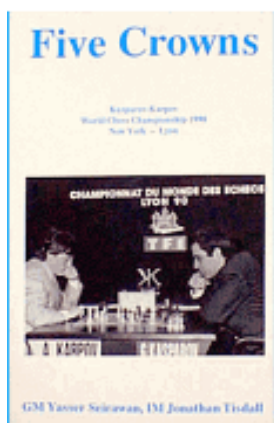


Inside Chess

Yasser Seirawan

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Round 8

1.c4 Nf6 2.Nc3 e5 3.Nf3 Nc6 4.g3 d5 5.cxd5 Nxd5 6.Bg2 Nb6 7.O-O Be7 8.a3 O-O 9.b4 Be6 10.Rb1 f6 11.d3 Nd4 12.Be3 c5!?

A normal theoretical move, but one that seems to violate the “rules” of chess. White's Bishop on g2 and Rook on b1 are now more than fully employed. A circumspect approach would be 12...Nxf3+ 13.Bxf3 c6 with a small plus for White.

13.Ne4 Nxf3+ 14.Bxf3 cxb4



Until now the recapture 15.axb4 has been automatic. A number of games have continued 15.axb4 Nd5 16.Bd2 Qd7! (better than the older 16...b6) with an equal position.

15.Nc5!

A very powerful novelty that leads to a clear advantage for White. This move took me a lot of time, because the lines are rather complicated.

15...Bxc5

After 15...Bd5 16.Bxd5+! (16.axb4 Bxf3 17.exf3 Qd5 should be alright for Black, although White may still be able to prove an advantage) 16...Nxd5 17.Ne6 Nxe3!? 18.fxe3 Qb6 19.Nxf8 Qxe3+ 20. Kg2 Bxf8 21.axb4 there is not enough compensation for the Exchange.

16.Bxc5 Rf7



Mikhail agrees to a difficult ending. The positions following 16...bxa3 17.Bxf8 Qxf8 18.Bxb7 Rb8 19.Bf3 a2 20.Rb5, intending Rb5-a5, 20...Qa3 21.Qc1 Qa4 22.Rc5 are better for White.

17.Bxb6

A technical approach. After 17.Bxb4 Nd5 18.Bd2 Rc7 19.Qa4! White can hope to profit from his two Bishops and the possible central break d3-d4.

17...axb6

An unfortunate necessity. After 17...Qxb6 18.Rxb4 Qa6 19.Qa4! White would have nearly decisive pressure on the queenside.

18.axb4 Qd4

Now a completely different phase of the game begins. Black has excellent piece play for his doubled pawns, but if White can neutralize Black's pieces through exchanges, his better pawn structure will give him the sunny side of a long afternoon.

19.Qc1 Bg4!

A necessary exchange, as White's Bishop is much stronger than its Black counterpart. After 19...Ra2 20.Rd1, intending Rd1-d2 and e2-e3, the Black pieces will soon be driven back.

20.Bxg4 Qxg4 21.Qb2! Rc7 22.Rbc1! Rac8 23.Rxc7 Rxc7 24.Ra1?!

A very strange decision. After careful play by White, Black's activity has been curtailed. White's last moves have been directed towards the advance f2-f4, which will give White a passed d3-pawn. Therefore, 24.f4! exf4 (more or less forced) 25.Qa2+! Kf8 26.Rxf4 Qd7 (26...Qh3 27.Rc4) 27.Kg2 gives White the initiative and better structure as well. Mikhail thought this line was really decisive. I played the text based on the idea Qb2-a2+ and Qa2-d5. Once the White Queen is centralized, I can use my Rook to hunt down Black's King. Mikhail now came up with a brilliant defensive idea which I had completely missed.

24...Kf7!

Well-played. The King is better placed *in front of his pawn shield* than behind. This is true, because there are no minor pieces on the board.

25.f3

Time for a new plan.

25...Qd7 26.g4!

A dual purpose move. By pushing the pawns on the kingside, White safeguards his own King, while trying to make things awkward for Black's King.

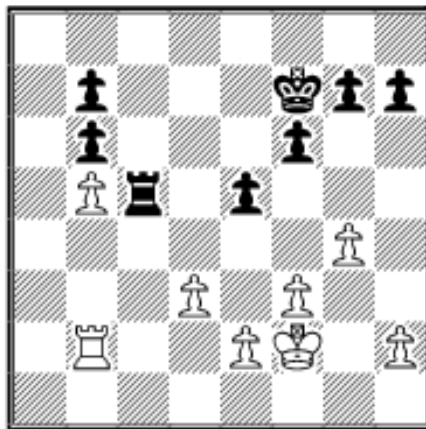
26...Kg6! 27.Kf2 Qd6 28.Kg2 Qc6 29.b5 Qc2! 30.Rb1?!

More forcing was 30.Ra2.

30...Kf7?!

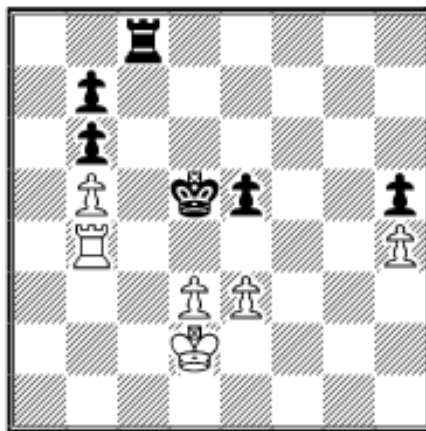
A crucial decision made under time pressure. Perhaps 30...Qc5 31.Qb4 Qe3 32.Qe4+ Qxe4 33.fxe4 Rc2 34.Kf3 Kg5 35.h4+ Kxh4 36.Rh1+ Kg5 37.Rxh7 Kg6! offered the best drawing chances.

31.Kf2 Qxb2 32.Rxb2 Rc5



For understandable reasons, Black has aimed for this fortress-like position, which he felt could not be broken into, but the pawn structure still offers White good chances.

33.Ke3 Ke6 34.Kd2! Kd6 35.Rb4 g6 36.e3 Kd5 37.h4 h5 38.gxh5 gxh5 39.f4 Rc8 40.fxe5 fxe5



Having made time control, I now hurried with my next move, giving away the victory. After 41.e4!+ Kd6 42.Rb1 White is ready for either Rb1-f1 or Rb1-g1, which will improve on the game by several tempi.

41.Ra4? Rg8!

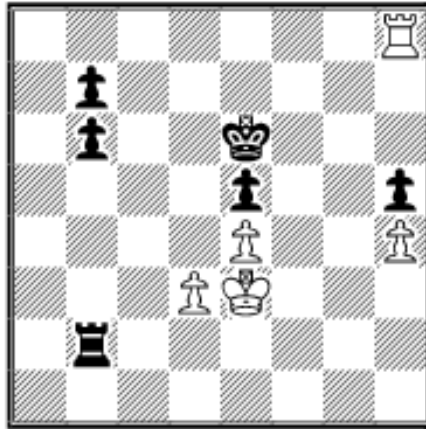
Only now did I realize that 41.Ra7 is answered by 41...Rg7 and then ...Kd5-c5 is threatened. After a long think I realized it was necessary to commit my e-pawn further.

42.Rc4 Kd6 43.e4 Rg2+ 44.Ke3 Rb2?

The losing moment. Black goes after the wrong pawn. After 44...Rh2!

45.Rc8 Rxb4 46.Rd8+ Ke6 47.Rb8 Rh2 48.Rxb7 Rb2 49.Rxb6+ Kd7
White would have to accept the exchange of b-pawn for h-pawn. With 2 vs. 1 in the center the game is a draw. The crucial difference will be that White's b5-pawn is closer to the defending Black King than White's h4-pawn.

45.Rc8 Rxb5 46.Rh8 Rb2



47.Rh6+!

White will now win a lot of tempi.

**47...Kd7 48.Rxb5 Kd6 49.Rh6+ Kd7
50.Rh7+ Kd6 51.Rxb7 Kc6 52.Re7
Kd6 53.Rh7**

At last, Black has earned the right to move, but it no longer helps him. The h4-pawn combined with the weakness of the e5-pawn is decisive.

53...Rh2 54.Rh6+ Kd7 55.Kf3 b5 56.Kg4

Simple threats of Rh6-b6 and Kg4-f5 now decide.

56...Kc7

The last chance. Black places his fate in the hands of his b-pawn.

57.Re6 Rd2 58.Rxe5 Kc6 59.h5 Rxd3

After 59...b4 60.h6 b3 61.h7 Rh2 62.Rh5 Rxb5 63.Kxb5 b2 64.h8Q b1Q the two connected passed pawns easily win.

60.h6 Rd8 61.Rh5 b4 62.h7 1-0

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