

GATA KAMSKY

CHESS GAMER

Volume 1: Awakening (1989–1996)

by
Gata Kamsky



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KEY TO SYMBOLS

!	a good move
?	a weak move
!!	an excellent move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
□	only move
=	equality
∞	unclear position
∞	with compensation for the sacrificed material
±	White stands slightly better
∓	Black stands slightly better
±	White has a serious advantage
∓	Black has a serious advantage
+ -	White has a decisive advantage
- +	Black has a decisive advantage
→	with an attack
↑	with initiative
↔	with counterplay
△	with the idea of
▷	better is
≤	worse is
N	novelty
+	check
#	mate

*This book is dedicated to my loving wife,
Vera Nebolsina,
whose support and encouragement
were among the key factors
that allowed me to complete the work.*

G. K.

INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader,

This work was originally envisioned as a single-volume collection of my most memorable games, annotated by me, à la Bobby Fischer's *My 60 Memorable Games*. However the more I delved into the past, the more things started to rise up from the recesses of my memory, which, along with deeper analysis and more detailed introductions to the games, made it more like an anthology of chess stories. Thankfully, my gracious editors decided to split the work into two volumes.

What you are going to find in this first volume is a selection of my most memorable battles on the chessboard during the first of two different periods. It covers the time from my arrival in the USA as an up-and-coming young talent in early 1989, acquiring the freedom to play in any open tournament in the world and quickly gaining precious experience to grow into a challenger for the World Championship in 1996. This period ended with my early retirement from the game to pursue other goals in life. The second volume will cover my experiences after returning to the professional chess arena in 2004, having completed my college and higher education, with the goal of fighting for the world title again. I came very close to achieving this; winning the World Cup in 2007 placed me amongst the top three players in the world. Such a successful return from retirement had never been attempted or achieved before in chess history.

I have included just a couple of games after 2013 since I felt that they were important to show the reader how, despite the ever-changing nature of chess, some aspects of it remain eternal.

One of the beliefs I have held for most of my life is that in chess there is only one goal worth pursuing this profession for - that of becoming World Champion. Everyone knows and remembers who the World Champions were; very few remember those who did not succeed. Having said that, I also believe that chess represents a great way for people of different nations to communicate and to settle disputes, as well as to forge friendships. Some of my lifelong friendships, which I value greatly, came about thanks to chess.

Chess is known to help a person develop who he or she is, to discover his or her gift and to present an opportunity to show that gift in a peaceful way. The other aspects of chess are well known - art, science, sport, war strategy, history, psychology (very much) and others - all of which make it a unique and great 'game'.

In this book, I have attempted to share my perception of chess and the aspects mentioned above through my annotated games and style, which was influenced mostly by the chess books and biographies of great players that I read when I was a child. Steinitz, Lasker, Capablanca, Alekhine, Botvinnik, Petrosian and others were my teachers to a great extent.

I must apologize in advance if some of my comments will be found offensive, but because chess has been a great part of my life, I do not try to be fair or objective, as each game, or more correctly, story, is tied to my emotions in a strong bond that reminds me of what was happening at that particular moment.

This book is intended for fans of the royal game with a wide range of skill. There are deep strategic battles, tactical storms, devious traps, life-affecting errors in time trouble and everything else!

My sincerest hope is that each reader will find something memorable or useful that will echo in his or her mind and, perhaps, provide something that will improve his or her level of chess understanding.

Above all, the short game-stories in this book are meant to inspire the reader to search for and discover the secrets of the game and its beauty.

I must say a big thanks to the great publishing and editorial team at Thinkers Publishing for their support and patience in working with me, in particular Messrs Romain Edouard and Daniël Vanheirzeele, as well as the many others involved in this project, without whom this effort would not have been possible.

*Gata Kamsky
five-time US Chess Champion
October 2018*

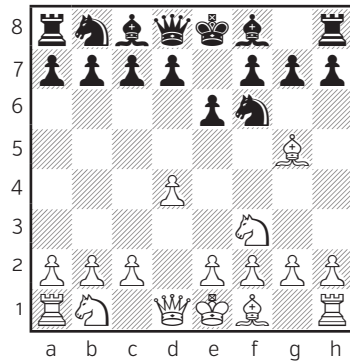
GAME 1

- ▷ **Gata Kamsky**
 ▶ **Krunoslav Hulak**
 New York 1989

This was my first round game in the event that was a turning point in my life. I had just arrived in the US, at the invitation of the American Chess Foundation, accompanied by my coach and father. Little did I know that I would never return to the country known as the USSR. My opponent had just come fresh from winning another GMA event (the Grand Master Association, recently created by Garry Kasparov in his quest to challenge FIDE's supremacy over the chess world). There is a lot that could be said about the circumstances surrounding the tournament. Regarding the chess itself, I can say, with a great deal of amusement (now!), that the 'top level' Commodore computer that my father had bought for an enormous amount of money in Russia from a certain Mr. Lypunov (who claimed to be a helper of GM Beliavsky) did not work in the USA because of the difference in the electrical current. When my father and I went to a local electrical store to ask how to get the computer to work, the guy looked at us like we were aliens and told us that

the computer belonged in a museum!! He tried the power adaptor, but it still didn't work, so for the whole tournament I was on my own, with lots and lots of heavy chess theory books and notes full of my games and analysis. This probably seems incredible to any young person who now has access to all the information thanks to his or her laptop, yet such were the days in the past.

1.d4 ♖f6 2.♗f3 e6 3.♙g5



The Torre Attack. It and the London System, 3.♙f4, were trusty weapons which were to serve me well for many years, even against the strongest opposition. It is named after the Mexican grandmaster who was active in the 1920s, Carlos Torre.

3...h6 4.♙h4 b6 5.♗bd2 ♙b7 6.e3 ♙e7

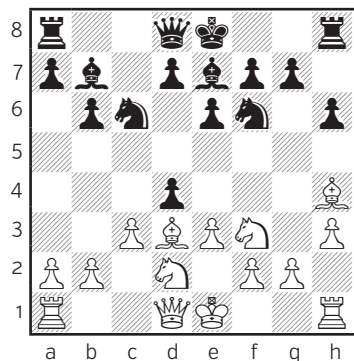
Black doesn't commit his central pawns to any configuration just yet, waiting for me to declare my inten-

tions first. Some of the typical ideas for Black include the ...g7-g5 pawn push, followed by ...♖f6-h5, chasing my dark-squared bishop, since its exchange, in general, is considered good for Black.

7.h3

Preparing an escape square on h2 for my dark-squared bishop.

7...c5 8.c3 ♘c6 9. ♕d3 cxd4



The first critical position of the game. Black decides to simplify the structure in the center, as taking on d4 with the c3-pawn would allow ...♖c6-b4, attacking my d3-bishop. After that, a logical follow-up by ...♖f6-e4 or ...♗b7-a6 would make sense, depending on the retreat path of my bishop. As a result, Black would be able to simplify the position to almost certain equality.

Therefore my next move is almost mandatory.

10.exd4

10.cxd4 ♖b4 11. ♕e2 ♖e4 (11...♞c8 seems to be a loss of time as White simply chases the b4-knight and gains more control over the center. 12.0-0 0-0 13.a3 ♖bd5 14. ♕g3±) 12. ♕xe7 ♜xe7 13.a3 ♖xd2 14. ♜xd2 ♖d5 15.0-0 0-0 16. ♕d3 ♖f6 17. ♜e2 d6 18.e4 ♞ac8=

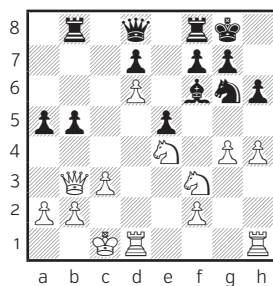
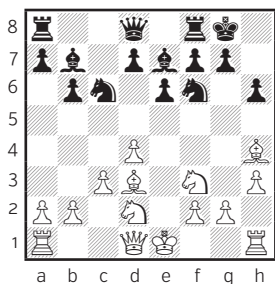
10...♖h5

It appears that White wasted a tempo with h3. The resulting position seems to be dynamic: both sides have mobile pawns in the center, and the position is semi-closed, allowing the possibility of opposite-side castling.

During the game I thought it was really smart of Black to exchange my dark-squared bishop, but many years later, looking at this position again, I think that my bishop on h4 is very awkward and hinders the pawn expansion. Of course during the game I suspected that my opponent did not expect me to even consider castling long at this point.

However one of the advantages of youth is in bravely storming positions with such optimism that even the wisdom of age sometimes has no choice but to concur. At least, sometimes...

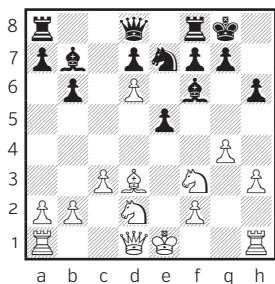
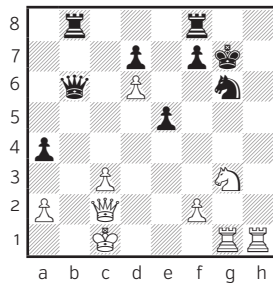
a) 10...0–0 is a logical alternative.



11. ♕g3! leaves White with a small advantage.

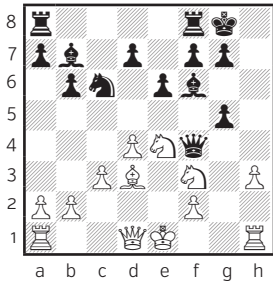
[11.g4?! A bit too early. White's forces are still unprepared for a general assault on the kingside. 11...♖c7! Black wants to play ...♕d5, while ♕d3 will always be answered by ...♕d6. (11...e5 12. ♕xf6 ♕xf6 13.d5 ♖e7 14.d6!

19...a4 20.♖c2 ♕xh4 21.♖dg1 b4
22.♖xh4 ♖xh4 23.g5 ♖g6 24.gxh6
bxc3 25.bxc3 ♖b6 26.hxg7 ♖xg7
27.♖g3



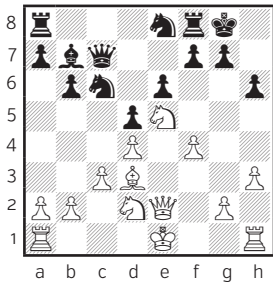
leads to unpleasant positions for Black: 14...♖g6 — or 14...♖c6 15.♖e5 ♖e8 16.♖g1 ♕g5 17.♖fxg5 hxg5 18.♖e2± — 15. ♕e4 ♕xe4 16.♖xe4 b5 17.♖b3!? a5 18.0–0–0 ♖b8 19.h4 with a huge attack, although Black may hold if he can defend like a computer:

27...♖g8! 28.♖f5+ ♖f8 29.♖h7 a3
30.♖h6 ♖g7 31.♖xg6 ♖b2+ 32.♖xb2
axb2+ 33.♖b1 ♖xg6 34.♖h8+ ♖g7
35.♖xb8 ♖xh6 36.a4 ♖xd6 37.a5 ♖f6
38.♖xb2 ♖e7 39.♖b5 f6 40.c4 ♖d8
41.♖c3 ♖d1=) 12. ♕xf6 (12.g5 hxg5
13. ♕xg5 Capturing with the knight
would have allowed ...♖xd4, attacking
the h1-rook. 13...♖d5 14.♖g1 f5!?∞
12... ♕xf6 13.g5 (13.h4 ♕d8
14.g5 h5∞) 13...hxg5 14.♖e4
♖f4 and White's attack doesn't
succeed:



15. ♖g1 ♜b4 16. ♜xf6+ gxf6 17. ♗e2 ♗xf3 18. ♗xf3 ♜c2+ 19. ♔xc2 ♔xf3 20. h4 ♝g7 21. hxg5 fxg5 22. ♖xg5+ ♗f6 23. ♖g1 ♖g8♯

11...d5 (11...d6 is also possible, but a bit passive, allowing White his space advantage) 12. ♔e2 ♗d6 13. ♗xd6 ♔xd6 14. ♜e5 ♔c7 15. f4 ♜e8

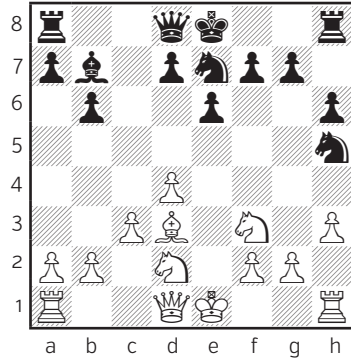


16.g4! with the initiative. White will probably play ♖g1 next, then castle long. (16. ♔e3 ♜d6 17. 0-0-0 b5 18. ♗b1 ♜c4 gives counterplay)

b) 10... ♔c7!? is extremely interesting as well, with the idea of 11. ♔e2 (11. ♗g3 ♗d6 Exploiting the fact that the pawn is no longer on h2 and can't support the g3-bishop. 12. ♗xd6

♔xd6 13. ♔e2 ♜e7 14. ♜e5 ♔c7 15. 0-0-0 ♜ed5↑) 11... ♜d5∞

11. ♗xe7 ♜xe7



A good move, as Black opens up his b7-bishop and prepares to transfer his e7-knight via d5 to a more useful square on f4.

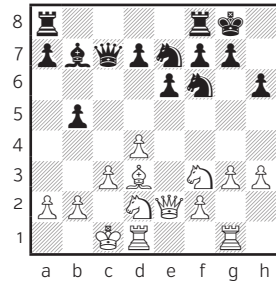
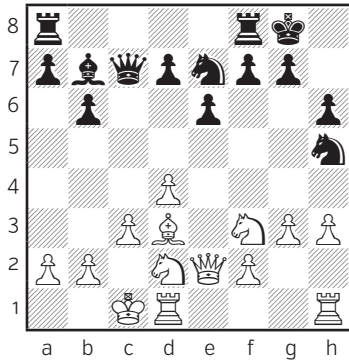
12.g3

Prophylaxis. White has to take the f4-square under control.

12... ♔c7 13. ♔e2 0-0

Black finally thinks it is a good time to castle, since if White castles short, Black's b7-bishop will become a monster. In hindsight, perhaps it was better for Black to bring his h5-knight back into the center and wait for the white king to make a decision on castling.

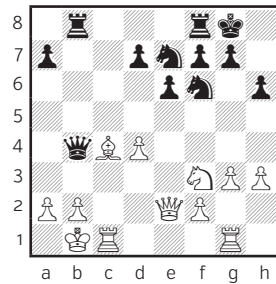
14. 0-0-0



16. ♖b1

Plans have been declared — it’s war! Pawns will be racing against opposing kings and defenses will be tested. I had a pretty good idea that if I managed to hide my king in the a1-corner and put the rook on c1, then Black’s ...b5–b4 pawn break could be sidestepped by my c3–c4 pawn push and White should be safe, something which can’t be said about Black’s king. At the same time, White’s d3-bishop is going to be a crucial component in both defense and offense.

[16. ♖xb5 ♜ab8 17. ♖b1 ♖xf3 18. ♗xf3 ♜a5 forces White’s b5-bishop to move, since an attempt to protect it with c3–c4 even loses to Black’s ...a7–a6 resource. 19. ♖c4 ♜xc3 20. ♜c1 ♜b4



14... ♗f6 15. ♜hg1 ♗fd5

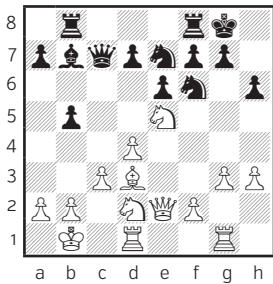
This move retains the option of playing ...f5, however in positions like this, every tempo is important. An immediate ...b5 was preferable, as taking this pawn would open the b-file for the black heavy pieces and White would be tied to pure defense.

21. ♖d3 (21.g4 A reckless ‘attacking’ move like this cannot succeed as most of White’s pieces are tied up defending the king. 21... ♗g6 22.g5 hxg5 23. ♜xg5 ♗f4 24. ♜c2 ♜fc8 and Black’s initiative on the queenside threatens to become decisive) 21... ♜fc8 Perhaps a bit timid, but exchanging a pair of rooks will forever eliminate White’s ambitions on the kingside and make the game more a question of whether White

15...b5!

can hold on to draw. 22. ♖xc8+ ♖xc8 23. ♖c1 ♖b8 24. ♔d2 ♔b7 25. ♗e5 a5 26. ♕a1 ♗f5!∞ This position seems roughly balanced, thanks to the reduced material, however there is plenty of play left. Black maintains a slight advantage thanks to White's weak isolated d4-pawn.]

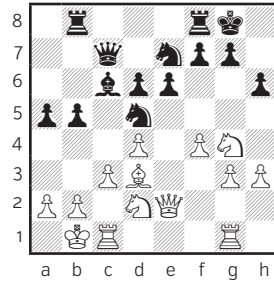
16... ♖ab8 17. ♗e5



Black can't push ...b4 that easily as White will just answer c3-c4. 17...d6

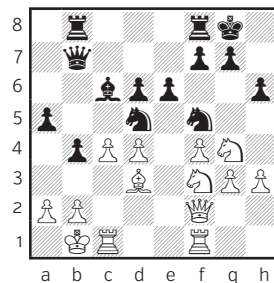
[17...a6?! This move serves a double function, firstly to protect the b5-pawn and secondly to secure an outpost on the d5-square for the black knights. The move's main drawback is the waste of valuable time. 18.f4 ♗fd5 19. ♖c1 (19. ♖gf1?! f6 20. ♗g4 ♗xc3+ 21.bxc3 ♗d5 22. ♖c1 ♗xc3+ 23. ♕b2 ♖bc8 24. ♔f2 ♔a5 25. ♖b1 ♖d5 26. ♗e3 ♔b4+ 27. ♕a1 ♗a4 28. ♗b3 ♖xb3 29.axb3 ♖xc1 30. ♖xc1 ♔a3+ 31. ♔a2 ♔xc1 with a large material advantage.) 19...d6 20. ♗g4 ♗f5 21. ♔f2 a5! with a complex battle ahead.]

18. ♗g4 ♗fd5 19. ♖c1 ♖c6 20.f4 a5



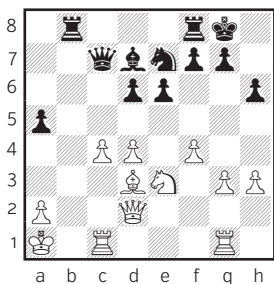
21. ♕a1!∞ This cautious move, sending White's king further into the corner away from the X-ray of the black b8-rook, is probably the most solid continuation. The game is sharp and unpredictable, though it does seem a bit easier to play with White, as Black's h6-pawn gives White a potential target for the attack on the kingside.

a) 21. ♗f3 ♔b7 22. ♖gf1 ♗f5↑ 23. ♔f2 b4 24.c4



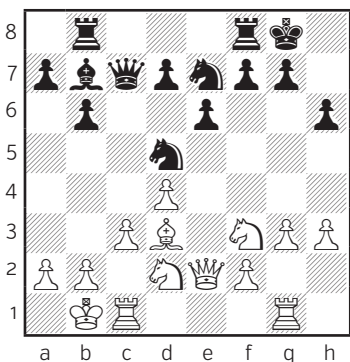
24... ♗c3+! 25. ♕a1 ♖e4! 26. ♔d2 ♖xf3 27.bxc3 ♖e4!∞ The simplest. White is overextended and exposed on both flanks with numerous pawn weaknesses as a result. Black has a very clear advantage.

b) 21. ♖e3?! b4! With this thematic move Black blows open White's queenside fortifications and forces White to switch to defense. 22. c4 ♗c3+ 23. bxc3 bxc3+ 24. ♔a1 cxd2 25. ♕xd2 ♙d7!



26. g4?! (26. ♕c3?! ♖fc8 27. g4 d5=) 26... d5!≠ The point: Black threatens to capture White's key f4-pawn and, at the same time, threatens to destroy White's connected central pawns.

16. ♔b1 ♖ab8 17. ♖c1



White sets up his defensive perimeter on the queenside before starting offensive action on the kingside.

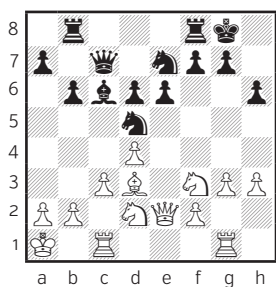
17... ♙c6?!

This move seems to be Black's first inaccuracy.

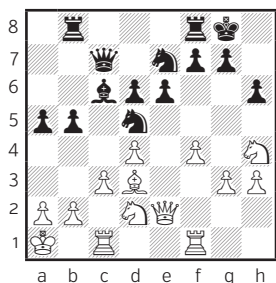
Black plans to use his b-pawn to ram White's defenses on the queenside, however to support this plan he is forced to place his light-squared bishop in an awkward position. In addition, after a potential ♗f3–e5, White will have an extra option of exchanging the black c6-bishop, creating lasting pressure on the light squares across the whole board.

a) 17...b5 is a bit too late now, as White has covered his vulnerable c3-pawn with ♖c1, and while Black will definitely have a measure of compensation for the pawn, it's far from certain that this extra pawn will not decide the game in the later stages. 18. ♙xb5!? (18. ♗e5?!) 18... ♗f6 19. ♙d3 a5 20. ♗e5 d6 21. ♗ec4 a4 22. f4±

b) 17...d6 Perhaps something simple like this move, denying White's f3-knight an obvious developmental square, was best, as a knight on e5 would be ideal in helping White launch his kingside attack. 18. ♔a1! (18. ♗h4?! seems terrible: 18...b5 19. f4 ♙c6 20. ♖gf1 b4 21. c4 ♗c3+ 22. bxc3 bxc3+ 23. ♗b3 a5 24. ♖xc3 a4 25. f5 exf5 26. ♗xf5 ♗xf5 27. ♙xf5 axb3 28. axb3 ♕a5 and Black has a strong initiative due to the open white king) 18... ♙c6



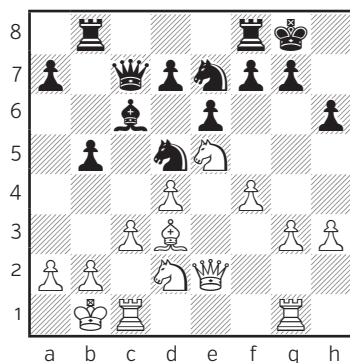
19. ♖h4 (19. ♙b1 b5 20. ♗d3 g6 21. h4 ♜f6 22. g4 ♜ed5 23. g5 ♜f4 24. ♗f1 hxg5 25. hxg5 ♜6h5 26. ♖h1 ♙g7 27. ♗e1 ♖h8!= Black succeeds in establishing an almost unbreakable fortress on the kingside, leading to a temporary stasis in the position.) 19...b5 20.f4 a5 21. ♖gf1 White readies himself for the attack, which will be difficult to defend against.



For example 21...♖fe8 22.g4 ♗d7 23. ♗f2 (23.g5 ♜f5 24. ♗f2 ♜de3 25. ♖g1 hxg5 26. ♖xg5 f6 27. ♖gg1→) 23...f6 24. ♖ce1 (24.g5 hxg5 25.fxg5 f5 26. ♜g2 a4 27.a3 ♗b7 28. ♖g1!→ and White is ready to push his h-pawn as a battering ram against the black kingside fortifications.) 24...♖bd8 25. ♜e4 ♖f8 26. ♜g3→ It is obvious

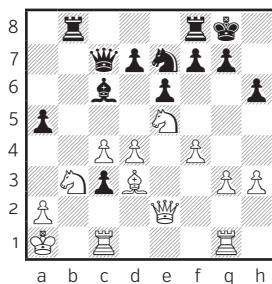
that Black has fully switched to defense on the kingside.

18. ♜e5 b5 19.f4



19...a5

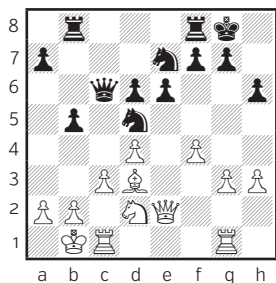
a) 19...b4 This idea no longer works because White has access to the c5-square for his d2-knight. 20.c4 ♜c3+ 21.bxc3 bxc3+ 22. ♜b3 a5 23. ♙a1



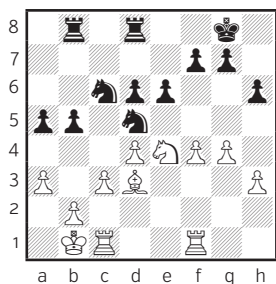
23...a4 (23...♙a8 24. ♖xc3 d6 25. ♜f3 a4 26. ♜bd2) 24. ♜c5! ♖b2 (24...d6 25. ♜a6+- This double attack decides the game.) 25. ♗e1 d6 26. ♜xc6 ♜xc6 27. ♗xc3+-

b) 19...d6 An attempt to get rid of White's best piece makes sense, but

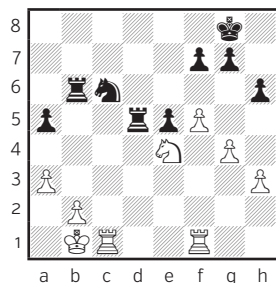
during the game my opponent probably didn't like the fact that I would suddenly transpose into an endgame where bishop and knight and a more harmonious pawn structure would give me a certain small but lasting advantage. For example
 20. ♖xc6 ♔xc6



21. ♔e4 (21. ♖gf1!? keeping the queens on is an alternative. 21... ♗f5 22. ♔f3 ♗fe3 23. ♖f2 ♗c4 24. ♖a1 ♗xd2 25. ♖xd2 ♖fe8 26. g4 ♗e7 27. ♔f2 d5 28. ♖dc2 ♔d6 29. h4 ♖ec8 30. a3 a5 31. ♖b1! White prepares for Black's eventual ...b5–b4 break. 31...b4 32. cxb4 axb4 33. ♖xc8+ ♗xc8 34. a4 b3! = with a balanced game) 21... ♗f6 22. ♔xc6 ♗xc6 23. a3 a5 24. g4 ♗d5 25. ♖gf1 ♖fc8 26. ♗e4 ♖d8



27. f5 This is a thematic attempt by White to break Black's pawn formation in the center. (27. ♖f2!? f5 28. ♗g3 g6∞ leads to a complex game where Black's slightly weakened pawn formation is compensated for by an incredibly strong d5-knight.) 27...e5 28. dxe5 dxe5 (28... ♗xe5 29. ♖e2 ♗e3 30. ♖f4 d5 31. ♗d2 ♗3c4 32. ♗f3 f6∞) 29. ♖xb5 ♖xb5 30. c4 ♖b6 31. cxd5 ♖xd5

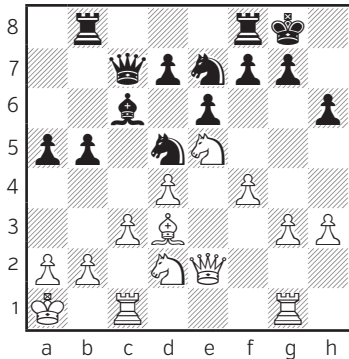


32. ♖c5 (32. f6 ♖d4 33. ♖fe1 gxf6 34. ♗xf6+ ♖g7 35. ♗e4 f6=; 32. ♖fd1 ♗d4 33. ♖c8+ ♖h7 34. ♖a2 ♖db5 35. ♖d2 ♖b8! 36. ♖c7 ♖5b7 37. ♖xb7 ♖xb7 38. ♖d3 h5! with an approximately equal game, though White's queenside pawn majority has strong potential to turn the tables in his favor) 32... ♖xc5 (32... ♖d4 33. ♗c3!±) 33. ♗xc5 ♗d4 34. ♖c1 f6 35. ♗e4 ♖b8 36. ♖a2 h5∞

20. ♖a1

White's king is finally secure and safeguarded against possible black ideas with ...b4 and ...♗c3. At this point, I was optimistic about win-

ning, as White has a clear plan for his attack on the kingside.

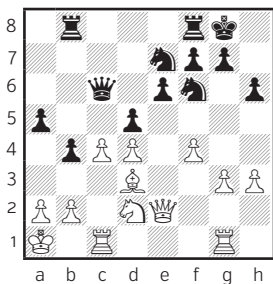


20...d6

At long last Black decides to give up hope of an attack and focuses on the center and defense.

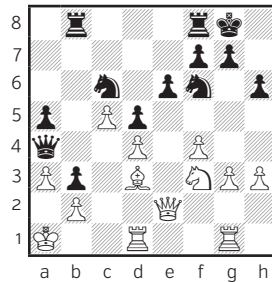
21. ♖xc6 ♜xc6 22. ♖gf1

22. ♖f3 This is an interesting alternative suggested by the computer, with the idea of keeping the rook on g1, since it's going to be needed there for the g4–g5 push, opening the g-file. However, it seems that Black has sufficient defensive resources after the following sequence: 22...b4 23.c4 ♗f6 24. ♜e2 d5



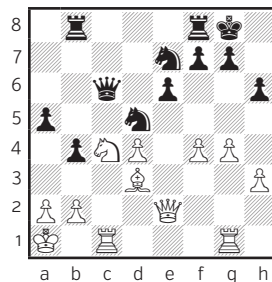
25.g4! A superior move, since the alternative below suddenly gives Black a new target, White's central d4-pawn.

[25.c5 b3 26.a3 ♜a4 27. ♗f3 ♗c6 28. ♜cd1



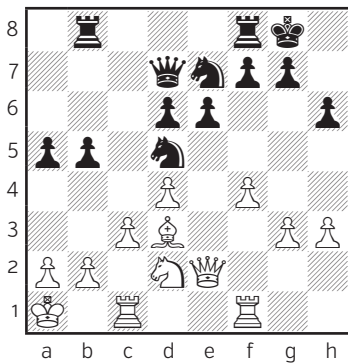
28...♖h8 (28...♗b4 29.g4! (29. ♗b1?! ♗a7! Forcing White's b1-bishop to return to the d3-square to prevent Black's knight from hitting White's a3-pawn with the coming ...♗a7-b5.) 29...♗xd4 30. ♗xd4 ♜xd4 31.g5 ♗e4 32.gxh6 g6 33. ♗xe4 ♜xe4 34. ♜d2 ♖h7 35.h4∞ White has good attacking potential.]

25...dxc4 26. ♗xc4 ♗fd5



White clearly has a more dangerous initiative, however it is not easy to choose the right continuation, as the following options show. 27. ♖e4 (27. ♖f2? This slow move even allows Black to recapture the initiative. 27... a4 28. f5 a3 29. b3 ♖c7! ♞ Suddenly Black has managed to expose a number of weak dark squares in the white camp. White must be extremely careful not to end up with a much worse game.) 27... ♗f6 28. ♖e5 Seems best. 28... ♗d5 29. g5 hxg5 30. ♖xg5 ♖xe5 31. fxg5 ♗fd5 32. ♗xa5 g6∞ And in this exciting endgame, Black seems to at least hold his own.

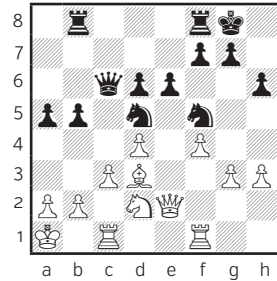
22... ♗d7



The game reaches the point where both sides have completed their preparations and open conflict must start. The complexity of the position arises from the fact that there are numerous ways of placing the minor pieces for both sides. With the game move, Black wants to play ...b4, and therefore removes

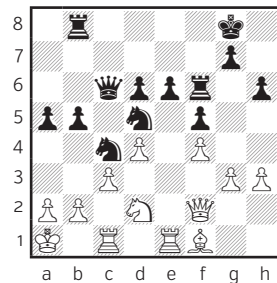
his queen from the X-ray of White's c1-rook.

22... ♗f5



23. ♖e4 Probably strongest, forcing Black to further weaken his king-side pawn structure, thus creating an additional target for White.

[23. ♖f2 ♗fe3 24. ♖fe1 ♗c4 25. ♗e4 f5 26. ♗d2 ♖f6 27. ♗f1



Black's defenses hold for now, but he has to remain on constant alert, as any careless move could spell trouble, for example 27... a4!? (27... ♗xd2?! 28. ♖xd2 a4 29. ♗g2 ♖d7 30. ♗xd5 exd5 31. ♖g2 ♖f7 32. a3± fixes Black with an inferior structure, which could become a decisive factor in the pawn endgame. 27... ♗db6? 28. g4!± results in an

immediate opening of the position which favors White, due to his very strong bishop.) 28.a3 ♖c7 29. ♕g2 ♜b6±]

23...g6 (23...♗de7? 24.g4+-) 24. ♖g1 ♗h8 25.g4 ♗fe7 26.h4→

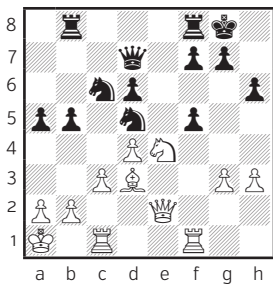
23. ♗e4

White centralizes the knight and provokes Black into active defensive measures like ...f5, which could later be used for a ...g4-break.

23.g4 is also possible immediately, but after ...f5 White has to decide how to defend his f4-pawn. 23...f5 24. ♖ce1 ♗g6 25. ♜h2 ♖be8 26. ♕b1 ♗ge7 27.g5 h5∞ Black successfully keeps the kingside locked.

23... ♖b6

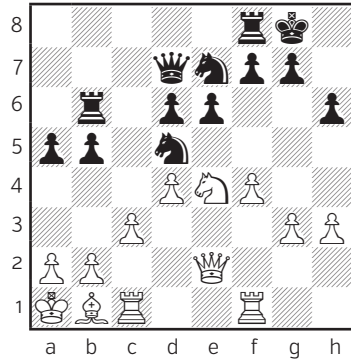
23... ♗c6 24.f5 exf5



25.g4!! Suddenly White's attack is almost decisive. 25...f4 26.g5 hxg5 27. ♜h5 g6 (27... ♜f5 28. ♖g1 ♜g6

29. ♜f3+-) 28. ♜h6+- Black's kingside defenses fall.

24. ♕b1!



This move creates the threat of setting up a ♕b1/♜d3 mating battery, therefore Black is finally forced to play ...f7-f5, which opens another front on the kingside for the white forces.

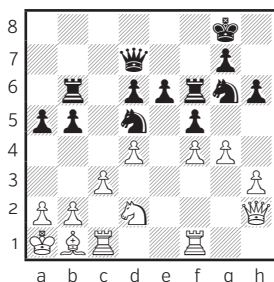
24...f5 25. ♗d2 ♗f6

Played with the idea of creating an outpost on the e4-square by pushing ...d6-d5 next, followed by planting the f6-knight on the newly created e4-square. This would close off White's b1-bishop as well, but such a plan gives White more possibilities than he is deprived of. Still, White's position is preferable because of his attacking potential.

25... ♖f6 was another alternative, attempting to hold the knight on d5, putting pressure on White's f4-

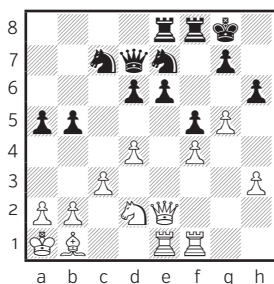
pawn, but as can be seen from the following lines, passive defense doesn't guarantee Black a quiet life.

a) 25... ♖f6!? 26.g4 ♖g6 27. ♖h2



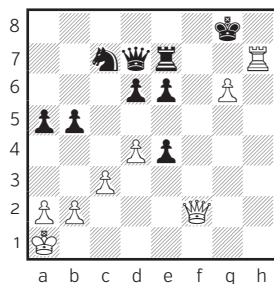
The following lines demonstrate the dangers for Black: 27...fxg4 (27...♖b8 28.♖ce1 ♖h8 29.♖g3 ♖ge7 30.♖e2±) 28.hxg4 ♖gxf4 29.g5 hxg5 30.♖h7+ ♖f7 31.♖e4 ♖f5 32.♖g1 ♖e7 33.♖ce1 ♖b8 34.♖g3 ♖f6 35.♖h5 ♖hx5 36.♖xh5+ g6 37.♖xg5 ♖g8 38.a4 bxa4 39.c4 ♖f4 (39...♖b4 40.♖ef1+-) 40.♖g4 ♖h5 41.c5 a3 42.bxa3 ♖d7 43.♖e3 ♖c6 44.♖e4±.

b) 25... ♖bb8 26. ♖ce1 ♖c7 27.g4 ♖be8 28.g5



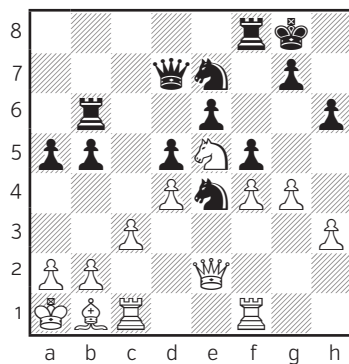
White is ready for this push. 28...hxg5 29.fxg5 g6 30.h4 ♖g7 31.h5

gxh5 32.♖xh5 ♖h8 33.♖f3 ♖c6 34.♖f2 ♖h3 35.♖e4 ♖d7 36.♖g2 ♖h2 37.♖e4 ♖ed5 38.g6 fxe4 39.♖g3 ♖xg2 40.♖xg2 ♖f6 41.♖xf6 ♖xf6 42.♖f2+ ♖g7 43.♖h1 ♖g8 44.♖h7 ♖e7



45. ♖h8+!!+- A pretty finish to White's attack.

26.g4→d5 27.♖f3 ♖e4 28.♖e5



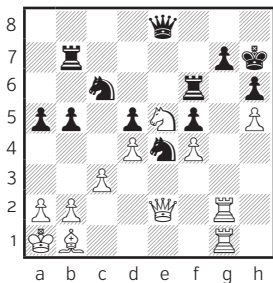
The pawn structure has changed and now seems to be a good time to stand back and take a look at the position. Black has achieved his objective of planting his knight on the e4-square, while White has transferred his knight to an improved location, the e5-square, made possible

by Black's ...d6–d5 push. The overall transformation seems to favor White, as he now also has a clear plan of doubling on the g-file. Meanwhile any potential ...b4 break can be met with c4, when Black can't really recapture on c4 with his d5-pawn as it would weaken his central e4-knight. Black probably has to try to eliminate White's strong central e5-knight with ...dxe5–c6 before White breaks through on the kingside.

28... ♖e8 29. ♗g1 b4?

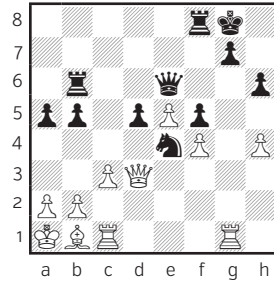
A mistake after which Black's position becomes critical. As mentioned before, Black's only chance was to eliminate White's most active attacking piece, the e5-knight.

29... ♘c6 30. gxf5 ♘xe5 (30... exf5 31. ♗g2 ♖h7 32. ♗cg1 ♗b7 33. h4 ♗f6 34. h5



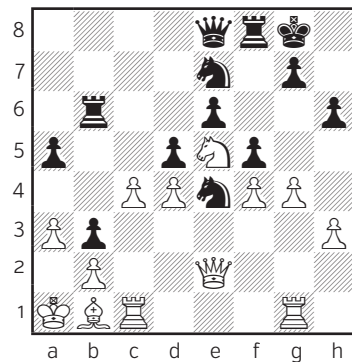
Black manages to establish the last line of defense. White's advantage is clear, and it's only a matter of time before he breaks through and starts cleaning up Black's weak pawns in

the center and on the queenside. 34... ♖h8 35. ♗g6 ♘xe5 36. dxe5 ♗xg6 37. ♗xg6 ♖c8 38. ♖d3 ♖c5 39. ♗a6 ♗a7 40. ♗xa7 ♖xa7 41. ♖xd5 ♖g1 42. ♖d8+ ♖h7 43. ♖d7+-) 31. dxe5 exf5 32. ♖d3 ♖e6 33. h4



33...b4 (33... ♗d8 34. h5 ♖f7 35. ♖d4 ♗e6 36. ♗g2 ♖c7 37. ♗cg1 ♗e7 38. ♗g6 ♖h8 39. ♗d3±) 34. c4 dxc4 35. ♗xc4± White's advantage is almost decisive thanks to his strong light-squared bishop and control of the open files.

30. c4 b3 31. a3+-



It is now clear that Black's attack on the queenside has failed, while White's initiative is getting stronger

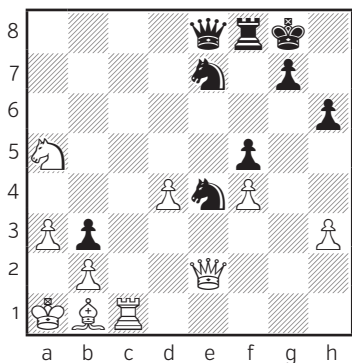
with every move. The advantage is decisive.

31...dxc4 32.♖xc4

The computer demonstrates a quicker path to a win, but at the time of the game I was only fourteen, and since this was my first game in a big international event against a strong grandmaster, I did not want to take any unnecessary risks.

32.gxf5! exf5 33.♖xc4+ ♔h7 34.♖c7 ♖bf6 35.♖a7 ♘d6 36.♖c7 ♖e6 37.♖c5 ♖ef6 38.d5 ♘g6 39.♘d7 ♗d8 40.♘xf8+ ♗xf8 41.♖xa5+- with a winning material advantage.

32...♖c6 33.gxf5 exf5 34.♘xa5 ♖xc1 35.♖xc1

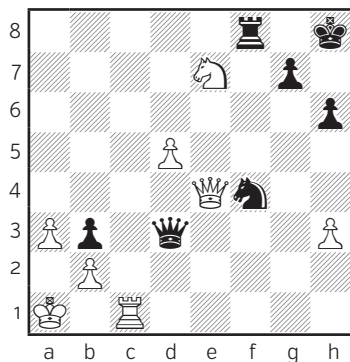


White eliminates Black's queenside pawns, while maintaining the pressure on the kingside. I believed the game was easily won and started to play carelessly.

35...♘d5 36.♖f3 ♖b8 37.♙xe4?!

37.♖c5! ♘xf4 38.♖e5! ♘g6 39.♖xf5 ♘d2 40.♖xf8+ ♗xf8 41.♗d3 ♘xb1 42.♙xb1 ♘f4 43.♖xb3+ ♙h8 44.♖f3 ♖f5+ 45.♙a1+- would have made converting White's material advantage easier.

37...fxe4 38.♖xe4 ♘xf4 39.♘c6 ♖b5 40.d5 ♗d3 41.♘e7+ ♔h8



42.♖xd3?!

Not yet the big mistake, however the idea that follows is flawed as it allows Black a miracle escape. Quite nervous at this point, I wanted to transpose into the endgame phase, where I believed in my technique. The correct, and winning, move was 42.♘g6, though it required deep calculation.

42.♘g6+! ♙g8 43.♖xd3 ♘xd3 44.♘xf8 ♘xc1 45.♘e6 ♙f7 46.a4 ♘d3 47.a5 ♘b4 48.♘c7! g5 49.a6 ♘xa6 50.♘xa6 h5 51.♘c5+-