



## COLUMNISTS



**Chess Informant**  
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## Veselin Topalov: Bulgaria's Newest Sports Star

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Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, is becoming one of the world's leading chess centers, in large part because of Veselin Topalov, who will be the top ranked player on the next rating list, and the Women's World Champion Antoaneta Stefanova.

Topalov has become Bulgaria's newest sports star thanks to his shared first place, with Kasparov, in Linares and his victory at the recently completed MTel Masters double round robin tournament in Sofia. New rules were introduced in Sofia to increase the fighting spirit of the players and to reduce the number of draws. The reaction of the six top grandmasters was mostly positive. They played under the following conditions:

- Draw offers are not allowed.
- A player can claim the draw only in case of perpetual check, threefold repetition, or if the position is a theoretical draw.
- Only the arbiter can claim a technical draw after first consulting with the GM advisor (in this case it was Zurab Azmaiparashvili).

Topalov's performance at this tournament was truly impressive. He was theoretically very well prepared, and he strived for complicated positions with many tactical possibilities. His fighting spirit, even during the early phase of the game, was very attractive to the chess fans.

We are pleased to offer to our readers, from the forthcoming Informant #93, two brilliant wins by one of the most serious candidates for the chess throne. It is surely interesting that these games were annotated by his opponents, Anand and Ponomarev, rather than Topalov himself.

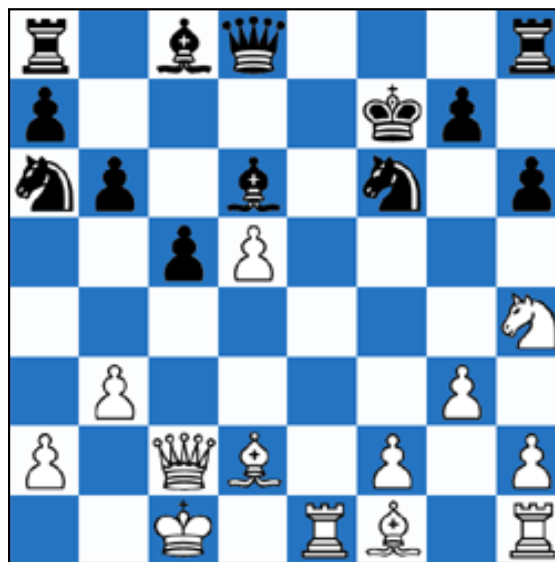
Because Topalov finished the first half of the tournament with one loss and four draws, he had to play aggressively to fight for the top spot. His first victim was Anand, who awarded a question mark to his move 10...Bb7, because after the excellent novelty 11.Neg5 Black got into serious trouble. 11.Bg2 was played in the game Seirawan - Browne, USA (ch) 1981, and Browne gave 10...Bb7 an exclamation mark in his notes to that game (see 32/602).

In the next to last round, Topalov brilliantly avenged his earlier loss to

Ponomarev. They played a popular variation of the Queen's Indian Defense with 8.Rc1, which was also played in the games Bologan – Tkachiev, France 2004 and Topalov – Gelfand, Monaco (blindfold) 2005. This is an interesting idea compared to 8.Rg2 which was introduced into practice by Bologan. Showcasing his excellent preparation, Topalov needed only five moves from the novelty 10.e5 to gain a decisive advantage; previously 10.Bd3 had been played. Topalov's further realization of his advantage was impressive as well.

## V. Topalov (2778) – V. Anand (2785) Sofia 2005

**1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 b6 4. g3 Ba6 5. b3 Bb4 6. Bd2 Be7 7. Nc3 c6 8. e4 d5 9. Qc2 de4 10. Ne4 Bb7? 11. Neg5!** [a novelty; 11. Bg2 see 32/602] **c5** [11... h6 12. Nf7 Kf7 13. Ne5 Kg8 (13... Kf8 14. Bh3 Qd4 15. Ng6 Ke8 16. 0-0 Qe4 17. Qe4 Ne4 18. Rfe1! c5 19. Bg2 Bf6 20. Re4!! Kd7 21. Re6 Bg2 22. Rf6 gf6 23. Nh8 and White is superior) 14. Bh3 (14. Bc3 c5 15. Bh3 Be4) Qd4 15. Be6 Kf8 16. Ng6 Ke8 17. 0-0-0! Qa1 18. Qb1 Ba3 19. Kc2 Qb1 20. Kb1 and White is superior] **12. d5** (only move) **ed5 13. cd5 h6** [13... Bd5 14. 0-0-0 h6 15. Bc3 hg5 16. Bf6 gf6 17. Bc4 and White is superior] **14. Nf7 Kf7 15. 0-0-0 Bd6 16. Nh4 Bc8** [16... Na6 17. Bc3!?!; 17. Bh3 with attack] **17. Re1 Na6** [17... Re8 18. Bb5 Re7 19. Bc3!]

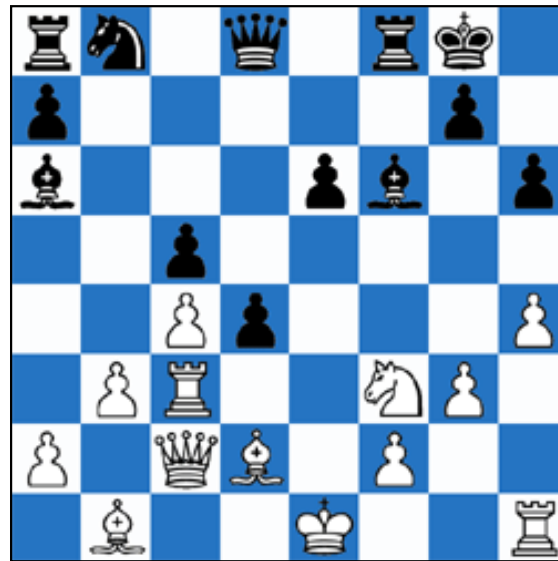


**18. Re6! Nb4** [18... Nc7 19. Bc4 b5 20. Bc3! with attack] **19. Bb4 cb4 20. Bc4 b5** [20... Kg8 21. Nf5! Be6 (21... Bf8 22. d6 and White is winning) 22. de6 Be7 23. Rd1 Qf8 (23... Qc7 24. Rd7 and White is winning) 24. Rd7 Re8 25. Nh4 Nh7 26. Qg6 Ng5 27. f4 (27. Nf5 Nf3) b5 28. Nf5 bc4 (28... Rh7 29. Bd3! and White is winning) 29. Ng7 Rh7 30. Ne8 Kh8 31. Nc7 and White is slightly better; 28. Bd5!?! and White is winning; 28. Bb5 and White is winning] **21. Bb5 Be7?** [21... Kg8! a) 22. Nf5 Be6 (22... Bf8 23. Bc4!) 23. de6 Rc8 24. Bc4 Be7; b) 22. Bc4! Be6 23. de6 Be7 24. Rd1 Qe8 25. Rd7! and White is superior] **22. Ng6** (and White is winning) **Nd5 23. Re7?** [23. Re5 Bb7 24. Nh8 Qh8 25. Qf5 Bf6 26. Qe6 Kf8 27. Qe8! Re8 28. Re8 Kf7 29. Rh8 and White is winning] **Ne7 24. Bc4 Kf6! 25. Nh8 Qd4 26. Rd1 Qa1 27. Kd2 Qd4 28. Ke1 Qe5 29. Qe2 Qe2 30. Ke2** (and White is superior) **Nf5 31. Nf7 a5** [31... Be6 32. Be6 Ke6 33. Nd8! and White is superior] **32. g4 Nh4**

33. h3 Ra7 34. Rd6 Ke7 35. Rb6 (and White is winning) Rc7 36. Ne5 Ng2 37. Ng6 Kd8 38. Kf1 Bb7 39. Rb7 Rb7 40. Kg2 Rd7 41. Nf8 Rd2 42. Ne6 Ke7 43. Ng7 Ra2 44. Nf5 Kf6 45. Nh6 Rc2 46. Bf7 Rc3 47. f4 a4 48. ba4 b3 49. g5 Kg7 50. f5 b2 51. f6 Kh7 52. Nf5 1 : 0 [V. Anand]

## V. Topalov (2778) – R. Ponomarev (2695) Sofia 2005

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 b6 4. g3 Ba6 5. b3 Bb4 6. Bd2 Be7 7. Nc3 0-0 8. Rc1!? [8. Bg2 see 92/486] c6 9. e4 d5 10. e5! [a novelty; 10. Bd3?! dc4 11. bc4 e5 and Black is slightly better] Ne4 11. Bd3 Nc3 [11... Nd2 12. Qd2 dc4 13. bc4 Nd7 14. 0-0 Bb7 15. Qe3 Re8 16. Rfe1 and White is slightly better, centre] 12. Rc3! c5 13. dc5 bc5? [13... d4! 14. Rc1 bc5 15. Be4 (15. h4 Bb7) Nd7 a) 16. h4 Qc7 17. Bg5 (17. Bh7 Kh7 18. Ng5 Kg8 19. Qh5 Qe5 20. Kf1 Nf6 and Black is winning) Rae8; b) 16. Qc2 f5 17. ef6 Nf6; c) 16. Ba8 Qa8 17. 0-0 Qc6 with compensation; d) 16. 0-0 Qc7 17. Re1 Bb7 unclear] 14. h4! [with the idea Bh7 with initiative] h6 15. Bb1! (and White is winning) f5 [15... Nd7 16. Bh6 gh6 17. Qd3 f5 18. ef6 Rf6 19. Qh7 Kf8 20. Ng5 hg5 21. hg5] 16. ef6 Bf6 17. Qc2 d4



18. Ng5! [18. Qh7 Kf7 19. Rc1 Bb7 with counterplay] hg5 19. hg5 dc3 20. Bf4!? [20. Rh8 Kf7 21. Qg6 Ke7 22. gf6 gf6 23. Rh7 Kd6 24. Bf4 Kc6 25. Qe4 Kb6 26. Bc7 Qc7 27. Rc7 Kc7 28. Qa8 and White is winning] Kf7 [20... Bd4 21. Qg6! Bf2 22. Ke2 and White is winning, with the idea Rh8] 21. Qg6 Ke7 22. gf6 Rf6 23. Qg7 Rf7 24. Bg5 [24. Qg5!? Kd7 25. Qd8 Kd8 26. Be4 Nc6 27. Rh8 Kd7 28. Ra8 e5 29. Be3 Bb7 30. Rh8 Kc7 31. Bc5 Nd4 32. Rh7! Rh7 33. Bh7 and White is winning] Kd6 25. Qf7 Qg5 26. Rh7! [weak point Kd6] Qe5 [26... Qc1 27. Ke2 Qd2 28. Kf3 Qd1 29. Kg2 and White is winning] 27. Kf1 Kc6 28. Qe8 Kb6 29. Qd8 Kc6 30. Be4 1 : 0 [R. Ponomarev, D. Komarov]



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