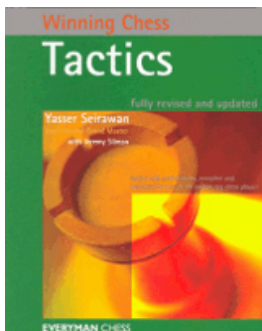




## COLUMNISTS

## Inside Chess

Yasser Seirawan



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## Yasser Annotates

## 1987 United States Championship, Part Three

Yasser and company continue their coverage of the 1987 United States Championship, from the third issue of *Inside Chess* 1988/03.

## Round Eight

A round chock-full of interesting games. Whitehead-Kudrin was a confusing game worthy of close scrutiny. Jay, playing the white side of a Grünfeld ending, was on the edge of either winning or losing. Ultimately, after seeming to get all the tempos break his way, he won a nice game.

I consolidated my tournament lead with a nice win over Dmitri from the black side of a Modern Defense. Dmitri came armed with a dangerous attacking idea. Great! His only problem was that he hadn't come to the board in an aggressive mood. Vacillating between attacking and playing solidly, he did neither.

Dlugy-Christiansen saw several spurned draw offers from both players. Larry chose a passive variation of the Queen's Gambit Declined and was saddled with a backward c6-pawn. However, despite a queen sacrifice at the end, the game always appeared balanced. Draw.

In Kogan-de Firmian, both players were satisfied with a draw.

There was an amusing moment in the game Wilder-Rohde. After quickly playing his first ten or eleven moves in a Queen's Gambit, Wilder went into a long think, then judged his attack to be slower than Rohde's. Later Wilder claimed to be lost after a mere eleven moves. Was he?

Walter Browne had great pressure for a long time against Benjamin. But Joel gritted it out and saved a tough game.

An intriguing fiasco is the following one. When these two get together they always seem to bring out the worst in each another!

**Fedorowicz, John (2520) – Gulko, Boris (2565)**

USA-ch Estes Park (8), 1987  
French Defense [C16]

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.Nc3 Bb4 4.e5 b6 5.a3 Bf8 6.Nf3 Ne7 7.Ne2

Fedorowicz's pet idea. Other recent developments include 7.Bb5+ c6 8.Ba4!?, in order to avoid an exchange of light-squared bishops. John's plan is very simple: Student body right! Everything on the kingside!

7...Ba6 8.Nf4 Bxf1 9.Kxf1 h5 10.Qd3 Nbc6 11.Bd2 Qd7 12.g3 Nf5

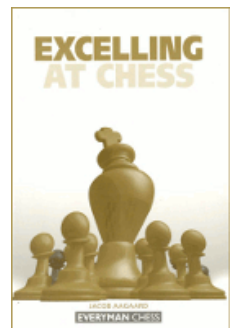
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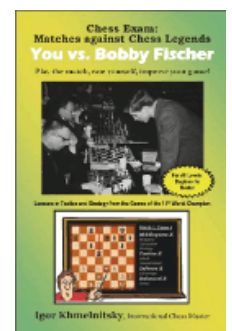
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Both players appeared happy with their positions. White has a nice edge in space and appears able to play on both sides of the board. Black has his knight on the excellent outpost f5 and is playing the French without his bad light-squared bishop.

What could be sweeter?

### 13.h3?

The start of a mistaken idea. Clearly Black must castle long: going to the kingside would be suicide. So what's John doing with the kingside?

He's opening it up against himself! My recommendation is the positionally suspect idea of preempting Black from going long. How about 13.b4!? Be7 14. h4!? After connecting his rooks, White can follow up with b5 and c4. Leaving the queenside alone just helps Boris decide where his king's going.

### 13...Be7 14.Kg2 0-0-0 15.g4?

Fedorowicz stubbornly clings to his rotten idea of booting Black's knight. Though it's an admirable quality to be loyal to your plans, you sometimes you have to change horses. Again, I'll mention 15.h4.

### 15...hxg4 16.hxg4 Nh6 17.Kg3?

This move walks into a deadly uppercut. White had to play 17.g5, though he's clearly worse after ...Nf5.

### 17...g5! 18.Nh5



### 18...f5!!

Oh yeah! Crunchola.

### 19.exf6 e5!

Boris now achieves another fantasy of all French Defense players: rolling White back with a center rush.

### 20.Kg2 e4 21.Qa6+ Kb8 22.Nxg5 Bd6 23.Rh4 Nxd4 24.Rah1 Nxg4

Black has two crushing threats, ...Nf5 and ...Qf5. White has no defense.

## 25.Qf1

In attempting to stop Black's threats, John sets himself up for a simple combination.

## 25...Nf3??



Played after a long think. The crispiest win is 25...Rxh5 26.Rxh5 Ne3+, after which White can't avoid mate. What's even worse, from Black's point of view anyway, is that he must now play into an ending an exchange up - but with White having excellent drawing chances!

## 26.Nxf3 exf3+ 27.Kxf3 Nh2+ 28.R1xh2 Bxh2 29.Qh3! Qxh3+ 30.Rxh3 Be5

When visualizing this position at move twenty-five, Boris probably thought the ending a trivial win. White must lose another pawn; Black will be a full exchange up. But not so fast! Suddenly all of White's pieces are optimally placed to support the passed f-pawn. Black must take draconian measures to deal with the little critter. With White's excellent initiative, the result is no longer surprising.

## 31.Kg4! Bxb2 32.Bg5 Rdg8 33.Rb3

Avoiding Black's threat of 33...Bxf6 34.Nxf6 Rxg5+ and ...Rxh3.

## 33...Bd4 34.f4 c5 35.Ng7 Rxg7

Played out of frustration as much as anything else. White has been allowed far too much activity.

Boris didn't want to wait for ...Kf5 and ...Ne6. Still, he could have improved over the game continuation with 35...Rh2 - but even then I don't think the extra tempo would have changed the result.

## 36.fxg7 Bxg7 37.Re3 Bd4 38.Re7 Rh2 1/2-1/2

Speculation was rife at the end of the game. Who stands better? Well, it's tough to say, but the game result is probably a correct one. One likely continuation is 39.f5 Rxc2 40.f6 Bxf6 41.Bxf6, when Black has full compensation for his piece. The only problem for Black is his king: with all the pawns missing it's a book draw; with pawns, it's not so clear. In several variations, White's chances appear preferable.

Wow! A real turnaround and a lucky escape for Fed.

## Round Nine

Another "hiccup" in the tournament for me. Even with my point lead, I had counted on winning, with white, against Whitehead as a kind of insurance. At first everything was on schedule. A nice opening advantage. A favorable middlegame. No counterplay for Black. An imminent win of material. And then, when it was only a simple matter of technique, my technique abandoned me. After putting up a tremendous defense for eighty-six moves, Jay managed

to hold the game by forcing a stalemate. Though a disappointment for me, the result was a disaster for Jay. He wasn't the same afterward and lost all his remaining games.

To make matters worse, from my point of view anyway, Gulko-Gurevich saw Black walk into a mate in one - from a position in which White was only trying for perpetual check! Very obliging. Thus my lead was shaved to a half-point.

Kudrin-Wilder was a hellacious affair. In an exciting Sicilian both players started to headhunt. Wilder found Sergey's first. I'd like to present this game for analysis, but neither player's scoresheet is completely decipherable.

In Kogan-Browne, Walter outplayed White simply and prosaically. Then things went awry, Boris won a healthy pawn, and it looked like curtains for Walter. Not so. In fact, a disappointed Walter Browne later explained how he almost won!

Poor Boris. When one's in bad form, even a lucky break isn't enough to win....

Christiansen and Fedorowicz played a funny game. Both GMs blitzed off their moves like crazy. My first thought was that they were anxious to return to Claus Bismark's bar. But, despite appearances, the game was a serious, hard-fought affair. Fed played provocatively and Larry responded in kind by sacrificing material. The result of their imaginative play? Draw. A strange game.

After the earlier time-scramble fracas in de Firmian-Rohde and the indecorous draw in Fedorowicz-Benjamin, we were curious to see the match-up between Rohde and Benjamin. Both players were well behaved; actually, their earlier exchanges contained more fireworks than their game. Rohde sat on a small positional advantage that never got serious. Joel held his ground and the game was drawn after thirty-seven moves.

The round's most fascinating game was the match-up between de Firmian and Dlugy. Both players are noted for their excellent opening preparation. Given that they had chosen the razor-sharp Velimirovic attack, we all anxiously awaited the result - especially since Max had drawn his first eight games. This would not be a "safe" draw!

**De Firmian, Nick (2485) – Dlugy, Maxim (2520)**

USA-ch Estes Park (9), 1987

Sicilian Defense [B89]

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 Nc6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 d6 6.Bc4**

True to his style, Nick chooses the sharpest way to handle the position.

**6...e6 7.Be3 Be7 8.Qe2 0-0 9.0-0-0 Bd7 10.Bb3 Nxd4 11.Bxd4 Qa5 12.Kb1 Rac8**

Not being an expert by any means in Sicilian positions, I assume all is proceeding normally. Still, at the risk of seeming grossly naive, I don't understand what White has in this position. I seem to recall ideas with White trying Rxd4 (rather than Bxd4) after Black exchanges knights, followed by an e4-e5 push and a rook swing to the kingside. But now, with a direct kingside attack no longer being White's intention, the action shifts to the center.

**13.f4 e5!**

Mandatory. Black can't allow White the option of e5, opening up the d-file as well as giving White a base on e4 for knight maneuvers. The next few moves all appear forced; Black's 13...e5 has cleared the way for the threat ...Bg4.

**14.Nd5 Nxd5 15.exd5 Bf6 16.fxe5 Bxe5! 17.Bxe5**



### 17...Rfe8

Hmmm. It may sound strange, but even though White doesn't appear to have made any mistakes, my view is that Black is now better. How so? Well, for two reasons. First, the bishops: the diagonal for White's is blocked by the pawn on d5; Black's has an open field. Second, the pawn structure: Black's majority on the kingside is far more mobile than White's on the queenside. In short, when it comes time to "push," White will face obstacles.

So has all the fun been taken out of the Velimirovic Attack? If it has, perhaps White's entire plan is wrong; it may be that he will have to improve his play earlier.

### 18.Bc3

If Nick also felt that he stood worse in the upcoming ending, he might have tried 18.Qe1 Qd8 19.Bxd6 Rxe1 20.Rdxe1. With this queen sacrifice, he would have achieved relative material parity while keeping Black occupied with blockading the d-pawn. The line seems to lead to a safe draw for White.

**18...Rxc3 19.Qd2 Rc5 20.Qxa5 Rxa5 21.Rhe1 Kf8 22.Rxe8+ Kxe8 23.Re1 + Kf8?**



This move is motivated by Max's concern for his rook. Since a pure bishop ending is a probable win for Black, he wants to challenge White's rook on the open e-file as soon as possible. But Black shouldn't be in such a hurry: his king is also important, being far more active in the center, and having the potential to go left or right. Thus, 23...Kd8 was stronger. The problem rook can always be activated by shifting it to c7 and e7. In this line, assuming that the game continuation would remain the same, Max would have saved two tempi.

### 24.c4 Rc5 25.Kc2!?

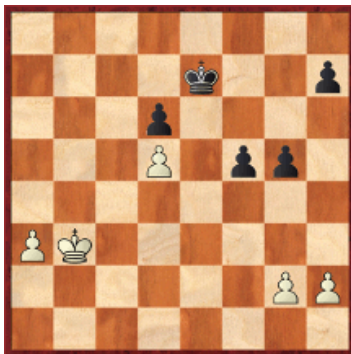
A critical move that leads by force to a fathomless king and pawn ending. It was simply impossible for either player to calculate the full consequences of the ending. Still, what choice does White have? If he idly waits, Black improves his position by playing either ...f5, g5, Kf7, etc., or ...Rc8-e8. Nick probably felt he had to risk the ending and hope for a draw.

**25...b5 26.Kc3 a5 27.a3 a4 28.Ba2 bxc4 29.Bxc4 Bb5 30.Re4 f5 31.Rd4 Rxc4+**

Why take right away? Can't Black save a tempo with 31...Ke7 32.Kb4 and then trade everything on c4? Well, not really. White's intention is to play b2-b4, not Kb4. Thus, the only line that differs substantially

from the game continuation is 31...Ke7 32.b4 axb3 33.Kxb3 Bxc4 34.Rxc4 Rxd5. In this line, Max felt that despite his extra pawn, White's counterplay with the a-pawn was good enough. Besides, he didn't believe that the upcoming king and pawn ending was drawn.

**32.Rxc4 Bxc4 33.Kxc4 g5 34.b4 axb3 35.Kxb3 Ke7**



Max is banking on a simple victory. First, his king will approach White's passed a-pawn. Then he will distract White on the kingside; and since White can't approach Black's pawns on the kingside, Black's king can just waltz over and slurp the White a- and d-pawns. Presto, simple win.

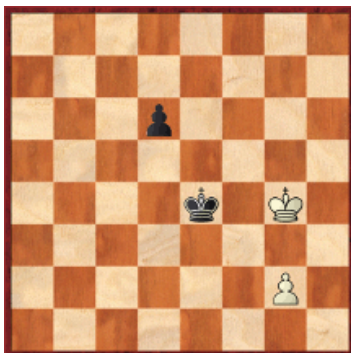
But one thing I've learned about king and pawn endings is this: they are not simple. Just "ask" any chess computer...

**36.Kc4 Kd7 37.h4! h6! 38.hxg5 hxg5 39.a4 Kc7 40.a5 Kb7 41.Kb5!**

If Black wants to make any progress, he must push one of his kingside pawns, thus making them vulnerable to attack.

Black cannot play 41...Ka7, since 42.Kc6 followed by Kxd6 allows White a simple draw.

**41...g4 42.Kc4 Ka6 43.Kd3 Kxa5 44.Ke3 Kb4 45.Kf4 Kc4 46.Kxf5 Kxd5 47.Kxg4 Ke4**



Most likely, both players had foreseen this position as early as move thirty-seven(!). The only problem is that both had come up with different evaluations. Max probably thought it a trivial win. For instance, after 48.Kh5 d5 49.g4 d4, Black queens with check. Neither does 48.Kh4 save White: By playing a timely ...Kf5, Black can still force White's king to h5.

Reflect on the position for a moment. Can White save himself?

**48.Kg3! Ke3 49.Kh2!!**

It is only with this incredible "away" move that White can salvage the game.



The move accomplishes two things: It prevents checks from behind after both players queen, and it prepares a king journey across the board to stop Black's d-pawn.

**49...d5 50.g4 Kf4 51.g5 Kxg5 52.Kg3 1/2-1/2**

After this, his ninth consecutive draw, Max was heard to say: "You know, I just can't win. Sometimes that's just the way it is."

### Round Ten

Today I survived a real scare. As white, Wilder played an *ECO*-recommended variation against a dubious defense I had prepared especially for the U.S. Championship. My reason for choosing the defense was to throw my upcoming Candidates' opponent off track. Maybe I should cross one bridge at a time! Anyway, after establishing a positional hammerlock, Michael looked to be doing me in. Fortunately, he slipped - though not far enough for my tastes, as the game ended in a draw.

My clear lead suddenly became murky when Gulko, playing black, won an excellent game against Whitehead. Darn! Jay's collapse became even more apparent in the rounds ahead.

It was White's turn to thump the Pirc in the game Browne-Rohde. Walter looked very good in winning a technical ending.

Benjamin-Kudrin and Fedorowiz-de Firmian were quick draws, everybody being a bit fatigued.

Christiansen pulled off a gigantic swindle against Gurevich from the black side of a Bogó-Indian. This game is so bad it turns one's stomach. However, others seem to have liked it, as it earned the Best Swindle prize. Poor Dmitri... When it rains it pours.

Speaking of things "raining" - well, Kogan was getting positively soaked. After nine consecutive draws, Max woke up to play a model game:

### **Sluzy, Maxim (2520) – Kogan, Boris (2460)**

USA-ch Estes Park (10), 1987

Old Indian [A55]

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 d6 3.Nc3 e5**

It's interesting to see the Old Indian making a return to the international chess scene. Can someone please explain why? I've seen so many prosaic wins for White. If White avoids making massive blunders, Black usually loses. But if Black makes even one misstep, White pounces, scores, and yells out "Next"!

**4.Nf3 Nbd7 5.e4 c6 6.Be2 Be7 7.0-0 0-0 8.Be3 a6 9.d5 cxd5 10.cxd5 b5**



Does this move gain space or just create a weakness? The floor is open to debate. In any case, Black should first play 10...Ng4, disrupting White's harmonious plans for the queenside.

**11.Nd2!**

The knight move secures Max a tremendous edge. With White having a big edge in the center, a safe king, and all of his minors aimed at the queenside, where will Black find play?

**11...Nb6 12.a4 bxa4 13.Nxa4 Nxa4 14.Rxa4**

With the *peshky* on a6 sitting by its lonesome, White's game plan is clear.

**14...Bd7 15.Ra2!**

The greedy 15.Rxa6 allows Black good counterplay with 15...Rxa6 16.Bxa6 Ng4. White prepares the grab.

**15...Qb8 16.f3 Bb5**

Black might also consider 16...a5 followed by ...Bd8, although he would still stand worse.

**17.Bxb5 Qxb5 18.Qa4 Rfb8 19.Qxb5 Rxb5 20.Rfa1 Ne8 21.b3**

How simple can you get? The game turns on this question: which is weaker - the white b-pawn or the Black a-pawn?

**21...a5**

If Black defends with 21...Nc7, White seizes the c-file with tempo: 22.Rc2 Bd8 23.Rc1 Ne8, and White has complete domination.

**22.Ra4 f5 23.b4 fxe4 24.fxe4 Bd8 25.Nc4 Ra6 26.Kf2! Nf6 27.Kf3**



A few years ago, my friend GM Quinteros suggested that Informant create a new symbol, a pillow, signifying "a dream position." The above configuration would qualify for a pillow.

**27...Rb7 28.Bg5!**

White wants to achieve a minor-piece ending of good knight against bad bishop. Black is helpless to prevent this.

**28...Rf7 29.Ke2 h6 30.Bxf6 Rxf6 31.b5! Ra7 32.b6 Raf7 33.Rxa5 Rf2+ 34.Kd3 Bxb6 35.Nxb6 Rxb6 36.R5a2 Rf3+ 37.Kc4 Rg4 38.Re2 h5 39.Nc8 1-0**

A very nice game by Max.

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