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## PREFACE

# Welcome to Planet Ivanchuk!

‘Chess is imagination’ – David Bronstein.

People are usually born with their inner vision already open. This allows them to clearly see anything they can imagine. Much depends on one’s capacity for imagination, which everyone can develop. But sometimes, it gets lost with age.

The ability to imagine is also one of the basic requirements to play chess well. The stronger the chess player, the stronger his imagination.

This book offers an exploration of one of the most striking examples of the power of imagination in chess: someone whom I have been fortunate to know since my youth, the great Vasyl Ivanchuk.

The outstanding Ukrainian grandmaster is an incredibly versatile player. In the opening and middlegame he has used almost every possible variation known in chess, and he has introduced a large number of his own ideas.

The exercises offered throughout this book are fun, engaging, and simple enough for any chess fan to understand – and your imagination will be developed at the same time! It is important that the reader enjoys the process of the struggle and at the same time takes a direct part in it!

The result is a large collection of the best artistic ideas created by Ivanchuk and a showcase of practical solutions at the highest level – at all stages of the game.

### Golden years

Vasyl Mikhailovich Ivanchuk was born on March 18th, 1969, in the town of Kopychintsy (in the Ternopolskaya region of Ukraine), to intelligent parents: his father was a lawyer and his mother a physics teacher.



‘At first, nobody dreamt that I had any talent for chess,’ he recalled in one interview. ‘At first, I just very much wanted to play. I was captivated by the sport. It all started when my father gave me a magnetic chess set for my birthday. I liked the pieces and asked my father to tell me about the game and to show me how the pieces moved. Then I wanted to know more and more, and my mother brought me a few books from the school she worked in. My first book was *Journey to the Chess Kingdom* by Averbakh and Beilin. Then I started solving chess problems that I copied out of newspapers. It was my first trainer, Gennady Vasylenko, who predicted I would become a successful player – “You will become at least a grandmaster,” he said.’

His first big successes came in 1985. Vasyl won the USSR junior championship and won bronze in the championship of Ukraine. A year later, he joined the chess faculty of the Lviv State University of Physical Culture. Ever since his student days, he has loved the city of Lviv, which became his home.

In 1986, the 17-year old master won the European Youth Championship, an event traditionally held in the Dutch city of Groningen at the end of the year.

For the improving youngster, the late 1980s was a period of especially rapid progress. Much has been said and written about this.

After his victory in the New York Open in 1988, where Vasyl outstripped such experienced grandmasters as Larsen, Gligoric and Byrne (37 grandmasters competed in this tournament), stories appeared in the American press about the rise of a new star of Soviet chess. The entire chess world marvelled at Ivanchuk’s enormous all-round chess knowledge, considering his main weapon to be his deep and accurate calculation.

He was awarded the title of Grandmaster by FIDE in 1988, and entered the world top 10 the same year.

By the start of the 1990s, Vasyl Ivanchuk was already one of the strongest players in the world. Here is an extract from his track record:

- in 1988 and 1990, he was part of the USSR team that won the Chess Olympiad, showing outstanding individual results;
- in 1989, he took first place at Linares ahead of Anatoly Karpov, shared first place in Biel with Lev Polugaevsky, and won the Tigran Petrosian Memorial in Yerevan;
- in 1990, he shared first place with Gata Kamsky at Tilburg and shared first place with Boris Gelfand in the Interzonal tournament in Manila.
- Ivanchuk’s best performance was at the super-tournament in Linares in 1991, as Nikolai Kalinichenko argued in his book *Vassily Ivanchuk*. See for

a little more information on this tournament Game 12 on page 33 and its introduction.

A leading player since 1988 with numerous brilliant victories, Ivanchuk held the No. 2 position in the FIDE world rankings on three occasions (July 1991, July 1992 and October 2007), surpassed only by Kasparov.

Ivanchuk has won Linares, Wijk aan Zee, the Tal Memorial, the Gibraltar Masters and the M-Tel Masters in Sofia. It is worth remembering how he knocked out several world-class first board players at the Chess Olympiad in 2010, securing first place for the Ukrainian team in that year, and also in 2004 (see Games 99 and 122-124). He became World Blitz Champion in 2007 and was the dominant winner of the World Rapid Championship in 2016, where he beat Magnus Carlsen (see Game 45) and many other top players.

More specific information is described within the training sessions, and there is a detailed report of his achievements at the end of the book.

### **Playing style**

Ivanchuk is regarded as a genius by his peers and by many observers. Kasparov argued in an interview that Ivanchuk had the level of a world champion.

Vasyl has a phenomenal memory which allowed him to build an extremely well-developed opening repertoire even before the advent of computers. He is able to play many different openings at a very high level, making it difficult to prepare against him.

Ivanchuk has managed to produce many new ideas in chess, mixing imagination, technique, ingenuity, maturity of style and fighting spirit.

### **Who is the strongest chess player in the world?**

*'Winners never quit, and quitters never win'* – Vince Lombardi.

This question has always captured the minds of all chess amateurs and professionals. But for the period of the early 1990s to the near-present, the answer is clear: the strongest chess player in the world was Vasyl Ivanchuk – if he was in good shape!

This latter addition is important, since Vasyl is known for his ups and downs; he had meteoric rises, such as listed above, and painful defeats, such as during the 2002 FIDE World Championship final against Ruslan Ponomarev – see the 9th training session in this book. But when Vasyl Mikhailovich is on a roll, then everyone knows that even the strongest player has to take care. Any player, including World Champions, can still lose to Ivanchuk when he is at his best!

## **Chess players about chess players**

When asked to name chess players she considered geniuses in 2012, Judit Polgar named only Vasyl Ivanchuk, Magnus Carlsen and Viswanathan Anand.

In 2013, Gawain Jones called Ivanchuk possibly the most talented player ever.

Anand has called Ivanchuk the most eccentric player in the chess world, and has said: 'He's someone who is very intelligent... but you never know which mood he is going to be in. Some days he will treat you like his long-lost brother. The next day he ignores you completely. The players have a word for him. They say he lives on "Planet Ivanchuk" [laughs]... I have seen him totally drunk and singing Ukrainian poetry and then the next day I have seen him give an impressive talk (...) His playing style is unpredictable and highly original, making him more dangerous but sometimes leading to quick losses as well.'

## **A personal touch**

I have known Vasyl Ivanchuk from the time he was wearing shorts! I have observed his rapid progress from when we participated together in Ukrainian tournaments, and his subsequent ascent to the top. Vasyl is a friend and an analysis companion. Often, even at nights, we made contact to analyse some game or idea, or simply to consult each other on some opening or player. Later on, in 1992-94, I twice helped him with certain specific preparation, although I think this was not for something concrete. The first time was in Moscow. Vasyl's only preoccupation was how to beat Kasparov. The second time was in his house in Lviv. I believe our training was more effective then. There I met his parents; they seemed very pleasant people who were very concerned about their son's life and successes.

I am impressed by Ivanchuk's great work ethic and his capacity to learn. For breakfast Vasyl always brought a notebook (not a computer notebook!) full of difficult chess problems. It surprised me how quickly and easily he found the solutions, while I was sipping my coffee... soon we were analysing some interesting games and we also studied some positions that are still not understood by the best engines. Sometimes we played blitz.

I think that a special habit of Ivanchuk is that he is always analysing something. His mind never stops working. Once, on a stroll in the beautiful city of Lviv, we entered a lovely church. There we I relaxed for a few seconds, but suddenly he started asking me things about a certain chess game. The priest was not so pleased and asked us to leave...

After I moved to Spain in 1999, we met many times at European and world chess events. I worked as a second for Vasyi before and during his match against Giri in Leon 2013 (see Games 180 and 181), and a year before that I helped him to win his last-round game against Wang Hao, winning the bronze medal for the Ukrainian team at the Istanbul Olympiad (see Game 130).

Our conversation continues to this day.



## WORKSHOP

In the four Parts of this book, the reader will find the following material:

- 20 training sessions with introductions, practical advice and summaries
- 187 commented examples (divided into 49 model games and 138 fragments) with plenty of exercises

• **more than 500 instructive positions for players of different strengths**

I have tried to follow the chronological order of the material (year by year) inside every Part. Only after that, I have arranged the exercises by theme.

## Seven symbols

For the convenience of my readers, certain special lines in the analysis are marked with one of the following seven symbols:



**TRICK:** hidden tactics and tricky ideas, e.g. traps you can set and pitfalls you have to avoid.



**PUZZLE:** exercises, possible transpositions, move-order subtleties, curiosities and rare lines.



**WEAPON:** the best lines to choose; strong or surprising options for both attack and defence.



**PLAN:** the main ideas for one of the sides in the next phase of the game.



**STATISTICS:** winning percentages for a variation or for either side/player.



**WORKSHOP:** a short overview of the structure of the chapter at hand.



**KEEP IN MIND:** fundamental ideas for either side.



## About the exercises

We all use exercises to boost our tactical skills. Beginners do it, average and advanced players too, even grandmasters... we want to simulate the tournament environment and learn to calculate precisely.

But hang on... can an exercise really simulate a tournament situation? Every puzzle has a solution, right? But when we calculate variations during our games... do we have a clear solution on every move?

This book offers you more than 500 positions for training. Some of these exercises have tactical solutions, but some don't... even though they look like they should have one! Still, you have to find the best move in each position. It can be a stunning sacrifice or a solid move, avoiding the temptation of opportunistic tactics... everything that can happen in a real game.

What makes this collection really special is that it is built purely on games by super-GM Vasyl Ivanchuk, and every move, every plan, every variation is thoroughly explained by someone who knows how Ivanchuk thinks.

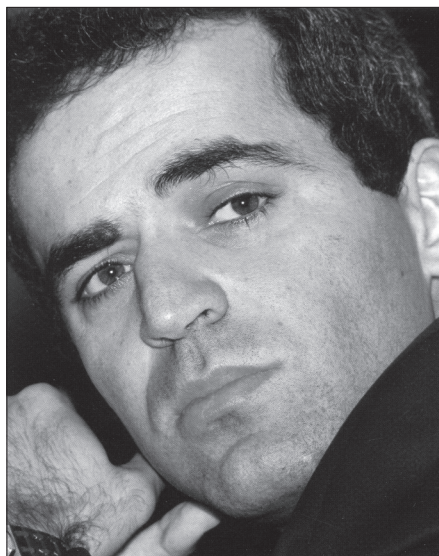
I hope you will enjoy your chess journey to Planet Ivanchuk – good luck!


Grandmaster Viktor Moskalenko,  
Barcelona, May 2024

## SESSION 3

# Ivanchuk versus Kasparov

Garry Kasparov (1963, 13th World Champion, 1985-2000) was proclaimed the best chess player in history by Chess.com in 2020. He broke Mikhail Tal's record by becoming the youngest World Champion. With six victories, he has also won the most World Championship Matches together with Lasker. Three of these were held outside FIDE, after he and Nigel Short left the World Chess Federation in 1993. They yielded him two World Championship titles in the years afterwards.



 STATISTICS: total 48 games = -9  
33 classical: wins =4, draws =19, losses =10 (-6)  
14 rapid: wins =2, draws =8, losses =4 (-2)  
1 blitz: wins =0, draws =0, loss =1 (-1)

Ivanchuk lost 15 games against Kasparov (he lost the same number to Karpov), and won only 6 (he won 13 games against Karpov). Almost half of Kasparov's victories occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when Ivanchuk was barely 20 years old while Kasparov was at his peak in all respects. Closer to the mid-1990s, the struggle was already on equal terms.

### **The only man Kasparov ever feared**

In Linares 1997 (see Game 14), after losing to Ivanchuk, Kasparov angrily asked him: 'You are playing poorly in this tournament, so why did you try so hard against me?!' Ivanchuk replied something like: 'I'm not much interested in the other games, only in beating you, Garry.'

Vasyl is six years younger than Kasparov, and this did not work in his favour; he lacked maturity and confidence against the World Champion. But not only that.

From the early 1990s onwards, Ivanchuk had every reason to perceive Kasparov as his principal rival in the fight for the highest title. This was evident in his preparation program for tournaments (I was invited to a couple of such training camps in 1994): the main focus was on his next game against Kasparov! The other games were not that important to him. However, it was clear to me that Kasparov's team was much stronger and more numerous in members. Vasyl's approach to chess has always been more classical and similar to the methods of the old champions: studying his favourite game alone, or amongst a close circle of friends and associates. But since the times of Karpov and Kasparov, this approach did no longer guarantee success. Natural preparation and learning methods have been replaced by computers and team work.

Despite Kasparov's obvious strength, young players like Ivanchuk, Anand, Shirov and Kramnik, did not play dryly for a draw against the World Champion like many do today against Magnus Carlsen: they fought openly to win! These struggles were of a very high level, although Kasparov, thanks to this factor and to his better preparation, won more often.

For this training session, I have selected all four of Vasyl's brilliant victories over Kasparov in classical games.

## Strategy

Game 11 Sicilian Defence

**Vasyl Ivanchuk** 2695

**Garry Kasparov** 2800

Linares 1991

This is Ivanchuk's immortal game. From a Rossolimo Sicilian, a Trompowsky structure was reached.

**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♙b5+!?**

White refrains from the main lines. After this game, th is bishop check got a new life for anti-Najdorf fans.

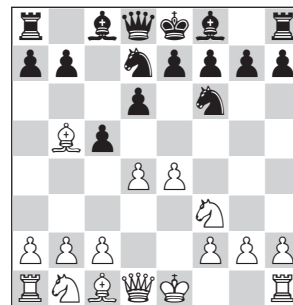
**3...♘d7**

An attempt to go into a complex game, which is quite according to Kasparov's ambitious style.

However, Black loses momentum

for his development. More often seen is 3...♙d7, simplifying, but also limiting Black's counterplay resources.

**4.d4 ♘gf6**



EXERCISE: I wonder how you would proceed here?

**5.0-0!?**

Ivanchuk is playing in the spirit of the position.  
The natural 5.♘c3 is more popular, but then White won't be able to play c2-c4 as in the game.



**TRICK:** 5.e5 is too aggressive: 5...♙a5+? (better 5...cxd4! which however leads to an equal game) 6.♘c3 ♘e4 7.♙b1±.

### 5...cxd4



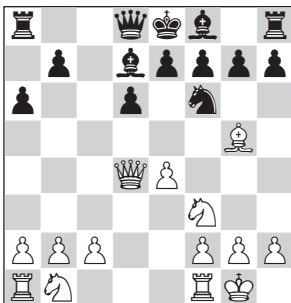
**TRICK:** It is dangerous to accept the pawn sacrifice – after 5...♘xe4? 6.♙e1 White develops pressure in the centre: 6...♘ef6 (6...d5? 7.c4! cxd4 8.cxd5 ♘ef6 9.♙xd4 g6 10.♙xf6 1-0, Alekseev-Zakharsov, St Petersburg rapid 2015) 7.dxc5 dxc5 8.♘g5 e6 9.♘c3 ♙e7 10.♙e2 a6 11.♘xf7! winning, Alekseev-Krush, Baku 2013.

### 6.♙xd4 a6

6...g6 7.e5!;

6...e5 7.♙d3±.

7.♙xd7+ ♙xd7 8.♙g5!?



The most energetic developing move. Both opponents seemed to have been striving for this position.

### 8...h6?!

Another provocative move.

Black stubbornly refuses to be passive as would have been the case after 8...e6 or 8...♙c6 9.♙xf6!?

### 9.♙xf6!

This resembles the Trompowsky Attack: 1.d4 ♘f6 2.♙g5! and ♙x♘.



**TRICK:** The text avoids 9.♙h4? g5 10.♙g3 ♙g7 which favours Black.

### 9...gxf6 10.c4!?N

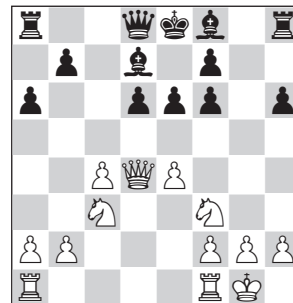
An important improvement:

White's c4- and e4-pawns help to block the centre, depriving Black of counterplay.

### 10...e6

10...♙g7 11.♘c3 0-0 12.♙d3±.

### 11.♘c3



White already has a significant static advantage.

### 11...♙c8

11...♙e7 12.b4!?

### 12.♘h1!?

A prophylaxis against the threats along the g-file.

**12...h5 13.a4 h4 14.h3! ♕e7 15.b4!?**

The queenside pawn storm has the aim of restricting the activity of the enemy light-squared bishop after b4-b5. Admittedly, this will yield Black control of the important c5-square.

**15...a5**

15...♖c7 16.♘d2.

**16.b5 ♖c7**

16...♜c5 17.♘d1!?

**17.♘d2 ♖c5 18.♖d3 ♜g8 19.♞ae1**

White prepares ♞e3 before pushing f2-f4.

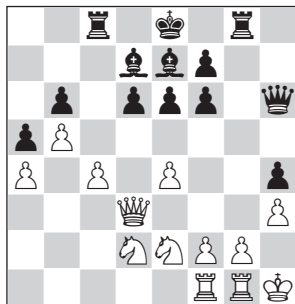
**19...♖g5 20.♜g1 ♖f4 21.♞ef1!**

With the idea ♘e2 and f2-f4.

**21...b6**

21...d5 22.♘e2!; 21...f5 22.♘e2!.

**22.♘e2 ♖h6**



**EXERCISE:** How should White continue?

**23.c5!**

With a bold pawn sacrifice, White frees up the c4-square for his knight.

Also good was the natural 23.f4 or 23.♞d1.

**23...♞xc5**

Some commentators criticized Kasparov's decision, referring to the

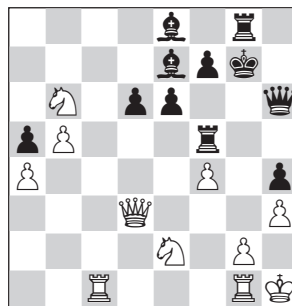
engines. But this is quite a human move: an attempt to activate at least one more piece.

If Black plays 23...dxc5, White gets an obvious initiative for a pawn with 24.♘c4.

**24.♘c4 ♕f8 25.♘xb6 ♕e8 26.f4 f5 27.exf5 ♞xf5 28.♞c1!**

Threatening to penetrate along the c-file.

**28...♔g7**



It's clear that the World Champion has been completely outplayed by Chuky.

**EXERCISE:** How would you exploit White's big advantage?

**29.g4!**

I love this attacking option, taking advantage of the fact that Black cannot take en passant.

A strong alternative was 29.♘c8! ♞d5 30.♖b3, promoting the b-pawn.

**29...♞c5 ♖c5 dxc5 31.♘c8! ♕f8**

Or 31...♕d8 32.♘d6!?, winning.

**32.♖d8! ♖g6**

The queen is the last black piece capable of moving.



**EXERCISE:** How to round off the attack?

**33.f5!**

The quickest and most elegant way to win!

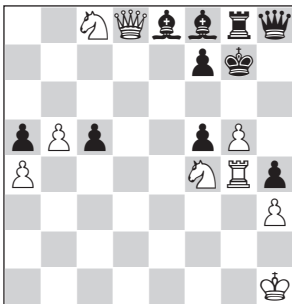
**33... ♖h6**

33... ♜f6 also loses after 34. ♜xe8 ♜e5 35. ♜g2 ♜a1+ 36. ♘g1.

**34.g5**

Depriving Black of his last chance – 34. ♜xe8 ♜e3!?

**34... ♜h5 35. ♜g4! exf5 36. ♘f4 ♜h8**



The culmination of a great strategic struggle. Notice the dramatic positioning of the black pieces on the eighth rank. It's hard to imagine that Kasparov himself was forced to arrange them in such a clumsy way!

**37. ♜f6+ ♜h7 38. ♜xh4+**

Black resigned due to checkmate on the next move. An exceptionally subtle game by the Ukrainian grandmaster!

Nikolai Kalinichenko wrote in his book *Vassily Ivanchuk*: ‘The summit of his achievements was his triumphal performance at the very strong international tournament at Linares in 1991. With a score of 9½ out of 13 (six wins and seven draws), Vassily Ivanchuk occupied outright first place, ahead of Kasparov and Karpov (...), and defeated both of them. This had not happened in the chess world for many years – nobody had broken the hegemony of the two K’s!’

**Opening**

Game 12 Sicilian Defence

**Vasyl Ivanchuk** 2710  
**Garry Kasparov** 2805

Amsterdam 1994

Not much needs to be said about the strength of Kasparov’s play. Every true chess fan knows his devastating attacks. But we also know how thorough Kasparov’s preparation was. He discovered powerful ideas for White as well as Black in many opening variations. He always had a strong team of seconds and one could only dream of catching Kasparov in the opening. However, in this game, Ivanchuk managed to deal Kasparov a

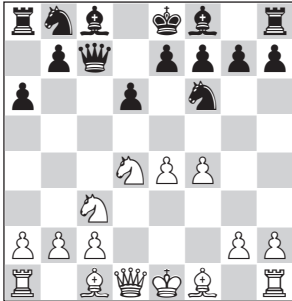
sensitive blow in his favourite opening, the Sicilian Defence.

**1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♗f6 5.♗c3 a6**

The Najdorf System is one of the most popular variations of the Sicilian Defence.

**6.f4 ♖c7**

More common is 6...e5 or 6...e6.



Here Ivanchuk introduced something new:

**7.♗f3**

This move has been used in many high-level games since, but in 1994 it was new. Perhaps thanks to its surprise value, Ivanchuk was able to inflict such a crushing defeat on his formidable opponent.

White has numerous alternatives here, but 7.f5!? is the most promising according to modern engines.

**7...g6**

Kasparov's first reaction is prudent. 7...e5!? was an option.

**8.♗e3 ♗g7 9.h3**

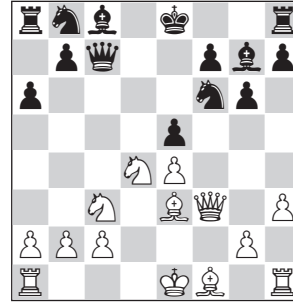
White prepares long castling.

**9...e5?**

This premature advance is the first serious mistake, allowing White to begin a tactical struggle for the initiative.

Black needed to continue developing with 9...0-0!? with an unclear position.

**10.fxe5 dxe5**



**EXERCISE:** How should White continue?

Suddenly, a very interesting, energetic move was played:

**11.♗h6!**

An excellent opportunity, knocking out the support from under the f6-knight. From here on, Kasparov had to solve specific problems at the board, and further on in the game he didn't manage this.

**11.♗b3±.**

**11...♗xh6**

This response is forced.



**TRICK:** The key point is 11...0-0? 12.♗xg7 ♗xg7 13.♗xf6+! ♗xf6 14.♗d5+ ♗g7 15.♗xc7 and White wins a piece.

Ivanchuk suggested 11...♗h5 as best. However, 12.♗xg7 ♗xg7 13.♗d5! ♗a5+ 14.b4 ♗d8 and now 15.♗b3 gives White an almost winning initiative.

12. ♖xf6 0-0 13. ♘d5!



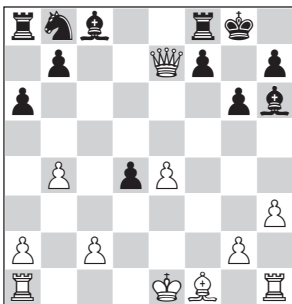
With a double threat: 14. ♘xc7 and 14. ♘e7+.

13... ♖a5+ 14. b4 ♖d8?

This unfortunate queen sacrifice gives White a sufficient material advantage to win. However, I understand Kasparov's practical decision, as he expected to receive dynamic compensation with his pieces.

Black refuses to go into the passive endgame that arises after the following forced line: 14... ♖g7 15. bxa5 (15. ♖xg7+!?) 15... ♖xf6 16. ♘xf6+ ♖g7 17. ♘d5! exd4 18. ♘b6 ♖a7 19. ♖c4!↑ with the idea 19... ♘c6 20. ♖f1! ♘xa5 21. ♘xc8! etc.

15. ♘e7+ ♖xe7 16. ♖xe7 exd4



EXERCISE: How should White continue?

17. ♖c4!

By far the best move. Having the queen, White is not going to move over to defence.

17... ♘c6 18. ♖c5 ♖e3 19. ♖f1 ♘d8  
Black defends f7 and prepares a regrouping with the moves ... ♖e6 and ... ♖c8, but this is not enough.



TRICK: 19...a5 runs into a combination: 20. ♖xf7! ♖xf7 21. ♖d5 etc.



EXERCISE: How to continue?

20. ♖f3!

A completely human decision. White plans to remove the most active black piece from the board: ... ♖xe3.

An artificial alternative was 20. ♖d5!? with the idea 20... ♖e6 21. c4!.

20... ♖e6 21. ♖xe3! dxe3 22. ♖xe6 ♘xe6 23. ♖xe3

White has a winning position, and Ivanchuk's technique is impeccable.

23...a5 24. b5 ♖ac8 25. 0-0-0 ♖c5

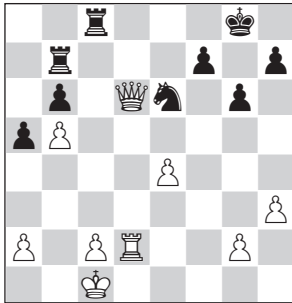
26. ♖d5 b6

26... ♖fc8 27. ♖xc5+-.

27. ♖g3 ♖c7 28. ♖d6 ♖fc8 29. ♖d2 ♖b7



If 29...♖c5 30.♙xb6 ♘xe4 31.♗d8+!, the passed b-pawn settles things.



**EXERCISE:** What is White's next plan?

**30.g4!**

As usual, Ivanchuk plays across the entire board.

**30...♖c5 31.♙f6 h6 32.e5 ♖e8 33.h4!**

In the same spirit.

**33...♔h7**

33...♖e4 34.♙c6+-.

**34.h5! g5**

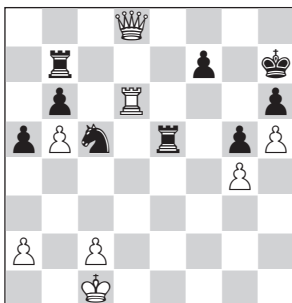
34...♗e6 loses to 35.hxg6+ fxg6

36.♙f8 ♗xe5 37.♗d8.

**35.♗d6 ♗e6 36.♙d8 ♔g7**



**TRICK:** 36...♗xe5?

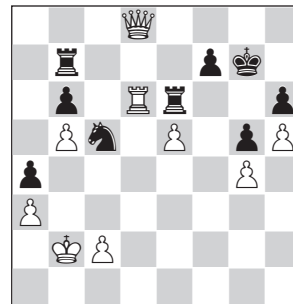


analysis diagram

**EXERCISE:** White to move and win.

37.♗xh6+! ♔xh6 38.♙h8#, a nice checkmate.

**37.a3 38.♔b2**



As in Ivanchuk's previous victory at Linares 1991, all of Kasparov's pieces end up fully paralysed.

**38...♗be7**

Or 38...♔h7 39.♗c6 followed by ♗c8.

**39.♗xb6 1-0**

A crushing defeat for the World Champion in his favourite opening!

**Strategy**

'Barricades always have two sides'  
– The Fully-Fledged French, New In Chess 2021.

Game 13

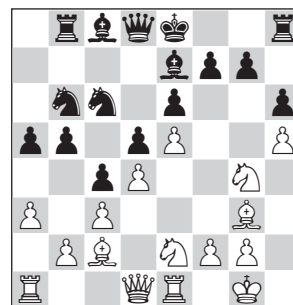
**Garry Kasparov**

2795

**Vasyl Ivanchuk**

2740

Horgen 1995



Throughout his chess career, Garry Kasparov suffered several painful defeats with White against the French. This is one of them.

**EXERCISE:** How should Black continue?

The pawn structure is very similar to the labyrinths seen in the French Advance Variation with ...c5-c4. White will have a hard time trying to find an effective plan.

**20...b4!**

Everything is ready for a ‘barricade’ attack.

**21.axb4 axb4 22.cxb4?!**

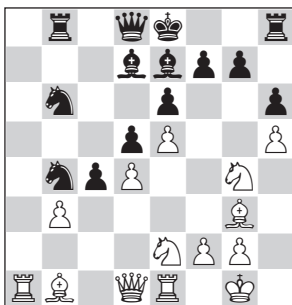
After this unfortunate exchange, Black gains the initiative on the queenside.

White should have started his attack: 22.f4! with mutual chances.

**22...cxb4 23.gb1 gd7 24.b3?**

This just helps Black to activate his b6-knight.

Once again, 24.f4!?



**EXERCISE:** How should Black continue?

**24...Ra8!**

Taking control of the a-file.

**25.Rxa8 Rxa8 26.bxc4 cxc4 27.c1?**

Overlooking a decisive strike!

**27...g4! 28.Ke2 Ka7!**

Now the pawn on d4 is not defended, and the battle ends.

**29.c3 Rxd4 30.cxc4 dxc4**

The extra c-pawn should decide the game quickly.

**31.Ke1 0-0 0-1**

This was one of Kasparov’s very rare losses with the white colour.

### Tactics

Game 14

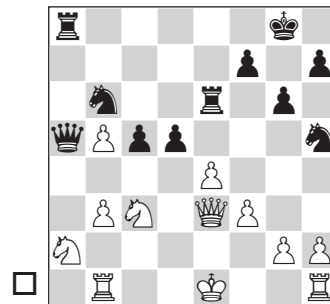
**Vasyl Ivanchuk**

2740

**Garry Kasparov**

2795

Linares 1997



**EXERCISE:** Find the best move for White.

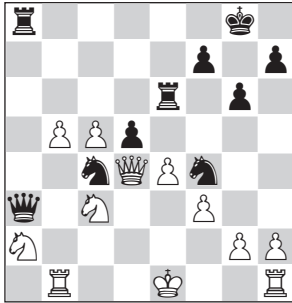
**22.b4!**

Remarkably, in all the four fragments in this training session, the pawn move b4! (for both colours) was highly successful against Kasparov.

22.Rxc5 c4 23.Rd1 is balanced.

**22...Ka3?**

Too ambitious, risky, and ultimately bad, but it requires some puzzling tactical decisions from White! Better was 22...cxb4 23.♖xb4±. **23.bxc5! ♗c4 24.♖d4 ♗f4**



**EXERCISE:** Find the best move for White.

**25.0-0!**

Excellent calculation and imagination: sacrificing a piece in order to advance the queenside pawns. Also interesting was 25.♖b4!?, but not 25.b6?! ♗e3! or 25.g3? ♖xc5!, both yielding Black counterplay.

**25...♖xa2 26.♗f2!**

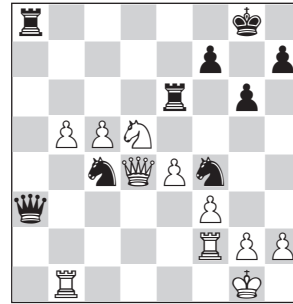
The key move of White's combination, winning in all lines.

26.♗xa2? ♗e2+.

**26...♖a3**

26...♖a5 27.b6! and White wins.

**27.♗xd5!**



The black knights prove useless against the well-organized armada of white pieces and pawns. Here Ivanchuk might have said: 'What interests me most is how to beat you, Garry!'

**27...♖d3**

27...♗xd5 loses to 28.exd5, and 27...♗d3 to 28.♖xc4.

**28.♖xd3 ♗xd3 29.♗c2 ♗a3 30.♗a2 ♗xc5**

If 30...♗xb1, 31.♗xa8+ ♖g7 32.c6 also wins.

**31.♗ba1 f5 32.♗c7 ♗e5 33.♗xa8 ♗xb5 34.exf5 gxf5 35.♗b6 ♗c3 36.♗c2 1-0**

It's time to give up, but Kasparov chose to lose on time (see, again, the dialogue between the opponents in the introduction).

**PostScriptum for the Ivanchuk versus Kasparov games**

Ivanchuk subsequently defeated Kasparov in two rapid games in 2002. But at that point, the latter was no longer the World Champion.

With Kasparov's retirement from chess in 2005, Vasyil lost his most challenging opponent. However, his motivation did not decrease at all, and his career got into full swing in this period. He kept winning big tournaments and qualified for the final match for the World Championship against Ruslan Ponomariov (see Session 10).

## SESSION 18

# Ivanchuk versus Morozevich

Alexander Sergeyevich Morozevich (born in 1977 in Moscow) was awarded the grandmaster title in 1994. He came fourth in the World Championship tournaments in San Luis, 2005, and sixth in the 2007 tournament in Mexico City. He won the extremely strong Russian Championships twice, in 1998 and 2007, and has represented Russia in seven Olympiads, winning numerous team and board medals.

Morozevich' natural talent is probably best illustrated by the fact that he won the Melody Amber tournaments (blindfold and rapid chess) alone in 2002, and shared in 2004, 2006 and 2008. He also won the Biel tournament three times: in 2003, 2004 and 2006. He was ranked second in the world on the FIDE list of July 2008.



Morozevich is known for his original, aggressive playing style with an unorthodox opening repertoire. Due to his risky and spectacular style, producing few draws, Morozevich is popular among chess fans.

Unlike most top chess players, Morozevich grew up independently. For a long time, his only chess (and life) mentor was a famous coach, national master Vladimir Yurkov (also the coach of the legendary grandmaster Andrei Sokolov, who unexpectedly fell into obscurity in the 1990s, and of some other grandmasters). I myself have also played against him and got to know him personally as a unique creative talent.



**STATISTICS:** total 55 games = +10  
19 classical: wins =11, draws =5, losses =3 (+8)  
26 rapid: wins =8, draws =11, losses =7 (+1)  
10 blitz: wins =4, draws =3, losses =3 (+1)

It's not about the overall score; Both opponents are worthy in terms of talent, but the difference lies in Ivanchuk's fundamental chess preparation – starting with the openings. Nevertheless, Morozevich knew how to create incredible complications on the board and more than once caused Vasya (and also himself) to make mistakes. Most of their fights are so exciting that I decided to include some dramatic blunders by both of them! (see Games 103-107).

So here is a selection of games by two of the most creative players in world chess.

### An anti-French attack

Game 101

**Vasyl Ivanchuk**

2730

**Alexander Morozevich**

2610

Amsterdam 1996

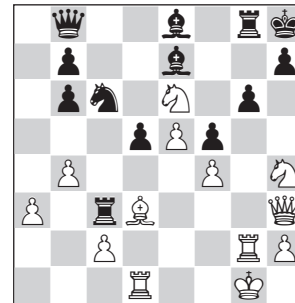
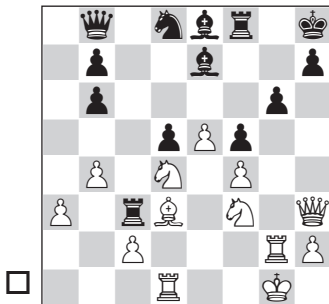
On 25...♖g8, 26.♘hf5! gives White an overwhelming advantage.

**26.♘e6!**

Moving closer to the black kingside.

Also good was 26.♘b5!?

**26...♗g8**



EXERCISE: Ready to attack?

Black has played a passive interpretation of the Classical French Defence – and now it is time for punishment.

EXERCISE: How to proceed with White?

**25.♘h4!**

Piling up the pressure. White's position is so good that there is no need to hurry with the blow on f5.

**25...♘c6**

**27.♘xf5!**

The crowning of White's strategy!

**27...♖c8**



TRICK: 27...gxf5 is not possible because of 28.♖xg8+ ♔xg8 29.♖h6! and after 29...♔f7 30.♖xh7+ ♔xe6 31.♘xf5 is checkmate.



TRICK: 27...♖xd3 28.♖xd3 gxf5 is met by 29.♖xh7+!



**EXERCISE:** How would you continue with White?

**28. ♖g3!**

Threatening the thematic 29. ♖xh7+!. The trivial 28. ♗h6!? should also win, but less beautifully.

**28...h5**

Other moves do not save Black either; for instance, 28... ♖xe6? 29. ♖xh7+! or 28... ♗xd3 29. ♗dxd3 gxf5 30. ♗xg8+ ♕xg8 31. ♖h6 ♕f7 32. ♗g3.

**29. ♗h6! ♗g7 30. ♕f5!?**

White uses the f5-square as a transit point for his pieces, but it was also a good square for a pawn: 30.f5+–.

**30... ♗xg3+ 31. ♖xg3 ♖b8**

Or 31... ♗h7 32. ♗f8!, winning.

**32. ♗xd5 ♗h7 33. ♕xg6 ♗xh6**



**EXERCISE:** Find the crushing coup de grâce.

**34. ♕f7! 1-0**

Mate is inevitable.

**An unusual Caro-Kann**

Game 102 Caro-Kann Defence

**Alexander Morozevich** 2758

**Vasyl Ivanchuk** 2705

Calvia Olympiad 2004

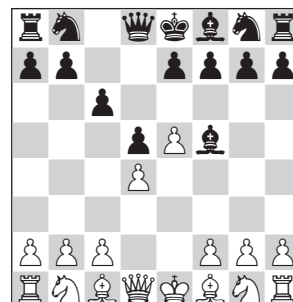
The Ukrainian team at the Calvia Olympiad was a group of young talents. There was only one ‘veteran’ playing first board: 35-year-old Vasyl Ivanchuk. But he was the one who played with enormous energy, brilliantly winning several decisive games in matches with strong opposing teams.

This highly attractive game was played in the fourth round against the Russian team, led by the fabulous Morozevich.

**1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5**

The Advance Caro-Kann leads is increasingly popular among top players.

**3... ♕f5**



**4.f4!?**

An unusual move, but one that deserves attention. The idea of

creating a pawn wedge is to prepare against the break ...c6-c5 by reinforcing the e5-pawn.

**4...e6 5. ♖f3 c5 6. ♔e3!?**

White threatens the c5-pawn.

**6...cxd4**

Giving up the centre square is not the best solution, but in such a complex position it is not so obvious what Black should do. Bad is 6... ♖c6? 7.dxc5!



**WEAPON:** But 6... ♖b6! offers really dynamic counterplay.

**7. ♗xd4 ♘e7 8. ♙b5+**

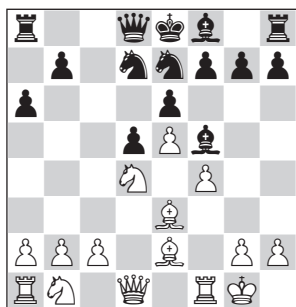
Gaining a tempo for development. However, better for White is 8. ♗c3!? ♙g6 9.g4! with initiative, Ziatdinov-Savon, Tashkent 1985.

**8... ♗d7!?**

Already turning creative at the board, Ivanchuk finds an interesting counterplan, although it seems quite risky.

**9.0-0 a6 10. ♙e2**

White threatens to push g2-g4.



The theoretical part is over – now let's start playing!

**EXERCISE:** How to proceed?

**10...g5!**

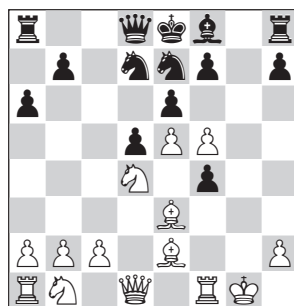
A strong resource that coincides with Black's general plan: breaking up White's centre.

**11.g4**

Counting on 11... ♙e4 12.f5! with the initiative. However, Black has a highly original retort.

It was worth considering 11.fxg5 ♗xe5 with roughly equal chances.

**11...gxf4! 12.gxf5**



To the enjoyment of the chess fan, Morozevich continues in his favourite style – pouring hot sauce over the board in the fight for the initiative.

**EXERCISE:** How would you continue with Black?

**12... ♗xf5!**

Ivanchuk offers his opponent a piece.

Not 12...fxe3?! 13.fxe6 and White has the initiative.

**13. ♗xf5**

The best reply.

On the other hand, after 13. ♙f2

♖g8+ 14. ♗h1 possible is 14... ♗g3+!

15. ♙xg3 fxf3 with excellent play for Black.

**13...fxe3 14.♘c3**

White maintains the tension – typical for Morozevich.

A different direction was 14.♘d6+ ♙xd6 15.exd6 ♘e5 with double-edged play, in which Black's chances are not worse.

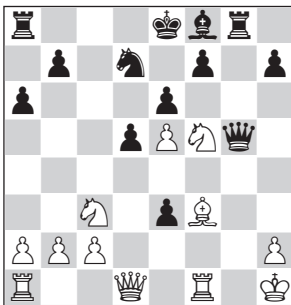
**14...♖g8+ 15.♔h1 ♚g5**

The critical moment of the game.

**16.♙f3?**

According to Moro's credo – all-out attack! However, White's desire for active play runs into a strong refutation.

The correct continuation was 16.♘g3 ♚xe5 with a complex game.



**EXERCISE:** How would you continue for Black?

**16...♘xe5!**

Finally White's centre has been completely destroyed, at the cost of a piece for three pawns – for now. Recapturing the knight with 16...♚xf5? is a bad idea in view of 17.♙h5!.

**17.♚e2**

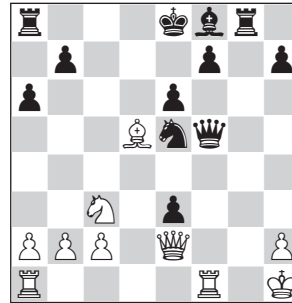
Not 17.♙xd5? or 17.♘xd5? because of 17...0-0-0! with advantage to Black.

**17... ♚xf5!**

An alternative was 17...0-0-0!?

**18.♙xd5**

What a great game, full of dynamic resources!



**EXERCISE:** How would you continue as Black?

**18... ♚h3!**

Black concentrates his forces on the kingside.

Much quieter, but technically interesting, was 18...♚g4!? 19.♚xe3 ♚g5, forcing the exchange of queens resulting in a better ending for Black.

**19.♙xb7 ♖a7**

19...♖d8!? or 19...♖b8!? looked more natural, but the text is also OK.

**20.♙f3 ♙h6!**

A strong human move: developing and at the same time defending the e3-pawn.

20...♖g3!? is Stockfish's idea.

**21.♘e4! ♔e7!**

Defending against the threat 22.♘f6+.

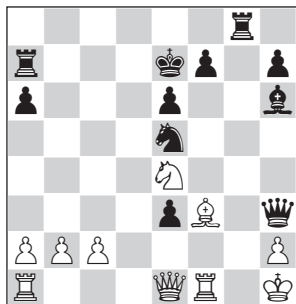
Alternatively, also strong was

21...♖g6!?

**22.♚e1!**

The fight doesn't stop.





White has established dangerous coordination between his queen and knight, requiring exceptionally accurate play from Black.

**EXERCISE:** How to continue?

### 22...f5?

Until here Ivanchuk has played almost flawlessly. But with this overly optimistic, emotional advance, he squanders his advantage. The cold-blooded 22...a5! or 22...b7 should have won.

### 23. ♖b4+ ♔f7 24. ♖d4

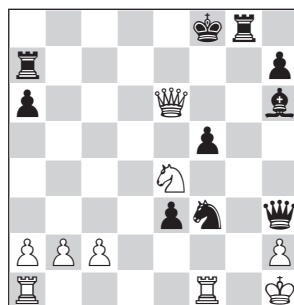
Morozevich is also still in an ambitious mood: the black knight and rook are under attack! Here White misses the first chance offered to him: 24. ♘d6+!? ♔f6 25. ♘e4+ ♔f7 26. ♘d6+ with a draw by repetition.

### 24... ♘xf3! 25. ♖f6+



**TRICK:** After capturing the rook with 25. ♖xa7+?? Black wins in 'action movie' style: 25... ♔g6 26. ♖g1+ ♔h5! (26... ♔g5!?!-+) 27. ♖f7+ ♔h4! 28. ♖e7+ and now 28... ♖g5, winning!

### 25... ♔e8 26. ♖xe6+ ♔f8



**EXERCISE:** In the midst of this chaos, can you spot a possible draw for White?

### 27. ♖f6+?

White's last mistake, perhaps due to time pressure or overexertion! Morozevich misses the saving move 27. ♖c8+! which still draws since the black king cannot hide from the checks.

### 27... ♖f7

Now, however, Ivanchuk's king escapes from the danger zone.

### 28. ♖d6+ ♔g7 29. ♖g1+ ♔h8 30. ♘f6 0-1

A game not without errors, but a rare uncompromising fight in which Ivanchuk prevailed. Thus, the Ukrainian team achieved an important 2½-1½ victory over the Russians.

## Amazing blunders and huge mistakes!

I was often amazed by Morozevich's tactical skills, but even more so by his inexplicable mistakes at the end of the game. At the same time, he played mostly fast and rarely

got into time-trouble. Perhaps this was due to excessive effort and, consequently, fatigue.

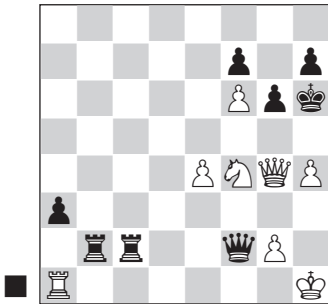
### A miss in Sochi

Game 103

**Alexander Morozevich** 2774

**Vasyl Ivanchuk** 2740

Russia teams 2008



Interestingly, commentators believed that the battle was effectively over here, whatever Black played.

**EXERCISE:** Try to find the only winning move for Black.

#### 34...♖b5?

This natural defensive rook move actually misses the win! The right move was to put the queen on the same rank: 34...♕c5! 35.♗xa3 ♕e5, defending everything.

#### 35.♗xa3??

Perhaps in time pressure, Moro misses his chance! After 35.♗d5! the position is equal; for example, 35...♗xd5 36.exd5 ♕xf6 37.♗xa3.

#### 35...♕d4

Now it's over.

36.♗d5 ♗b1+ 37.♖h2 ♕g1+

White resigned.

There follows 38.♖h3 ♕h1+ and 39...♗xg2+, winning.

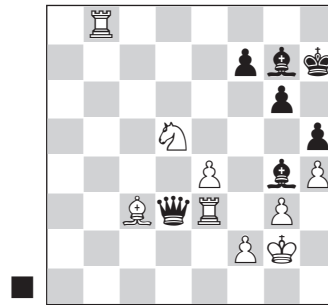
### A blitz miss in Moscow

Game 104

**Vasyl Ivanchuk** 2781

**Alexander Morozevich** 2788

Moscow blitz 2008



**EXERCISE:** Black to play and save the game.

Here Morozevich missed an elegant escape by playing:

#### 42...♕d1??

A desperate move.



**TRICK:** Instead, the cool resource 42...♕h3+! 43.♖xh3 (not 43.♖h2? ♕f1 44.♗f4 ♕xf2+ 45.♖xh3 ♕xe3 and Black is better) 43...♕f1+ 44.♖h2 ♕xf2+ forced a draw by perpetual check.

#### 43.♗f6+

Now White wins easily.

Game 121 Pirc Defence

**Fabiano Caruana**

2670

**Vasyl Ivanchuk**

2703

Biel 2009

Overall score: +4 =7 -4.

**1.d4 d6 2.e4** ♟f6 **3.** ♘c3 **g6**

The Pirc-Ufimtsev Defence allows Black to create a dynamic position, in which the advantage of White's first move is not so noticeable.

**4.** ♖e3

Caruana chooses the very popular modern '150 Attack' pattern.

**4...** ♗g7

Nowadays, 4...c6!? and 4...a6!? are two important alternatives, aiming to discourage the plan based on ♖d2 and ♗h6 (see the author's book *The Perfect Pirc-Modern*).

**5.** ♖d2 **c6** **6.** ♗h6!? ♘xh6 **7.** ♖xh6 ♖a5

Following old ideas, improvisation style.

It is worth trying the classical Pirc advance 7...e5! here.

**8.** ♗d3 **c5** **9.** ♟ge2

Not a dangerous line. According to experts, 9.d5!? is quite annoying for Black.



The opening phase is over, let's play chess!

**EXERCISE:** How to continue?

**9...** ♘c6!

Maintaining the tension.

**10.d5** ♟e5!

Black's minor pieces are much more at ease than their white counterparts. The threat of ...c5-c4 looks very strong.

**11.** ♗b5+?

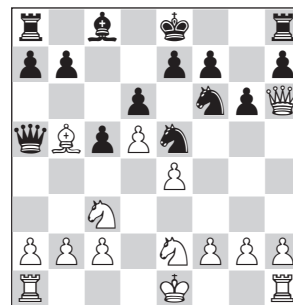
This measure is erroneous for reasons that are not at all obvious.



**TRICK:** 11.f4? leads to complications favouring Black:

11...♟eg4 12.♖g7? (12.♖h4 c4!; 12.♖h3? ♟f2!) 12...♖g8 13.♗b5+ ♔d8! 14.♖xf7 ♟h6 leaves the queen trapped.

11.♖d2 is a safer move, but its main drawback is that it allows Black to castle.



**EXERCISE:** How to continue?

**11...** ♔d8!

A significant improvement! The bishop on b5 is badly placed, and

in order to avoid exchanging it off, Black is prepared to renounce castling.

**12. ♘g3**

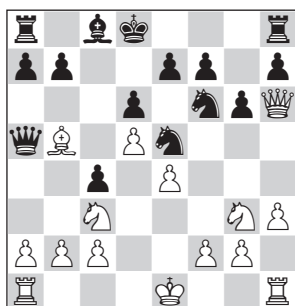
White is already in trouble. 12.f4? transposes to a line mentioned above, while 12. ♖d2 is met by 12... ♗xe4!. Finally, 12.h3 is refuted by 12... a6! 13.f4 ♗eg4! 14.hxg4 axb5 15. ♖g7 ♜e8! with a sharp game but favourable for Black.

**12...c4!**

Cutting off the light-squared bishop.

**13.h3**

It was too late for 13. ♖d2 a6 14.f4 axb5 15.fxe5 dxe5. White has no obvious way to disturb Black's stability on the dark squares.



EXERCISE: How to continue?

**13...a6**

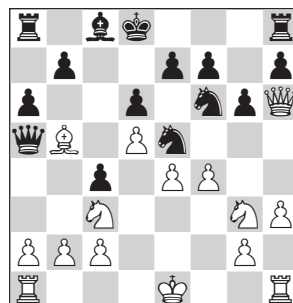
The only problem with this generally good move is that it misses an immediate win.



**TRICK:** Stronger was the paradoxical 13...g5!.. This prevents f2-f4, renewing the threat of ... a7-a6, while after 14. ♖xg5 a6 15.f4 ♗g6 the threat to trap the queen with

...h7-h6 leaves White a piece down. But this is a variation only a computer could find!

**14.f4**



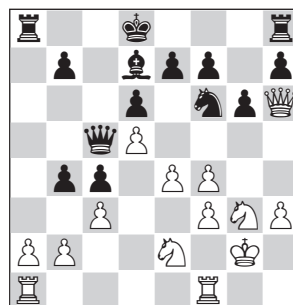
EXERCISE: How to continue?

**14... ♗f3+!**

This curious exchange leads to an extremely interesting position, in which the strategic advantages of Black's position are offset by the unsafe position of his king.

**15.gxf3 axb5 16.0-0 b4 17. ♗ce2 ♖c5+ 18. ♔g2 ♗d7 19.c3!?**

White needs to activate his e2-knight.



EXERCISE: How would you continue?

**19...bxc3?!**

Maybe Black should not have allowed his opponent to solve the knight's problem so easily, and should have played one of the useful moves he made in the next phase of the game: 19...♖g8!.

**20.♟xc3!**

With the unpleasant threat of breaking through with the e-pawn.

**20...b5**

It was preferable to play 20...♙c7!?

**21.a3**

White intends to build up his attack in a slow, gradual manner.

He could have started active operations immediately with 21.e5!?, but the result would not have been entirely clear.

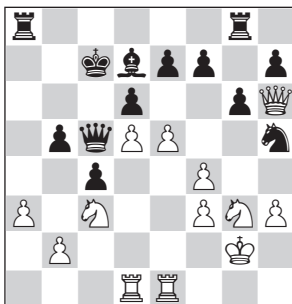
**21...♙c7 22.♖ad1 ♜hg8!**

Preparing original counterplay against the central pawn advance – see Black's next move.

**23.e5 ♟h5! 24.♖fe1!**

A strong move, completing development.

The only defect of White's position is the presence of doubled pawns, but it requires very deep insight on Black's part to take advantage of it. Not 24.♟xh5? gxh5+-+.



**EXERCISE: How to continue?**

**24...g5!?**

A spectacular knight sacrifice, and the key to Black's practical idea! A complicated battle lies ahead, with chances for both sides.

After 24...♖ae8, the position would have remained more balanced.

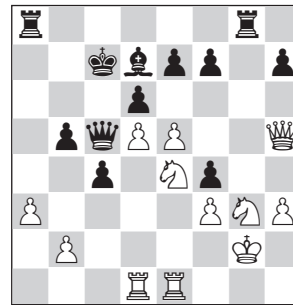
**25.exd6+**

This exchange may seem like a premature concession, but weakening the d6-square makes sense in view of a tactical detail revealed slightly later.

Bad is 25.fxg5? when 25...♟f4+ is crushing.

25.♟xh5 ♜g6 may transpose to the game.

Head-spinning complications follow after 25.♙xh5!? gxf4 26.♟ce4.



analysis diagram

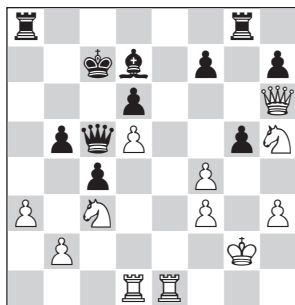
**EXERCISE: How to continue?**

26...♖xg3+! 27.♙h1!! (the only defence!) 27...♖xh3+ 28.♙xh3 ♟xh3 29.♟xc5 dxc5, Black seems to have reasonable compensation for the exchange. His queenside majority may become threatening.

**25...exd6 26.♟xh5?!**

White's previous move could have been justified by 26.fxg5 or

26. ♖xh5!? with unclear complications.



EXERCISE: How would you continue?

### 26... ♖g6!

This important inclusion avoids 26... gxf4+?? 27. ♖g7! and White wins.

### 27. ♖e4?

Forcing a transition into a cheerless endgame.

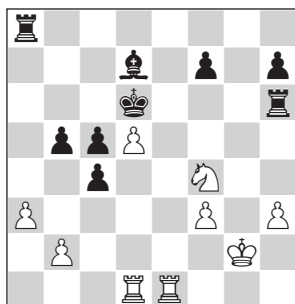
More tenacious was 27. ♖xh7 gxf4+ 28. ♖xg6 fxc6 29. ♖xf4, obtaining some counterplay for the queen.

27... ♖h6 28. ♖xc5 dxc5 29. ♖g3 gxf4 30. ♖e2 ♖d6

The rest is relatively easy.

30... ♖xh3!?

31. ♖xf4



EXERCISE: How would you continue?

### 31... ♖g8+!?

With a simple manoeuvre, Black wins a pawn, which is sufficient for victory.

32. ♖f2 ♖h4! 33. ♖g2 ♖xh3 34. ♖h1

♖gg3 35. ♖xh3 ♖xh3 36. ♖e1 h5

37. ♖e4 ♖h1 38. a4 ♖b1 39. axb5

♖xb2+ 40. ♖g3 c3 41. ♖e3 ♖xb5 0-1

The passed pawn on c3 costs White a knight. A very interesting game, featuring unexpected tactical nuances and great fighting spirit on both sides.

## Sacrificing the isolated pawn

Game 122 Caro-Kann Defence

Vasyl Ivanchuk 2754

Alexander Beliavsky 2632

Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad 2010

Overall score: +12 =10 -1.

1. c4 c6 2. e4 d5 3. exd5 cxd5 4. d4

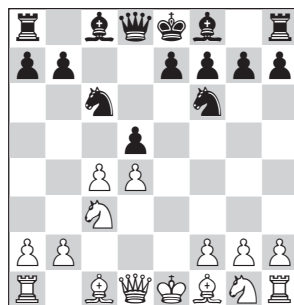
Transposing into the Panov Attack.

In this line of the Caro-Kann,

Black must play very carefully and precisely.

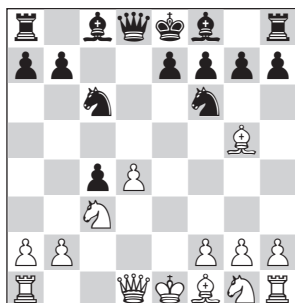
4... ♖f6 5. ♖c3 ♖c6

5...e6 is regarded as very solid, in most cases leading to positions with an isolated pawn.



**6. ♖g5!?**

The most energetic, while 6. ♘f3 allows an ultra-theoretical line after 6... ♗g4!?.  
**6... dxc4**



EXERCISE: How would you continue?

**7. ♗xc4!?**

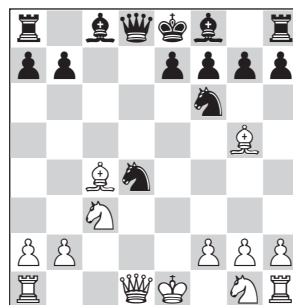
Developing.

**7... ♘xd4?**

Taking the pawn with the knight is extremely dangerous.



PUZZLE: The capture 7... ♗xd4 has a somewhat better reputation, but Black would have to defend with utmost precision. For instance, 8. ♗xd4 ♘xd4 9. 0-0-0 e5 10. f4! ♗g4 11. ♘f3 ♗xf3! (it is one of the opening paradoxes that giving up the bishop at this point offers better defensive prospects) 12. gxf3 0-0-0! (12... ♖c8? 13. fxe5!) 13. fxe5 ♘xf3 and this position, seemingly bad for Black, is still balanced! Stein-Speckner, Dortmund 1993.



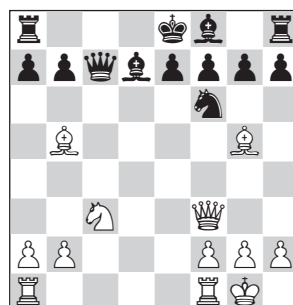
EXERCISE: How should White continue?

**8. ♘f3! ♘xf3+ 9. ♗xf3 ♖c7**

Black's defensive task is probably more than any human player can handle; White is simply too active. So far the results for Black have been rather depressing.

After 9... a6 10. ♗xf6!? (10.0-0) 10... gxf6 11.0-0 it's time to go home.

**10. ♗b5+ ♗d7 11.0-0**

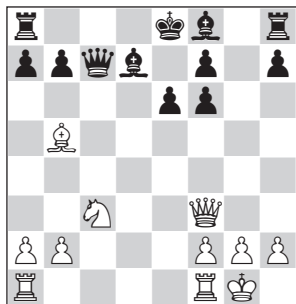


**11... ♗c6**

Black is already far behind in development, but if he has to move the bishop again, then this is, to put it mildly, an alarming signal.

If 11... ♗xb5 12. ♘xb5 ♗b6 13. a4! has led to a 6-0 score for White.

11... e6 12. ♗xf6!? gxf6 was seen in Abu Sufian-Zia, Dhaka Borsho 2021.



EXERCISE: How to win?

13. ♖d5!, and Black soon resigned.

**12. ♖xf6 gxf6**

Bad is 12...exf6? 13. ♖fe1+ ♖e7

14. ♖d5 with a massacre.

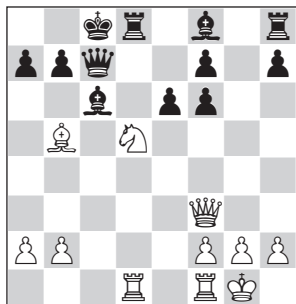
**13. ♖ad1 e6 14. ♖d5**

Ivanchuk was surely capable of finding a sensible solution with the tempting move 14. ♖xf6!?, but the game continuation also seems very unpleasant for Black.

**14...0-0-0**



TRICK: 14...exd5 15. ♖xf6 (15. ♖fe1+!?) 15...♗g8 (15...♖g7 16. ♖xg7+–) 16. ♖xc6+ bxc6 17. ♖fe1+ ♖e7 18. ♖xe7+!, winning.



EXERCISE: How would you continue?

**15. ♖xc6! exd5**

15...♖xc6 16. ♖c1 ♖c5 17. ♖e7+ yielded the same result.

**16. ♖xd5 ♖b8 17. ♖c1**

17. ♖xb7!? was the simplest way.

**17...♖d7 18. ♖cd1**

The only mysterious move in an otherwise crystal-clear game.

18. ♖fd1!? seems more natural, but there is not much difference anyway.

**18...♖e7**

After 18...♖c7, 19. ♖xb7! decides.

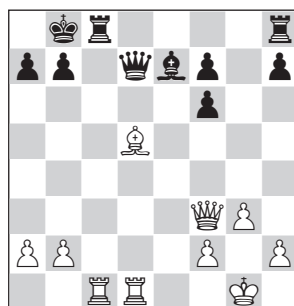
**19.g3 ♖c7 20. ♖c1 ♖d7 21. ♖fd1**

An excellent post for the rook.

**21...♖c8**

On 21...♖b5 there follows 22. ♖c3

♖d7 23. ♖b3 ♖a6 24. ♖xb7!, winning.



EXERCISE: How would you continue as White?

**22. ♖xb7!**

This final shot is a merciful shortcut to the finish for Black.

**22...♖xc1**

Or 22...♖xb7 23. ♖xb7+ ♖xb7

24. ♖d7+ ♖b6 25. ♖xc8 ♖xc8 26. ♖xe7, going into a technically winning endgame.

**23. ♖xc1 ♖xb7 24. ♖f4+ ♖a8 25. ♖c7 1-0**