

# MODERN CHESS FORMULA

THE POWERFUL  
IMPACT OF ENGINES

by  
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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



# INTRODUCTION

This book is dedicated to chess, though I must confess it is not that same chess with which I immediately and eternally fell in love many, many years ago. There were plenty of wonderful moments, and no shortage of horrible disappointments associated with that version of the game in which I certainly considered myself a true professional. The realities of chess life during the second half of the twentieth century are difficult for today's young people to imagine or understand: Tournaments lasting 30,40 days with adjourned games being completed on specific days allotted for such adjournments. Unbelievable time trouble given that back then only the unrestrained dreamer David Bronstein even thought about incremental time to be added after each move. Mountains of cigarette butts in ashtrays — a fixed attribute of the chess battles and battlefields in those severest of days. Finally, suitcases filled to the very brim with Yugoslav Chess Informants and handmade card indexes.

The arrival of computers dramatically changed the game, while the birth of “Chessbase” made all those aforementioned suitcases that much lighter. Still, in the early 80's this new trend caught on with but a select few even if the value of electronic databases was certainly evident. For instance, I only obtained my first laptop after working with Viktor Korchnoi in preparation for the 1991 candidates matches. Seeing how a sixty-year-old accomplished grandmaster used one finger to complete a task that required considerable energy from my entire body convinced me of the necessity to change. It took another ten years at that before the computer evolved from being a faithful archivist into an active participant in the process of tournament or match prep. Even during the Karpov-Anand match in 1998, the analysis of the very best chess engines caused much confusion and snickering. As I am publishing this book in 2020 it is important to recall that back in 2014, during the Kramnik-Leko championship match, a famous episode involving weak computer analysis could still take place. Peter Leko had refuted, “Over the board,” the analysis of Vladimir Kramnik's powerful seconds and coaches, all of whom were armed with the latest computer engines of

the time. In truth, it wasn't even the machine's fault but rather the fact that it still happened to work too slowly. It's difficult to explain the drama behind these situations to a young chess player today since the reliable computer now solves similar positions in mere seconds. Furthermore, the fateful question of who is stronger, man or machine, has long been answered. The engine has become the "Holy Cow" to which all chess players now pray regardless of their religious convictions or rating. Far from being a foe or rival it has become an invaluable helper, consultant and the highest of authorities. Since the highest of all oracles is soulless and cynical it is ready to help anyone ignoring opinions and preferences. Therefore, the task before each player is to use this dominant and universally accessible power to their particular advantage.

The rise of computers didn't just alter the lives of professionals. The nature of the relationship between the players and general public changed completely. On the one hand the aura of exclusivity and exceptionalism that surrounded grandmasters in the past was gone. On the other hand there was a dramatic increase in the number of individuals that were suddenly able to follow along and understand top level games. There was no longer a need to count pieces anymore, (as some wives of chess players would often do since they did not know how to play themselves), or try to decode some kind of hidden body language. All one need know now is that a "+" in front of the number means White has an advantage while a "-" thereby means Black has an advantage. The bigger these numbers are the more significant the advantage. It usually takes about ten minutes to teach a novice the rules of any game while understanding, and more so, the correct evaluation of what happens on the pitch, court or field is much harder to master. In modern chess everything is strictly backwards. It is possible to know the evaluation of any position better than any expert while not truly understanding a single thing at the same time.

The constant debate about chess being a sport, science, or art has also lost all meaning. This commonplace triad no longer has anything to do with reality. Without a doubt chess is a sport. In fact, the sport element is currently the most dominant. Who won the tournament, who has the best chance to win the candidates match and play the champion, where is grandmaster "NN" in the current rating list? These questions are precisely what most interests the average chess fan. If we take science to mean the ability to co-



operate with the engine this element still exists as well. It is just absolutely annoying for some and satisfying for others since the process of working on chess has gotten significantly simpler.

However, when it comes to art the implication is that there lies some secret, riddle or guessing from the audience. These elements are gone forever from chess. There is a higher authority in the chess world now and this supreme judge evaluates every move, every flight of human imagination and every movement of the soul with credibility and without room for appeal. If after some absolutely inexplicable move, which in the not too distant past would electrify a crowded auditorium, the evaluation of a position changes from say +1 to +.2, that same outburst of emotion burns out from the crowd. A good illustration of this is the following analogy. Assume you are going to see a famous opera with a brilliant performer. Your inner being is filled with the highest emotion and completely prepared to engage and experience true beauty. After the performance of the main theme, impeccably performed by the famous tenor, you are ecstatic, but your gaze almost involuntarily falls on the modest scoreboard next to your chair. The performance is given a four out of ten. What happened? Was there a computer glitch? With a shaking hand you press another button and see a dry and impartial list of every mistake made by the singer. Certainly, such knowledge increases your self-perception as a music critic, but the magic of art is destroyed in an instant.

In Latin the word “pharmakon,” means medicine. However, if we were to dig deeper into the dictionaries, there we would find another unexpected translation: poison. In other words, that which is the most harmless of medicines in excess doses or if applied incorrectly turn into its exact opposite and this has been known for quite a long time. That tireless assistant, the analysis engine, always at our service in our work, is strangely a form of pharmakon in some sense as well. With excessive or incorrect use he can become a chess player’s enemy, or better yet, an enemy of that player’s games and results. Therefore, it seems the perfect formula of “playing like a computer” is perhaps not as clear as it may appear at first glance. Playing like a computer is beyond human ability. Wagering on playing by the cosmically high standards of the engine will more than likely not only be unattainable for a human, but also quite bad for them. After all the soulless machine doesn’t know fatigue or time trouble. It isn’t interested in the tournament

standings and doesn't experience stress in situations that decide the game or even the whole of a tournament. On the other hand, wholehearted ignorance of computer evaluations and recommendations is naïve and overly egotistical in our time. Therefore, what is the best way to attain the benefit of a necessary relationship with the computer while not losing our unique individuality at the same time? This book will discuss the problems related to the interaction between humans and the engine. In order for the subjective opinions, conclusions and predictions of the author to claim some semblance of objectivity the games in this book were played exclusively by players of the highest caliber. After all, certain patterns and tendencies can only be identified by analyzing the games of real professionals in the absolute truest sense of that word. That is why the reader isn't required to agree with the author on everything but is guaranteed some measure of delight in being introduced to the creative work of the best players in the world!

How does modern chess compare to the game of the same name that was quite popular in the territories comprising the former Soviet Union? In the past few decades it has changed far less than the successor of that country know as Russia. The same 8x8 board, the same pieces and even the rules remain practically the same. Although the enthusiasts from FIDE try really hard they can't think up anything more significant than the latest clarifications regarding pawn promotion on the last rank. It is possible to claim that outwardly chess is a very conservative game. In fact, this is one of the reasons for its growing popularity around the world. Truthfully if one were to try and look behind the scenes of this spectacle there are significant changes. A typical scene of preparation for a tournament or individual game involving a bona fide chess professional of the 70's, or 80's looked something like this: mountains of disorganized literature, random notebooks, notes on scraps of paper and the pieces themselves. The heart of all preparation was definitely the pieces: solid Staunton or cheap plastic made no difference because the main event took place over the board. It is well known that Bobby Fischer was inseparable from his pocket chess set. He was always ready to whip it out to confirm or refute any idea that came to mind yet he was far from the only one. Nowadays some professionals don't even have a board, never mind books. The computer replaced everything. This isn't good or bad but rather just the reality of modern times. Together with yesterday's training relics practically gone are the explorers. Those who were ready to check over and sharpen new ideas endlessly, sometimes

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absolutely fantastic and sometimes quite often unquestionably insane. Even if at present the process still grinds on day and night, and in the most literal sense of the word as the machines don't understand tiredness much like they don't understand the joy of an epiphany, doubt, hopelessness or other human emotions. One, and sometimes more engines, toil without rationing electricity, sometimes checking on their master's ideas or more often showing their own evaluations and recommendations on screen with each conclusion supplemented by an exact numeric equivalent. There is no arguing with such an expert. Is it even necessary? He, as the almighty judge, knows all and can answer any question. All that is needed is patience. During a mutual training session, a young player who is currently one of the top in the world, asked Garry Kasparov: "How did you evaluate positions in the past?" After all standard evaluations like "better" or "worse" are too vague and cannot begin to satisfy a modern professional. The very question feels like a giant gap between the approach to solving chess problems then and now. Intuition and improvisation are gradually phased out by exact knowledge and calculation. So far this has only become fully evident in the opening. More than anything else it has become opening preparation which has made the biggest fundamental change to professional chess. So now let us peer behind the curtain.



# OPENINGS

How this holiest of processes occurs now will later be discussed in full detail though for now I simply cannot deny in indulging myself by demonstrating a few examples of the artistic revelations of the past.

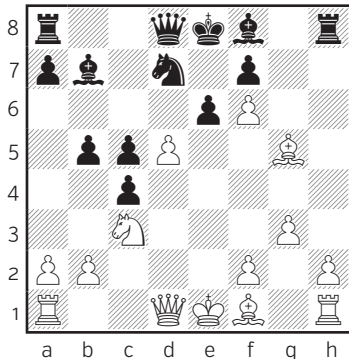
1

▷ L. Polugaevsky [2620]

▷ E. Torre [2550]

Moscow 1981

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6  
5.♙g5 dxc4 6.e4 b5 7.e5 h6 8.♙h4  
g5 9.♘xg5 hxg5 10.♙xg5 ♘bd7  
11.exf6 ♙b7 12.g3 c5 13.d5



“I analyzed the correct configuration in Botvinnik’s variation for about two weeks, all while risking

the loss of precious time in preparation for my match against Mecking (1977). The risk paid off. One sleepless night while captivated by my work I literally shuddered as if grabbing the proverbial Firebird by its tail: an absolutely new idea was suddenly within my grasp. It wasn’t necessary in the match and the scrap of paper with it lay amongst my things for more than four years!”  
— Polugaevsky.

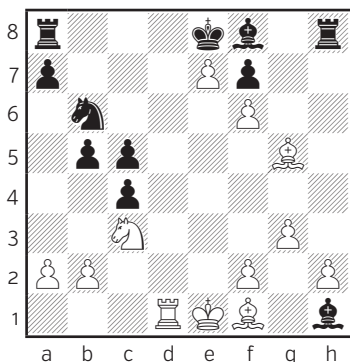
13...♘b6?!

Based on this game, a move which was before considered almost the main line option was completely rejected although possibly it waits for better times. As for other continuations in this position that is a topic best left for a separate work.

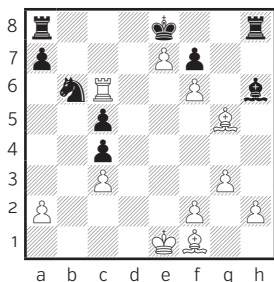
14.dxe6! ♙xd1+

14...♙xh1 15.e7 ♙d7 (15...♙xd1+ 16.♙xd1 This leads to a position from the game.) 16.♙xd7+ ♘xd7 17.♘xb5 ♙xe7 18.fxex7 f6 19.♙f4 Obviously favoring White.

15.♙xd1 ♙xh1 16.e7

**16...a6**

A possible rehabilitation of this particular line must be related to 16... $\text{\textcircled{c}}6$ !? 17. $\text{\textcircled{d}}6$   $\text{\textcircled{b}}4$ ! Only this! (Losing is 17... $\text{\textcircled{c}}8$  18. $\text{\textcircled{h}}4$   $\text{\textcircled{h}}6$  19. $\text{\textcircled{f}}4$   $\text{\textcircled{b}}4$  20.  $\text{\textcircled{h}}3$ ; as well as 17... $\text{\textcircled{d}}7$  18. $\text{\textcircled{e}}4$ !  $\text{\textcircled{g}}8$  19. $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{\textcircled{f}}8$   $\text{\textcircled{c}}+$   $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{\textcircled{f}}8$  20.  $\text{\textcircled{e}}2$ .) 18.  $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{\textcircled{x}}6$   $\text{\textcircled{b}}\text{\textcircled{x}}3$  19. $\text{\textcircled{b}}\text{\textcircled{x}}3$   $\text{\textcircled{h}}6$

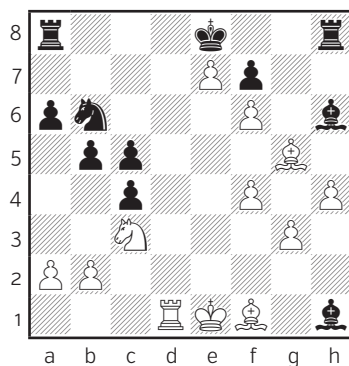


20.  $\text{\textcircled{h}}4$  (White doesn't have time to set up the pawn chain with h4 and f4 since after 20.h4 comes 20... $\text{\textcircled{x}}g5$  21. $\text{\textcircled{h}}xg5$   $\text{\textcircled{c}}8$  with the position after 22.  $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{\textcircled{x}}b6$ !?  $\text{\textcircled{a}}\text{\textcircled{x}}b6$  23.  $\text{\textcircled{h}}\text{\textcircled{x}}c4$   $\text{\textcircled{c}}7$  24.  $\text{\textcircled{h}}b5+$   $\text{\textcircled{d}}7$  being one of those you don't see every day. Despite the huge material advantage, Black has to be happy with a drawish outcome.)

20... $\text{\textcircled{d}}7$  21.  $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{\textcircled{x}}c5$   $\text{\textcircled{h}}f4$  With good chances to save the game.

**17.h4!!**

The position arising after 17. $\text{\textcircled{e}}\text{\textcircled{f}}8$   $\text{\textcircled{c}}+$   $\text{\textcircled{c}}\text{\textcircled{f}}8$ ! 18.  $\text{\textcircled{d}}6$   $\text{\textcircled{b}}8$  19.  $\text{\textcircled{h}}e3$   $\text{\textcircled{h}}5$  20.  $\text{\textcircled{h}}e2$   $\text{\textcircled{h}}e5$  was successfully defended by Polugaevsky's longtime coach Bagirov against Plachetka (Berlin 1979) and Beliavsky (Moscow 1981).

**17... $\text{\textcircled{h}}6$  18.f4!**

Black's kingside rook is relegated to incarceration, the e7-pawn ties down the king while the firebird spirit defeats earthly material.

**18...b4**

A passive defense is hopeless.

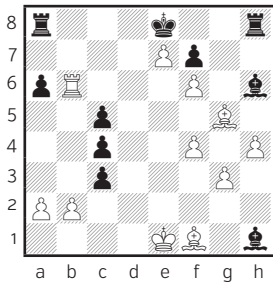
18... $\text{\textcircled{h}}xg5$  19. $\text{\textcircled{f}}xg5$   $\text{\textcircled{b}}8$  20.  $\text{\textcircled{d}}6$ !  $\text{\textcircled{h}}a8$  21.  $\text{\textcircled{h}}3$  Black is completely helpless.

**19.  $\text{\textcircled{d}}6$ !**

Things would be simpler for Polugaevsky today. The engine finds the correct line in mere seconds.

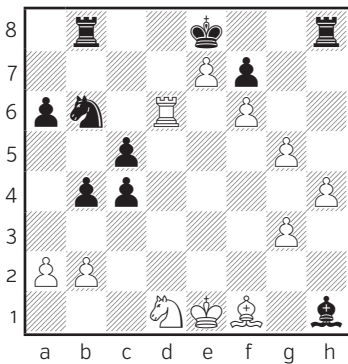
**19... ♖b8!**

Terribly unhelpful is 19...bxc3  
20. ♖xb6



20...cxb2 (20...c2 21. ♖d2 ♖d7  
22. ♗xc4 ♗e4 23. ♖xa6!+-) 21. ♗xc4  
♗c6 22. ♖xb2 a5 23. ♖b5! ♖c8 24. ♖xa5  
Black's material advantage is an illusion in every variation since the h8-rook can't get in the game.

**20. ♗d1 ♗xg5 21. fxg5**



**21... ♗d5!**

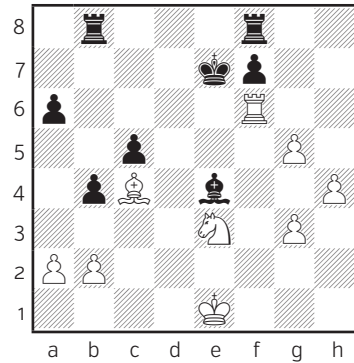
Losing is 21... ♗d5 22. ♗e3 ♗e6  
23. ♗g2 ♗d7 24. ♗c6! (Stronger and prettier than Polugaevsky's suggested 24. ♗e4±.) 24... ♗xc6 25. ♗f5  
♖g8 26. ♗g7+ ♖xg7 27. ♖d8+ ♖xd8  
28. exd8 ♖+ ♗xd8 29. fxg7 In any case inaccuracies in the analysis only assist in highlighting the humanity of the grandiose intent.

**22. ♗xc4 ♗xe7 23. fxe7 ♖xe7  
24. ♖f6!**

Domination is more important than some pawn.

24. ♖xa6 ♖he8! 25. ♖f6 ♗f8+ gave Black chances to defend.

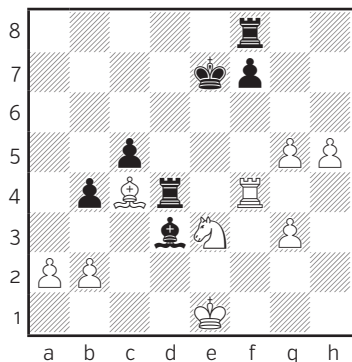
**24... ♖hf8 25. ♗e3 ♗e4**



**26. ♖xa6**

A human is weak! According to the engine the pawn should be neglected even now in favor of 26.h5 ♖bd8  
27. ♗e2.

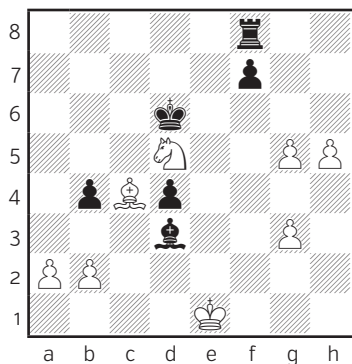
26... ♖bd8 27. ♗f6 ♖d6 28. ♗f4 ♖d4  
29. h5 ♕d3!



30. ♘d5!

According to Polugaevsky his analysis stretched all the way up until this position. This seems unimaginable as the whole process back then was literally done by hand.

30... ♖d6 31. ♗xd4 cxd4



32. ♕b3?

After the deed was essentially done inexplicable glitches start to occur. Winning was 32. ♕xd3 ♖xd5 33. h6.

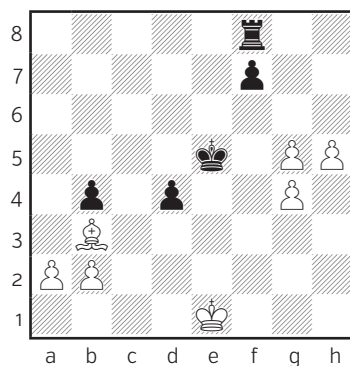
32... ♕c2?

For some reason Torre insists on this exchange yet Black wasn't really threatened by anything. The simplest way to a draw was 32... ♕f5.

33. ♕xc2 ♖xd5 34. ♕b3+?

A mistake apparently made because of some sort of hallucination. Just as before easily winning was 34. h6 or 34. ♖d2.

34... ♖e5 35. g4



35... ♖f4?

Black's miss is easier to explain as fatigue after conducting a difficult defense plus time trouble.

A draw could be reached by way of:  
35... d3! 36. g6 (36. ♖d2? ♖d4) 36... fxg6  
37. hxg6 ♖f6 38. ♖d2 (38. ♕f7 ♖c8)  
38... ♖d8 39. ♕f7 ♖d4.

36. g6



Now it's over.

36...♖e3

36...fxg6 37.hxg6 ♜e8+ 38.♔d2 ♜e7  
39.♙f7

37.g7 ♜c8 38.♖f1 d3 39.♖g2 ♖f4  
40.h6

1-0

It is difficult to imagine, how much time, energy and emotion Polugaevsky poured into this astounding opening novelty. Everything amazes here: The paradoxical intent, crystal clear and accurate analysis and even the obvious errors at the end of the game. A true artist and creator in action!

The next novelty bomb blew up the author of these very pages.

2

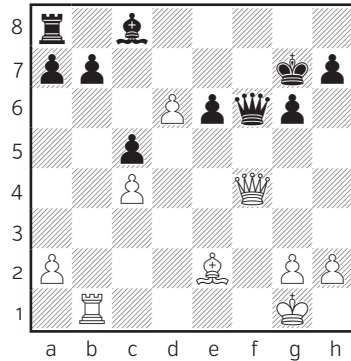
▷ I. Novikov (2420)

▷ V. Tukmakov (2550)

Lvov 1984

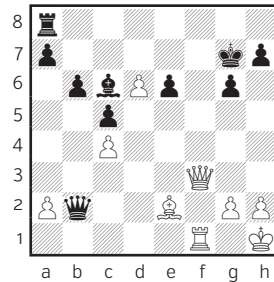
1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.c4 ♙g7 4.♘c3  
d5 5.cxd5 ♘xd5 6.e4 ♘xc3 7.bxc3  
c5 8.♞b1 o-o 9.♙e2 ♘c6 10.d5 ♘e5  
11.♘xe5 ♙xe5 12.♞d2 e6 13.f4 ♙g7  
14.c4 ♜e8 15.e5 f6 16.d6 fxex5 17.♙b2  
exf4 18.♙xg7 ♖xg7 19.o-o ♞f8

20.♞xf4 ♜xf4 21.♞xf4 ♞f6



22.♞e4

Both sides made the opening moves rather quickly which isn't surprising: this variation was extremely popular at the time. I played this position as White too: 22.♞e3 b6 23.♖h1!? ♙d7? (stronger is 23...e5) 24.♞f1 ♞b2 25.♞f3 ♙c6



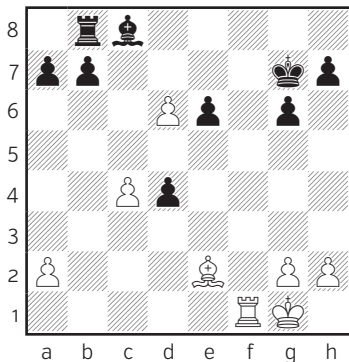
26.♞f7+?

[Modern engines quickly find the path to victory with: 26.♞xc6! ♞xe2 27.♞d7+ ♖h6 28.♞f7 ♞d3 29.♞f4+ ♖g7 30.g4! ♞d4 (or 30... ♞d8 31.♞f6+ ♖h6 32.♞h4+ ♖g7 33.♞e7+ ♖h6 34.g5+ ♖h5 35.♞xh7+

$\text{c}5\text{g}5$  36.  $\text{f}1\text{g}1+$   $\text{c}5\text{f}6$  37.  $\text{e}7+$   $\text{c}5\text{e}5$   
 38.  $\text{g}5+$   $\text{f}5\text{f}3$  39.  $\text{e}1+$   $\text{c}5\text{d}4$  40.  $\text{e}3+$   
 $\text{c}5\text{xc}4$  41.  $\text{b}3+$   $\text{c}5\text{d}4$  42.  $\text{d}1+$   $\text{c}5\text{e}5$   
 43.  $\text{b}2+$ ) 31.  $\text{f}7+$   $\text{c}5\text{h}6$  32.  $\text{f}4$   
 $\text{e}5$  (32...  $\text{xd}6$  33.  $\text{g}5+$ ) 33.  $\text{h}4!$   $\text{e}1+$   
 34.  $\text{g}2$   $\text{hx}4$  35.  $\text{xe}6$ . Of course  
 calling this continuation easy is  
 difficult. I clearly remember that  
 during the game I had a feeling of  
 a significant advantage for White.  
 My intuition, as it turns out, didn't  
 fail me and that is at least comfort-  
 ing.]

26...  $\text{c}5\text{h}8$  27.  $\text{f}3$   $\text{xf}3$  28.  $\text{xf}3$   $\text{d}8$   
 and Black was able to hold this po-  
 sition. (Tukmakov — Ftacnik, Hast-  
 ings 1982/1983)

22...  $\text{b}8$  23.  $\text{f}1$   $\text{d}4+$  24.  $\text{xd}4+$   
 $\text{cxd}4$



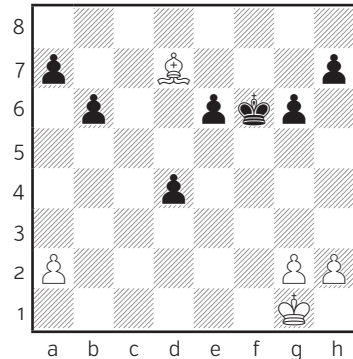
25.  $\text{b}1!$

A novelty at the time. White previ-  
 ously played 25.  $\text{c}5$ .

25...  $\text{d}7$

Really bad is 25...  $\text{e}5$ ? 26.  $\text{c}5$   $\text{f}5$  27.  $\text{c}6!$ .

26.  $\text{f}3$   $\text{b}6$  27.  $\text{c}5$   $\text{c}8$  28.  $\text{c}6$   $\text{xc}6$   
 29.  $\text{c}1$   $\text{d}7$  30.  $\text{xc}8$   $\text{xc}8$  31.  $\text{c}6$   
 $\text{c}5\text{f}6$  32.  $\text{d}7$   $\text{xd}7$  33.  $\text{xd}7$



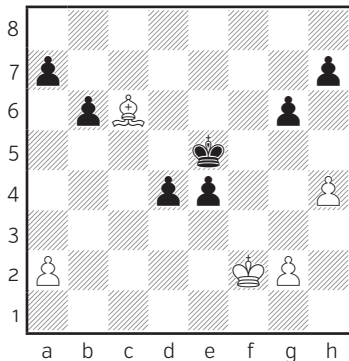
This somewhat unusual endgame is  
 practically forced after 25.  $\text{b}1$  and  
 does not look dangerous for Black.  
 I only had one cause for concern  
 during the game which was the  
 quick and confident play of my op-  
 ponent.

33...  $\text{e}5$

It seems that after this natural  
 game move there is no way to save  
 anything. Less clear are the conse-  
 quences after 33...  $\text{c}5\text{e}5$ . In his book  
 "Revolution in the 70's" Kasparov  
 writes that in preparation for his  
 match with Karpov in 1986 he thor-  
 oughly analyzed this position with  
 his assistants but just couldn't find  
 a clear draw. Novikov practically  
 shut down the variation but 25(!)  
 years later a hero stepped forward

brave enough to defend this endgame. After 33...♔e5 34.♕f2 ♖d5 in the game Shulman-Marin Reykjavik 2009 Black even managed to win which was a generous gift for his tedious analytical work (although at this point with the help of the engine). It seems Marin's research finally puts a period at the end of a decades long theoretical dispute: the endgame is drawn.

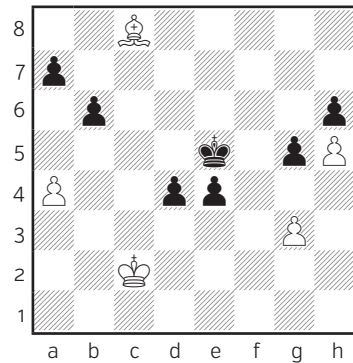
34.♕f2 e4 35.♙c6 ♔e5 36.h4!



It is this brilliant move, discovered by Novikov during analysis, which conclusively determines the evaluation of the position. Zugzwang keeps Black from being able to hold his center pawns in place. Impeding, with the help of the g3-h4 barrier, the activation of the black king, White wins with the king march ♕e2-d2-c2-b3-c4. Black is helpless against this plan. I penned these notes while preparing my book "Modern Chess Preparation" written in 2012. There I mentioned that

the engine is a weak assistant when it comes to these types of endings. However, here just a few years later, the electronic expert easily deals with similar puzzles now.

36...h6 37.g3 g5 38.h5 ♖f5 39.a4 ♔e5 40.♙b7 ♖f5 41.♙c8+ ♔e5 42.♕e2 ♖d5 43.♙b7+ ♔e5 44.♖d2 ♖f5 45.♙c8+ ♔e5 46.♖c2



46...d3+?

As it turns out only here did the draw slip through Black's fingers. Of course achieving it will not be an elementary matter at all: 46...♖d5 47.♖b3 b5!! (In case of 47...e3 the game would end in the same way as the earlier variation: 48.♙b7+ ♔c5 49.♙a6 ♖d5 50.♖c2 ♖e4 51.♙b7+.) 48.axb5 e3 49.♙b7+ ♔c5 50.♙f3 ♖xb5 The added resource in the form of the passed pawn guarantees Black the draw. Only after squandering this opportunity did I fully reward my opponent for his difficult analytical work.

47. ♖c3 ♗d5 48. ♘a6 ♙e5 49. ♚b7  
 ♜f5 50. ♖d2 ♗g4 51. ♘xe4 ♜xg3  
 52. ♘xd3 g4 53. ♘f5 ♜f3 54. ♖e1  
 ♜f4 55. ♘c8 ♗g5 56. ♜f2 ♜xh5  
 57. ♜g3 ♜g5 58. ♘xg4 a6 59. ♘e2 b5  
 60. ♘xb5

1-0

The game made a huge impression on the chess world as well as the author of these words. But we realize it was really the opening which is where the idea was found. This crushing defeat contributed to my gradual transformation from an apologist for the Grünfeld Defense to a universal opening player that specifically avoided long forcing variations. The story of this opening novelty is quite interesting and also reflects the realities of chess life in the past which is so different from today. At some point before the events described above Novikov found himself playing this variation in some insignificant tournament. He couldn't win the game but something in the position intrigued Igor so much that he spent the rest of his time studying it. Naturally the tournament was ruined but who even remembers it? Even that particular game can't be found. Instead a true experimental masterpiece was born in which my participation far outweighs any personal bitterness over the loss. Even now,

having a powerful engine at my disposal, it isn't so easy to follow in the steps of a grandmaster enthralled by the search for truth and driven by intuition and excitement.

I presented these wonderful examples not for sake of some nostalgia about days past nor do I consider myself a big fan of opening exploration. In this book we won't discuss the wonderful chess of the past but rather of modern realities. The game, despite its unchanged outward appearance, has become significantly more complex, and analytical discoveries far from being unexplained miracles have become a routine part of daily preparation.

Matches for the World Championship always created a lot of interest beyond the obvious sporting element. For professionals they were always a precise indicator of modern theory and the games played in them often set the tone for what opening, or variation was fashionable to play. The participants were usually helped by whole coaching teams and the preparation took months making the quality of work, as a rule, of the best vintage. Of course periodically certain holes in preparation did pop up but they were always unavoidable given the notorious human factor. With the arrival of computers and their ever

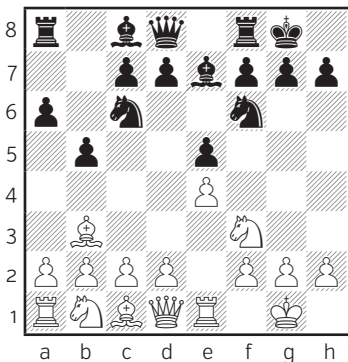
more confident invasion into opening preparation the quantity of such disappointing oversights has naturally decreased.

However, during the dawn of the computer age curious episodes did occur. The most memorable of these was in the Kramnik-Leko match. The computer was already heavily relied upon but compared to modern standards operated very slowly. It was exactly this leisurely pace of technology that played its infamous joke on Kramnik.

3

▷ V. Kramnik [2770]  
 ▶ P. Leko [2741]  
 Brissago 2004

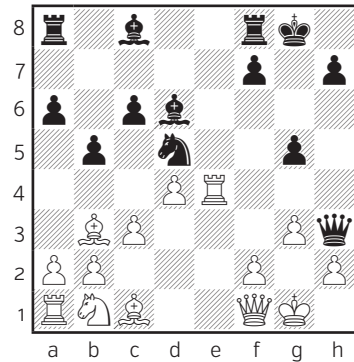
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙b5 a6 4.♙a4  
 ♘f6 5.o-o ♙e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♙b3 o-o



8.c3

Only on the fourth attempt did Kramnik finally accept a true opening duel in the Marshall attack. In the three previous games with White he limited himself to the modest 8.h3

8...d5 9.exd5 ♘xd5 10.♗xe5 ♘xe5  
 11.♖xe5 c6 12.d4 ♙d6 13.♖e1 ♔h4  
 14.g3 ♗h3 15.♖e4 g5 16.♗f1!?



“Given Leko’s focus on the newest and most popular continuations we prepared a somewhat rare and almost forgotten variation.” Bareev

16...♗h5

“Leko thought for almost an hour deciding whether he should play a middlegame he doesn’t remember or an endgame he doesn’t know.” Nowadays this endgame is played in dozens of games with many of those being contested at the elite level.

17.♗d2 ♙f5 18.f3! ♘f6 19.♖e1!?