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## *Inside Chess*

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## Yasser Annotates:

Kramnik-Topalov

Monte Carlo 1998

### *A Delightful Game*

Preparing my report on the 1998 Melody Amber tournament for *Inside Chess* magazine, the following game struck me as a wonderful example of the pro's and con's of rapid chess. For years I've heard of how five-minute and rapid chess were "*bad*" for a players development and how rapid chess leads to "*inferior*" quality games as compared to classical time limits. Let the critics say what they will. I've seen some incredibly bad tournament games in my career - some by my very own hand! The extra minutes are no guarantee that a player will find the hidden move, the winning combination or the saving resource. In blitz chess, rapid chess and classical chess, the eye moves quickly. It sees the tactics that lose and quickly blocks them out as "noise" to the music at hand. Once a line is rejected, the eye and the mind have to be pulled back with a conscious effort. Usually such efforts are born out of desperation!

What first attracted me to this game was that the opening is an old favorite who has been a close hard-working friend. When I saw that Black lost, I rushed to the aid of my old friend. Where had he gone wrong?

**White: GM Vladimir Kramnik**

**Black: GM Veselin Topalov**

Monte Carlo MON (02) 1998

**1.Nf3 g6 2.d4 d6 3.c4 Bg7 4.Nc3 e5 5.dxe5 dxe5 6.Qxd8+ Kxd8  
7.Bd2?!**



A strange square for the Bishop. Usual is a line like 7.Bg5+ f6 8.O-O-O+ Nd7 9.Be3 when White doesn't have much due to ...Bg7-h6 trading away a useless Bishop. The purpose behind the move is that if Black sets up with ...f7-f6 then a potential Nc3-e4 controls useful squares, especially after ...c7-c6 and the Bishop might poke out by Bd2-b4. The drawback of the text is that Black can now develop his c8-Bishop.

**7...Be6 8.O-O-O Nd7!? 9.Ng5!**

Forced moves can also be strong ones. After 9.e3 h6! Or 9.e4 f6! I prefer Black in both cases. The text sacrifices a pawn but is the best way to take advantage of his superior development.

**9...Bxc4 10.e4 Bxf1 11.Rhxf1 Nh6 12.f4 c6 13.fxe5 Ke7 14.Nf3 Ng4 15.Bg5+ Ke8 16.e6**

Same comment as before! White can't allow Black to snap off the e5-pawn for free, which would give Black a strategically won game.

**16...fxe6 17.Rd6 Nf8!?**

Not a bad move but Black's pieces can become congested. (I know it's nice to keep a Knight in the stable at home.) More active was 17...Nc5 keeping the f8-square vacant.

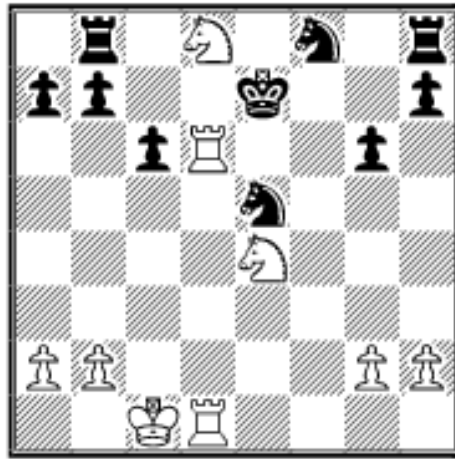
**18.Rfd1 Bf6!?**

Overestimating the threats to his King, Veselin scurries to trade off his handsome Bishop. Safer was 18...h6 19.Rd8+ Rxd8 20.Rxd8+ Kf7 21.Bd2 Ke7 21.Rb8 b5 22.Rb7+ Nd7 23.Rxa7 allowing White to win back his pawn but the dangers have passed.

**19.e5 Bxg5+ 20.Nxg5 Nxe5 21.Nxe6 Ke7 22.Nd8!**

White's best try for compensation. If 22.Nc5 b6 23.Na6 Ne6 is comfortable for Black.

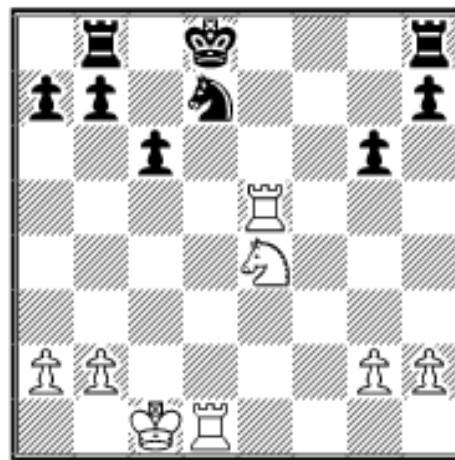
**22...Rb8 23.Ne4**



### 23...Nfd7

Falling into a dastardly trap. But who is the hunted and who is the prey? After 23...Ned7 24.Ne6 or 23...Nf7 24.Nxf7 Kxf7 25.Rd8 Rxd8 26.Rxd8, White will have excellent compensation for the pawn.

### 24.Re6+ Kxd8 25.Rxe5



Black "*appears*" to be toasted as threats are coming from all directions. The reason that appears is in quotes, is that this is a blindfold games. The players are staring at empty computer screens with that far away look in their eyes. Before reading further, stop and ask yourself what would you

do as Black.

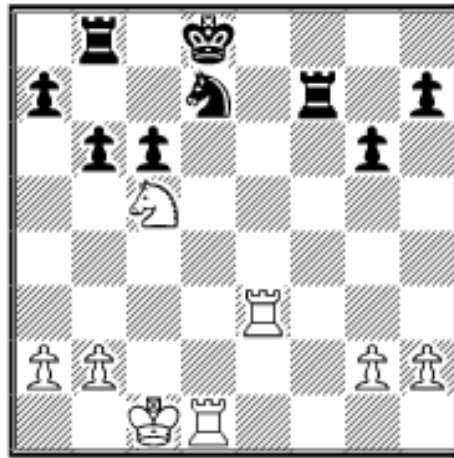
### 25...Rf8?

If you saw that the intended 25...Re8 loses a piece to 26.Rxd7+ Kxd7 27.Nf6+ picking off a Rook pat yourself on the back. That is indeed the problem! The quick tactical eye caught the trick and stopped the mind from continuing. The fork sinks the variation and a new defense was needed. Topalov thought in exactly this way and was thus prevented from executing his plan of trading pieces. He was forced to cast around for another idea. However, his plan was precisely what Topalov should have played! After 27...Kd6 28.Rxe8 Rxe8 29.Nxe8+ Ke7 30.Nc7 Kd7 31.Na8 Kc8 Black would win.

The question is, while this line isn't deep, would it have been spotted with more time on the clock? Or would our tactical eye have eliminated the line altogether?

Tigran Petrosian once made a remark to the effect that if a player doesn't see the [winning] move early in his think, he won't find it after a long time either.

**26.Nc5 Rf7 27.Re3 b6?**



The losing moment. Like I said, this line was a favorite of mine in my early days and I didn't mind an adventuresome King. The "natural" continuation was 27...Kc7 28.Ne6+ Kb6 29.Rb3+ Ka5 exiting stage right. The problem with the text is that it causes a breach on the Queenside and allows

the caged Knight to escape unlike the variation mentioned above.

**28.Rf3! Rxf3 29.Nxd7 Rf2 30.Nxb8+ Kc7 31.Na6+ Kb7 32.Nb4 c5 33.Nc2 Kc6 34.Rd2 Rf1+ 35.Rd1 Rf2 36.Rg1 g5 37.h3 h5 38.Ne1 c4 39.Nf3 c3 40.bxc3 Rxa2 41.Kb1 Rf2 42.Nxg5 Kd5 43.g4 h4 44.Rd1+ Kc4 45.Ne4 Rh2 46.g5 Kb3 47.Rg1 a5 48.g6 1-0**

A delightful game with high caliber moves displayed by both players. Bravo!

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