



## COLUMNISTS

*Inside Chess*

Yasser Seirawan

*Winning Chess  
Combinations*

by Yasser Seirawan

## Yasser Annotates:

## Damjanovic - Seirawan, Belgrade 1991

There is a simple rule of thumb for winning a tournament: Draw the bad positions, win the equal ones. Reverse the theorem and you find yourself in last place. Such was my fate in Belgrade's 1991 Investabank tournament (I find that the passage of time helps lend objectivity to one's view of losses).

I would like to look at a game that propelled me towards the bottom of the crosstable. If it's true that we learn more from our losses than our wins (and I think it is), then perhaps we can both benefit. In this game the moral is: don't get too wrapped up in your own plans!

*Branko Damjanovic-Yasser Seirawan*

Belgrade 1991

Reti Opening [A09]

**1.Nf3 d5 2.c4 d4 3.g3 Nc6 4.Bg2 e5 5.O-O**

This seems the most precise. After 5.d3 Bb4+ 6.Bd2 a5, White has lost some options.

**5...g6!?**

A troubling decision. The straight-ahead 5...e4 6.Ne1 Nf6 7.d3 Bf5 8.Bg5 exd3 9.Nxd3 favors White, as the g2-bishop exerts unpleasant pressure. A sterile equality looms after 5...Nf6 6.d3 a5 (6...Be7 7.b4! Bxb4 8.Nxe5! favors White) 7.e3 dxe3 8.Bxe3 Be7, when the inevitable d3-d4 makes a draw certain. With the text I also indirectly offer a draw, but found it to be the only possible way to invite play.

**6.d3**

Disappointing for me. The seemingly more enterprising 6.b4? Bg7 7.b5 Nce7 8.d3 a6 leads to a promising position for Black.

**6...Bg7 7.Nbd2?**

This attempt to transpose into a favorable variation of the Benoni just gives Black a space advantage for free. White had to be content with a draw by: 7.b4 Nxb4 8.Qa4+ Nc6 9.Nxe5 Bxe5 10.Bxc6+ bxc6 11.Qxc6+ Bd7 12.Qe4 f6 13.f4 Bf5 14.Qc6+ Bd7 15.Qe4 Bf5 with a repetition. If White wants to avoid this draw, he should try 7.Na3! Nge7 8.Bd2 a5 9.Nc2 OO 10.a3 a4 11.Nb4 Na5 with sharp play.

**7...a5 8.b3**

A necessary precaution if White is to get

queenside play. If 8.a3?, then 8...a4!, when Black controls the center and has an edge on the queenside.

### 8...Nge7?

I agonized for more than half-an-hour over this natural move. The problem was that I was so delighted with the position after eight moves that my ambitions had soared. The position after 8...f5 9.a3 Nf6 10.Rb1 O-O 11.b4 axb4 12.axb4 e4 13.dxe4 fxe4 14.Ng5 e3 15.fxe3 looked quite promising:



This position gave me a major headache. Thus far, Black's play has been logical and powerful and I expected something good to be in the offing. But what? The "normal" 15...Ng4 is soundly refuted by 16.Bd5+ and White has gone over to the attack. And after 15...h6 16.Nge4 dxe3 17.Nxf6+ Bxf6 18.Ne4, Black has nothing to show for his efforts.

The more I thought about the position, the more I came to the conclusion that White's compact position didn't offer me many prime attacking opportunities. Clearly, I'd have to "build" things up a little. However, while I'm

building White is planning a2-a3, Ra1-b1 and b3-b4-b5, booting my c6-knight, and the move played takes away the e7-square as a retreat for the c6-knight.

Black's best formation is obtained by 8...f5 9.a3 Nh6! 10.Rb1 O-O (A key decision. Black could force White to expend more tempi getting in b3-b4 by 10...Qe7 11.Ne1 -- O-O 12.Nc2 Nf7 13.b4 g5!, when White's defensive knight on f3 has moved away.) 11.b4 axb4 (developing the a8-rook) 12.axb4 Nf7 13.b5 Ne7:



Black has an ideal kingside attacking opportunity. Frustrated by my inability to choose between two better variations, I chose the text. Why?

### 9.a3 Bd7?

Huh? Folks, this is a prime example of a meaningless developing move. All it does is weaken the b7-pawn, make the bishop a target and lose a tempo. The move is a minus! After 9...h6 10.Rb1 g5 11.b4 axb4 (Another key decision. Black can delay this exchange.) 12.axb4 Ng6, Black still has some kingside

ambitions.

### 10.Rb1 Rb8?

Trying to justify ...Bc8-d7. The idea is to meet 11.b4 by 11...axb4 12.axb4 b5, when the b4-pawn is a target. But by playing on the queenside, Black is helping White develop an initiative there.

### 11.Qc2! O-O 12.Ne4! h6 13.b4 axb4 14.axb4 b5?

This leads to a clear edge to White. Black had to abandon his plan and try 14...b6 15.b5 Na5 16.Ba3 f5 17.Ned2 Rf7 with a small plus for White. I have to admire 14...b5? Better in the center and the kingside, I decide to be better on the queenside as well. Greed. Man's noblest emotion.

**15.Nc5 (1:05) 15...Be8 (1:40)**

Along with an inferior game, my clock has been ticking too fast!

**16.Bd2**

Emphasizing Black's lack of piece coordination. Black has no plan.

**16...Nf5?**



Vacating the e7-square in the wrong way. Best was 16...Nc8, aiming for ...Nc8-d6. The text makes the f5-knight a target too. Black's problem is 16...bxc4? 17.dxc4! (17.Qxc4? Nxa7! gives Black a great game if he can achieve ...Na7-b5 and ...Ne7-d5). Now, despite Black's central superiority, his pawns are frozen and White cruises on the queenside with b4-b5 and Bd2-b4. Black's game would be a wreck after 16...bxc4?

**17.Na6!**

Starting a combination that wins a pawn.

**17...Rb6 18.cxb5 Rxb5 19.Nh4!**

The point. If Black had played 16...Nc8, the f5-knight wouldn't be *en prise*.

**19...Nxh4 20.Bxc6 (1:36) 20...Bxc6 (1:50) 21.Qxc6 Rb6 22.Qc4??**

A serious oversight by White. Forced and strong was 22.Qxc7 Qa8 23.gxh4 Qxa6, when White has won a pawn but Black has a fair chance of stopping the b4-pawn.

**22...Qa8!**

Ooops. Suddenly Black gets an attack.

**23.gxh4 Rxa6 24.Qxc7 Rc8 25.Qd7 Ra2!**

Correctly playing for the win rather than a blockade of the b4-pawn.

**26.Rfd1 Rcc2 (1:55)**

Time-trouble is rearing its ugly head, but the win is in sight. I now expected 27.Be1 Rxe2 28.Qg4 h5 29.Qg2 Qxg2+ 30.Kxg2 Bf8 31.b5 Reb2 32.b6 Bd6 33.b7 Kg7, when the black king waltzes over to collect the b7-pawn. I hadn't decided if this ending was winning or not when my opponent blitzed out his next move.

**27.b5!? Rxd2 28.Rdc1??**



Losing. With my mind working at 4,000 RPMs, my main line was 28.Rxd2 Rxd2 29.b6 Qa2 30.Qb5. Unquestionably, I would have continued with the intended 30...Bf8 31.b7 Bd6 32.b8=Q+ Bxb8 33.Qxb8+ Kg7 with an easy win. GM Predrag Nikolic caused me a restless night by innocently asking during the postmortem, "What about 33.Qe8+?" Now 33...Kg7 34.Rxb8 and White wins! Amazing. What was my mistake after 22.Qc4? Should I have been playing to blockade the b-pawn and not go for the attack? I couldn't believe the



attack failed. Finally, at 3AM I found the following after 30.Qb5:



I should redirect my attack towards White's king: 30...Qe6!! 31.b7 Qg4+ 32.Kh1 Qxe2 33.b8=Q+ Kh7, when despite White's extra queen, his king will be mated.

**28...Bf8??**

Snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. After 28...Rdc2 29.b6 Rab2 White can give up.

**29.Rc7 (1:56)**

Whoops. I missed that one. I watched my flag rise while silently cursing myself. The game is lost.

**29...Be7 30.Rc8+?**

After 30.Qxe7, my resignation isn't far away.

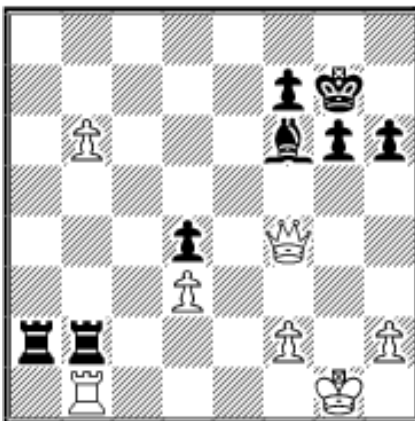
**30...Qxc8 31.Qxc8+ Kg7 32.Qc7?**

Passed pawns should be pushed. The "criminal's lust" wasn't crying out loudly enough.

**32...Bxh4 33.Qxe5+?**

A further mistake that helps me. Now my dark-squared bishop can control the b8-square.

**33...Bf6 34.Qf4 Rxe2 35.b6 Reb2??**



Tossing the game away for the last time. By 35...Be5 (Of course!), followed by ...Reb2, I could still put up stiff resistance.

**36.Rxb2 Rxb2 37.Qc7 Rb5 38.b7 Be5 39.Qxe5+?**

More to the point was b8=Q with an instant handshake. Both players continued to blitz each other until move forty-eight.

**39...Rxe5 40.b8=Q Rg5+ 41.Kf1 Rg4 42.Qe5 + Kg8 43.h3 Rh4 44.Kg2 g5 45.Qf6 Kf8 46.Kg3 Kg8 47.Qd8+ Kg7 48.Qd6 f6**

At this point my flag fell and I stopped the clock so that we could reconstruct our scoresheets. The Belgrade audience burst into applause, construing my action as resignation. The wall-boy obliged the audience further by putting up 1-0 on the board. After the reconstruction, the players settled back down to play and the audience calmed down to wait for the next resignation.

After the game, chief arbiter Carlos Falcon confided that he had been put in an awkward situation. What if my opponent claimed a win because I stopped the clock? Chief arbiters are there to enforce the rules and my action, though natural, was illegal. I've played in so many open tournaments without arbiters around that stopping the clock after a flag has fallen is second nature. According to the FIDE rules, stopping the clock without permission is a legal way of resignation! Players be warned!

Despite Black's near-fortress the game can't be saved.

**49.Qb8 Kf7 50.Qh8 Ke7 51.Qg8 Kd6 52.Qe8 Kd5 53.Qe7 Rf4 54.Qh7 Kc5 55.Qxh6 Kb4 56.h4! Rxh4 57.Qxf6 Kc3 58.Qxg5 Rh1 59.Qb5 1-0**

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