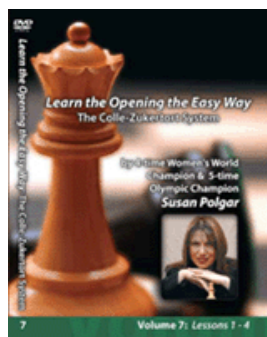




COLUMNISTS

Susan Polgar on Chess

Susan Polgar



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Undisputed at Last

When Garry Kasparov decided to bolt from FIDE and play a world championship match against Nigel Short under the auspices of the Professional Chess Association in 1993, the world championship crown became divided.

Then when Topalov won the FIDE World Championship tournament in San Luis in 2005, some chess fans did not recognize his title because Kramnik did not participate. Kramnik subsequently defeated Topalov in Elista in 2006, but the toiletgate scandal marred the results.

Anand won the Mexico City World Championship last year; a tournament that did include Kramnik, yet some die-hard critics still disputed the result because it was not from match play.



Viswanathan Anand

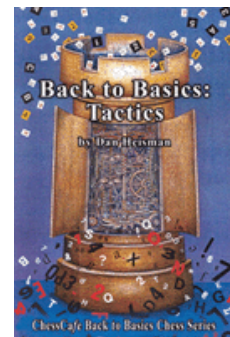
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Now that Anand has defeated Kramnik in a head-to-head match, the title is no longer in dispute. Anand, the tiger from Madras, became the only world champion to win the title in three different formats: Knockout, Tournament, and Match.

Coming into this match, most chess polls showed a slight edge to Anand to win the match by one point.

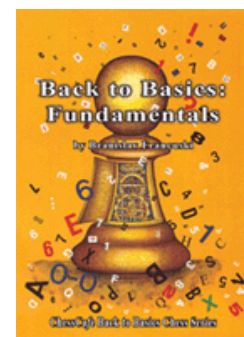
After two draws from the first two games, Anand shocked Kramnik and the chess world by winning game three with the black pieces! The middlegame was very sharp and Kramnik blundered at a crucial moment. This was very important psychologically because Kramnik is known as one of the most solid players and he almost never loses with white. I believe game three completely changed the dynamics of the entire match.

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Vladimir Kramnik

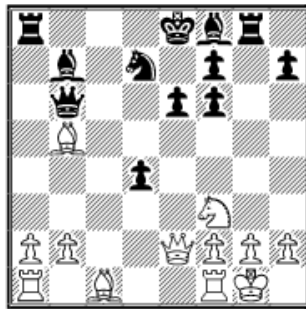
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To prove a point, Kramnik chose to play the same opening in round five. Once again, when the game reached the pivotal moment, Kramnik erred and lost. Was it ego? Was it poor preparation? Was it stubbornness? No one other than Kramnik could answer. But I doubt that anyone could have predicted that Kramnik would be down by two points after only five games, with both losses as white.

Here is my analysis of game five:

Kramnik, V. (2772) – Anand, V. (2783)
 Bonn, Germany (5) 2008
 Meran Semi-Slav [D49]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nf3 Nf6 4.Nc3 e6 5.e3 Nbd7 6.Bd3 dxc4 7.Bxc4 b5 8. Bd3 a6 9.e4 c5 10.e5 cxd4 11.Nxb5 axb5 12.exf6 gxf6 13.O-O Qb6 14. Qe2 Bb7 15.Bxb5 Rg8



Anand played 15...Bd6 in the third game, which led to a wild game where Kramnik misplayed and lost: 16.Rd1 Rg8 17.g3 Rg4 18.Bf4 Bxf4 19.Nxd4 h5 20.Nxe6 fxe6 21.Rxd7 Kf8 22.Qd3 Rg7 23.Rxg7 Kxg7 24.gxf4 Rd8 25.Qe2 Kh6 26.Kf1 Rg8 27.a4 Bg2+ 28.Ke1 Bh3 29. Ra3 Rg1+ 30.Kd2 Qd4+ 31.Kc2 Bg4 32. f3 Bf5+ 33.Bd3 Bh3 34.a5 Rg2 35.a6 Rxe2+ 36.Bxe2 Bf5+ 37.Kb3 Qe3+ 38. Ka2 Qxe2 39.a7 Qc4+ 40.Ka1 Qf1+ 41.

Ka2 Bb1+ 0–1.

16.Bf4 Bd6

The players were moving at a fast pace until now. Kramnik took his time with his next move. He could play 17.Bg3 and 17.Bxd6. I like 17.Bg3 with the idea to strengthen the g-file from the threat of Black's bishop on b7 and rook on g8. This is the critical moment and he could be worse in some of the lines. Frankly speaking, I am very surprised that Kramnik repeated this variation because it suits Anand's style much better. I am not privy to the players' preparation, but it seems that Kramnik was surprised by 15...Rg8.

17.Bg3 f5

Black chooses the most aggressive option, he could also play 17...Ke7 or 17...Rd8. Black's plan is to create an attack on the kingside, while White's plan is to exploit Black king's position in the center and try to advance his connected passed a- and b-pawns. Possible continuations are 18.a4 f4 19.Bh4 Qc5 20.Rfd1 Qh5 21.Kh1 Rxg2 22.Kxg2 Qxh4 23.Bxd7 + Ke7 =+; 18.Rfd1 f4 19.Bh4 Ra5 20.a4 Rxb5 21.axb5 Ne5 –/+; 18.Bxd6 Qxd6 19.Rfd1 Ke7 =+; or 18.Ne5 Bxe5 19.Qxe5 f6 20.Qe2. At this point

in the game, White was more than fifty minutes behind on the clock.

18.Rfc1

I did not anticipate this move. Now I think it is unclear after 18...f4 19. Bh4 Be7 20.Bxe7 Kxe7 21.Bxd7 Kxd7.

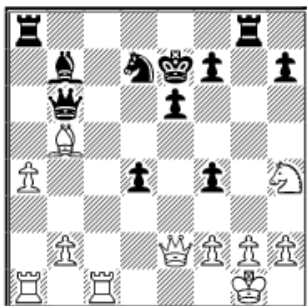
18...f4 19.Bh4 Be7

White had no way of stopping the eventual exchange of the dark-squared bishops, which makes the g2-pawn more vulnerable to Anand's attack.

20.a4

Kramnik had a few other options such as 20.Bxe7, 20.Qd3, but I like 20. a4 the best. It strengthens the bishop on b5 and allows the queen to do other things. This was a crucial moment for Anand. Two possible options are 20...Qd6 or 20...Rd8. I prefer the latter because I would want my rook to be on the a-file for now.

20...Bxh4 21.Nxh4 Ke7



It is very difficult to come up with the right plan in this complicated position, especially given the high stakes of the game. An interesting try is 22.g3 Rg5 23. Bxd7 Kxd7 24.Nf3 Bxf3 25.Qxf3 Rb8 and White is a little better. Another could be to get the king off the g-file by 22.Kf1. This game is crucial for both players. If Kramnik falters again, it would be virtually impossible to come back with just seven games left. On the

other hand, if Kramnik wins, it put the momentum back on his side. The state of mind of the players could be the most important factor in such a close match. Having been through this before, I can tell you that it is not fun.

22.Ra3

A complete surprise and an interesting idea, though I am not sure if it is the strongest choice. Black has two main ideas: to pile the rooks on the g-file with 22...Rg5 or to make a play for the c-file by 22...Rac8. Both are playable although I prefer playing for the c-file. This is why I do not believe that 22.Ra3 is the most accurate move.

22...Rac8

Anand plays for the c-file; now 23.Rxc8 Rxc8 24.Ra1 Qc5 25.Qd2 Qd6 26.Rd1 Ne5 27.Kf1 is equal.

23.Rxc8 Rxc8 24.Ra1

The black king is safer than it was a few moves ago. But so is the white king. 24...Rg8 25.a5 Qc5 26.a6 Ba8 27.Bxd7 Kxd7+; 24...Rc5 25.b4 Rg5 26.Nf3 Rg8 27.Rd1 Nf6=; I like this line the best: 24...Qc5 25.Qd2 Qd6 26.Rd1 Ne5 27.Kf1=.

24...Qc5 25.Qg4

Kramnik played this move very fast. It would be a mistake for Black to play 25...Qc1+ 26.Rxc1 Rxc1+ 27.Bf1 Ba6 28.h3+-. 25...Qe5, 25...Qc2, or 25...Ne5 are all better options. I think 25...Qe5 is the most interesting.

25...Qe5 26.Nf3

Another instant response by Kramnik.

26...Qf6

Anand also responded very quickly. Another possibility was 26...Bxf3 27. Qxf3 Rc2 =.

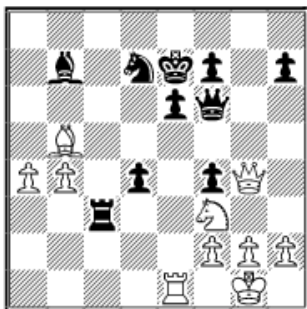
27.Re1

27.Nxd4? would have been a mistake, because of 27...Qxd4 28.Rd1 Nf6–+. 27.Rd1 is also a good move. In fact, I like it better than 27.Re1.

27...Rc5 28.b4

I think the clear choice here is 28...Rc3 to attack the knight on f3. Anand's position is quite comfortable now.

28...Rc3



The pressure now is on White. The worst possible move is 29.Nd4.

29.Nxd4??

This is a poison pawn. White is now in serious trouble. It is basically over.

29...Qxd4 30.Rd1 Nf6 31.Rxd4 Nxe4 32.Rd7+ Kf6

Black wins because of White's back rank problem.

33.Rxb7 Rc1+ 34.Bf1 Ne3!

A brilliant move! Kramnik missed this when played 29.Nd4.

35.fxe3 fxe3 0-1

A devastating loss for Kramnik; now Anand leads 3½-1½. The round five loss clearly affected Kramnik in game six. He lost again, this time with Black. So at the halfway mark of the match, Anand was leading 4½-1½.

Kramnik won game ten to stay in the match, but Anand cinched the victory in game eleven. Anand only needed to draw to retain his title. However, it is easier said than done considering the circumstances.

Anand, V. (2783) – Kramnik, V. (2772)

Bonn, Germany (11) 2008

Sicilian Defense [B96]

1.e4

Anand plays 1.e4 for the first time in the match! The choice itself may not be a big deal, but it played a big role psychologically. The final game to win the World Chess Championship is the hardest to play.

1...c5

Kramnik took about two minutes to respond. Having no choice but to go all out for a win, he cannot rely on more solid choices such as the Petroff or Berlin.

2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 a6

It is quite obvious that Kramnik is going for broke by employing one of

the sharpest openings: the Sicilian Najdorf.

6.Bg5 e6 7.f4 Qc7

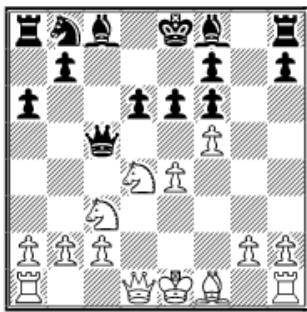
There are a number of other playable choices, such as 7...Be7, 7...Qb6, 7...Nbd7, etc.

8.Bxf6

Here 8.Qf3 is quite popular as well. 8...gxf6 9.f5

White also had many other options such as 9.Qd2, 9.Be2, 9.Qf3, etc. If Anand wins or draw with ease, he looks like a genius for employing 1.e4 to shock his opponent. On the other hand, if he loses in a sharp game, everyone questions his decision to play aggressively instead of going for something quiet when he needed only a half-point to retain his title. If I were in Kramnik's shoes, I would also be happy to have a chance to score in a sharp opening, especially when a draw will not do.

9...Qc5



I think Kramnik has used this line less than ten times in his career, and I do not remember him winning any of these games. On the other hand, at this stage of the match, the surprise element and nerve will play a very big role, maybe even more so than the actual opening. Anand surprised Kramnik with 1.e4 and Kramnik surprised Anand by choosing the Najdorf. Welcome to the psychological part of chess! This Qc5

move seemed to have surprised Anand.

He spent quite a bit of time on his tenth move.

10.Qd3

This is a logical move. It clears the way for White to castle queenside. It also protects the f5-pawn. 10...Bh6 is now a logical move to prevent White from castling. 10...Nc6 is also a good move to put pressure in the center. In my opinion, Black has already equalized. Black has a good presence in the center and the bishop-pair. White's pieces are not optimally coordinated. I think Black has a comfortable position.

10...Nc6 11.Nb3

White should not trade the knight, as this would favor Black.

11...Qe5

This is a logical move to keep pressure in the center. I think White has to consider O-O-O here. The black king can reasonably stay in the center because of the strong central pawn structure. White cannot afford to do the same.

12.O-O-O

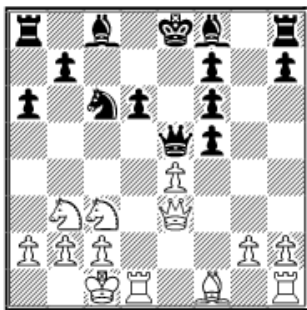
White basically offers the f5-pawn as a sacrifice. The compensation is to be able to break up black's central pawn chain while opening up the critical e-file. I would not take it. I prefer either 12...Bd7, 12...Rg8, or even 12...b5. 12...exf5 is too scary, but you never know what Kramnik may do when he needs to win.

12...exf5

A very brave decision! No one can say that Kramnik backs off from a

tough fight. This is a playable move, it's just dangerous. This is what the chess fans want to see, two heavyweight champions going toe-to-toe. The position is unclear after 13.Re1 Bh6+ 14.Kb1 Be6, or 13.Kb1 fxe4 14.Qxe4 Be7 15.Qf3 Be6.

13.Qe3



I did not expect this move. In addition to clearing the diagonal for the bishop, the d5-square for his rook or knight, the b6-square will be one White would have an eye on. Black might as well consider playing 13...fxe4 since he already played exf5. This position is still unclear, even though this type of position generally favors Anand. Kramnik has a tough decision to make and the dynamics of the game will change quite a bit with his

choice. I would probably narrow my choices to 13...Be6 or 13...h5. He is taking a lot of time for this move. He obviously understands that one error in judgment can end the match.

13...Bg7

A very unusual choice! I do not think this is the best option for Kramnik. It is clearly not the most aggressive move. I do not think Anand was unhappy seeing this move. It looks like Kramnik may want to get his king to the kingside. Therefore, two good options for Anand are 14.Nd2 or 14.Rd5, both are unclear, but definitely not worse for Anand. If 14.Nd5, then O-O and Black is better.

14.Rd5

The best move here is 14...Qe7. He needs to save the e6-square for his bishop.

14...Qe7

The most promising move for White is 15.Qg3 to attack both the d6-pawn and bishop on g7.

15.Qg3

Both players may soon get into time pressure; they each have less than sixty minutes left. Possible lines are 15...Rg8 16.Qxd6 fxe4 17.Qxe7+ Kxe7 18.Nxe4 f5 =+; or 15...Rg8 16.Qh4 fxe4 17.Nxe4 (17.Qxh7 Kf8 unclear) 17...Be6 18.Nxd6+ Kf8 19.Rd3 =+.

15...Rg8

As I pointed out in the lines above, 15.Rg8 is a good choice for Kramnik.

16.Qf4

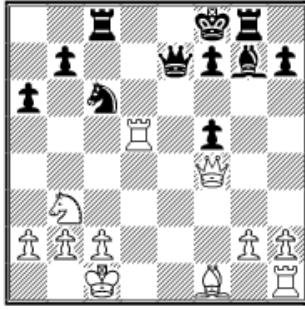
Black is fine with 16...Be6 if 17.Rxd6, then Bh6 —. White should just retreat the rook to e1. 16...fxe4 is also playable.

16...fxe4

If 17.Nxe4 Be6 18.Nxd6+ Kf8 19.Rd1 Rd8 and the position is unclear. White is about six minutes ahead on the clock.

17.Nxe4 f5

Perhaps 18.Nxd6+ Kf8 19.Nxc8 Rxc8 +=.



White is slightly better. The idea for Anand is quite simple. The position is very complicated. Therefore, it is to his advantage to trade pieces and simplify the position where there will be less chances to blunder.

20.Kb1 +=

The draw comes closer. Black must try 20...Qe1 21.Nc1 Ne7 to give Black any last hope. 21.Qc1 is also fine for White, not much for Black.

20...Qe1+ 21.Nc1

I see very few options for Kramnik to pull out a win.

21...Ne7

The best response for White is Qd2 to trade queens. That would guarantee Anand a draw at the very least. 22.Qd2

Black has no choice but to trade queens. Otherwise, he would face checkmate with Rd8+.

22...Qxd2 23.Rxd2 Bh6

Now 24.Rd7 +=.

24.Rf2

The position is still even. The only way Kramnik can win here is if Anand blunders. Once Anand gets his pieces out, Black has nothing.

24...Be3 ½-½

Congratulations to Anand for retaining his title! Excellent fighting spirit by Kramnik! Both players deserve plenty of respect.

Polgar Chess University Online

I recently reached an agreement with the Internet Chess Club to host the Polgar Chess University online on World Chess Live. The idea is for me to conduct chess training classes weekly online in three levels:

- Beginner (aiming for under 1000)
- Intermediate (approximately 1000 to 1600)
- Advanced (approximately 1600 to 2200)

It will start with one weekly class per level. In addition, I will have special classes to show parents, teachers, and coaches how to help youngsters learn and improve and how to introduce chess in the schools. I will also do exclusive lectures for World Chess Live in which I will invite my sisters and many other world-class players and coaches to appear as guests.

Details will be announced on my [blog](#) and on ICC. Please check it out!



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