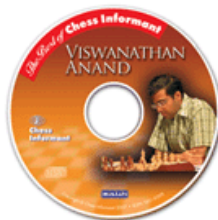




COLUMNISTS

The Kibitzer

Tim Harding



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Thoughts on the World Championship

Unfortunately, the deadline of my May column did not make it possible to write last month about the Anand-Topalov match, which was still undecided, but there has now been time to reflect on that extraordinary contest. In just twelve games, the chess world saw play of the highest order and also a few extraordinary blunders. Nevertheless, to my mind there is little doubt that the right man won the match.

By now, readers will have seen all the games but I shall look at some of the critical moments later in the article. First, I wish to re-examine the recent history of the World Chess Championship itself.

I was very disappointed with the online coverage of the match, although it was more or less possible to discover in real time what moves were played. Despite trying broadband connections both at home and in college, I never succeeded in connecting to the video coverage on the official site. Their web coverage included the following announcement for much of the match:

"Warning! It is absolutely prohibited the live broadcast of the moves or video during the game on other websites, media or software without the explicit permission of the organizers of the match. This prohibition is being violated by ChessBase."

Another Bulgarian website, Chessdom, had text comments, but firstly the pages did not refresh automatically, and secondly the quality of the analysis once the games reached their critical stages became increasingly slow and superficial. Future organisers of world championship matches and other major chess events must do better.

Background to the match

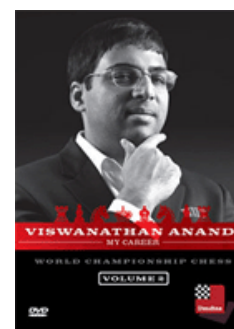
Of course, I have written previously in this series about the world title. By looking back at some of those former articles, it is clear that the situation has improved considerably at what it had been ten or fifteen years ago. The world chess championship has regained some, but not all, of its previous status. The situation where there were rival world champions, one of them decided by the winner of a knock-out tournament, was very damaging to the game.

The title of Kibitzer 23 ([April 1998](#)) was "Who is the real World Champion?" Then I argued that "nobody has the uncontested right to be regarded as World Chess Champion". Besides Karpov (the FIDE champion) and Kasparov, the IBM computer Deep Blue had defeated Kasparov in a short non-title match and Fischer was still claiming to be champion.

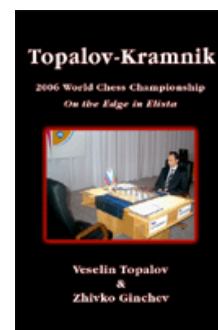
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Alexander Khalifman

In Kibitzer 40 ([September 1999](#)) I returned to the topic and asked "Is Khalifman the real World Champion?", because we then had the absurd situation that the FIDE world title had just been won by a player who was forty-fifth on the rating list, 223 Elo points below Kasparov. The world champion has nearly always been in the top three or four rated players, if not the very top.



Ruslan Ponomarev

In the year 2000, FIDE held another knock-out world championship tournament. There were fewer boycotts by top players that time and it did produce a winner from the top echelon of the world elite none other than Anand, who was thus crowned world champion for the first time. He had maybe half a crown. It was a bit like holding the WBC world heavyweight title, but not the WBA and other versions. However, he only held the title for a year because there were two more knock-out championships, won by Ponomarev (2001) and Kasimdzhanov (2004). This was something like the Khalifman situation all over again.



Rustam Kasimdzhanov

By 2001, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, controversial ruler of the Russian autonomous district of Kalmykia, had become FIDE president. The chess world was wondering was this a good thing or not. At least it was generally believed then that nobody could be worse or more corrupt than his predecessor, Campomanes, but maybe we think about that differently now. So in February 2001 ([Kibitzer 57](#)) I wrote on "FIDE, the World Championship and the Art of Boxing Promotion". That article was reprinted in the anthology book, [Heroic Tales: the Best of ChessCafe.com 1996-2001](#).

In December 2007 ([Kibitzer 139](#)) I asked how many world champions have there been? At that date, Anand had won the unification tournament, the first step to his current status. That article was chiefly prompted by the claim of retired grandmaster Raymond Keene in *The Times* that there had been nineteen world champions. My own count was fifteen as I refused to recognise FIDE's post-Kasparov champions until the reunification, and rejected Keene's inclusion of four unofficial world champions before Steinitz. As is well known, Keene has consistently made grandiose claims on behalf of Howard Staunton, but winning his Paris match against Saint-Amant in 1843 did not make Staunton world champion. Even Keene did not include Saint-Amant in his list of unofficial title-holders! My most recent article on this subject was in November 2008, "World Title Shenanigans" ([Kibitzer 150](#)), which dealt with the Anand-Kramnik match.

The status of the world championship

When I was a young player, the championship was the preserve of the Soviet Union, which held it in trust for FIDE. Before the Second World War, successive world champions had guarded the title jealously like a personal possession, but the death of Alekhine had given the world chess federation the opportunity to increase its power by controlling access to the vacant throne. The 1948 tournament at The Hague and Moscow, won by Botvinnik, began a quarter century of Soviet domination.

A succession of grandmasters from the USSR played stately twenty-four game matches at the rate of three games per week (and with a few postponements), so that matches lasted a full two months, sometimes more. Until Fischer broke through to become challenger, these matches were always played in Moscow, and so they were again on a few subsequent occasions. Fischer versus Spassky, Reykjavik 1972, was the first world title contest played outside the USSR since the first half of the 1948 tournament and the first title match played in the West since 1937. Karpov's match with Kamsky played in Elista, after FIDE had stripped Kasparov of the official title, was one of the last contests played under the old conditions.

The games during this era were played at the then standard pace of two and a half hours each for forty moves, after which games were adjourned and analysed overnight – chiefly by the players' teams of seconds. This also happened in many tournaments but not always, as sometimes there was only a short meal-break and an evening resumption, but in matches the overnight

adjournment gave the players the chance to sleep – or have a sleepless night. The sealing of the move at the end of five hours play was a key ritual, usually giving some advantage to the player whose turn it was when time was called by the arbiter. White, at move forty-one, might sacrifice a few minutes until the arbiter brought the envelope, rather than let the opponent seal or have an easy guess at what the sealed move would be.

Adjournment analysis, in those pre-computer days, was an important part of the duties of seconds and was a science in itself, half akin to correspondence play. In extreme cases, usually endgames, it was possible to calculate in advance, and repeat at the board, a long sequence of adjournment analysis. Woe betide the opponent whose analysis had missed a resource early on and who had to sit and calculate, conscious that the opponent had worked it all out in his home or hotel.

(By the way, in that article from 2001, I asked whether the Leinster League in Ireland was the last event where games were still adjourned after forty moves. Happily that has now changed and games are completed by virtue of playing the whole game in one session at the rate of two hours each – albeit without time increments.)

Resuming next day, the rate of play was the same as before, an average of three and a half minutes per move, with time controls at moves fifty-six, seventy-two, eighty-eight, etc. Occasionally games were adjourned a second time. Sometimes results of adjourned games were agreed without resumption, a player deciding his advantage was too small to give realistic chances of winning and that the time was better spent in rest or preparation. Alternatively, even with a draw almost certain, a player might decide to play on and torture his opponent with an extra sessions, if his own moves were the easier to find.

Before the current trend to short matches, they actually grew longer. They went back to the old principle from the nineteenth century that a match was to be decided by whoever could win a certain number of games, X , where X was usually six, but might be as many as ten. Bobby Fischer was partly responsible for this trend, first seen in the 1978 Baguio City match when Karpov was successful in defending his title against Korchnoi by 6-5, finally landing the decisive point after the score had reached 5-5. That match was played under similar rules to the great 1927 struggle between Alekhine and Capablanca. The unfinished forty-eight game match between Karpov and Kasparov finally put an end to such marathons.

The speeding up of grandmaster chess has been caused chiefly by economic factors and by the computer. The unwillingness of organisers and players to see unfinished games decided by computer analysis has done away with adjournments and enforced the completion of games in a single session. This, putting a premium on physical endurance, has in turn caused time limits to be speeded up, with forty moves in two hours being the normal rate for the first phase of master play. Of course, in earlier times it was far from unknown for tournaments to be played at that rate (except top grandmaster events), but the half-minute per move difference does, I think, tilt the balance somewhat in favour of the attacker in complicated positions and increases the premium on good opening preparation. The second consequence of needing to finish in one session is that the rate of play after move forty is also accelerated, which has been facilitated by digital clocks into which all kinds of special rates can be programmed. (Analogue clocks with flags could never be made so precise.) In the case of the Anand-Topalov match, the players received an extra hour after move forty, and if move sixty arrived, then they were given a further fifteen minutes, plus a thirty-second increment every time they made a move. The time-increment system was also an idea of Bobby Fischer's, though perhaps it did not originate with him. The clock and time pressure played a significant role in some of the Anand-Topalov games, especially the seventh and the ninth.



Nigel Short

World Championship matches started to become shorter in the 1990s, although the forty moves in two-and-a-half hours plus adjournments pace was still usually in effect. When Nigel Short challenged Kasparov in the first PCA breakaway match in London in 1993, the duration was set at twenty-four games. To please the television company contracted for coverage, there was a provision that in the event of one player winning the match within the distance, exhibition games would be played. This was particularly unfortunate as it was highly predictable that Short would not be able to spin out the match to the full twenty-four games. He managed twenty and the subsequent exhibitions were generally considered a farcical addition, so have never been repeated.

Anand himself was Kasparov's opponent the next time. Now it came to be reckoned that the best-of-twenty games would be a reasonable length for a world title match. This was the second PCA match, played in New York in 1995, and was noteworthy for the rather soporific nature of the play. The match began with eight draws, after which Anand took the lead! Only now did Kasparov rise to the occasion, winning with white the very next game, Game Ten.

The turning point of that match came in Game Ten when Kasparov played the Dragon Sicilian with black for the first time in his career and offered a draw at move nineteen. This was the first time in the match that a draw offer was refused. Anand must have regretted it ever after, because a few moves later he blundered and lost. Games Eleven, Thirteen, and Fourteen also went Kasparov's way, after which he could play out four draws and win within the distance, $10\frac{1}{2}$ - $7\frac{1}{2}$.

To decide the world title over twelve games instead of twenty or twenty-four once seemed to the purists like a too-short contest. Yet the recent matches have shown that there can be many twists and turns over that length, and that a match of twelve games does provide the opportunity to come back from an early disaster. Moreover, the Lasker-Schlechter match was even shorter.

The faster time-limit than of old also need not necessarily lead to a serious deterioration of quality, since the time increment system in the later stages at least ensures that a player can never have less than half a minute per move in the endgame.

Both these compromises to today's requirements of commercial sponsorship and shorter fan attention-span have in principle created more interest in title matches than in the good (or bad?) old days. One "modernisation" of the rules would be detrimental, but so far has not come into effect. The match rules provided, not for the first time, for rapid game deciders had the match been tied at 6-6. As it happened, they were not necessary, but it seems inevitable that sooner or later the world title will be decided by five-minute games, and at that point we shall definitely be able to say that the game has been dumbed down and the traditional world championship format has gone forever.



Photo: Anand-Topalov.com

Some highlights of the match

Topalov – Anand

First match game, 24 April 2010

Grünfeld Defence [D86]

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Bc4 c5 8 Ne2 Nc6 9 Be3 0–0 10 0–0 Na5

In Game Ten, Anand returned to this defence and played 10...b6, drawing with a reasonable margin of safety, but this match has probably not done the reputation of the Grünfeld much good.

11 Bd3 b6 12 Qd2 e5 13 Bh6 cxd4 14 Bxg7 Kxg7 15 cxd4 exd4 16 Rac1 Qd6

The game starts to depart from known theory but it seems that both players had examined the consequences of this move in their pre-match analyses.

17 f4 f6 18 f5 Qe5 19 Nf4 g5 20 Nh5+ Kg8 21 h4 h6 22 hxg5 hxg5 23 Rf3



[FEN "r1b2rk1/p7/1p3p2/n3qPpN/3pP3//3B1R2/P2Q2P1/2R3K1 b - - 0 23"]

A tense situation; Black must probably play 23...Bd7 after which the sacrifice on f6 is not sound. Then if 24 Rg3, Black plays 23...Kf7, but Anand played the wrong move first.

23...Kf7??

Anand has admitted that this blunder was caused by forgetting his pre-match analysis.

24 Nxf6!

Annihilation.

24...Kxf6 25 Rh3 Rg8 26 Rh6+ Kf7 27 Rh7+ Ke8 28 Rcc7 Kd8 29 Bb5 Qxe4 30 Rxc8+ 1–0

Although that failure was extraordinary, it must be pointed out that Anand was put at a major disadvantage by the volcanic ash-cloud which forced him to make a tedious and improvised overland journey to Sofia from Frankfurt

due to the halting of flights. He asked for three days postponement and was only allowed one: a home-town decision in favour of Topalov.

Anand fans were in shock. How could he recover from this awful blow? Very easily, as it turned out. He levelled the score at the first opportunity.

Anand – Topalov

Second match game, 25 April 2010

Catalan Opening [E04]

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3

Black now has the option of playing the Queen's Indian (3...b6) or Bogó-Indian (3...Bb4+). However, if White plays the Catalan keynote fianchetto at once, Black may answer 3 g3 by 3...c5 or 3...Bb4+, which can be awkward because the knight is not yet defending the d-pawn.

3...d5 4 g3 dxc4

In recent years the trend for Catalan defenders seems to have been to take the gambit pawn rather than shore up d5 by ...c6, followed eventually by ...b6 and ...Bb7. That line is fairly solid, but comparatively rare nowadays.

In Game Seven (see below), Topalov switched to the other critical line, 4...Bb4+.

5 Bg2 a6

5...Bb4+ was played in Game Four, but Anand seemed to stand better throughout that game, which he finished with a sparkling sacrificial kingside attack.

6 Ne5

The alternative here is 6 0-0. Black needs to know both lines well if he is to play 4...dxc4.

6...c5!

This was once thought bad but improvements for Black have been found in recent years. White has more dynamic chances after 6...Bb4+.

7 Na3

I played 7 Be3 in a correspondence game some years ago and obtained only a draw as Black played very solidly.

7...cxd4 8 Naxc4 Bc5

8...Ra7 is more usual.

9 0-0 0-0



[FEN "mbq1rk1/1p3ppp/p3pn2/2b1N3/2Np4/6P1/PP2PPBP/R1BQ1RK1 w - - 0 10"]

10 Bd2

In Game Six, Anand switched to 10 Bg5, the game continuing 10...h6 11 Bxf6 Qxf6 12 Nd3 Ba7 13 Qa4 (since 13...b5? would cost material after 14 Qc2 bxc4 15 Qxc4). Within a few moves, a position arose in which Anand had two knights against two bishops and he had some temporary pressure. In the long run, he had to be careful to ensure the draw.

10...Nd5 11 Rc1 Nd7 12 Nd3 Ba7 13 Ba5!?

Apparently new.

13...Qe7 14 Qb3 Rb8



[FEN "1rb2rk1/bp1nqppp/p3p3/B2n4/2Np4/1Q1N2P1/PP2PPBP/2R2RK1 w - - 0 15"]

15 Qa3

This offer of the queen exchange, allowing Black to double the pawns, was criticised, with 15 Rfd1!? looking more natural. As matters turned out, however, the move worked out well.

15...Qxa3 16 bxa3 N7f6?!

Anand's strategy would have been more questionable if Black had found 16...Nc5!, because after the text move Black soon drifts into a position without prospects where White can strengthen his position and choose his time to force the pace later. The power of the Catalan bishop on the long diagonal proves much more significant than the extra pawn which will inevitably be regained.

17 Nce5! Re8! 18 Rc2 b6 19 Bd2 Bb7 20 Rfc1 Rbd8

Not 20...Rec8?? because 21 Rxc8+ Rxc8 22 Rxc8+ Bxc8 23 Nc6 wins a piece.

21 f4 Bb8 22 a4

Is this really threatening a4-a5?

22...a5 23 Nc6 Bxc6 24 Rxc6 h5?! 25 R1c4 Ne3?

After this move Black is close to lost. Commentators reckoned he should have played 25...Ng4 (with the idea 26 Rxd4 Ba7) or immediately 25...Ba7!?

26 Bxe3 dxe3



[FEN "1b1rr1k1/5pp1/1pR1pn2/p6p/P1R2P2/3Np1P1/P3P1BP/6K1 w - - 0 27"]

27 Bf3

Anand does not want to change the structure by 27 Rxb6!? Rxd3 28 exd3 e2 29 Rb1 Ba7+ 30 d4.

27...g6

This, probably giving up the wrong pawn; is the consequence of move 24. 27... Nd7 may be better.

28 Rxb6 Ba7 29 Rb3

Avoiding the trap 29 Rb7 Rxd3 30 Rxa7 Rd2.

29...Rd4

Here Topalov probably overlooked the point at move thirty-one, but it may be too late to make a difference.

30 Rc7 Bb8 31 Rc5! Bd6

If 31...Rxa4? 32 Bc6.

32 Rxa5 Rc8 33 Kg2 Rc2 34 a3 Ra2 35 Nb4 Bxb4

If 35...Ra1 36 Nc2; or 35...Rad2 36 Ra8+ Kg7 37 a5; or 35...Rxa3 36 Rxa3 Bxb4 37 Ra8+.

36 axb4 Nd5



[FEN "6k1/5p2/4p1p1/R2n3p/PP1r1P2/1R2pBP1/r3P1KP/8 w - - 0 37"]

37 b5! Rxa4 38 Rxa4 Rxa4 39 Bxd5 exd5 40 b6 Ra8 41 b7 Rb8 42 Kf3 d4

Or 42...Kf8 43 Kxe3 Ke7 44 Kd4 Kd6 45 Rb5 Kc6 46 Rc5+ Kb6 47 Rc1 to win the d-pawn.

43 Ke4 1-0

In Game Three, Anand adopted the Slav, accepted a slightly inferior ending

and drew it quite comfortably. The champion was following the strategy used by Kramnik in Game Six of his Topalov match.

Topalov – Anand

Third match game, 27 April 2010

Queen's Gambit Slav Defence [D17]

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 dxc4 5 a4 Bf5

This variation discusses one of the central issues in the defence of the Queen's Gambit: what to do with this bishop? In the orthodox QG, the early ...e6 makes it hard to develop, except by a fianchetto; in the Slav the bishop goes outside the pawn chain, but can become harassed by enemy pawns.

6 Ne5

This is much sharper than 6 e3, which gives Black more time to organise himself.

6...e6

In the very old days, Black used to play 6...Nbd7 here, but it proved unsatisfactory. 6...e6 was the subject of a major article by theoretician B. Voronkov in *Shakhmatny Byulleten* in 1972 (issues two and three), and some of his ideas were overlooked in later theory books on the Slav.

7 f3

White hopes to blot out the light-squared bishop. Instead, 7 Nxc4 is premature and 7...c5! (despite the lost tempo) gives Black a good game. In the 1929 Alekhine-Bogoljubow match, White played 7 Bg5, but the correct reply to that is 7...Bb4, not 7...Be7 as Bogo played.

7...c5

John Donaldson once called this piece sacrifice idea "very interesting" and "bizarre", but it is just about playable if Black is content to draw. 7...Bb4 is the main line, after which White has several options; 8 Nxc4, 8 e4 and 8 Bg5 being the main ones.

8 e4



[FEN "rn1qkb1r/pp3ppp/4pn2/2p1Nb2/P1pPP3/2N2P2/1P4PP/R1BQKB1R b KQkq e3 0 8"]

8 dxc5 Qxd1+ 9 Kxd1 Bxc5 10 e4 Bg6 11 Bxc4 Nc6? 12 Nxc6 bxc6 13 Bf4 was much better for White in another Alekhine-Bogoljubow game, but 11...Nbd7 12 Nxd7 0–0–0 (first suggested by Pavel Kondratiev) solves Black's problems.

8...Bg6

This move was introduced by Kramnik in the sixth game of his 2006 match against Topalov.

8...cxd4 9 exf5 Bb4 was Voronkov's main idea. In a book on the Slav some

years ago, Matthew Sadler recommended this for complications. A few years ago, I obtained two comfortable draws in this line against strong correspondence opponents, one of them rated over 2600. Smyslov's 9...Nc6 is possible, if Black is willing to defend a slightly inferior ending.

9 Be3

Until about ten years ago, White was thought to have a clear advantage here. 9 d5 is also possible.

9...cxd4 10 Qxd4 Qxd4 11 Bxd4 Nfd7

Introduced by Smyslov against Pia Cramling in 1999; this retreat to challenge a white knight on e5 occurs in some other Slav lines.

12 Nxd7 Nxd7 13 Bxc4



[FEN "r3kb1r/pp1n1ppp/4p1b1/8/P1BBP3/2N2P2/1P4PP/R3K2R b KQkq - 0 13"]

13...a6

13...Rc8 14 Bb5 a6 15 Bxd7+ Kxd7 16 Ke2 occurred in Game Eight, which White won (see below). Presumably Anand did not repeat 13...a6 as he wished to avoid preparation; the line is never quite equal for Black.

14 Rc1

Topalov varies at last from his play against Kramnik, where he chose 14 Ke2 Rg8 15 Rhd1. In his book on that match, Topalov wrote that he also considered 14 h4 as Aronian played against Kramnik. Clearly, Topalov had decided in the interim to avoid such lines which his opponent would be certain to have prepared.

14...Rg8 15 h4 h6

15...h5 drew fairly comfortably in Game Five. This topped the bishop being forced to h7. At the critical moment, tactics enabled Black to play ...f7-f6, liberating the bishop.

16 Ke2 Bd6 17 h5 Bh7 18 a5 Ke7 19 Na4 f6 20 b4 Rgc8 21 Bc5 Bxc5 22 bxc5 Rc7 23 Nb6 Rd8 24 Nxd7 Rxd7 25 Bd3 Bg8



[FEN "6b1/1prk1p1/p3pp1p/P1P4P/"]

The bishop finds its way into the game (see moves twenty-eight through thirty-three) and a draw becomes pretty inevitable now.

26 c6!

This is the only way to try to make something happen, but Anand has adequate resources.

26...Rd6! 27 cxb7 Rxb7 28 Rc3 Bf7 29 Ke3 Be8 30 g4 e5 31 Rhc1 Bd7 32 Rc5 Bb5 33 Bxb5 axb5 34 Rb1 b4 35 Rb3 Ra6 36 Kd3 Rba7 37 Rxb4 Rxa5 38 Rxa5 Rxa5



[FEN "8/4k1p1/5p1p/r3p2P/1R2P1P1/3K1P2/8/8 w - - 0 39"]

39 Rb7+ Kf8

The remaining moves are pointless, but Topalov had said he would neither make nor accept verbal draw offers, so the players had to find repetition sequences to conclude hostilities.

40 Ke2 Ra2+ 41 Ke3 Ra3+ 42 Kf2 Ra2+ 43 Ke3 Ra3+ 44 Kf2 Ra2+ 45 Ke3 Ra3+ 46 Kf2 ½-½

In Game Four, Topalov defended the Catalan Gambit again and was trounced once more. Games Five and Six were then drawn as mentioned above. Anand was in the lead at the half-way stage. As with his match against Kramnik, the rules stipulated that the sequence of colours was reversed, giving him two whites in a row at one point and black in the final game. Can anyone tell me when this rule was first employed and whose idea it was? In the traditional world championship matches from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, I believe that there was always a strict alternation of colours from the beginning to the end of matches.



Photo: Anand-Topalov.com

In Game Seven, Anand survived an amazing sacrificial counter-attack by Topalov, whose clock-handling was extraordinary. After Black's twentieth move, Topalov had still only consumed three minutes compared with fifty-nine for Anand. It seems clear that not only did Topalov predict Anand's early response to his change of variation against the Catalan, but it was in this game that the special computer Topalov had commissioned nearly won him a game.

Anand – Topalov

Seventh match game, 3 May 2010

Catalan Opening [E00]

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 d5 4 g3 Bb4+

Topalov did not wait to see where Anand would vary from Game Six.

5 Bd2 Be7

This variation is analogous to the lines in the Bogoljubow Indian and Queen's Indian where the check is played as a probe, sacrificing a tempo to displace the white queen's bishop.

6 Bg2 0–0 7 0–0 c6 8 Bf4 dxc4 9 Ne5 b5

This move was introduced by Ivanchuk against Gelfand at Monte Carlo earlier this year.

10 Nxc6 Nxc6 11 Bxc6 Bd7

Ivanchuk had played 11...Ba6.



[FEN "r2q1rk1/p2bbppp/2B1pn2/1p6/2pP1B2/6P1/PP2PP1P/RN1Q1RK1 w - - 0 12"]

12 Bxa8

White has nothing if he doesn't take exchange sacrifice.

12...Qxa8

Topalov used only two minutes so far; Anand twelve minutes.

13 f3 Nd5 14 Bd2

Was 14 Nc3 safer?

14...e5

An instant response by Topalov; it seems he out-prepared Anand this time. Watching live, it seemed the world champion was in trouble.

15 e4 Bh3

Topalov makes it a pieces sacrifice and he had still only used three minutes! This is now a piece sac.



[FEN "q4rk1/p3bPPP/8/1p1np3/2pPP3/5PPb/PP1B3P/RN1Q1RK1 w - - 0 16"]

16 exd5

16 Rf2 was an alternative.

16...Bxf1 17 Qxf1 exd4 18 a4 Qxd5

Anand, who by now had used forty-eight minutes, had little choice but to go down what he had to assume was a line which Topalov presumably analysed with a computer engine on the rest day. He dare not allow himself to think it might be a bluff or that his opponent would be looking for a forced draw. In such complicated situations, the golden rule is to try to find a safe line that holds before speculating in whether playing for a win is possible.

19 axb5 Qxb5

Topalov continued to blitz, wasting no time on the alternative 19...Bc5.

20 Rxa7

Some commentators thought White should have given the preference to development by 20 Na3!?.

20...Re8 21 Kh1!?

Anand took another six minutes here, finally choosing his move perhaps on the basis that it might be a surprise and so end the computer sequence. Alternatives were 21 Kg2 and 21 Rxe7 Rxe7 22 Na3 Qxb2 23 Qxc4 Re8.



[FEN "4r1k1/R3bPPP/8/1q6/2pp4/5PP1/1P1B3P/1N3Q1K b - - 0 21"]

Topalov can now capture take on b2, but perhaps Anand calculated he could sacrifice his knight and draw? That also seemed to be Topalov's conclusion as he spent seventeen minutes on this move and decided to play for a win. The Chessdom commentator made the point that Black did not wish to "waste his preparation".

21...Bf8!?

The main line perhaps was 21...Qxb2 (if 21...Bd6 22 Bc1) 22 Qxc4 (22 Qe1 also leads to a draw according to some analysts.) 22...Qxb1+ 23 Kg2

(threatening Rxe7) 23...h6 24 Rd7, to kill the d-pawn and leave the position totally level.

22 Rc7

Anand now had forty minutes left. Topalov was an hour ahead on the clock and spent ten minutes on his next.

22...d3 23 Bc3 Bd6 24 Ra7 h6

After Topalov's longest think, he had used a total of fifty-one minutes. 24...h6 ends back rank threats so Black can bring his rook to e2 in some lines.

25 Nd2

Probably this was not best? 25 Na3 and 25 Ra5 were possible, while 25 Qh3 (with the idea of penetrating to d7 and probably forcing a draw) was suggested on Chessdom. Anand had twenty-nine minutes left and was perhaps wondering whether playing for a win was possible after all. In fact, after his chosen move it seems to be Black who forces the pace again.

25...Bb4 26 Ra1!

Anand had twenty minutes left. Topalov had only one pawn for the bishop.

26...Bxc3

26...Re2!? was also possible.

27 bxc3 Re2 28 Rd1 Qa4

Black thought a while on this.

29 Ne4 Qc2

Anand had sixteen minutes left. Topalov apparently settles for a draw – maybe assuming it is forced, which turns out not to be the case?



[FEN "6k1/5pp1/7p/8/2p1N3/2Pp1PP1/2q1r2P/3R1Q1K w - - 0 30"]

30 Rc1 Rxe2+ 31 Kg1 Rg2+ 32 Qxe2

No perpetual check! A surprise for everyone watching; White is not playing the repetition. Maybe he doesn't want to grovel, he wants to show he is willing to fight on. Also now his best moves are maybe more obvious than Black's?

32...Qxc1+ 33 Qf1 Qe3+

Topalov had to choose between this and 33...d2 34 Nxd2 Qxd2 35 Qxc4 where Anand would have a passed pawn in a Q+3P ending, but it must be a draw. Vishy had thirteen minutes left so was not in time trouble.

34 Qf2 Qc1+ 35 Qf1 Qe3+ 36 Kg2

Anand again avoids the obvious draw by repetition.

36...f5 37 Nf2 Kh7 38 Qb1

To meet ...d2 by Qxf5+ and otherwise maybe infiltrate with Qb5.

38...Qe6

Vishy could force a draw by Nxd3 but prefers to continue manoeuvres.

39 Qb5

I began to wonder whether this was going to be a heartbreak for Topalov who no longer has a clear draw?

39...g5 40 g4

Vishy makes the control with five minutes to spare and now gets an extra hour. One plan was perhaps to force off queens and try to win N+P v 4 P with his c-pawn?

40...fxg4 41 fxg4 Kg6



[FEN "8/8/4q1kp/1Q4p1/2p3P1/2Pp4/5NK1/8 w - - 0 42"]

42 Qb7

Now Vishy has forty-nine minutes left and he threatens Qe4+. Black must advance the d-pawn to prevent this, but then it is no longer guarded by the c-pawn. However, after the game, computer engines tried to claim a win for White commencing 42 Qa4.

I have not seen convincing analysis and we shall probably have to wait a while before a consensus on what was really happening in this game emerges among grandmasters.

From now on, Topalov managed to steer the game to a draw.

42...d2 43 Qb1+ Kg7 44 Kf1 Qe7

Anand started to think again, falling behind on the clock once more as he tried to win.

45 Kg2 Qe6 46 Qd1 Qe3 47 Qf3 Qe6 48 Qb7+ Kg6 49 Qb1+ Kg7 50 Qd1 Qe3 51 Qc2 Qe2 52 Qa4 Kg8 53 Qd7 Kf8 54 Qd5

The queen position has been systematically improved but it is not enough.

54...Kg7 55 Kg3

White would like to move his king towards e2/ d1 and win the passed pawn, but it cannot be done.

55...Qe3+ 56 Qf3 Qe5+ 57 Kg2 Qe6 58 Qd1 ½-½

It was perhaps not surprising that after this titanic struggle, the players had a reaction next day. It was easier for Topalov because he had first move. In Game Eight, Anand's Slav did not do so well and made a serious error at move twenty-two allowing White to plant a knight at d6, which eventually had to be captured, creating a passed pawn. Anand was now forced to defend a bishops of opposite colours ending a pawn down, where there was a danger White could obtain split passed pawns. For several moves, the defence seemed to hold until this position was reached.



[FEN "8/1p3k1p/p2Pp3/Pb2B1K1/
8/5P2/1P4P1/8 b - - 0 54"]

Here it is essential to rule out the possible penetration of the white king to the queenside, for which reason the black king must watch the passed d-pawn and the bishop must be used to protect h7. Therefore, 54...Bd3 (or 54...Ke8 5 Kh6 Bd3) is essential; e.g., 55 f4 Ke8 56 g4 Kd7 57 f5 exf5 58 gxf5 h6+ 59 Kf6 Bc2 and now Black just waits, according to, IM Malcolm Pein on TWIC, republished at the ChessBase website.

Anand cracked under the pressure and after **54...Bc6 55 Kh6 Kg8 56 g4** Anand resigned. At first sight this was premature, but Black cannot move his king and the bishop must remain on the a4-e8 diagonal. White has a free hand to continue but still there was much debate online about how exactly White wins against best play. Chessdom provided no variations at all, only vague generalities; their commentators apparently had no clue why the game ended so abruptly.

Pein indicated the continuation 56 g4 Be8 57 g5 Bc6 58 f4!? Bd7 59 Bd4 Be8 60 Bg7 (zugzwang) 60...Bc6 61 g6 hxg6 62 Kxg6 Be8+ 63 Kf6 Bc6 64 Bh6 – but why does Black have to put the bishop on e8?

The line on Susan Polgar's website is more convincing: 58 Bg7 Be8 59 f4 Bd7 60 g6 hxg6 61 Kxg6.

After a rest day, Anand came close to restoring his lead in Game Nine, another complicated struggle in which he traded his queen for two rooks and had a strong attack, balanced by Black's pair of passed pawns on the queenside. Anand fell short of time more than once and as a consequence probably missed numerous wins. Unfortunately, I was travelling that day and could not look at the live coverage until a very late stage. I gather that Anand's 40 Rh8 was probably wrong, letting Black's king escape the back rank, whereas 40 Re4 would have been very hard to defend.



[FEN "8/8/kN2R3/p6R/1p1n4/5P2/
6PK/q7 w - - 0 53"]

This is about where I came in. Anand (White) had seven minutes against twenty-three minutes (to reach move sixty), and he used about two and a half minutes to play:

53 Rd6

White threatens mate in four starting Nc4, Rh7.

53...Kb7!

After six minutes, a clever defence as White (psychologically speaking) is likely to attempt the same mating pattern.

54 Nc4?!

In this case Nc4 seems inaccurate. White should have played 54 Nd5.

54...Nxf3+ 55 gxf3 Qa2+

And eventually Topalov escaped with a draw.

The next two games ended in draws, Anand returning to the Grünfeld and then playing the English Opening, reversed Dragon Sicilian. Game Twelve, which Topalov fans expected him to win with White, took an unexpected turn. The Bulgarian imploded suicidally in the middle-game.



Photo: Anand-Topalov.com

Topalov – Anand

Twelfth match game, 10 May 2010

Queen's Gambit Declined [D56]

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nf3 Nf6 4 Nc3 Be7 5 Bg5 h6 6 Bh4 0–0 7 e3 Ne4 8 Bxe7 Qxe7 9 Rc1 c6 10 Be2 Nxc3 11 Rxc3 dxc4 12 Bxc4 Nd7 13 0–0 b6 14 Bd3 c5 15 Be4 Rb8 16 Qc2 Nf6 17 dxc5 Nxe4 18 Qxe4 bxc5 19 Qc2 Bb7 20 Nd2

During this phase, Anand defends his isolated c-pawn indirectly with tactics. Here if 20 Rxc5? Bxf3 21 gxf3 (21 Rc7 Qg5) 21...Rxb2.

20...Rfd8 21 f3

Not 21 Rxc5?? Rxd2.



[FEN "1r1r2k1/pb2qpp1/4p2p/2p5/8/2R1PP2/PPQN2PP/5RK1 b - - 0 21"]

This position had previously occurred in a 1998 German email correspondence game Herbert Bellmann v Günter Schulze, which had an absurd conclusion. One commentator on the world championship match noticed this precedent, but did not know why the loser soon blundered a rook.

21...Ba6

Bellmann forgot to include the move pair 20...Rfd8 21 f3 in his game record and after 21...Qd6 22 Nb3 Ba6 White played 23 Rd1?!, thinking he had the advantage (since on his board the black rook was on f8), but Black of course played 23...Qxd1+ and White resigned.

22 Rf2 Rd7 23 g3

Still not 23 Rxc5? Rxb2; White has no genuine threat. He seemed to suffer a psychological collapse in the second half of this game.

23...Rbd8 24 Kg2 Bd3 25 Qc1 Ba6

White could repeat moves, but apparently he was more worried about the prospect of a rapid-games play-off. Anand, who at the start of this game may have been reconciled to that outcome, would probably have found some way to continue anyway since he has a slight advantage.

26 Ra3 Bb7 27 Nb3 Rc7 28 Na5 Ba8

Of course Black wants to keep the magnificent bishop.

29 Nc4 e5! 30 e4

This only provokes, not prevents, the reply:

30...f5!



[FEN "b2r2k1/p1r1q1p1/7p/2p1pp2/2N1P3/R4PP1/PP3RKP/2Q5 w - f6 0 31"]

31 exf5?

Topalov seems to think this is a helpmate problem composition tournament. His challenge collapses dramatically.

31...e4 32 fxe4 Qxe4+ 33 Kh3 Rd4 34 Ne3 Qe8 35 g4 h5 36 Kh4 g5+ 37 fxe6 Qxe6 38 Qf1 Rxe4+ 39 Kh3 Re7

Black threatens 40...Rxe3+ 41 Rxe3 Rh4+, etc.

40 Rf8+ Kg7 41 Nf5+ Kh7

Now White has nothing.

42 Rg3

Not 42 Nxe7? Rh4+ 43 Kxh4 Qg4 mate. Anand plays the final phase to perfection.

42...Rxe3+ 43 hxe3 Qg4+ 44 Kh2 Re2+



[FEN "b4R2/p6k/8/2p2N1p/6q1/6P1/PP2r2K/5Q2 w - - 0 45"]

45 Kg1 Rg2+ 46 Qxe2 Bxe2 47 Kxe2 Qe2+ 48 Kh3 c4 49 a4 a5 50 Rf6 Kg8 51 Nh6+ Kg7 52 Rb6 Qe4 53 Kh2 Kh7 54 Rd6 Qe5 55 Nf7 Qxb2+ 56 Kh3 Qg7 0-1

Defending the now-unified title of World Chess Champion, the Spanish-resident Indian grandmaster Viswanathan Anand overcame his dreadful start and then withstood an extraordinarily determined fight-back from his opponent, the highly talented Veselin Topalov, who seemed to hold the initiative in the middle section of the match. Anand's mental resistance was epitomised by the extraordinary seventh game and his play in the decisive phase of Game Twelve. The Bulgarian finally broke his resistance in Game Eight to level the scores, but in the remaining games Anand never seemed in serious danger of losing. He missed numerous opportunities to win Game Nine and then in Game Twelve, Topalov cracked under the pressure of the occasion and Anand clinched the match with the only win achieved with the black pieces.

In 1998, the leading French chess magazine called Anand the vice-champion of the World: he was second under the PCA for losing to Kasparov and second under FDIE for losing its world championship final to Karpov. It is really only now that Anand can really put that double defeat behind him forever. He finally gained (or regained, if you count 2000) the world championship, albeit in a tournament, in 2007. Since then he has retained that title twice in matches against two different dangerous contenders, Kramnik and Topalov, one of whom was a previous champion. Of course, in tournaments, he is only *primus inter pares* as the Romans said (first among equal) and must face stiff challenges in future from rising stars like Magnus Carlsen, but in 2010 he is undisputed world chess champion and this must be a good thing for chess.

For the second time in succession, Topalov has shown himself to be a bad loser by public criticism of his opponents. Many readers will recall his "Toiletgate" criticisms of Kramnik, which he put into a book. Now he criticises Anand for having high-level assistance and for not organising chess in his homeland – although it turns out that Topalov had a very powerful custom computer made for his own preparations. To me, Topalov seems a quite brilliant player on his day, but overall a rather unpleasant individual. I

am pleased he lost and hope he never plays for the world championship again. It seems that I am not alone in that opinion since the chess world subsequently found out that Carlsen, Kramnik, and Kasparov had all helped Anand in one way or another with his preparations.

Postscript: the FIDE Presidency

If for no other reason than a man can spend too long in one job, I think it is time for FIDE to elect a new President. I have never been a great fan of Anatoly Karpov, as a person, but surely it is time for Kirsan Ilyumzhinov to be replaced.

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