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Inside Chess

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*Winning Chess Combinations*

by Yasser Seirawan

Yasser Annotates:

Topalov - Kasparov, Las Palmas 1996

Veselin Topalov (2750) - Garry Kasparov (2785)

Las Palmas, Gran Canaria (1) 1996

Bogo-Indian [E11]

1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6

A bit of a surprise. Although Garry has played a large number of defenses, his favorite KID was certainly what Topalov had prepared against.

3.g3!?

It's interesting to note that the top players feel the Nimzo- and Queen's Indian Defenses offer Black a solid game. Therefore, the Catalan has become a bit of a favorite.

3...Bb4+ 4.Bd2 Be7

The alternatives 4...Qe7 and 4...a5 are more popular than the text, which leaves Black with a somewhat passive position.

5.Bg2 d5 6.Nf3 0-0 7.0-0 c6

The Closed Catalan, an intriguing choice by the normally rambunctious Kasparov.

8.Qc2 b6 9.Ne5

I consider this move premature. White wants to increase the influence of his g2-bishop, but he has superior options after 9.Rd1 Bb7 10.Bf4 as played in Piket-Seirawan, Amsterdam 1996.

9...Nfd7 10.Nd3 Bb7 11.Rd1 a5 12.a3 Ba6!



This annoying strike forces White to resolve the central tension, as 13.b3 a4! favors Black.

13.cxd5 cxd5 14.Be3

After the text, White has to give up any claim of an opening advantage. He is concerned about the potential weakness of his d4-pawn, but is unwilling to play e2-e3, locking in his d2-bishop. White avoids 14.Nc3 Nc6

15.Nxd5? Nxd4 16.Nxe7+ Qxe7, when Black will seize the e2-pawn and the initiative. 14.e4 Nf6 15.e5 Nfd7 gains space, but isn't a promising French Defense position for White. Finally, 14.Bf4 Qc8 15.Nc3 Nc6 16.e3 g5 shows the awkwardness of White's dark-squared bishop.

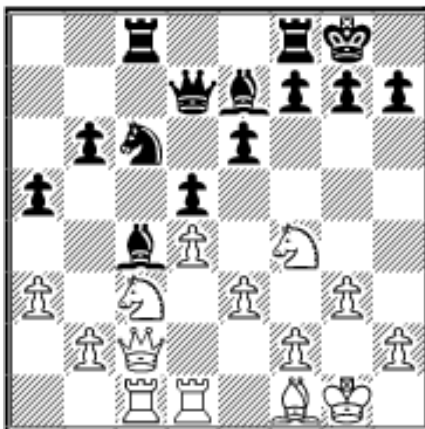
14...Ra7!

This looks awkward, but is quite strong. Black develops his passive a8-rook to the open c-file.

15.Nc3 Rc7 16.Bf4 Rc8 17.Bxb8

Not a happy decision, as White gets rid of his problem bishop for no gain. A possible alternative is 17.g4!?, securing the g3-retreat square. Mind you, it is reasonable not to want to play such weakening moves!

17...Nxb8 18.Rac1 Nc6 19.e3 Bc4 20.Bf1 Qd7 21.Nf4



21...b5!?

In typical Kasparov fashion, Garry introduces a tactical battle that can't be avoided. Black could try 21...Bxf1 22.Rxf1 Bd6 with equal play, but he has greater ambitions.

22.Bxc4

Avoiding 22.Nxb5?? Bxf1 23.Rxf1 Nxd4 24.Nxd4 Rxc2 25.Rxc2 e5, as

Black wins. Nor can White disturb the c4-bishop with 22.b3?, which would lead to the loss of the a3-pawn.

22...bxc4 23.e4

White has no choice. Black's superior pawn structure on the queenside

gives him a strong strategic advantage.

23...Bf6

The position is rich in tactical possibilities. Garry had to consider 22...e5!? 23.dxe5 (23.Nfxd5 Nxd4) 23...d4 with sharp consequences. Another possibility was 22...Bg5!? 23.exd5 Nxd4 24.Rxd4 e5 25.Re4 exf4 26.gxf4, which might work out in White's favor. While Kasparov undoubtedly considered these lines, after introducing 21...b5, it was the text that he intended.

24.exd5 Nxd4 25.Qe4 e5 26.Nh5



Since 21...b5, the players have been on a collision course toward this position. Who stands better? And why? Certainly, both sides can point to their trumps. Garry continues to show his calculating prowess, while being guided by his attacking intuition.

26...Bg5 27.f4 f5! 28.Qg2

It appears that Black's central position is about to collapse, but Kasparov has

prepared a resource.

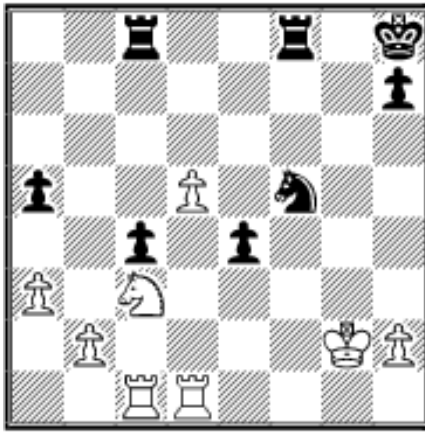
28...Qf7! 29.Nxg7 Qxg7 30.fxg5 Qxg5

The immediate 30...e4 also deserves consideration, but transposition into the game is likely.

31.Kh1 e4 32.g4!?

Topalov fights back by trying to break up the central team. Both players display their aggressive natures by doing the utmost to seize the initiative. White had to also consider 32.Ne2 Nf3 33. Nf4, when again both players have their trumps. If 33...Rf6, 34.d6 keeps the position unclear.

32...Kh8 33.gxf5 Qxg2+ 34.Kxg2 Nxf5



Tactics have taken a pause and assessment of endgame prospects is in order. The players have fought to a standstill. While still unclear, the position is roughly balanced.

35.Kh1?!

I don't see the need to step back into the corner. Furthermore, to allow Black's knight the ideal blockading square on d6 feels wrong. 35.Re1 e3

36.d6 Rcd8 37.Ne4 Nxd6 38.Rxe3 Nxe4 39.Rxe4 Rd2+ 40.Kg3 looks drawn.

35...Nd6 36.Re1 Rf4 37.a4!

A good move, as Nc3-b5 will reduce the position to a draw.

37...Rb8 38.Re2?!

I see no reason to avoid a simple draw, e.g., 38.Nb5 Nxb5 39.axb5 Rxb5 40.Rxc4 Rxd5 41.Rcxe4 Rxe4 42.Rxe4 Rd1+ 43.Kg2 Rd2+ 44.Kg3 Rxb2 45.Re7, followed by Re7-a7.

38...Kg7 39.Rce1?! Rb4!

A nice trick that was likely played in mutual time trouble. Naturally, Topalov was expecting 39...Re8 40.Nb5 with an easy draw. The text came as a nasty surprise. Upon 40.Nxe4?? Nxe4 41.Rxe4 Rxe4 42.Rxe4 c3! 43.Re7+ Kf8 Black wins. Left to his own devices, Black will play ...h7-h5-h4-h3, applying a clamp. As the possibility of ...Kg7-f6-e5 could prove menacing, it's clear that Black has gained the better prospects.

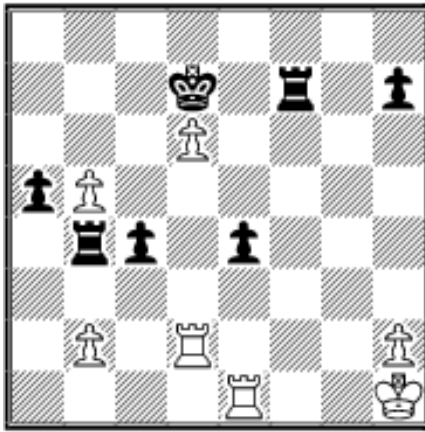
40.Nb5

Although late, this move is probably best under the circumstances.

40...Nxb5 41.axb5 Kf7 42.d6

The same trick as before poisons the e4-pawn. The position has suddenly become promising for Black.

42...Ke6 43.Rd2 Kd7 44.Rg1 Rf7 45.Re1



45...a4!

I can't help but admire Kasparov's ability to use all the tricks at his disposal. Now 46.Rxe4 c3! 47.Rxb4 cxd2 48.Rd4 Rf1+ wins.

46.Re3 Rg7

Preparing the possibility of ...Rb4-b1 checkmate. Topalov must have been amazed to find himself in serious

difficulties.

47.Rxe4 a3 48.Re7+ Rxe7 49.dxe7+ Kxe7 50.bxa3 Rb1+ 51.Kg2 c3

Black's breakthrough reaps its rewards, as the c3-pawn can't be stopped. A magical endgame by Kasparov.

52.Re2+ Kd6 53.Kf3 Kd5! 54.a4 Kd4 55.a5 Rxb5 56.a6 Ra5 57.Re4+ Kd5 58.Re3 c2 59.Rc3 Rc5! 0-1

Kasparov's final beautiful point. White is skewered after 59.Rxc5+ (59.a7 Rxc3 is check!) 59...Kxc5 60.a7 c1=Q 61.a8Q Qh1+.

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