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Many ChessCafe readers remember grandmaster Alexander Baburin when he first penned the Checkpoint column. He went on to found the daily electronic chess journal, Chess Today. We recently had the pleasure of interviewing Alex; it was fitting that it took place as a series of email exchanges. We hope you enjoy our...



Interview with Alex Baburin

by Hanon W. Russell

Hanon W. Russell: Where and when were you born?

Alex Baburin: I was born in 1967 in Gorky, Russia. Now that city is called Nizhniy Novgorod, which is its original name. It is a nice old city, located about 450 km east of Moscow. It is probably Russia's third largest city after Moscow and St. Petersburg.

(HWR) Tell us about your family, your mother, father and any siblings.

(AB) Both my parents are workers, so I am from a proletarian family, which is not very common among professional chess players from the former USSR. My mother worked at a shoe factory, while my father worked at a radio-equipment plant. I have no brothers or sisters – my mother had a serious heart condition, so she was advised against having any children. I am glad she took her chances! Perhaps being a single child was one of the reasons I got seriously hooked on chess – my parents worked and I looked for ways to amuse myself.

(HWR) When did you learn how to play chess?

(AB) I was 7 or 8 when my father taught me chess. We played often and I guess I was getting better at it. Then a woman came to our school and started a chess club, which I joined. I enjoyed playing there and soon became too good at chess for my dad. That woman – Ideya Blagonadezhnaya – became my coach and I am very grateful for all the help and encouragement she gave me over the years. Her husband – GM Oleg Chernikov – also influenced my chess a lot. We stay in touch still.

(HWR) Please describe some of your earlier chess-playing experiences.

(AB) I was always very competitive and hated to lose. Also, I was (still am?) a perfectionist and hated to play badly and spoil my chances. I still remember one game, where I had a big advantage, but only drew. I got so cross with myself that I came home and told me parents not to mind me for while, if I did not speak – I was too obsessed with that game... Maybe that was a bit extreme, but this search for perfection is certainly useful. I still have a desire to get deep into positions. I remember a game that I lost in 1996 to GM Korneev. I played an interesting idea in the opening, sacrificing a piece. I got four pawns for it, but lost. That night I did not go to bed till about 5 in the morning, but found where I went wrong. Basically, my opening idea was good, but the execution was poor.

My first game vs. Ivanchuk (sometime in 1984) was interesting. He was already a stronger player then. At some point in the opening he attacked one of my pawns. There were many possible defenses, but somehow all would lose that pawn a few moves later. I was so amused that I spent 1 hour 50 minutes on my next move (we played something like 45 moves in 2h 30m) – sheer madness! Poor Vasily was so bored... I sacrificed that pawn and was unlucky not to win the game because of my time-trouble. Nowadays I would have made this decision much faster – in 10-15 minutes.

When I was a teenager, I once had a game against a local master that lasted for about 140 moves – I was squeezing an extra pawn in a queen ending. It took several adjournments and about 15 hours of play. My longest game without adjournment went on for 126 moves and took over 12 hours. It was the last round of an open tournament in Hungary and I had two bishops and a knight vs. bishop and knight (no pawns). Many thought that I was mad to try to win it so hard, but I did win.

(HWR) When did you achieve the rank of master? International master? Grandmaster?

(AB) I had a slow start. When I was 15, I finished 2nd in the Russian (not USSR!) junior championship, which was something, but then I did not get too many chances to play in strong events. For young chess players in the USSR, living outside of Russia could be of advantage – juniors developed faster in Latvia, Georgia, Byelorussia, etc. I had to go through qualifying tournaments in Russia, which was tough. Not that it bothered me too much – I played basketball, was pretty good in school and did not really think that I would be a chess professional. I became a master when I was 21 – nowadays most juniors think of retiring at this age!

Getting the IM title was easier. Fortunately, around 1989 it became easier to play abroad in the Eastern European countries. I made 3 IM norms in the first 3 international tournaments where I played (Bulgaria and Hungary). Then in my first GM tournament (Budapest, 1991) I made a GM-norm very confidently. In early 1992 I missed the second (which would be also the final) norm by a half-point and than norms eluded me completely. In 1993 I was one of the highest rated IMs in the world with 2550. Only in 1996 did I become a grandmaster.

(HWR) Please describe the influences on your play. Have they always been the

same? Did those players who influenced you change as you progressed from master to IM to GM?

(AB) When I was a junior, I appreciated most solid positional play, so players like Botvinnik and Portisch were my favorites. Also Fischer and Karpov. As I developed, I started to appreciate other styles too. I am pretty universal in my chess tastes now – I can look at games of any player, as long as they are interesting. I enjoy reading game collections and annotated games in magazines, usually without the board. Today it could be Smyslov and Tal, tomorrow Kasparov or Korchnoi – they are all great and worth looking at.

(HWR) How would you best describe your style of play?

(AB) Mostly boring, but sometimes I play interesting games too. I try to play according to the position, but I prefer clear plans and endgame to wild complications.

(HWR) Please tell us about your wife and children.

(AB) My wife Elena comes from my city and we met there. She graduated in physics, but in Ireland it is hard to find work in this field, so she is currently trying to find a suitable occupation. Elena can play chess – her grandfather was a keen player and taught her. She has seen many chess players and I suspect that she believes that most of us are a bit mad! Well, sometimes I can agree with that...

We have two kids – Ivan (12) and Anastasia (7). Ivan plays chess a bit, but does not take it too seriously – he certainly won't lose sleep over it! I never pushed him – if he wanted help with chess, I would give it. Only recently I started to show him some chess stuff and his game improved. But still he is far more interested in computer games. Ivan is also into encyclopedias – he has a very



good memory. Like me, he plays basketball, so we often play together. Anastasia knows how pieces move, but you don't want to know what she thinks of chess players! :-) She swims and does ballet, which, along with fighting with her brother, keeps her busy. *Photo: Like father, like son? Alex teaches his son Ivan.*

(HWR) What are your hobbies? What do you like to do when you are not playing chess? Favorite (non-chess) authors, films?

(AB) When I was a kid, I took swimming seriously and I still like to swim once in a while. Sometimes I play basketball too – we have a pretty good group of players here, very international – three Americans, a couple of Canadians, two Italians, some Irish. We meet once a week. This is as far as sport is concerned. As for other hobbies, I am not original – I like to read, listen to music, watch movies and meet with friends. I have many friends both in Dublin and back in Russia. Among

chess players I have many friends too and nowadays this one of the main reasons why I play in tournaments – not to show the latest novelty in the Alekhine Defense! One of my current hobbies is backgammon. I often play it with my friend IM Mark Heidenfeld, but I know that have a long way to go before I become any good at this game.

When it comes to music, movies and literature, again, like in chess, my tastes are pretty universal – I like broad spectrum. For example, I like Dostoevsky (particularly ‘Besy’!), but equally enjoy some modern Russian authors like Pelevin. My favorite book is probably *Master and Margarita* by Bulgakov. Montagne is also one of my favorite authors.

There are many great films. Because I was brought up in Russia, many of the western films were simply unknown to me. So, about a year ago I asked my friend John Donaldson to name 10 of his favorite films and later asked some other people the same question. Then I started getting those films – like *Citizen Kane*, *Third Man*, *Casablanca*, etc. They are great and I still look out for such films – like *Easy Rider* and *Deer Hunter*, which I saw recently. Some Russian films are very good too. I’d have difficulties choosing one favorite film, but if I must, it would be *Some Like It Hot*. Jack Nicholson is my favorite actor.

(HWR) What are your favorite sites on the web?

(AB) I don’t follow much apart from chess on the Web, so I’ll be talking about chess sites. TWIC is my favorite site – I visit it every week. Usually to download latest games, but sometimes I read news there too. **ChessCafe.com** is another place, which I visit regularly – probably 1-2 times a months, mostly to read articles. When my friend Tony Miles wrote for **ChessCafe.com**, I did not miss a single article by him! Sometimes I go to KasparovChess. There I tend to read about tournaments and watch commentary, usually by GM Shipov. ChessBase is another site – they used to have online calendar (with players’ birthdays, etc), which was helpful. Lately I became a frequent visitor to ICC – mainly to give online lessons, but sometimes I watch games in real time too. Other chess sites I visit sporadically, when something draws my attention to them.

(HWR) When did you leave Russia and why did you decide to emigrate to Ireland?

(AB) In 1993. While playing in France earlier that year, I met an Irish chess player named Eamon Keogh. He invited me to come and play in Dublin at Easter and later I got a work contract there for a year, teaching chess. My wife and son (who was just 3 then) came with me. It was supposed to be just one year abroad – to see another country and a different culture. But while people make their plans, life goes its own strange way – I’ve been living in Dublin for almost 9 years now. As my parents live in Russia, I try to go there often and make sure that my kids spend the summer there.

(HWR) What differences have you noticed, both in chess and life in general, in Russia since you left?

(AB) Chess used to be a prestigious occupation in Russia, at least till the late 80s. Not any more. On one hand there is more choice before young people in Russia now (which is a great thing!), while on the other hand chess does not pay well – this is something quite important in the country, which is ‘building’ capitalism. Still, chess is respected enough there. As for life in general, it became much tougher and faster – the border between success and failure and wealth and poverty became very thin. Russia now is a very exiting place to live in, but it could be very unforgiving, particularly if you are vulnerable or old...

(HWR) How do you like living in Ireland?

(AB) I guess I was lucky that I came to Ireland and not another country. While I am highly adoptive, it was certainly easier to settle in Ireland than somewhere else in Europe – Irish people are very open and friendly. It is also a children-friendly country, with a decent educational system. Ireland is truly beautiful, though I still have much to explore here. The Irish culture is rather different to the Russian one (I am no fan of pubs, which are way too noisy to my taste!), but I made good friends here. Chess-wise it was not too easy to settle – while there is little competition, there is also a very limited market for my services. Still, over time I got some students and a weekly column in one of Ireland’s main newspapers. I also sell chess books and equipment. Recently I started teaching chess in schools and this year I hope to turn it into successful business, as there is much interest in chess here among kids.

(HWR) What do you consider to be the best game you have played?

(AB) I honestly can’t say that I am very excited about any of my games. I have played a number of reasonable games, but nothing world class. Perhaps my win over Lesiege in Bermuda in 1998 will pass as my best game, though I am not mad about it – perhaps it’s better to show a few games which I think are OK.

(HWR) Your best tournament?

(AB) That is easy to call – the Monarch Assurance Open in the Isle of Man in 1997. I scored 8 out of 9, 1½ ahead of second place, and showed something like a 2825 performance.

(HWR) Your worst tournament?

(AB) It must be the closed tournament in Gausdal, Norway in 1993. I played really badly and lost about 20 rating points there.

(HWR) Who are your favorite chess authors?

(AB) My favorite genre is game collections. There I like Tal for his humor and sharpness, Bronstein for his originality, Smyslov for his clarity and laconism. Perhaps these three are my current favorites, but there are many more: Larsen is great and Gligoric is very interesting. You can’t omit Fischer, Karpov, Timman or Kasparov. And then there are Kramnik and Shirov. Recent game collections by Korchnoi are simply fantastic! Nowadays I always read Morozevich’s notes in

chess magazines – he is pretty witty. For the same reason I never missed notes by my friend Tony Miles – it was such a joy to read!

As for other types of chess books, Watson, Silman, Rowson and many others are interesting and chess good writers.

(HWR) At one point you were part of Morozevich's analytical team. Tell us about that please.

(AB) I was his manager from May 2000 till October 2001. My job was to deal with chess organizers, arrange playing schedules and training processes for Alexander Morozevich. I went with him to many tournaments: Sarajevo, Frankfurt and New Delhi in 2001, Wijk aan Zee and Dortmund in 2002. At all of those events I also worked as his second. While preparing his opening repertoire was not really my job, of course we analyzed openings too and discussed what would be best for him to play. All of that was very interesting and I learned a great deal from Morozevich. While most chess fans regard him just as great attacking player with extravagant opening ideas, in fact Morozevich is a very deep strategist and chess thinker, who is also very good at the endgame. Of course, he has some chess and psychological faults as well, which prevent him from getting even more successful in chess. I guess I was reasonably successful in my job as during that period Morozevich was No. 4-5 in the world. Working very close with someone often requires close personal ties and till October last I thought that we were friends. It turned out that was wrong there, but I still remember fondly our mutual work in 2000-2001. Maybe I will work as a chess manager again when a suitable candidate approaches me.

(HWR) Tell us about the creative process leading up to the concept and writing of your book *Winning Pawn Structures*. How long did it take you to write?

(AB) Shortly after I came to Ireland, I met a man called Michael Crowe. He worked as a chess coach and at first we talked mostly about chess. But soon we became close friends. Michael taught me a lot about living in the West. Writing a book was his idea – he said that if I had anything to say, I should do so. I always had interest in various pawn structures and patterns, so I decided to give it a go. But I guess I would really prefer writing about some players – human decision-making interests me much more than pawn skeletons. Anyway, the start was good and I am proud of WPS. Except I hate the title, which is a bit misleading – the book deals with 5-6 structures at most, all revolving around the isolated d-pawn. I tried to get it changed, but the publisher insisted...

It took too long to write the book – between 2 and 3 years – I am not the most disciplined worker. I need real interest in something I do and chess life provides many distractions.

(HWR) How did the idea of publishing a daily electronic chess journal come about? When did you first conceive of this kind of journal? Who is on the regular staff?

(AB) This has a lot to do with flying. When I am on the plane, ideas just come to

my mind. It could be the altitude, it could be the idleness, but most likely it is caused by free alcohol. So, it was the summer of 2000 and I was flying to Copenhagen where I was going to give a chess seminar. During the trip I thought that there was enough material to write about chess every day. Yet, I had a weekly column and a pretty small one too. As I could not see which paper would possibly publish my chess stuff on a daily basis, I decide to start my own! Quickly I figured out the details: it could not be free, but had to be inexpensive. It should not be too long and ideally should both entertain and educate. I thought of the format and decided that PDF was best for the purpose – it allows you to see diagrams and figurines even if one does not have the same fonts on his machine. Most people use some chess software, so PGN and CBV were quickly added.



There was (and still is!) a lot of free and very good chess stuff on the Net, so *Chess Today* had to offer something unique. It could not be just chess news – you simply can't beat TWIC at that! But not many sites gave current annotated games, so that had to be our selling point. And this is where *Chess Today* is ahead of the field now. Of course, Kasparov Chess has many good

annotated games, but to access them you need to go to their web site, while Chess Today comes to your mail-box effortlessly. All the reader needs to do is to open the file and click 'Print'. Many read *Chess Today* on their way to work, during coffee breaks, etc. It seems that the format suits most people and we have very high percentage of subscription renewals – over 90%. *Photo: The Baburins in Turkey.*

The editorial team grew with the newspaper: Tim Harding helped with editing in the early days, then Jimmy Adams (editor of *Chess Monthly*) recommended Graham Brown (UK). Graham has done most of the editing, but I was also fortunate to link with Ralph Marconi (Canada), our second editor.

As for journalists, I started alone, during the Istanbul Chess Olympiad, while I was also playing. That was tough, but once I managed that, I knew I could produce *Chess Today* daily. However, I needed help, as writing for it every day would be the shortest way to a mental asylum. So, I asked IM Vladimir Barsky to join me. He is a professional chess journalist. Then GM Ruslan Scherbakov started writing for my paper. I knew both since we were teenagers. At some point GM Mikhail Golubev and IM Maxim Notkin joined the team. Both are excellent journalists, so *Chess Today* has a very strong panel. It is likely that more people will write for us soon – the paper is growing and I want to diversify the content. What we really need is more readers! I'd like to take this opportunity to invite ChessCafe readers to visit our Web site – www.chesstoday.net, where you can find sample issues and read what others say about *Chess Today*. Subscriptions rates are currently \$19, \$25 and \$44 for 4, 6 and 12 months respectively. I suspect that nobody reads every issue as it comes out, but every week you will get excellent material for study and enjoy.

(HWR) Please describe a typical day putting together and publishing an issue of *Chess Today*.

(AB) Nowadays I produce about one issue per week on average, usually at the weekend. It takes roughly three hours to put an issue together, which I do in the evening, when there are more games and news available. I create CBV and PGN files, as well as a Word file. Then I e-mail them to either Ralph or Graham, who edit the text, create PDF files and then send the final version to our mailing list. It is a team task that requires co-ordination and delegating of some duties. One important lesson which I have learned since I started *Chess Today* is that you



can't and shouldn't do everything alone – you need to trust and you can trust other people and their initiatives. I've seen it with the GM Square site too – all of my Web masters contributed more than I expected. Photo: *Liechtenstein 1992 – it was my first victory in the West (7½ out of 9 in the 1992 Liechtenstein Open). Karpov happened to be at the closing ceremony.*

As for my typical day, it could involve a lot of different things, most of which have something to do with chess: I teach in schools, give individual lessons in person and over the telephone, sell chess books and equipment, write articles for chess magazines and for my weekly in the Irish Sunday Independent, run online chess auction, etc. Those who are interested may find out more at www.gmsquare.com. Looking after *Chess Today* (corresponding with readers, fixing day-to-day problems, etc) also takes time.

(HWR) Which chessplayer, current or past, do you admire most?

(AB) Again, I can't choose just one – there are too many things to life. But here is my list: Lasker – for his diverse interests and durable career, Tal – for his love of the game and Kasparov – for his chess might.

(HWR) Which chessplayer, current or past, do you admire least?

(AB) You mean, as a person? Then Fischer – his interviews in the past few years make me sick.

(HWR) Since you have become a grandmaster, by whom do you believe your style of play has been most influenced?

(AB) I can't single out anyone – when somebody becomes grandmaster, he already has a pretty solid chess foundation. We all learn from each other.

(HWR) Since Kasparov and Short decided to play their title match outside the auspices of FIDE, there has been confusion (some would call it chaos) in and around the world championship. American GM Yasser Seirawan has recently made a comprehensive proposal regarding the championship. What is your

opinion of Yasser's proposal? Do you have any suggestions or proposals of your own to solve the championship "problem"?

(AB) I think Yasser's proposal is good for chess – our game needs professional organization, one world champion and clearly defined rules. No compromise is ever perfect (I mean Prague, where Anand and Ivanchuk, as well as some others, might be affected), but it is still better than chaos. I hope that professional chess will be united.

I have many questions for FIDE, which often acts incompetently. I have seen and have heard of many events when FIDE or its representative tried to rip off players – like giving them 'special' rates at hotels at world championships, European championships (both team and individual) and at junior events. If and when somebody tries to object, the organizers threatened to exclude that person or team from the event – sick... I heard that from 2004 chess players will have to pay for accommodations, etc. at Chess Olympiads. Again, instead of trying to attract sponsors, FIDE hopes to harvest however little money from the players themselves. It will result in fewer teams coming to this event, that's all. FIDE needs a team of professionals, but we are very long way away from it and I am not holding my breath.

(HWR) Despite the fact that Garry Kasparov continues to dominate tournament play, most chess players believe that Vladimir Kramnik is the world champion. Do you agree?

(AB) I regard Kramnik as the World Champion and Ponomarev as the FIDE Champion. I believe in tradition: each new World Champion defeats the previous one in a long match. OK, you can cite Hague-Moscow 1948, but that was also a very long event. I regret that things got messy after 1995. I understand those who feel that they should have a go at the World Champion title. I just don't believe that there are over 100 players capable of it. Most chess professionals need better structured events and more sponsorship, which (in the ideal world!) FIDE should help to attract and encourage.

I think that Garry is still the best player, while Vladimir holds the title. Ponomarev's achievement in Moscow in 2001 is very credible – he is already very strong and will get even better. Then you have Leko, who looked very convincing in Dortmund. Then Anand, Topalov, other players from top 10 and many promising youngsters – chess could be a great game to watch and follow – just define the rules better! I hope the Prague agreement will succeed.

(HWR) What are the personal goals and aspirations that you would like to achieve in the chess world?

(AB) I don't play much nowadays. I don't think that I can get close to 2700 or anything like that – you need a great talent to do that. As for playing in open tournaments it does not matter whether you have 2550 or 2650, there are a lot of players in this range who don't really work much on their chess, getting by on what they already know. This is certainly my case. You can't make living just playing in tournaments, so what's the point in studying the Najdorf for six hours a

day? This is one difference (apart from the talent) between the top 10-15 and the rest. So, when I play chess, I hope to visit new, interesting places, meet new people and the old friends and to play some interesting games – nothing more, nothing less. My ambitions are in chess publishing – I'd love to make *Chess Today* a success. I also hope to develop GM Square and start publishing chess books.

(HWR) What advice would you give to chessplayers who want to improve their game? Is a personal chess coach important?

(AB) Be critical towards your play, study and annotate your own games and learn what your weaknesses and strengths are. Make a program – when and what you will study, when and where you'll play. Get a decent library, but be choosy – no need to have tons of opening books. Some are essential, but you also need a few game collections, 2-3 endgame books and a few general works on chess. Subscribe to 1-2 chess magazines, follow chess on the Web. Get a good chess program with a decent database (my favorites are Chess Base 8 and Mega Database 2002). And don't forget to subscribe to *Chess Today!* :-) Try playing against stronger opposition. Review your progress from time to time, best with a coach. Having a personal coach can speed your chess development and in fact could set you on the right track. Sometimes we know little about some subject, sometimes we can't assess ourselves properly – this is where professional help is essential. Personally, when I work with someone, I see my role as a tutor – I may not teach you how to check mate with extra rook, but I will show you what your chess strengths and shortcomings are. In chess, like in any other field, there are good and bad trainers, so seek recommendations before you start with someone. Finally, don't forget that chess is for fun – travel, meet new people, make friends and enjoy life! Good luck!

Alex has kindly sent us a selection of his favorite games, include his nice win over Lesiege.

***Baburin-Shabalov* Leningrad 1989**

1. d4 f5 2. c4 Nf6 3. g3 g6 4. Bg2 Bg7 5. Nf3 O-O 6. O-O d6 7. Nc3 Qe8 8. b3 h6 9. Bb2 Na6 10. Re1 g5 11. a3 Qf7 12. e4 Nxe4 13. Nxe4 fxe4 14. Rxe4 Nc5 15. Re2 Bg4 16. Re3 Rae8 17. h3 Bh5 18. Qe2 e5 19. g4 e4 20. Nxc5 hxc5 21. dxc5 Bxb2 22. Qxb2 Bg6 23. cxd6 cxd6 24. Rd1 Re6 25. Rd2 Rf6 26. Bxe4 Bxe4 27. Rxe4 Rf3 28. Rde2 Qg6 29. Re7 R3f7 30. Rxf7 Qxf7 31. Qd4 Qf3 32. Re7 Rf7 33. Rxf7 Kxf7 34. Qd5+ Qxd5 35. cxd5 Kf6 36. h4 gxh4 37. f4 1-0

***Baburin-Fokin* URS-sf Russia-ch Gorky 1989**

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 d5 4. cxd5 Nxd5 5. Nf3 c5 6. e3 Nc6 7. Bd3 Be7 8. O-O cxd4 9. exd4 Nxc3 10. bxc3 O-O 11. Re1 b6 12. h4 Bb7 13. Ng5 Bxg5 14. Bxg5 Qd5 15. Qg4 f5 16. Qg3 Na5 17. Re5 Qd7 18. Rae1 Bd5 19. h5 Nc4 20. R5e2 Nd6 21. h6 Rf7 22. Bf4 Ne4 23. Bxe4 fxe4 24. Be5 g6 25. c4 Bxc4 26. Rxe4 Bxa2 27. Rg4 Bd5 28. Rc1 Bc6 29. d5 Qxd5 30. Bb2 Rc8 31. Rxc6+ hxg6 32. Qxc6+ Kf8 33. Ba3+ Ke8 34. Qg8+ Kd7 35. Qxf7+ Kd8 36. Qe7# 1-0

***Stefansson-Baburin* Budapest 1991**

1. d4 d5 2. c4 dxc4 3. Nf3 a6 4. a4 Nf6 5. e3 Bg4 6. Bxc4 e6 7. h3 Bh5 8. Nc3

Nc6 9. O-O Bb4 10. g4 Bg6 11. Nh4 Bxc3 12. bxc3 Ne4 13. Nxc6 hxc6 14. Kg2 Qh4 15. Qf3 O-O-O 16. Rh1 f5 17. Bxe6+ Kb8 18. gxf5 Rh5 19. Qf4 Rg5+ 20. Kf3 Qxf2+ 21. Kxe4 Qc2+ 0-1

Baburin-Pribyl Liechtenstein 1996

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 g6 3. Nf3 Bg7 4. g3 O-O 5. Bg2 d5 6. cxd5 Nxd5 7. O-O Nb6 8. Nc3 Nc6 9. e3 e5 10. d5 Na5 11. e4 c6 12. Bg5 f6 13. Be3 cxd5 14. Bxb6 Qxb6 15. Nxd5 Qd8 16. Rc1 Nc6 17. Qb3 Rf7 18. Rfd1 Be6 19. h4 Rd7 20. Bh3 f5 21. Ng5 Bxd5 22. Rxd5 Rxd5 23. exd5 Nd4 24. Qxb7 Ne2+ 25. Kf1 Nxc1 26. Ne6 Qf6 27. Qxa8+ Bf8 28. Qc6 Nd3 29. Nc5 Qxc6 30. dxc6 Nxc5 31. c7 1-0

Emms-Baburin Isle of Man 1996

1. e4 Nf6 2. e5 Nd5 3. d4 d6 4. Nf3 Bg4 5. Be2 e6 6. h3 Bh5 7. O-O Be7 8. c4 Nb6 9. Nc3 O-O 10. Be3 d5 11. cxd5 exd5 12. g4 Bg6 13. Ne1 Nc6 14. Ng2 f6 15. Nf4 fxe5 16. dxe5 d4 17. Nxc6 hxc6 18. Qb3+ Kh8 19. Rad1 Bc5 20. Ne4 Qe7 21. Qc2 Qxe5 22. Bg5 d3 23. Qxd3 Nd4 24. b4 Nxe2+ 25. Qxe2 Bxb4 26. f4 Qe6 27. f5 gxf5 28. gxf5 Rxf5 29. Qh5+ Kg8 30. Nf6+ Qxf6 31. Rxf5 Qxf5 0-1

Wolski-Baburin San Francisco 1997

1. Nf3 d5 2. g3 c6 3. Bg2 Bg4 4. O-O Nd7 5. d4 Ngf6 6. b3 Bxf3 7. Bxf3 e5 8. e3 e4 9. Bg2 h5 10. c4 h4 11. Ba3 hxc3 12. hxc3 Bxa3 13. Nxa3 Qe7 14. Nb1 Nf8 15. Nc3 Ne6 16. cxd5 cxd5 17. Qe2 Ng5 18. Rfc1 a6 19. Na4 Kf8 20. Rc2 g6 21. Rac1 Kg7 22. Rc7 Qe6 23. Nc5 Qf5 24. Nxb7 Nf3+ 25. Kf1 Ng4 26. Qb2 Raf8 27. Nc5 Rh2 28. Nd7 Nxe3+ 29. Ke2 Rxc2 30. Nxf8 Ng4 31. Rf1 Nfh2 32. Qa3 Nxf1 33. Ne6+ Qxe6 34. Qc5 Rxf2+ 35. Ke1 Nxc3 36. Rc8 Qxc8 37. Qxc8 e3 0-1

Frias-Baburin San Francisco 1997

1. Nf3 d5 2. d3 g6 3. g3 Bg7 4. Bg2 e5 5. O-O Ne7 6. e4 O-O 7. Nbd2 Nbc6 8. c3 a5 9. a4 h6 10. exd5 Nxd5 11. Nc4 Bf5 12. Re1 Re8 13. Nh4 Be6 14. Bd2 Qd7 15. Qb3 Nde7 16. Bf1 Rad8 17. Rad1 b6 18. Bc1 g5 19. Ng2 Bg4 20. Be2 Bxe2 21. Rxe2 Nf5 22. Reel Nfd4 23. cxd4 Nxd4 24. Qa2 Nf3+ 25. Kf1 Nxc2+ 26. Kg1 Nf3+ 27. Kf1 Qh3 28. Nce3 Nd4 29. Kg1 Re6 30. b3 Red6 31. Bb2 Nf3+ 32. Kf1 e4 33. dxe4 Rd2 34. Rxd2 Rxd2 0-1

Baburin-Nunn Kilkenny 1997

1. d4 Nf6 2. Nf3 g6 3. c4 Bg7 4. Nc3 O-O 5. g3 c6 6. Bg2 d5 7. cxd5 cxd5 8. O-O e6 9. Ne5 Nfd7 10. f4 f6 11. Nf3 Nc6 12. b3 Qa5 13. Bd2 f5 14. e3 Qd8 15. Ne5 Ndx5 16. dxe5 b6 17. Bc1 Ba6 18. Rf2 Rc8 19. Ba3 Nxe5 20. Nxd5 Nc6 21. Rc1 Qe8 22. Rxc6 1-0

King-Baburin Kilkenny 1997

1. g3 d5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. Bg2 g6 4. c4 Bg7 5. cxd5 Nxd5 6. d4 O-O 7. O-O Nb6 8. Nc3 Nc6 9. d5 Na5 10. Qc2 Nxd5 11. Rd1 c6 12. e4 Nb4 13. Qa4 Qb6 14. Bg5 Nc4 15. Rab1 a5 16. a3 Be6 17. Bxe7 Rfe8 18. Bg5 Qc5 19. e5 Nxb2 20. Rxb2 Qxc3 21. Rdb1 b5 22. Qd1 Qxa3 23. Nd4 Bxe5 24. Nxe6 Bxb2 25. Nc7 Qa2 26. Nxa8 Rxa8 27. Be7 Bd4 28. Bxb4 Qxf2+ 29. Kh1 axb4 30. Qf3 Qxf3 31. Bxf3 Ra3 32. Bxc6 b3 33. Bxb5 b2 34. Kg2 Ra5 35. Bc4 Rc5 36. Bd3 Rc1 37. Kf3 f5 38. Ke2 Kg7 39. Kd2 Kf6 40. Ke2 g5 41. h3 h5 42. Kf3 Ke5 43. g4

fxg4+ 44. hxg4 h4 45. Bf5 Kd5 0-1

Epishin-Baburin Vienna 1998

1. d4 d5 2. c4 dxc4 3. e4 Nc6 4. Be3 Nf6 5. Nc3 e5 6. d5 Na5 7. Nf3 Bd6 8. Qa4+ Bd7 9. Qxa5 a6 10. Bc5 b6 11. Bxd6 bxa5 12. Ba3 Bb5 13. b3 Nxe4 14. Nxe4 cxb3 15. O-O-O bxa2 16. Kb2 f6 17. Kxa2 Kf7 18. Rd2 Qd7 19. Bxb5 axb5 20. Rc1 b4 21. Bb2 Rhd8 22. Rc6 Kg8 23. Nc5 Qg4 24. Ne6 Qxg2 25. Nxd8 Rxd8 26. Ne1 Qe4 27. Rc1 a4 28. f3 Qe3 29. Rcd1 Qb3+ 30. Ka1 a3 31. Bc1 Qc3+ 32. Kb1 Ra8 0-1

Baburin-Egger Istanbul 2000

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 c6 3. Nf3 d5 4. e3 Bf5 5. Nc3 e6 6. Nh4 Bg4 7. Qb3 Qb6 8. h3 Bh5 9. g4 Bg6 10. c5 Qc7 11. Nxc6 hxg6 12. g5 Ng8 13. e4 Nd7 14. exd5 exd5 15. Ne2 Ne7 16. Bf4 Qa5+ 17. Bd2 Qc7 18. O-O-O b6 19. Bf4 Qb7 20. h4 O-O-O 21. cxb6 Qxb6 22. Qc2 Nf5 23. Rh3 Bd6 24. Rc3 Nb8 25. Bh3 Bxf4+ 26. Nxf4 Rxh4 27. Bxf5+ gxf5 28. Qxf5+ Rd7 29. Nxd5 Qb5 1-0

Plaskett-Baburin Birmingham 2002

1. e4 Nf6 2. e5 Nd5 3. Nf3 d6 4. d4 Bg4 5. Be2 e6 6. h3 Bh5 7. O-O Be7 8. c4 Nb6 9. Nc3 O-O 10. Be3 a6 11. exd6 cxd6 12. c5 dxc5 13. dxc5 N6d7 14. b4 a5 15. a3 axb4 16. axb4 Rxa1 17. Qxa1 Nc6 18. Rd1 Qc8 19. Qa4 Rd8 20. g4 Bg6 21. b5 Ncb8 22. Qa7 Re8 23. c6 bxc6 24. b6 h5 25. Rc1 hxg4 26. hxg4 Qd8 27. Rd1 Bf6 28. Na4 Bc2 29. Rd2 Be4 30. Nc5 Bd5 31. Nxd7 Nxd7 32. b7 Qe7 33. g5 Bc3 34. Rd3 Qb4 35. Bd4 Bxd4 36. Rxd4 Qb2 37. Bd1 Rb8 0-1

Baburin-Lesiege Bermuda 1998

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. Qc2 O-O 5. a3 Bxc3+ 6. Qxc3 b6 7. Bg5 Bb7 8. e3 d6 9. f3 Nbd7 10. Bd3 h6 11. Bh4 c5 12. Ne2 Rc8 13. b4 A rare, yet possible move, invented by GM Sorokin and employed by GM Ivan Sokolov. 13...cxd4?! Better is 13...d5 14. exd4 Re8?! A dubious idea. 15. O-O e5 16. Rac1 This is very solid; also interesting was 16. Bf5!? 16...e4 Black's play is risky, but at least it is consistent. 17. fxe4 g5 After 17...Bxe4 I was going to play 18. Ng3 Bxd3 19. Qxd3 and if here Black dares to trap the bishop 19...g5 he might be running into the following pretty line: 20. Nf5 gxh4 21. Nxh6+ Kf8 22. Qh7! 18. Bg3 Nxe4 19. Bxe4 Bxe4 20. Bxd6 Bxg2 21. Ng3! This move brought me the Best Attack of the tournament - some people obviously believed that I sacrificed the exchange. Now it is time to reveal the truth - I just forgot about the f1-rook! However, it has good effects: once the white knight appears on f5, Black's king will be very uncomfortable. 21...Bxf1 22. Rxf1 Re6? My computer here suggests 22...g4!?- the move which I did not consider during the game at all. Perhaps, we, poor human beings, sometimes have some kind of a mental block. This move weakens the kingside furthermore, but it vacates the g5-square for the black queen, which is a good defensive idea. Here White would have to work much harder than in the game in order to prove his point. However, I believe in White's advantage here after 23. Nf5 Qg5 24. Qc2! h5 25. c5 bxc5 26. bxc5 and White's pawns are very dangerous. 23. Nf5 Kh8 This move looks very strange, but it's necessary, as otherwise 24 d5 would be absolutely devastating. Yet, Black's defence has a weak spot... 24. d5+ Qf6 25. Nd4 Rxd6 26. Rxf6 Rxf6 27. Nf5! This is it - the knight once again paralyses Black's kingside and Black does not get a chance to consolidate his pieces. 27...Kh7 28. Qc2 Kh8 29. Qe4 White

threatens to play 29 Qe7, so Black resigned. His position is indeed hopeless.} 1-0

Korneev-Baburin Linares Open 1996

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nf6 5. Nc3 a6 6. f3 e5 7. Nb3 Be6 8. Be3 Nbd7 9. g4 Be7 10. Qd2 This is still a popular position, so perhaps this game has some theoretical value. **10...Rc8 11. O-O-O b5 12. g5 Nh5 13. Nd5 Bxd5 14. exd5 Nb6** As Black threatens to play ...Nc4 and after Bxc4 bxc4, White has to play Nb3-a5 now. **15. Na5! Nxd5 16. Qxd5 Qxa5 17. Bh3 Rc4! 18. Bg4** 18. b3? Qc3 19. bxc4 Qxe3+; 18. Qa8+ Qd8 19. Qxa6 O-O 20. Qxb5 Rh4! and after exchanging the dark-squared bishops the black knight gets to the f4-square. **18...O-O!** This is the most principled solution! 18...g6?! 19. Bxh5 gxh5 20. Qa8+ Qd8 21. Qxa6; 18...Nf4 19. Bxf4 Rxf4 20. Qc6+ Kf8 21. Rxd6 g6 22. Qc5 Kg8? (22...Rd4 23. Qxe5 Qd2+ 24. Kb1 Bxd6 25. Qxh8+ Ke7 26. Qf6+ Kf8 27. a3) 23. Qxe5 Bxd6 24. Qxd6 Qxa2 25. Re1!) **19. Bxh5 Qxa2 20. Bg4** The only move, as Black threatened 20...Rxc2+ and 21...Rc8+. **20...Qa1+?** Later I realised that my attack lacked force - the f8-Rook and the Bishop are both passive. After 20...Bd8! Black would have a dangerous attack: 21. Qd3! (21. Kd2?? Rd4+) 21...Qa1+ 22. Kd2 Qxb2 23. Ke2 d5! **21. Kd2 Qxb2 22. Ke2!** (22. Rc1?? Bxg5!) (22. Qd3? Bxg5!) **22...Rxc2+ 23. Rd2 b4 24. Bf5 Rxd2+ 25. Qxd2 Qxd2+ 26. Bxd2 d5** Black's four pawns do not matter here, as they are going to fall one after another. **27. Ra1 b3 28. Rxa6 g6 29. Bb1 Bc5 30. Ra5 Bd4 31. Rxd5 Ra8 32. Rb5 b2 33. Be3 Bxe3 34. Kxe3 Kg7 35. Rxb2 h6 36. h4 Ra3+ 37. Kf2 Ra7 38. Be4 hxg5 39. hxg5 Re7 40. Rb7 1-0**



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