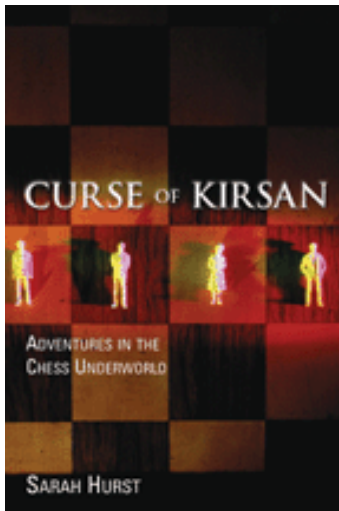




COLUMNISTS

Misha Interviews...

Misha Savinov

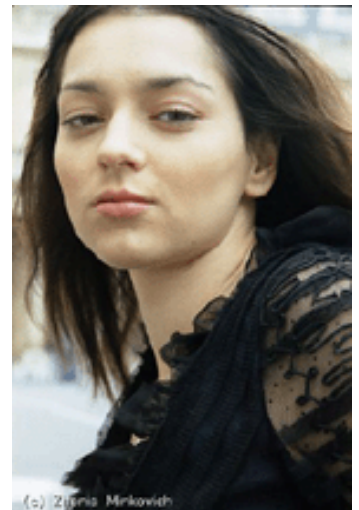


Interview with Alexandra Kosteniuk

Alexandra Kosteniuk is arguably the most famous Russian female chess player ever. She wrote an autobiography at the tender age of 17, and nearly became FIDE Women's World Champion in 2001. Anyway, I don't think there are people unaware of who she is and what her achievements are. Thus, skipping the biography section, let us proceed straight to the Q&A...

MS: Could you tell us about your participation in the women's world championship in Yekaterinburg?

AK: Of course, one could say that determining the world champion with a knock-out tournament is not very sensible. The knock-out is good for the spectator, but we are not just playing *a* tournament – it is the world championship! I'd prefer either a round-robin or a series of longer matches. And, of course, the time control has been cut, and I don't see any reason for it. TV is equally ignorant of 7-hour chess or 5-hour chess. Blitz is suitable for putting on a show, but for sporting reasons the classical control must be applied.



However, if I take part in the championship, I accept the rules of the game, even if the men's championship formula is more sensible. I am the kind of a person who needs to explain their defeats for definite reasons, and I played the third match very poorly, from a purely chess point of view.

MS: FIDE officials claimed that they discussed the time control with the players, and the participants voluntarily chose this shortened time limit.

AK: I am not aware of any discussions prior to the Yekaterinburg event. The time control issue was discussed at the European Cup, where the men preferred playing classical and the women went for the FIDE control. However, these tournaments are completely different.

In Yekaterinburg we played with 90 minutes for 40 moves, plus 15 minutes for the rest of the game, which just erases the endgame stage. I'd suggest

adding either an hour or 45 minutes after the 40th move.

When I played in first category tournaments, the time control was 90 minutes for 36 moves, plus 30 minutes for the rest of the game. And now it is being applied in the world championship. Mind you, we know a bit more now, and have more things to consider at the board.

MS: Were there psychological reasons for your performance?

AK: Of course, it was mixed with psychology, because I can hardly explain some of my choices now. The main conclusion I can make is that one just has to play stronger! More work, more studying – this should help. This is the only option for me; with the improved skill, one begins playing better automatically and makes better moves, even under pressure.

MS: Is winning the world championship your main motivation in chess?

AK: No, not at all! The most important thing for me is to learn to play better chess. There is vast room for improvement in many aspects of my play. When I play a game, I want my moves to be as close to perfect as possible. It is not that I don't want to become a world champion, but...

MS: But you want to win the championship, so to speak, in passing?

AK: Exactly. If I improve a lot, this will come naturally. So my primary task is working on my chess.

MS: Do you enjoy the process of playing?

AK: This is connected with the result: I can't say I enjoy the game if I lose.

MS: Of course, one's feelings after the game are determined by the outcome, but what about your feelings during the game?

AK: During chess tournaments, when I have an opportunity to play, all thoughts and doubts are left in the background. I see the pieces, I see the opponent, and everything is in my hands. The outcome depends on my own skill, and nothing interferes. If you are stronger at this particular moment, you win. I feel it during the game, and it inspires me. This is why I love chess. Generally, justice is very important to me in everyday life. In chess justice can be obtained, and this is wonderful.

MS: But can justice really be obtained in chess? The game often turns chaotic, when it can hardly be controlled.

AK: Well, this is a global question. Maybe our life is an illusion, who knows? For me there is more justice in chess than in everyday life. I've been

playing since the age of 5. Everything is simple – there is a board with 64 squares, a set of pieces, simple rules... Although, of course, I am not trying to hide from reality by playing chess: my life is broader than that.



MS: Is your mental approach different depending on whether you play classical, rapid or blitz chess?

AK: No, there is absolutely no difference. Some people are very surprised at how much time I devote to preparing for speed events, but if I do something, I do it responsibly.

MS: Would you take a draw in a drawn position, if it is possible to win on time in blitz?

AK: (Laughing) That is a delicate question. I am a sportsman, and the decision depends on the tournament. Maybe this is wrong, but I know that sometimes I'll play on in drawn positions, because time is an equally important part of a blitz game. In a training game or on the Internet, I will likely take a draw, if the opponent has not flagged me in a similar situation before.

I have often played in official blitz events, like the European championship or world championship, and before each tournament there was a discussion as to whether the normal blitz rules should be adjusted so that one could claim a draw in a dead drawn position. In Moscow blitz tournaments, a draw can be claimed in positions such as rook vs. rook without pawns. But the participants were always against it, saying “we are all professionals, we respect each other, this rule is completely unnecessary.” And then – playing in the last European blitz championship, I noticed that my competitors played on in drawn positions and flagged their opponents. I even had to blitz out about a hundred moves in an opposite-colored bishop ending. So,

naturally, in the next rounds I was ready to play like that myself, although generally I am a peaceful person.

MS: When was the last time that a move was taken back in one of your games?

AK: Hmm. When I was 13 or 14, I played in a blitz tournament, and I touched a piece, but then realized that any move loses. I got very upset, knowing that I must move it and lose the game. I sat for 3-4 minutes and then moved another piece. My opponent, without saying a word, just moved the piece back and pressed the clock. So I resigned.

MS: Can you understand Vladimir Malakhov, who allowed GM Azmaiparashvili to take a move back?

AK: Well, anything can happen. Thank God, there is much less injustice in chess than in figure skating or gymnastics. Yes, even in chess disputable moments occur. I would never “forgive” the opponent for violating the touch-move rule. However, you have to understand, that if there are no eye-witnesses, you can’t do anything about it! Sometimes I experienced such situations, and it is very annoying. Luckily, this has never happened to me in important tournaments, as happened to Judit Polgar in Linares!

MS: What other games do you play?

AK: It is not so much about games – I am devoted to sports in general. I am a very athletic person, and I like to participate in sports, as well as watch them on TV. It was very unfortunate that the Aeroflot Open coincided with the Winter Olympics this year, because I completely missed the skiing, and biathlon, etc. I like running, and I am ready to play football on occasion. However, watching football is less fun. It is actually a bit annoying to turn on the TV and see a casual game of the Russian Premier League – why should it be more spectacular than chess? It is insulting.



MS: Has the prominence of chess increased or decreased?

AK: Chess was extremely popular in the USSR, and it is impossible to maintain such a high status over time. Chess has declined very much, but life flows in cycles and, as I am an optimist, I think we are on the rise. I always take the opportunity to do something for chess.

MS: You have just returned from Italy, correct?

AK: Yes. Italy is organizing the Chess Olympiad, and they are trying to draw attention to chess. Of course, it is difficult in a country that is crazy

about football, but... They need events that can be noticed. Organizing a tournament here and there is good for chess players, but general publicity is attained in a different way. I was giving a simul at the central square of Frascati (a town near Rome) as a part of the Frascati chess festival. Anatoly Karpov was also invited.

MS: You are the only person representing chess in the world of advertising. What does this demand?

AK: It is really difficult. Chess is not so popular, and one has to prove that a chess player can make a profit by advertising something. It is not charity; it has to be profitable for both sides. This is a very difficult task. However, I think it worth the effort, because any word about chess helps promote the game.

MS: Do you have an agent?

AK: My father takes care of it in Russia and my husband, Diego, usually handles the negotiations in other countries.

MS: Do people recognize you on the street?

AK: Fortunately, no.

MS: What do you think should be the preferred method of funding chess?

AK: It would be great if chess could become an Olympic sport. Then it would be recognized as a sport worldwide, and fundraising would be much easier. Unfortunately, it is not realistic right now. We were close in 1998-99, but something went wrong.

The chess world is very esoteric. We need to make the general public aware of chess events, and little is done in this direction. Also, the idea of including chess into the school curriculum is very promising. Broadening the base of people who understand chess is required, and this can only be achieved through school education.

MS: Do you think FIDE is doing anything in this direction?

AK: I know that there is a Chess Education Committee in FIDE, so they are probably doing something, but it is clearly too little, as we never hear much about them. As for working with media, advertising chess events, improving image of chess – these issues are completely forgotten! Contacting major TV channels and newspapers should be the responsibility of FIDE! It is what sports federations are made for.

MS: Do you think women's chess and men's chess should co-exist?

AK: Yes, I think so. I consider chess a sport, and men are simply physically stronger, which is less important in chess, but I have no doubt that it has an affect.

If you look at the rating list, you can see that men's ratings are increasing, and I thought the same of women's ratings. But Diego conducted a small study, and to my surprise he found that only the top 10 on the women's list experience a rating increase. I am now number 3 with a rating of 2540; however, this is rather meaningless. It is the ability to maintain a certain level over time that is important.

MS: FIDE used an average rating over a certain period of time for qualification purposes, and this led to some injustices; for instance, when Vassily Ivanchuk failed to qualify...

AK: Ratings only mattered for San Luis, since then everyone has a chance at qualification. Of course, when using a single criterion one can't avoid injustices. It all should be balanced, and critical decisions have to be more (*pause*) logical.

MS: Do women play chess differently than men? Many people insist that women play more combatively.

AK: This is explained by the limited number of tournaments. Women just have fewer opportunities to play, so they are more excited about playing. It is a great pity that women's chess is practically neglected. Men's chess gets at least some mention in the mass media, but women's chess is almost forgotten. This is also a problem.

MS: Did you sense any respect from the male players at the Aeroflot Open, when you played the whole tournament in the +1 group? Or was their attitude more like, "finally I have an easy pairing"?

AK: I don't think anyone underestimated me in such a way; however, true respect can only come from consistent results. What I sensed was their perplexity. And I need to work hard to prove that this place belongs to me! This is my real level of skill! Then my +1 in the Aeroflot will be taken for granted.



MS: How did you come to have a role in the movie *Bless the Woman* by Stanislav Govorukhin. What were your impressions about the movie and the moviemaking process?

AK: It was very interesting. I spend plenty of time working on chess, so it is always exciting to try something else.

There was a VIP blitz tournament in Dagomys, in which Govorukhin took part (the famous director, who plays at 1st category strength, is also a Deputy of Russian State Duma – MS), and I was there for a national team training session. We met, and he said that he is looking for a girl for his next film. He asked me whether I might be interested, and I said yes.

Then in a few days his assistant called and invited me to read the screenplay, and come to an audition. I read it and I liked it. There are differing opinions on the film, but I think it is very good for its genre – a melodrama about how a woman sacrifices everything for her husband. I think this is very Russian, very typical for Russians. Even in my own family, when my father served in the army, my mother always traveled with him.

I passed the audition, and the movie was filmed in Odessa; we worked for 10 hours a day. I never thought that film-making was such a slow and time-consuming process! It would take about 7 hours to set up the lighting, and then there was a lunch break, which only left about 2 hours for the actual filming. It did not feel like hard work compared to chess, where you have to concentrate for 7 hours, and every loss of concentration may result in a bad defeat... Of course, I enjoyed working with great actors like Inna Churikova. It was also a very revealing experience.

The premiere was really impressive! And, when I saw my name on the big screen, I forgot about everything! I was stunned, and overwhelmed with

feelings – now I understand what pleasure actors find in their profession. It was well worth the effort.

MS: Would you like to repeat it?

AK: I have no objections.

MS: Which role would you pick if you could choose?

AK: First of all, I'd like to have a leading role. My character is *(pause)* strange, very mixed, I think I could handle any genre, any kind of role.

MS: Could you possibly write a script for a chess movie?

AK: *(doubtfully)* Write a script?

MS: Or consult someone writing a script?

AK: Yes, I'd be glad to. Actually, when I tell the story of my life, people sometimes say it is actually a good script for a film! You don't even have to write anything... Well, if somebody plans on making a film about chess, I would be happy to help. I think chess gave me a great deal, and I am trying to repay it whenever I have the chance.



Alexandra Kosteniuk Annotates

Kosintseva, Tatiana (2486) - Kosteniuk, Alexandra (2492)

Russian Championship Superfinal Samara (9), 24.05.2005 [B51]

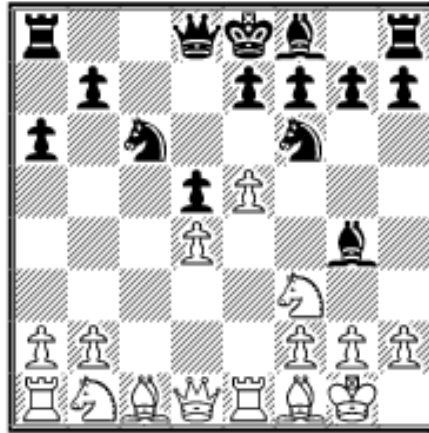
It was clear that the result of this game would decide the title of Russian Champion. Last year I played Tatiana in the fifth round, and lost with the white pieces, causing me to finish second in the tournament. This year our

game was played in the ninth round, and I was half a point behind Tatiana. Nevertheless, I didn't consider it a necessity to win; I was just going to give it a good fight until the end.

1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.Bb5 d6 4.0-0 Bd7 5.Re1 Nf6 6.c3 a6 7.Bf1 Bg4 8.d4 cxd4

In T. Kosintseva-Galliamova, at the 2004 European Championship, Black chose 8...Bf3?!, and White won convincingly in 21 moves.

9.cxd4 d5 10.e5



10...Ng8!?

This looks slightly provocative, but Black wants to play ...e7-e6 and bring her knight to f5, which would be an improved French Defense, with the bishop on g4 instead of c8.

11.Be3

White has also played 11.e6, trying to prevent Black's plan.

11...e6 12.a3 Nge7 13.Nbd2 Nf5 14.Bd3 Be7 15.Qb1 Qd7

Perhaps simpler was 15...Nxe3 16.fxe3 Bh5 with the idea ...Bg6.

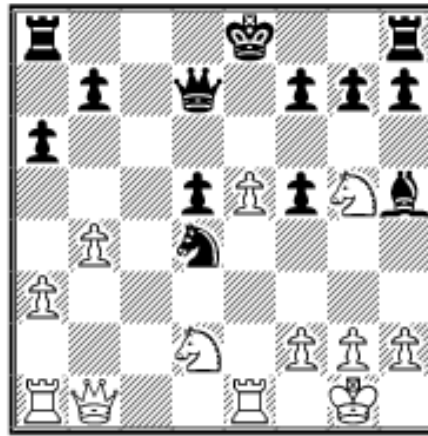
16.b4 Bh5

16...Nxe3 17.fxe3 (17.Rxe3) 17...Bh5 would have been interesting.

17.Bxf5!?

An intriguing novelty; in Morozevich-Petursson, London 1994, White played 17.Ra2?!.

17...exf5 18.Bg5 Bxg5 19.Nxg5 Nxd4

**20.Nb3!**

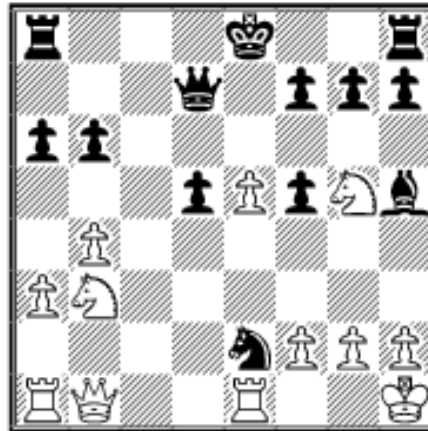
This was a total surprise to me. I only looked at the following variations:
 20.Qd3 Ne6 21.Qxf5 Bg6 22.Qg4 Nxc5
 23.Qxg5 0-0 with equality; 20.e6 Nxe6
 (20...fxe6 21.Qd3 h6 22.Qxd4 hxc5
 23.Nb3 with strong compensation for the
 two pawns) 21.Nxe6 (21.Qxf5 Bg6
 22.Qh3 0-0) 21...fxe6 22.Qxf5 Bf7
 23.Nf3 0-0 with equality.

20...Ne2+!?

After 20...Ne2+! 21.Qxf5 Bg6 22.Qg4; or 20...Nxb3 21.e6, White has an easy game and the advantage.

21.Kh1

Tatiana suggested 21.Rxe2 after the game, but Black should be able to defend with precise play: 21...Bxe2 22.Nd4 (22.e6 fxe6 23.Nd4 Bg4 24.Ngxe6 f4! a defense that saves Black in many variations) 22...Bg4 23.h3 (23.e6 fxe6 24.Ngxe6 f4 25.Nc5 Qe7) 23...Qe7 24.f4 h6.

21...b6?

A mistake, which could have been decisive if White had played precisely. It was necessary for Black to finish development with 21...0-0! 22.Nc5 (After 21...0-0, the move 22.g4 loses strength, as White doesn't have any more threats connected with e5-e6, since the king is no longer on e8: 22...Bxg4 23.f3 Bh5 24.Rxe2 h6) 22...Qc8 during the game I only looked at this move, but analysis shows it was not the only one.

a) 22...Qe7 23.Qxf5 Bg6 (23...g6 24.Qf6 Qxf6 25.exf6 with a better endgame for White 25...h6 (25...b6 26.Nd7 Rfe8 27.Nxb6 Rad8 28.f3 h6 29.Nh3 g5 30.Ng1 Nc3 31.Re7) 26.Nh3 b6 27.Nd7 Rfd8 28.Nxb6 Rab8 29.Na4) 24.Qg4 Nc3 25.e6 f6 26.Nh3 Ne4 27.Nxe4 (27.Rad1 Rad8 (27...Nxc5 28.bxc5 Qxc5 29.Nf4) 28.Nxe4 dxe4 29.Nf4 f5 30.Nxc5 hxc5 31.Qxc5 Rf6 32.Rxd8+ Qxd8=) 27...dxe4 28.Nf4 f5 29.Qg3 and White is better, but Black can defend. b) 22...Qd8 23.Qxf5 g6 24.Qf6 b6 25.Qxd8 (25.Nd3 h6 26.Nh3 Bg4 27.f3 Bxh3 28.Rxe2 Bf5 and Black isn't worse) 25...Rfxd8 26.Na4 b5 27.Nc5 h6 28.Nh3 g5 with equality; 23.f3 (23.e6!? this move leads to interesting and double-edged positions with mutual chances 23...fxe6 24.Qb2!?) a) 24.Ngxe6 Rf6 25.Ng5 h6 26.Nh3

(26.Nf3 Bxf3 27.gxf3 Nf4) 26...b6 27.Nd3 f4 and Black is attacking. **b)** 24.Qd3 Rf6 25.Rxe2 transposes to 24.Qb2; 24...Rf6 25.f3 **a)** 25.g4 Bxg4 26.f3 Nf4 27.fxg4 h6 and White's cavalry isn't stronger than Black's infantry. **b)** 25.Qe5 b6 26.Ncxe6 h6 27.f3 (27.Nc7 hxg5 28.Qxd5+ Kh7 29.Nxa8 Qb8 with more than enough compensation) 27...hxg5 28.Rxe2 Qc4 and Black is better. **c)** 25.Rxe2 Bxe2 26.Qxe2 b6 27.Nd3 Qc3 (27...h6 28.Rc1 Qe8 29.Nf3 Rc8) 28.Rc1 Qxa3 29.Qd1 Black's position seems defenseless, but Black can find counterplay with (29.Rc7 e5 30.Qh5 h6) 29...a5 30.Nf4 axb4 31.Ngxe6 b3 32.Nc7 b2 33.Qxd5+ Kh8; 25...Nf4 26.Rac1 White's initiative seems very dangerous, but there are no concrete threats and, with ...h6 and ...b6, Black threatens to repel White and start counterattacking 26...Qe8 27.Qd4 b6 28.Qxf4 bxc5 29.Rxc5 h6 30.Nh3 Rc8) 23...Nf4 (also interesting is 23...b6 24.e6 bxc5 25.Qxf5 Bg6 26.exf7+ Kh8 (26...Rxf7!? 27.Qxc8+ Rxc8 28.Nxf7 Kxf7 29.Rxe2 c4 30.Rd2 Ke6) 27.Qxc8 Raxc8 28.Rxe2 c4 29.Rd2 c3 30.Rxd5 h6 31.Ne4 Bxe4 32.fxe4 Rxf7) 24.Rc1 I didn't play 21...0-0 because of this position, not noticing that I can play 24...Ne2 and White probably has nothing better than a repetition of moves 25.Re1 Nf4=.

22.g4?

Having spent almost all her time, White chooses the worst continuation, which gives Black counterplay. White could have punished Black's imprecision with 22.Qd3!, during the game I was most afraid of this move. 22...Nf4 (22...Qb5 23.Qxf5 Bg6 (23...0-0?? 24.Qxh7#) 24.Qf3) 23.Qe3 Ne6 (23...h6 24.e6 fxe6 25.Qxf4 hxg5 26.Qxf5 Bf7 27.Nd4±) 24.Nxe6 fxe6 25.Qxb6±; 22.e6 fxe6 23.f3 (23.Qb2 h6) 23...Nf4 24.Qxf5 Rf8 25.Qe5 with advantage; 22.Qb2!? Nf4 23.e6 fxe6 24.Qd4 h6 25.Qxf4 hxg5 26.Qxf5 transposes to the variation above.

22...Bxg4 23.f3 Nc3

During the game I was very happy with my position, but it's not that simple. The game is very sharp and complicated, and the price of each move is very high.

24.Qc1?



After this move the initiative goes to Black. With 24.Qd3! the position would have stayed unclear. I wanted to play 24...Ne4, but then follows 25.fxe4 fxe4 26.Qg3 and I can't play 26...h6? because of **a)** 26...0-0? 27.Rg1 with attack; **b)** So Black has to play 26...Qf5, but still faces difficulties: 27.h4 Qg6 and now: **b1)** 27...Bh5? 28.Rf1 Qg6 29.Rxf7 h6 30.Qh3 Rd8 31.Rf6 gxf6 32.Qe6+ Kf8 33.Rf1 hxg5 34.Rxf6+ Qf7 35.Qxb6 Re8 36.Nc5; **b2)** 27...h6 28.Rf1 hxg5

(28...Qg6 29.Nxf7 0-0 30.Nd6) 29.Rxf5 Rxh4+ 30.Kg2 Bxf5 31.Qe3 Rc8 32.Nd4 and Black doesn't have enough compensation for the sacrificed queen; 28.Nd4 (28.Qxg4 h6 29.Rac1 hxg5 30.Rc8+) 28...Bd7 with unclear play, although I prefer White's position; 27.e6 Bxe6 (27...fxe6 28.Nxe4+—) 28.Nxe6 Qxe6 29.Qxg7 with a decisive advantage; 24.Qc2?! Rc8 (24...Bxf3+ 25.Nxf3 Ne4) 25.Qd3 Ne4 (25...d4 26.e6 Qd5 27.exf7+ Kd7) 26.fxe4 fxe4 27.Qg3 is similar to the variation with 24.Qd3, but with an extra tempo for Black: 27...h6? 28.e6 Bxe6 29.Nxe6.

24...d4 25.e6 fxe6 26.Qf4

Obviously not 26.Rxe6+?? because of 26...Qxe6 27.Nxe6 Bxf3+ 28.Kg1 Ne2+ 29.Kf2 Nxc1—+.

26...0-0 27.Nxd4 Bh5 28.Qh4?

Probably the decisive mistake; White should have preferred 28.Ndx6 Rf6 29.Rac1 and now: **a)** 29.Qc4? Rc8 30.Nc5+ Qd5 31.Qxc3 bxc5; **b)** 29.Qe5 Qc6 (29...Rxe6 30.Qxe6+ Qxe6 31.Nxe6 Bxf3+ 32.Kg1 Rc8) 30.Rac1 Bxf3+ 31.Kg1 Ne2+ 32.Qxe2 Qxc1 33.Nxf3 Qxa3 (33...Qc3) 34.Qg2 Ra7 with unclear play; 29...Rc8 30.Qe5 h6 31.Rxc3 Rxc3 32.Qxc3 hxg5 33.Nxg5 Rc6 34.Qe5 with equality.

28...Rf6!

A very precise move; after 28...Bg6 29.Rxe6 Rf6 30.Rxf6 gxf6 31.Nge6, the position would have remained unclear.

29.Ndx6?

Another time pressure mistake; but 29.Rac1 Nd5 would still give Black an advantage.

29...h6!

One more precise move, which nearly ends White's resistance.

30.Qxh5 hxg5 31.Nxg7 Qxg7

In severe zeitnot White plays some more moves before stopping the clock.

**32.Re8+ Rxe8 33.Qxe8+ Rf8 34.Qe6+ Kh7 35.Re1 Qf6 36.Qd7+ Rf7
37.Qe8 Nd5 0-1**

Matveeva, Svetlana (2423) - Kosteniuk, Alexandra (2492)

Russian Championship Superfinal Samara (6), 20.05.2005 [D17]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 Nf6 4.Nf3 dxc4

This was the first time that I played this variation.

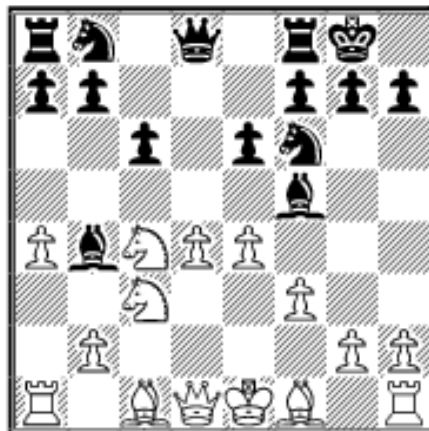
5.a4 Bf5 6.Ne5 e6 7.Nxc4

Svetlana told me after the game that she just mixed up variations. The most popular continuation here is 7.f3 Bb4 8.e4 Bxe4 9.fxe4 Nxe4 10.Bd2 Qxd4 11.Nxe4 Qxe4+ 12.Qe2 Bxd2+ 13.Kxd2 Qd5+, when Black has 2-4 pawns for a piece, and often a very interesting and unusual ending (3 pawns vs. K/B) can be seen.

7...Bb4 8.f3 0-0

I spent a lot of time calculating 8...Nd5 9.Bd2 (White can even play 9.Qd2 with the idea of e4) 9...Qh4+ 10.g3 Qxd4 11.e3 Qf6 (11...Qc5 12.e4 unclear) 12.e4 Nxc3. But the move that I didn't see during the game, 13.Qb3!, led to a quick win in Mikenas-Feigin, Kemeru 1939: 13...Nxe4 14.Bxb4 Qd4 15.fxe4 Qxe4+ 16.Kf2 Qxh1 17.Nd6+ Kd7 18.Nxf5 Rd8 19.Be7 Na6 20.Qxb7+ Nc7 21.Rd1+ 1-0.

9.e4?!



Now Black gets the initiative and a very serious attack by sacrificing a piece for 3 pawns. The most popular move here is 9.Bg5, when 9...h6 10.Bh4 c5 11.dxc5 Qxd1+ 12.Rxd1 Bc2 13.Rc1 Bxa4 14.Bxf6 gxf6 15.Ra1 Bb3 16.Nb6 Nc6 17.Nxa8 Rxa8 gives compensation for the exchange with very interesting and complicated play.

**9...Nxe4 10.fxe4 Qh4+ 11.Kd2 Qxe4
12.Qf3 Qxd4+ 13.Ke1 Nd7 14.Bf4**

14.Qe3 e5 15.Bd2 Rfe8 16.Nd1 Bxd2+ 17.Nxd2 Rad8.

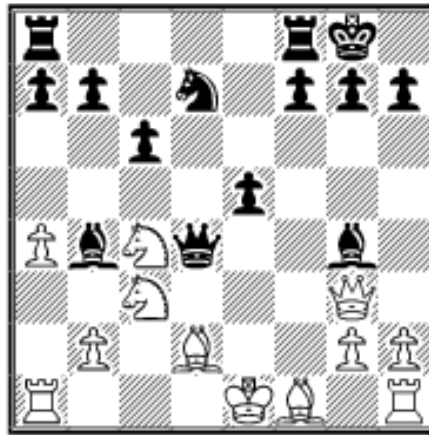
14...e5

14...Nc5 was seen in Tukmakov-Shamkovich, Kiev 1969; 14...Bg4!? was also very interesting and strong 15.Qg3 (with his bishop on f4 White cannot play 15.Qe3? e5 16.Bg5 (16.Bg3 b5-+) 16...f6 17.Bh4 b5-/+)) 15...Rad8 (15...e5 16.Be3 Bxc3+ 17.Kf2 Nf6! 18.bxc3 (18.Kg1 Bxb2 19.Rb1 (19.Ra2 Ne4 20.Qxg4 Bc3 with the idea of f5 and a strong attack) 19...Nd5 20.Rxb2 Nxe3 21.Qxe3 Rab8 22.Qxd4 exd4 with a better ending for Black) 18...Ne4+ 19.Kg1 Nxg3 20.cxd4 Nxh1 21.dxe5 b6 22.Kxh1=) 16.Bg5 Nf6 17.Qe3 e5 18.Bxf6 gxf6 19.Be2 (19.Kf2 Be6 20.Qxd4 Rxd4 21.Ne3 Rd2+ 22.Be2 f5 Black is better) 19...Bxe2 20.Qxe2 b5 21.axb5 cxb5 22.Nd2 Bxc3 23.bxc3 Qxc3 Black is better.

15.Bd2

15.Be3!? Bxc3+ 16.Kf2 Qh4+ 17.g3 Qf6 18.bxc3 Qg6 19.Bg2 Bg4 20.Qe4 f5 21.Qb1 f4, as in Plachkinova-Velcheva, Cutro 2000; 15.Bg5 Bg4 16.Qg3 (16.Qe3 f6 17.Bh4 b5-/+)) 16...f5 17.Rc1 Nc5 18.Nd2 (18.Be3 Nd3+ 19.Bxd3 Qxd3 20.Kf2 Bxc3 21.bxc3 Qe2+ 22.Kg1 f4-+) 18...Rad8! with an attack.

15...Bg4 16.Qg3?



The decisive mistake. White had to play 16.Qe3, when I planned 16...Rfe8, and White has to be very careful, whereas Black plays practically without risk: 17.Nd1 (17.Be2? Bxe2 18.Qxd4 exd4 19.Nxe2 d3 20.Bxb4 Rxe2+ 21.Kd1 Re4 22.b3 b5-+; 17.Ne4? Bxd2+ 18.Nexd2 b5; 17.Kf2 Bc5 18.Qxd4 exd4 19.Na2 d3+ 20.Kg3 Be2 21.Nc3 Nf6) 17...Bc5 (17...Bxd2+ 18.Nxd2 Rad8 19.Qxd4 exd4+ 20.Kf2 Ne5 Black is better) 18.Qxd4 exd4+ 19.Kf2 Nf6 20.Bd3

Ne4+ 21.Bxe4 Rxe4 Black is better.

16...Nc5 17.Rc1 Rad8!

White hoped for 17...Nb3 18.Be3, but even here White is in big trouble: 18...Qe4 19.Qxe5 Qg6.

18.Be3 Bxc3+ 0-1

And, after 19.bc Qd1 20.Rd1 Rd1 21.Kf2 Ne4 22.Kg1 Ng3 23.hg Be2 24.Nd2, Black can choose between 24...Rfd8 25.Kf2 Rdd2 26.Bd2 Bf1

27.Be3 Be2 or 25...Bf1 26.Nf1 (26.Rf1 Rdd2) 26...Ra1 winning in both variations. I was now in clear first place with five rounds to go.



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