** **14.gxf3 Qg3+**. Sergey said after the game that he did not see this coming. It tells something about players' condition

when we are forced to play two rounds a day. **15.Kh1 Qh3+** **16.Kg1 Rxf3** and **White resigned**.

But I still had to win my last round game. My opponent was the young Ukrainian IM Igor Smirnov, who needed a draw for his norm. However, it seems he burned out before the game, as I went on to win it relatively easily. I felt that Igor hoped that I would not be able to keep up the pace and would be content to draw in the last round. And when I drew a lost position with Obukhov and then won almost on demand with Black in penultimate round, it was a shock for him. Well, he is young, just 15, and such psychological vulnerability is excusable at his age.

One can say that this tournament reflected like a mirror my entire chess career. A good start, then a slip, then a rush to the finish, a win on demand and happy ending!

**MS:** Whom else did you beat there?

**DY:** Let's see. Moscow GM Arbakov, who regularly plays in Alushta, Andrey Nikitin, a GM from Tomsk (in Siberia - M.S.), two Israeli players, Erenburg and Livshits, strong IM Yagupov, IM Selin and IM Smirnov. 7 wins total.

**MS:** Let me ask an "economical" question. Is it possible to make living from chess at your level? How do you resolve these issues?

**DY:** Right now, thanks to my reputation, which for some reason continues to grow, I regularly receive requests to give lessons. Plus I do not avoid team events, as it means guaranteed money. Also, in recent years I have attained a certain stature, which allows me to remain "in plus" at the

individual tournaments, i.e. my net gain is significant. When I become a GM, I expect my expenses to decrease. Mostly due to better conditions offered to GMs. As far as I know, 2650-rated players have no problem financing themselves and their families. Maybe I am missing something, but this my understanding. They earn enough for bread. Sometimes even for butter (smiles).

Also, I am still not fed up with chess! The game itself, the creative process brings me enormous pleasure apart from simple money making. I see people who have played 120-150 games a year for decades! Naturally they risk losing interest in chess. I am not blaming them, of course. Maybe sometimes I will get tired of chess, too, but right now it feels like I am pretty far from it!

**MS:** I think you may thank the obstacles you've met on a way. Hard-earned success is often more valuable.

**DY:** Yes, probably. I know some young players - no names - young, but already very experienced, and they sometimes express certain cynicism, unhealthy cynicism towards chess. Life is tough. And it is exceptionally hard to play chess and live on chess earnings. Chess professionals, and I am not an exception, have very special personalities. You always have to be in a fighting mood, force your way through, beat competitors who just yesterday were your friends, etc. It hardens the personality, but also complicates communication with other people. Especially with non-chessplayers! Your goals, ideals, values are very different from theirs. Besides, almost all chess players are strong logicians, and they try to calculate this or that situation. It might be hard to endure. But, again - chess players like most human beings can be very different...

**MS:** Talking about your perspectives: do you have dreams, say, to break into the elite, to enter the championship cycle? What are your plans?

**DY:** Well, maybe, maybe, but my attitude is little bit different. I do not have a goal to hit 2650, or to become European champion in 2012. Here is my point of view. I deny that there can be a limit of skill development. As long as I work on chess and notice progress, I suppose I am doing it right. My intention is to solve global tasks by solving local ones. Look, I arrive at my first round game of St.Petersburg championship. Let's assume that I dream of winning the European Championship next year - but how does that affect my move selection in this game? I just keep trying to find the best move in a given position, to show the best results in a tournament - my goal is to make a good showing. I strive to keep my objective in view.

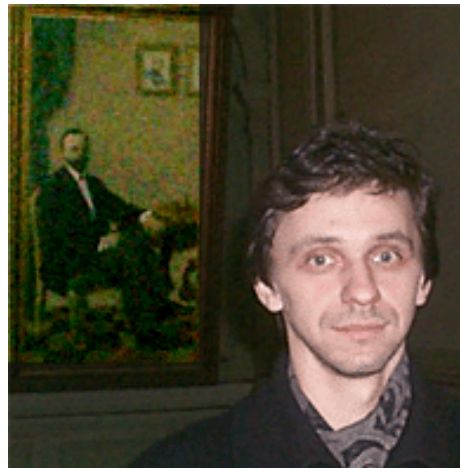
**MS:** I can't end this interview without asking you of your opinion about the current state of the chess world. Who do you think has better title chances, if both matches take place [ we talked before the latest news about the Kasparov - Ponomarev match - M.S.]?

**DY:** The situation is very confusing. It is unclear whether these matches will occur, and, of course, nobody knows if they take place at all! It's a shame that Kramnik and Leko can not play at their full strength, partly due to psychological confusion, partly because they have to hide their preparation. The major problem with unification is that it is extremely difficult to achieve. However, it is good that at least they're trying.

As for the favorite (laughs). Chesswise, Kasparov is the obvious favorite. However, it feels like his years are slowly beginning to tell. Remember, Garry Kimovich himself said prior to his match with Kramnik in London: "I believe I will be able to compete at the highest level for about 5 more years". You see, he did not allot much time for himself. It is normal that Kasparov's play is largely based on energy. And one cannot turn time back. Again - in my opinion, Kasparov probably is playing best chess of all four. However, Kramnik has already won one match, and I am not so sure that Kasparov would win the rematch. So, I have a feeling that Kramnik may end up winning this cycle. If it takes place!

**MS:** And whom of younger players would you like to mark out as possible future title contender, based on energy, chess ability and tournament results? Since you are not only a player, but also a teacher with deserved reputation, you must be the right person to ask such a question!

**DY:** I like Grischuk most of all. He makes a strong impression. He has energy, plays very interestingly, original chess and, at the same time, apparently devotes much of his time to study. He tries to play deeply. I remember Grischuk at the Russian Championship in 1998 in St. Petersburg. He was young and shy boy, an outstanding tactician, but with obvious blind spots at his armor. Then in 1999 he won the Chigorin Memorial - one could easily notice a colossal leap! And, amazingly, he keeps on developing at that pace. A brilliant, gifted player, and a nice person, too. Grischuk is a very menacing competitor for the greatest champions. Well, of course, Ponomarev is also a serious figure. It is too early to say something definite about Radjabov. So, talking about those young players who have already achieved something, I'd name Grischuk and Ponomarev.



**Games**

We met and talked at the Chigorin Chess Club in downtown St.Petersburg. But when I asked him to pick one or two interesting games for **ChessCafe** readers, Denis had trouble choosing without a list. After all, despite a reputation of a solid and hard-to-beat player, Denis has many brilliant and tense games, original opening set-ups and strategic concepts. He believes in classical chess, and, somewhat like Fischer, has the skill to reduce highly complicated positions to simple manageable elements, which helps him to keep control under the most crazy-looking situations.

Finally, we went to my flat, where after a cup of tea Denis annotated one of his recent games. He called it a great battle with an unfortunately unjust finish. Both players were inventive, stubborn and cool-headed until the last time control. By the way, if you seek professional annotations, please refer to Chess Informant, as this game appeared there with many more variations than in this **ChessCafe** version. Meet Denis Yevseev!

***Yevseev,D (2553) - Arzumanian,G (2455) [D31]***  
**RUS Cup final 6th Nefteyugansk (7), 11.10.2002**

Georgy Arzumanian is another young Ukrainian IM. I don't know why, but head-spinning positions are quite common in our encounters.

**1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 c6 4.Nc3 dxc4 5.a4 Bb4 6.e3 b5 7.Bd2 a5 8.axb5 Bxc3 9.Bxc3 cxb5 10.b3 Bb7 11.bxc4 b4 12.Bb2 Nf6**

Here is famous Noteboom variation, one of the sharpest branches of the Semi-Slav tree. I usually do well as White, Arzumanian specializes in it as Black.

**13.Bd3 Nbd7 14.0-0 0-0 15.Nd2 e5 16.Bc2**

This is a rare move. My idea is to block Black's passers first, while keeping my center pawns at c4 and d4, denying the Black Knights good central outposts.

**16...Qc7 17.Ba4 Nb6 18.Bb5 a4!?**

A surprise! In my preparation I considered only the logical 18...Bc6. After the text it turns out that the black pawn is immune - 19.Bxa4 Nxa4 20.Rxa4 Qc6, winning.

**19.dxe5**

This moves is called for, as I need an escape square for B on b2.

**19...Nfd7 20.f4 Nc5 21.Bd4 b3**

The position is very complicated. White has an extra pawn and prepares to launch a pawn storm against the black King, while Black's passers are blocked thanks to the white Knight on d2 biting on b3. On the other hand, it is difficult to set up the mate, and the black pawns will sooner or later be set in motion. One has to understand that in the ensuing complications Black has an important trump - at some point he may be able to sacrifice some material and rely on the

power of the pawns. In fact, this is what actually occurs in the game. At this point I was very optimistic about my position, considering it nearly won, but detailed analysis proved that the objective assessment is "unclear".

**22.f5**

Maybe the most natural move, but perhaps White should not rush, because Black immediately begins to bother the weakened e5-pawn. Perhaps more sensible was to throw one more piece into the attack: 22.Qh5!?. However, I felt that f5-f6 must decide the game in just a few turns.

**22...Nbd7 23.f6 Nxe5**

The post mortem showed that this was a serious mistake. 23...g6 was an absolute must. Black can defend against any mating attempt with either Kh8-Rg8 or Ne6. The position would remain dynamically balanced. Now the white Queen enters the action.

**24.Qh5 Ned3 (the best defense) 25.Rf5 Rfd8**

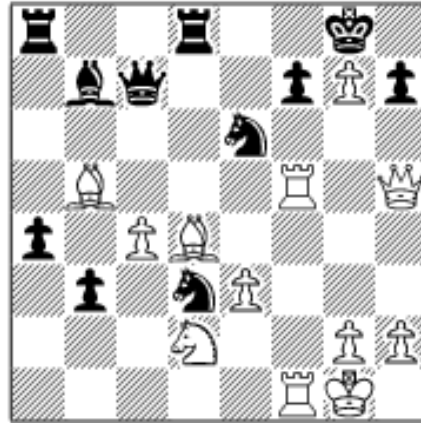
Black tries to use tactics to hold his rapidly deteriorating position. Here I calculated 26.Bxc5 Nxc5 27.Rxc5 Qb6 = or 27...Qd6 = and rejected the variation. However, I stopped just one step short. On 27...Qb6, there is the incredible interposition 28.Bc6!!, winning. And 27...Qd6 could be well met with 28.Rc7! Qe6 29.Qg5, with a won endgame. A finesse is that on 27...Qb6 White can not use this idea, as 28.Rc7 leads to mate in 6 after 28...Qxe3+, 29...Bxg2+! etc. However, the text is also not bad.

**26.Raf1 Ne6**

Also in this position White had a hidden winning resource: 27.Nf3!! The computer fails to find this quiet knight maneuver, but once this move is entered, the machine begins to appreciate human logic. I suggest you to

check the variations yourself (or refer to Chess Informant). However, I did not dive into the depths, being hypnotized by very simple plan - 27.fxg7, 28.Rxf7 and mate follows. How can Black resist such concentration of attacking power?

**27.fxg7**



**27...Ndf4!!**

I overlooked this amazing defensive resource, which had been planned far in advance by Arzumian. Well, not exactly defensive - counter-attacking! I correctly estimated that the white kingside power cannot be stopped without serious material losses – but I underestimated Black's counterplay afterwards.

Having received such a blow, I began to calculate, and – Oh, boy! - White's position appeared lost! I can't close the f-file because White's attack will vanish into thin air, and Black pawns will inevitably tell. Luckily, I finally managed to concentrate and found the only reply...

**28.R5xf4! Nxf4 29.Rxf4 Qxf4! (of course) 30.exf4 Rxd4**

The time control was 1½ hour + 30 sec per move, which did not help to maintain the integrity of the game. The main problem is that at some point players find themselves in permanent time trouble. It is a common situation - you calculate long or branching variations, but must make a move without finishing your calculations! Also understand that players must also keep the score, study the board, and you get a complete madhouse.

**31.Nb1!**

The best move. On 31.Qe2 the simplest is 31...Rxd2 32.Qxd2 a3. Black will have sacrificed half of his pieces, and his pawns will bring a deserved victory. I had other plans!

**31...a3 32.Nxa3 Rxa3 33.Qc5!**

This triple fork on two Rooks and one mate saves White.

**33...Rd1+ 34.Kf2 Ra2+ 35.Ke3 Ra8**

35...Kxg7 led to perpetual, which would be a good finale for this game. However, both players are in desperate time trouble, and Arzumian plays for a win.

### 36.Qb4 Rda1 37.c5 R1a3 38.c6

Apparently, both of us were on opposite sides of good and evil. Maybe we somehow picked correct moves, but without even minimal understanding of what was going on at the board.

### 38...b2+ 39.Kd4 Ba6 40.c7

And here the incident occurred. Georgy fell into calculating long drawing line, forgetting for a moment about his clock, and lost on time. However, the final position is indeed drawn. Here is one sample variation that we discovered in the post mortem: 40.c7 Bxb5 41.Qxb5 Rc8 42.Qxb2 Ra7= 43.f5 Raxc7 44.f6 Re8, and perpetual is inevitable.

This was a great game! A relatively new opening plan for White was introduced. Both players fought hard and uncorked very interesting moves, especially Black's stunning 27<sup>th</sup>. The tension lasted until well into the endgame. Besides, this game illustrated the main middlegame ideas of the Noteboom and I hope it was entertaining to follow. Frankly, after the game I felt sorry for my opponent, who had invested so much effort into it, and ended up losing on time in a drawn position. I would have preferred this game to end in a logical way. But it turned out differently... **1-0**



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