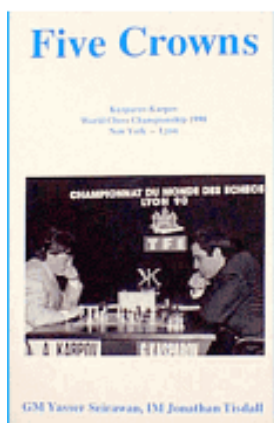


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Yasser Seirawan-Alexander Shabalov

Slav D10

United States (ch) (7) Key West 1994

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.Nc3 e5

Alexander is well known for his attacking penchant so his choice of the Slav Gambit came as no surprise. I decided to play a peaceful variation, knowing full well he'd be prepared to take risks for the initiative.

4.e3 e4 5.Qb3 Nf6 6.Nh3 Bd6 7.cxd5 cxd5 8.Bd2 Nc6?! 9.Nxd5 O-O 10.Bc4?! Bxh3 11.gxh3 Rc8 12.Rc1 Kh8!



An excellent decision which leaves White in a quandary as to what to do with his king. Going kingside with 13.O-O Nxd5 14.Bxd5 Qh4 appears inadvisable and the queenside is out, so that leaves the center. After a long think, I devised a risky defensive strategy based on my bishops covering a lot of entry squares combined with a gradual shifting of the king to the queenside.

13.Be2! Nxd5 14.Qxd5 f5

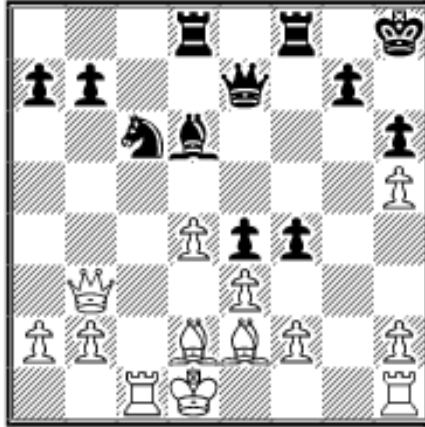
Alexander is in his glory. He has the initiative. My next moves are based on the idea of utilizing my extra pawn positively rather than allowing my pawns to become "weakies."

15.h4! Qe7 16.Kd1! Rcd8 17.h5 h6

My first triumph. He doesn't want me to play h5-h6, which will uncover his king. But now I have the g6-square and the h5-pawn might prove very

useful in the ending or even in a mating pattern with a bishop on g6. An important variation was 17...Bg3 18.Qxd8! Rxd8 19.hxg3, when White has a very safe position. Also the variation 17...f4 18.h6 fxe3 19.hxg7+ Qxg7 20.fxe3 Rf2 21.Qxe4 is fine for White, as Black's king has been exposed.

18.Qb3 f4



19.h3!!

I was extremely proud of this move for two reasons. First, it provides a protected square, making a possible Be2-g4 invulnerable. I also felt that this would be like waving a red flag before an angry bull. Alexander would be whipped into an attacking frenzy by my desire to save an ugly f2-pawn. I was still harboring visions of Rc1-c2 and Kd1-c1, exiting stage left.

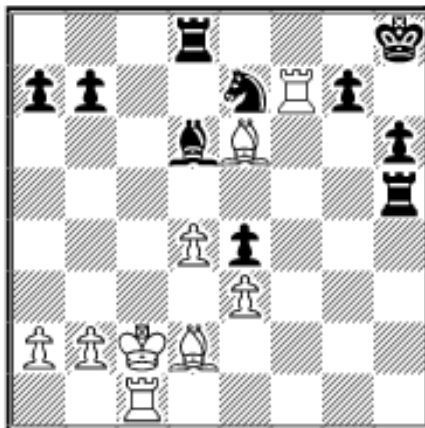
19...fxe3 20.fxe3 Rf2

I was happy to see this, as it allows me to bring my h1-rook into play. While 20...Qh4? 21.Qe6 (21.Be1!?) is no problem for White, more worrisome lines involved 20...Bg3, preparing to either sacrifice against d4 or to simply reposition the Black pieces.

21.Rf1 Rh2 22.Qf7

Heading for what I thought to be a nice ending, but 22.Bg4 Rf8 23.Rxf8+ Qxf8 24.Kc2 Bb4 25.Rd1 Qf2?! 26.Qe6 is more promising for White.

22...Rxb3 23.Bg4 Rg3 24.Qxe7 Nxe7 25.Be6 Rg5 26.Kc2 Rxb5 27.Rf7



A game of amazing complexity. Now it is White who has sacrificed a pawn for the initiative. With active pieces and a weak e4-pawn, I rated my chances as no worse.

27...Rg5 28.Bc3 Nd5 29.Bxd5 Rxd5 30.Rxb7 a5 31.Rg1 Bf8?

We were in time trouble, but this qualifies as a very bad move. Black had to play 31...g5 in order to get his

passers on the move.

32.Ra7 Rf5?

Same criticism as above. Again 32...h5 was called for.

33.d5??

Unable to resist the opportunity to play d4-d5. After the obvious 33.Rxa5 Rf3 34.Kd2 Re8 35.a4 Kh7 36.Re5 Rxe5 37.dxe5 Bc5 38.Rg4 White wins by just pushing his passers home.

33...Rdxd5 34.Bxg7+ Bxg7 35. Rgxg7 Rd3!

A tricky shot. I hadn't anticipated that Black had any mating threats against my king. The text threatens ...Rf5-c5+ and mate next move!

36.Rh7+ Kg8 37.Rag7+ Kf8 38.Rc7 Rf2+ 39.Kc1 Rf1+ 40.Kc2 Rf2+ 41.Kc1 Draw

A mistaken decision to agree to a draw. After 41.Kb1 Rf1+ 42.Rc1 Rxc1+ 43.Kxc1, White still retains the advantage.



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