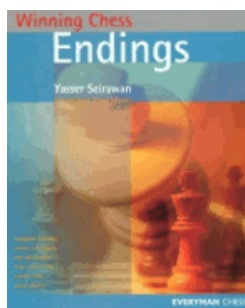




## COLUMNISTS

*Inside Chess*

Yasser Seirawan



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## Yasser Annotates

## 1987 United States Championship

Yasser and company look at some games from the 1987 United States Championship, from the very first issue of *Inside Chess* 1988/01.

## Round One

A bad day for me. Walter Browne chose a defense that gave me a tiny opening advantage. I declined an early draw offer, but overreached against Walter's superlative defense and was summarily executed.

Kogan chose an insipid way to play the Bogo-Indian. This provoked Wilder to attack him which Michael did with lip smacking gusto!

Jay Whitehead was never in danger of getting an advantage against the well prepared Max Dlugy. The last ten moves seem unnecessary.

Kudrin gained a clear advantage against Gulko but muffed his attack and the game was drawn.

The most interesting game of the round was Benjamin - deFirmian. Both players had their chances. Joel held a nice edge but then it became his turn to defend. No psychic guessed that the eventual Co-Champs would play in the first round.

Dmitry Gurevich was as surprised as anybody to find himself with a winning adjournment against Fedorowicz. In a position that required careful defense, Fed had declined a draw offer, explaining, "I got nothing better to do." Hmmm.

Rohde - Christiansen was postponed and played three days later. Larry played an irregular king's Indian with an early Bc8-f5, a system championed by Kamran Shirazi. Perhaps we'll have to start referring to it as the Shirazi king's Indian. Larry got a good position from the opening but was completely outplayed. The final position was horrifying! Larry was in atrocious form, but a nice effort by Michael Rohde.

**Wilder, Michael (2505) - Kogan, Boris (2460)**

USA-ch Estes Park (1), 1987

Bogo-Indian [E11]

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 Bb4+ 4.Nbd2 d5**

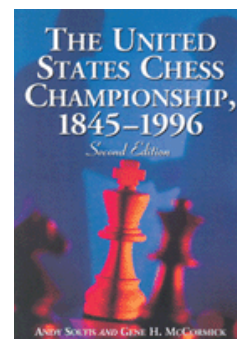
I prefer 4...b6 against the Nbd2 system.

**5.Qa4+ Nc6 6.a3 Be7?**

I don't like this move as the question soon becomes: "What is the knight doing on c6?"

**7.e3 O-O 8.Qc2 a5?**

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The start of a horrible plan. Black should probably start relocating the knight on c6, with Nb8.

**9.b3! Bd7 10.Bb2 Na7**

See previous note.

**11.Bd3 h6**

Boris claims his play to be theoretical. “Wonderful,” I thought. “This is something I’ve never learned!” The stage has been set. White has the better development, better piece location and central domination. All after just eleven moves! In addition, Black’s last move weakened his king and has made a target for White. White is fully justified in embarking on a king kill.

**12.Rg1! c5 13.dxc5 Bxc5**



**14.g4! dxc4 15.Bxc4 Rc8 16.g5**

Thud.

**16...hxcg5 17.Nxg5 Re8 18.Nxf7 Qe7 19.Ne4! Kxf7 20.Nxf6 1-0**

Kortchnoi’s expression after such a game is, “remember to reset your jaw!” Ouch!

**Benjamin, Joel (2575) - DeFirmian, Nick (2485)**

USA-ch Estes Park (1), 1987

Nimzo Indian Qc2 [E32]

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nc3 Bb4**

It’s interesting that deFirmian prefers to avoid the Benoni against a fellow practioner. After all, as you play and learn certain openings, you discover how bad they are! He prefers to sidestep any of Joel’s discoveries.

**4.Qc2 O-O 5.Nf3 d6**

I don’t understand this move. When White, I worry about 5...c5. It now

seems as if White gets a super version of positions with the two bishops with his queen bishop not hemmed in on b2.

**6.Bg5 Nbd7 7.e3 h6 8.Bh4 Qe7 9.Be2 b6 10.O-O Bxc3 11.bxc3**

Pardon? Please! A little respect for the pawn structure! I prefer giving Black the opportunity to go kamikaze with 11.Qxc3 g5 12.Bg3 Ne4 13.Qc2 f5 14.Nd2. Black's "attack" is destined to rebound against him, while 11...Bb7 12.Nd2 gives White a comfortable plus.

**11...Bb7 12.Nd2 e5 13.Rae1**

White prepares f2-f4.

**13...Rfe8 14.Bd3**

The immediate 14.f4 allows 14... exf4 15.exf4 Qe3+! 16.Kh1 Qh3! Now, however, 15.f4 is "big."

**14...e4**

A radical decision that dramatically changes the strategic picture. Still, something had to be done to prevent f4.

**15.Be2 Nf8**



**16.Bxf6?**

A strange move contrary to the needs of the position. White's position is coiled, ready to strike, but the game doesn't play itself. Best is 16.f3, when Black has three tries:

White retains his edge after 16...exf3?! 17.Bxf3 Bxf3 18.Rxf3 g5 – Otherwise 19.e3-e4 is killing – 19.Ref1 Ng4 20.Rxf7 Qxe3+ 21.Bf2 Nxf2 22.R1xf2.

Black has insufficient compensation for his pawn after 16...Ng6 17.Bxf6 (17.Bf2 is a consideration. But, if White had this intention, then 16.f4 would've been better.) 17...Qxf6 18.Nxe4! Bxe4 19.fxe4. White's menu of attacking options includes ideas with c4-c5 followed by Be2-c4 or b5 or e4-e5 and Be2-f3-c6 or d5.

Perhaps Joel fretted over 16...g5(?). But after the simple 17.Bg3 Black's kingside is leaking like a sieve. The rook on f1 is nicely placed to exploit potential tricks.

**16...Qxf6 17.f3 Qg5 18.Bd1**

White could play 18.f4 followed by f5, to surround e4 with Rf1-f4. White would probably prefer to have his pawn on b2 in that case.

**18...f5?**

True to his nature, Nick refuses to relinquish the initiative. But sometimes it's wise to hunker down. Best was 18...exf3 19.Bxf3 Bxf3 20.Nxf3 Qe7 21.e4 Ng6 when the worst has passed. Now White can safely season the morsel on e4.

**19.fxe4 fxe4 20.Rf4 Qe7 21.Bh5 Ne6 22.Rg4**

White is in no hurry to munch the pawn on e4. He also has a clear edge with 22.Bf7+ Kh8 23.Bxe6 Qxe6 24.d5. Joel also sidestepped a nice trap: 22.Bxe8 Nxf4 23.exf4 Rxe8 24.d5 It now appears that White just scarfs the e-pawn but 24...e3 25.Nf1 e2 26.Ng3 Qh4! And suddenly, winning the e-pawn isn't easy. The possibility of Bb7-a6 causes White further worry.

**22...Rf8 23.Nxe4 Kh8**



The only compensations that Black has for his pawn deficit are White's doubled pawns and momentarily awkward piece placement. White can remedy his problems with the simple 23.Bg6! followed by 24.Ng3 and Black is on the critical list. Instead, White can't resist making luft. This costs a critical tempo and prevents White from relocating his pieces.

**24.h3??**

Having failed in the center and with no prospects against White's king, Black tries...

**24.....a6!? 25.Bg6 Bc8! 26.Rg3 Bd7**

It is critical that Black prevent White's reorganizing plans. White would love to play e3-e4-e5 winning but must first move the knight on e4. Black can then be troublesome by reminding White of his poor 24th move: 27. Nf2 Qh4!? 28.Kh2 Ng5 and White can't regroup in a natural way.

**27.Qe2 b5 28.Nf2! bxc4 29.Bb1! Ng5**

White has regrouped and it has cost him his extra pawn, but with a nice center he has a lot to look forward to. He can gain a clear edge with 30.e4 followed by 31.Rge3.

**30.Qxc4?**



This walks into a pretty combination. DeFirmian, with his ever present tactical eye, achieves equality.

**30...Rxf2! 31.Kxf2 Rf8+ 32.Kg1 Nxb3+!**

The point, 33.gxh3 is destroyed by 33...Qh4 34.Kg2 Bxb3+.

**33.Rxb3 Bxb3 34.gxh3**

Forced; 34.Qd3 walks into Bf5 35.e4 d5! In the meantime Black threatens 34...Qg5.

**34...Qg5+ 35.Kh1 Qg3**

Even in severe time pressure both players saw that 35...Rf2 36.Qc6 Qg3 will mate for Black but realized that White mates first with 37.Qa8+! The game now ends in perpetual check.

**36.Rf1! Qxb3+ 37.Kg1 Qg3+ 38.Kh1 Qh3+ 39.Kg1 Qxe3+ 40.Kg2 Qg5 + 41.Kh1 Qh4+ 42.Kg2 Qg4+ 43.Kh2 Qh4+ 44.Kg2 1/2-1/2**

An exciting and interesting game. A good example of both players' style.

## **Round Two**

An extraordinary round. The highlight was the most controversial game of the tournament, DeFirmian-Rohde.

Christiansen showed up in time to go down in a not very interesting dispute in the Grnfeld exchange sacrifice variation. Larry didn't appear to be well prepared. Kudrin more then equalized. Suddenly he was simply winning. Kudrin allowed Christiansen some tricks but being two exchanges down was too much.

Dmitry Gurevich scored a nice upset, defeating Browne on the Black side of a Benoni. In recent years the Benoni has been getting clobbered in the Championships. Walter has been particularly impressive on the White side. "Mitry" showed real courage in his selection of openings.

Dlugy's game with Wilder was riveting. A very important theoretical dispute arose in Max's favorite Qa4 treatment of the queen's Indian. For a few days I found myself almost obsessed with the position which arose in the game. It is an incredibly rich position, full of tactics.

Fedorowicz - Whitehead was of critical importance to theory. Black just repeated the most topical lines given by the Informant. He could then resign! White proceeded to make his own task more difficult than necessary after having played a beautiful sequence of moves in the middlegame. He got a winning ending but poor endgame play again cost Fedorowicz an extra half a point

The games Gulko - Seirawan and Kogan - Benjamin were short draws. Probably we were all still adjusting to the altitude.

**De Firmian,Nick (2485) - Rohde,Michael A (2550)**

USA-ch Estes Park (2), 1987

Sicilian Scheveningen [B82]

*Annotations by Nick deFirmian*

**1.e4 c5 2.Nf3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.Nxd4 Nf6 5.Nc3 e6 6.f4 a6 7.Bd3**

Here the bishop is more aggressively placed than at e2, but it is exposed to Nc6-b4xd3.

**7...Be7 8.O-O O-O 9.Kh1 Nbd7 10.Qf3 Qb6 11.Nde2 Qc7 12.b4!**

With c3 protected White can play this aggressive setup - fianchettoing the bishop and gaining queenside space.

**12...b6 13.Bb2 Bb7 14.Qh3 d5 15.e5**

Probably better is Fedorowicz's idea: 15.exd5 exd5 16.a3 because 16... Ne4 17.Nxd5! Bxd5 18.Nc3 is good for White.

**15...Ne4 16.Ng3 Nxg3+ 17.hxg3 g6 18.a3! b5**

Intending 19...Nb6 with some queenside play and the important defensive possibility Bc8. Because of this I decided to rush the attack.

**19.f5!? exf5 20.Rxf5 d4**

Blocking off one of the bishops.



**21.Qh6!**

With the deadly threat of 22.Rh5 gxh5 23.Qxh7 mate. Now Black has only one move - 21...Rfc8 so that 22.Rxf7 Kxf7 23.Qxh7+?! Ke8 24.Bxg6 + Kd8 is speculative. Already being in time pressure, I was very worried about what to do. White has many dangerous possibilities: 22.Raf1; 22.Rxf7 Kxf7 23.e6+; 22.Rh5 but I don't see any clear continuation. However, Rohde didn't see this and played.

**21...Bg5? 22.Rxg5 dxc3 23.Rh5! Rfe8 24.Qxh7+ Kf8 25.Qh6+ Ke7 26.Qg5+ Ke6 27.Qg4+ Ke7 28.Qg5+ Ke6 29.Bxg6!**

The game would normally be finished now, but I was in very severe time pressure. Rohde was also in time pressure which explains the following moves.

**29...Nxe5 30.Bf5+ Kd6 31.Rd1+ Bd5 32.Rh6+? Re6 33.Bxe6 fxe6 34.Bc1 Kc6 35.Bf4 Nf7 36.Qxd5+**



**36...exd5!??**

Here I was startled, but then found the strong 37.RxK!.

At this point TD Dick Gardner declared my flag had fallen and that I had lost on time. I then produced Rohde's king (which I still had in my hand) and declared "Illegal move!." As the rules are not very clear on what is the penalty for an illegal move, there was some discussion and another move played.

[YS: White has been winning easily since 24 Qxh7+. The only reason Rohde hasn't resigned is because Nick's flag has been hanging by a thread. Naturally, his flag chose this moment to fall! Rohde cried, "FLAG!" and all hell broke loose. I know this sounds like an Alcoa commercial, but you're the referee, "You make the call!." Gardner, the tournament director, took the conversation out into the hall. What to do? Clearly, if he gives Nick anything over 4 seconds he gives him the game. But should Michael go unpunished for making an illegal move? The rule book wasn't helpful. Given that the arbiter can impose some type of "discretionary time penalty," Gardner felt uncomfortable. He decided to award White a few seconds. Well folks, there was a problem. Every game had to be timed by a USCF Master Quartz; because of the unusual second hand movements it's virtually impossible to award "a few seconds" as the second mechanism might turn at any moment. I've heard some one minute specialists boast that they're able to make many moves without the mechanism moving at all. ]

### **36....Kb6**

[YS: While reaching over to clobber his clock, Rohde knocked over his king which lay prostrate over the c6 and b7 squares. Nick froze for a moment and then rattled off ]

### **37.Be3+**

[YS: When DeFirmian's flag fell again, groans could be heard from the TD's staff. So, once again out into the hallway.

Gardner announced his decision to give Nick more time. Joel Benjamin now took it upon himself to lecture the TDs on the proper course of action. This was most annoying to Rohde as he and Joel have had a falling out over a board of directors dispute at the Manhattan Chess Club. As Michael and Joel traded verbal volleys, Michael resigned under protest. That didn't help at all. A protest would mean that the appeals committee would have to convene. The committee consisted of Benjamin (of course!), Christiansen (who disqualified himself as Nick is a close friend), and Dmitry Gurevich (who had meanwhile announced that if Rohde is awarded the victory he will withdraw in protest!). The three alternates were Kudrin, Gulko and myself.

Fortunately, Michael had twenty-four hours to think over his protest and in due course withdrew it. Whew!

The life of a TD is not an easy one. "When you're right no one remembers, when you're wrong no one forgets!" [ If I may be allowed to make a suggestion in case of a similar occurrence: simply award the player who has faced the illegal move one full minute. ]

### **1•0**

Definitely my most dramatic game of the tournament.

### **Round Three**

This game made a riveting impression. The post-mortem was twice as long as the game! It occupied me during dinner and while I slept. I had been attracted to the idea of meeting the queen's Indian with Qa4 in 1979 but I was uncertain about the fascinating complications provided by Black's speculative pawn sacrifice. At the Riga Interzonal I showed the



line to Mednis who used the Black side to gain a useful draw against Kuzmin. Still, I had not resolved the variation to my satisfaction.

**Dlugy,Maxim (2520) - Wilder,Michael (2505)**

USA-ch Estes Park (2), 1987

Queen's Indian: Dlugy's 5.Qa4 [E15]

**1.d4 Nf6 2.c4 e6 3.Nf3 b6 4.g3 Ba6 5.Qa4 c6 6.Nc3 b5 7.cxb5 cxb5 8.Nxb5 Qb6 9.e3**

Grefe once played 9.Nc3 against me. I lost but had a better game after 9... Bb4 10.Bg2 Nc6 11.O-O Bxc3 12.bxc3 Bxe2 13.Re1 Bb5.

**9...Bb7 10.Be2 Bc6 11.Qc4 Qb7 12.O-O a6 13.Nc3 Bxf3 14.Bxf3 Qxf3 15.Qc8+ Ke7 16.e4**

So far both players have remembered the theory books. Now things begin to break down.

**16...h5**

The grab 16...Nxe4 costs the game after 17.Qb7 +-.

**17.d5**



Otherwise 17...h4 leads to mate.

**17...h4??**

Oops. 17...Ng4 was forced. But sometimes forced moves are strong moves! We spent lots of time on White's options. At first I thought White was just lost. For instance, 18.d6+ Kf6 19.Qd8+ Kg6 20.Qg5+ Kh7 and White can resign with a clear conscience. Or 18.d6+ Kf6 19.Qb7 Nc6 and again Max is lost. Also uninspiring was 18.Bf4 or Bg5+. Only after considerable effort could the assembled find the incredible 18.e5!!? Now: 18...Nxe5 19.d6+ Kxd6 20.Qd8!? or 20.Bf4 with fathomless complications or the "simple ending": 19...Kf6 20.Qd8+ Kg6 21.Qg5+ Kh7 22.Qxe5 Nc6 23.Qe4+ Qxe4 24.Nxe4 The question that the assembled couldn't answer was who stands better? I can only assure the reader that a deep look into the position with a fellow chess friend can become a richly rewarding experience. I leave it to you then. Back to the game.

**18.d6+!! ½-½**

Michael jumped at Max's offer. Apparently Max had forgotten a check! 18...Kxd6 19.Bf4+ e5 20.Rad1+ Ke6 21.Qc4+ d5 22.Nxd5 Nxd5 23.Qxd5+ Kf6 24.Qxe5+ Kg6 25.Qf5# Both players had seen this simple variation, but both players had been unduly impressed by 22...Qxe4 Can you find White's simple win?

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