

NEVER TOO LATE TO BECOME A GRANDMASTER

by
Vladimir Okhotnik



www.thinkerspublishing.com

Managing Editor
Romain Edouard

Assistant Editor
Daniël Vanheirzeele

Graphic Artist
Philippe Tonnard

Cover design
Iwan Kerkhof

Typesetting
i-Press <www.i-press.pl>

First edition 2021 by Thinkers Publishing

Never Too Late To Become a Grandmaster
Copyright © 2021 Vladimir Okhotnik

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission from the publisher.

ISBN 978-94-6420-128-4
D/2021/13730/11

All sales or enquiries should be directed to Thinkers Publishing, 9850 Landegem, Belgium.

e-mail: info@thinkerspublishing.com
website: www.thinkerspublishing.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Key to symbols	5
Preface	7
Foreword	9
MY MEMORABLE MEETINGS WITH GREAT CHESS PLAYERS	
Mikhail Tal	71
Mikhail Botvinnik	73
Vasily Smyslov	77
MY MEMORABLE GAMES	79

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

PREFACE

Of course, chess is just a game. True, unlike most games, it also includes elements of logic and art, but for many people in our modern world everything that is not related to development is a waste of time. My parents held the same opinion until 1981, when I first earned decent money, by Soviet standards, working as a coach for Maya Chiburdanidze in the World Championship match. But, putting aside my engineering diploma, I chose this path and decided to devote my whole life to chess. Returning to the traditional question: if I had to start life anew... I answer myself—I would become a chess player again!

In recent years, chess has increasingly become a testing ground for the latest electronic technologies. The chess computer has become so strong that the application on your mobile phone can surpass the best grandmasters. The Internet and the emergence of powerful chess engines have changed our game, and computer preparation for the game has led players to play stronger already at a younger age. The computer has become a powerful learning tool in our time. Of course, such new trends did not pass by the author of this book. I started working with computer engines in the late 90s. At first it was an attempt to find new ideas in the opening. Later, when I worked on writing two volumes (2002–2008) of the “CARPATHIAN WARRIOR”, I analyzed thousands of games and unearthed many discoveries. In those years I had to help the computer engines, I had to indicate the direction of the search. Tactically, the programs were by then well-prepared, of course, but they still did not provide a convincing assessment of the position. Over the past few years, much has changed, and the programs already dictate the direction of chess fashion...

Since 1963, I have played about 4,500 games in various tournaments and for my book I chose those encounters most memorable to me. I chose the games mainly following three criteria:

1. The presence of combinations with material sacrifice.
2. An important novelty in the opening.
3. An interesting endgame.

For this book, I specially analyzed my games and took on one of the latest versions of STOCKFISH as an assistant. Analyzing my old games again, I was often unpleasantly surprised that what I considered a plus often turned out to be a bluff. There were also pleasant moments in this work when it turned out that in some games I performed more than 80% of moves along the first line of the modern computer engine. In many notes on the initial stage of games, the reader will find options that are poorly covered in chess literature, and I hope that my respected reader will include these options in his repertoire (perhaps not only for blitz or rapid chess). Let the reader not be embarrassed by the length of some comments. Firstly, chess is tactics and accurate calculation of options, and secondly, I tried to comment on the games so that the notes would be interesting to chess players of different levels.

Well, perhaps that's all, and let my dear reader judge everything himself.

April 2021, Vladimir Okhotnik

VASILY SMYSLOV

In 1980, the so-called University of Chess Culture was opened at Dnipropetrovsk University. The idea of opening such a university came largely to rector Vladimir Mossakovsky in order to legitimize the award for the arrival and performances of famous Soviet chess players at the invitation of the university, since now the chess university had a separate bank account. In Soviet times, an educational university did not have the right to directly pay for such lectures and classes. Professor of the Department of Microbiology, master Vitaly Shcherbakov, was elected honorary rector. Interestingly, Shcherbakov was one of the first (in the late 40s) to play a new system in Najdorf's Sicilian Defense, connected with ...♙b6 and ...♙xb2 in the game against Paul Keres.

Ex-world champion Vasily Smyslov was invited to the grand opening of the university, accompanied by his buddy, the famous coach and international arbiter Boris Postovsky, who now lives in the USA. This time the rector was in the city and helped me a lot to better receive the famous guest. Many students and teachers gathered for this lecture from the world champion in the conference hall of the university. And when it came time to ask questions, the audience began to feel shy, and I had to connect and ask the first question to warm up the audience. "Vasily Vasilyevich, what do you think one should do, in order to achieve rapid progress in competitive results: work on your weaknesses or develop your best qualities?" Smyslov thought for a few seconds... and suddenly answered: "I think that you need to maximize your strengths". Then, his answer surprised me a little. I was familiar with the games of the ex-world champion since childhood and, in my opinion, he was a universal chess player. Smyslov himself in public, talking about his work, was not always frank: "I will make 40 good moves, and if you also make 40 good moves, there will be a draw", he once said in an interview. In fact, he often boldly played sharp positions. And although many consider him a classic strategist, he was a universal chess player. The World Champion then spent several days in our city and before leaving, the rector invited Smyslov and several of our university masters to the sauna. The organization fell on my shoulders — the main thing was to get the necessary products. The reader, I hope, will not forget that we then lived in a country with a complete deficit. We somehow found out that Smyslov loves good dry Georgian wine, which was not easy to get, but I still somehow got it. I remembered the story that my father told me that in the mid-40s, he lived in a residential building in Tbilisi, as did the father of Vasily Vasilyevich. His apartment was opposite the apartment of Smyslov Sr. Perhaps that is why the grandmaster prefers Georgian wine, I thought then. In

the end, the problem was resolved, and a wonderful chess company gathered in the sauna. We played blitz, joked, but most of all I remember the fantastic singing of the great chess player. I should tell you that he once studied at the conservatory as an opera singer, and in 1951 he even participated in a competition to get to the Bolshoi Opera House. Once, in the early 70s, when I was going to some tournament, I heard him singing on the radio in a train. But one thing is hearing it on the radio, and quite another among chess friends and with good wine. Interestingly, 15 years later he would release his first disc of opera arias for his 75th birthday. In the 80s, he physically looked great (he later had vision problems), and when he went on to play a Candidates match with Kasparov several years later, this did not come as a surprise to me. I remember how someone once asked him the traditional question about chess longevity. Smyslov clearly demonstrated his answer, spreading his arms to the sides. It all depends on human energy. "Look...", he spread his palms wide. "This is the distance between the palms. Korchnoi's energy, and this, for example, Karpov", said Smyslov, significantly reducing the distance between the palms. The great chess player died twenty years later in the 90th year of his life.

In conclusion, I want to say that what I achieved by the age of 70, I owe to chess. Thanks to chess, I became acquainted with other countries and their culture, and made many friends. But the greatest joy is when you become a subject of pride to your family and close friends. This happened when I won the World Seniors Championship in 2011, and repeated in 2015. I gratefully recall the presidents of chess clubs and even just chess enthusiasts from different countries who helped me feel comfortable. These include: Ferenc Rauh (Eger); Vasvari Karoly (Fabulon, Budapest); Imre Szilagyi (Hajdúböszörmény); Imre Matyas (DVTK, Miskolc); Janos Toth (Kazincbarcika); Attila Vanczak and Gabor Homolya (MVSI-Kis Bocskok, Miskolc) from Hungary. Also, Andrei Clausel (608); Diego Salazar (Chalon en Champagne); Bernard Vincent (Epinal); Damien Fillon (FSJT, Paris); Pascale Vantet and Frank Triger (Noissy le Grand); Mamit Flament and Rene Flament (Le Touquet); Jean Vaast (Meaux club); Benoit Poisseroux (Blagny) from France. Helmut Loscher (Feffernitz) from Austria. Scherer Klaus (Betzdorf) from Germany. Veerle Vermieren and Cris Vanderstappen from Belgium. Josef Sotmari and Josef Resch (Mukachevo) from Ukraine.

I was lucky in my life. My wife, Svetlana, took care of almost all my family concerns. I can't say that I didn't deal with my daughters at all; I tried to educate them, took part in their school and other affairs. But, in fact and all honesty, all the domestic burdens fell on my wife's shoulders. Most of my chess successes are owed to her merits.

MY MEMORABLE GAMES

GAME 1

▷ **Vladimir Okhotnik**
▶ **Alexander Ofrenyuk**

USSR 1967

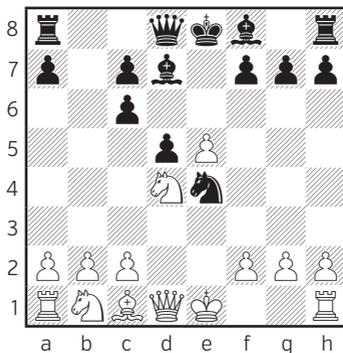
I'm not fooled by the idea that I play better now than in previous years, but several years ago Grandmaster Vladimir Malaniuk pleasantly surprised me, expressing the opinion that with age I intensified... The last few years I have struggled not so much with my age, but more with the opinions of family and friends who believe that I should quit playing tournaments.

Of course, the main reason why my interest in chess does not diminish lies in its charming beauty and attractive depth. Fifty three years ago, after graduating from school, I applied to the Physics and Technology Faculty of the Dnipropetrovsk State University. Not that I liked the engineering profession, it was just that a couple of my chess friends had also applied to the Physics and Technology Faculty, and the university team needed to be strengthened before the team cham-

pionship of Ukraine among universities. Having passed a couple of exams perfectly, I went to take the final essay. Anyone who has passed entrance exams in the USSR knows that it was a selection exam and none of the applicants are confident in a positive assessment for the last examination... Without knowing my assessment, I went to Kiev with the team, leaving my mother to worry about the result. I tell all this so that it is clear what emotional state I was in before playing my best game in the first round of the championship. It must be said that I did not know the theory of the variation with the development of the bishop on e7. With my coach, Eduard Semenovitch Bakhmatov, we had looked at the more popular ...♘c5. So, the position that happened in the game was new for me. Eleven years later, at an international tournament in Kiev, where I worked for several days in the press center, a journalist from Sweden turned to me, asking me to show something interesting from my games. I showed this one — I had especially prepared several games for an article for “Chess Bulletin” (No. 11.1978

“Opening Notes”) — and the game later received good press (appearing in “Evans Gambit: and a System vs Two Knights’ Defense” by Tim Harding, and “Tactics in the Chess Opening 2 Open Games”, by AC van der Tak and Friso Nijboer). Gary Lane also included this game in his book (I do not have this book — it came out in an amazingly small print run (only 300 copies) but I saw it). Yes, I remember also... in 1968 I showed this game to Yuri Lvovich Averbakh, at the Zenit training camp. He liked that my sacrificial knight showed such unusual agility (9 moves out of 26 played). “This is probably the best example in the history of chess on the subject of knight games!”, concluded the Grandmaster.

1.e4 e5 2.♖f3 ♗c6 3.d4 exd4 4.♙c4 ♗f6 5.e5 d5 6.♙b5 ♗e4 7.♗xd4 ♙d7 8.♙xc6 bxc6



9.0-0

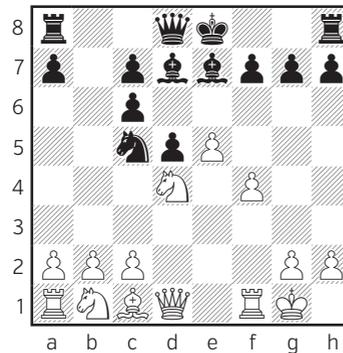
9.♗b3!?

9...♙e7

It’s unpleasant for Black to play such positions. One has to switch over to defense.

Instead 9...♙c5!? or 9...c5!?

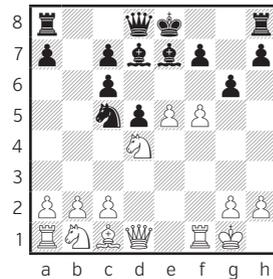
10.f3 ♗c5 11.f4



11...♗e4

Other options include:

a) 11...g6!? 12.f5! and now:



12...♙xf5

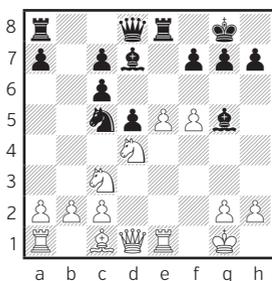
[12...gxf5 13.♙h5! ♙b8 (13... ♗e6 14.♗xf5+-) 14.♗xf5 ♙xf5

15. ♖xf5 ♘e6 16. c4!± (16. ♘c3± Degraeve, J – Shvidler, E Cappella-Grande 1990)]

13. ♘xc6 (13. ♘xf5 gxf5 14. ♖xf5 ♗d7 15. ♗f3 o-o-o±) 13... ♗d7 14. ♘e7 ♗xe7 15. ♗xd5 o-o 16. ♘c3± Zelcic – Zaja Solin/Split 2001;

b) 11... ♗b8!? See the game Okhotnik, V – Dydyshko, V;

c) 11... o-o 12. f5 ♕g5 13. ♘c3 ♖e8 14. ♖e1



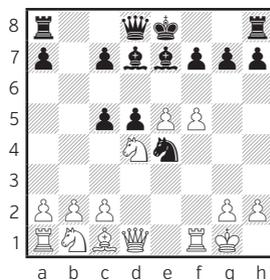
14... ♘e4 (14... ♕xc1?! 15. ♗xc1± Horvath, A – Betoon, R Melaka 2012) 15. e6 (15. ♘e4 dxe4 16. e6 fxe6 17. fxe6 ♕xe6 18. ♘e6 ♖xe6 19. ♗g4 transposes to 15. e6) 15... fxe6 16. ♘e4 dxe4 17. fxe6 ♕xe6 18. ♘e6 ♖xe6 19. ♗g4 ♖e5 20. ♕xg5 ♗xg5 21. ♗xg5 ♖xg5 22. ♖xe4 ♖d5 23. ♖ae1 ♖d2 24. ♖ie2±;

d) 11... f6?! 12. f5! o-o 13. e6 ♕e8 14. ♗g4 ♘e4 15. ♘c3± Papp, T – Banusz, T Balatonlelle 2006;

e) 11... f5!? 12. b4!± (12. ♘c3±).

12. f5 o-o!?

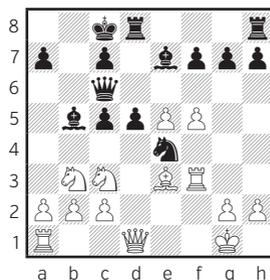
a) 12... c5!?



13. ♘b3!

[13. ♘e6!? ♕xe6 (13... fxe6?! 14. ♗h5+ g6 15. fxg6 ♕b5 16. g7+ ♘d7 17. gxh8 ♗ ♗xh8 18. ♖f7±) 14. fxe6 fxe6 15. ♘d2 ♘g5=; 13. ♘e2!?± Jones, G – Naiditsch, A Baku 2016;]

13... ♕b5 (13... c4?! 14. ♗xd5±; 13... ♕c6?! 14. ♘a5±) 14. ♖f3 ♗d7 15. ♘c3 o-o-o 16. ♕e3 (16. a4!?) 16... ♗c6

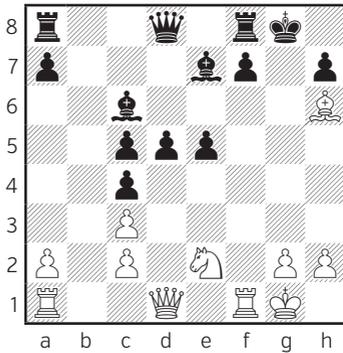


17. a4 ♕a6 (17... ♕c4 18. ♘a5 ♗a6 19. ♘xc4 ♗xc4 20. ♗e1 ♘xc3 21. bxc3 ♖he8 22. ♕f4±) 18. ♘a5±;

b) 12... ♕c5! This move is the least studied, but the fact that Paul Keres, one of the most prominent experts in

the idea of 19...fxe5 20.f6! ♖xf6
 21.♚e6+-) 19...d4 20.♚g4 ♔h8
 21.♘h5 ♗g8 22.♘f4 ♕e8 23.♘g6+
 ♕xg6 24.fxg6 h6 25.♚h5 ♕f8 26.♜b1
 ♚d6 27.♞b7 ♚e5 28.♚xh6+ 1-0
 Zelcic,R - Zavacki,I Bosnjaci 2003

18...gxf6 19. ♕h6! fxe5



20. ♘d4!!

The knight unexpectedly changes route.

20... ♕d7

Other continuations also lose, for example:

a) 20...cxd4 21.♚g4+ ♕g5 22.♕xg5
 ♚c8 23.♞f5 h5 24.♕f6+! hxg4
 25.♞h5+-;

b) 20...exd4 21.♚g4+ ♕g5 22.♕xg5
 ♚d7 23.♞f5 h5 24.♕f6+ hxg4
 25.♞h5+-

21. ♘c6!! ♚e8

Again, the only move. If 21... ♕xc6
 22.♚g4+ ♕g5 23.♕xg5 ♕d7 24.♚g3+-.

22. ♘xe5+- ♕e6

22... ♕g5 23.♘xd7 ♚e3+ 24.♔h1
 ♕xh6 25.♚xd5+-

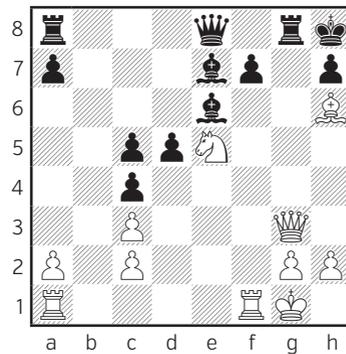
23. ♚f3 ♔h8

Other continuations do not help, for example:

a) 23... ♕h4 24.♚h5 ♕e7 (24... ♚e7
 25.♘c6+-) 25.♞f3+-;

b) 23... ♕h4 24.♚h5 (24.g3) 24... ♚e7
 25.♘c6 ♚d7 26.♚xh4+-

24. ♚g3 ♗g8



25. ♘xf7+!

The final blow!

25... ♚xf7 26. ♚e5+

Black resigned, which requires no explanation.

It seems to me that this game is one of my best achievements.

1–0

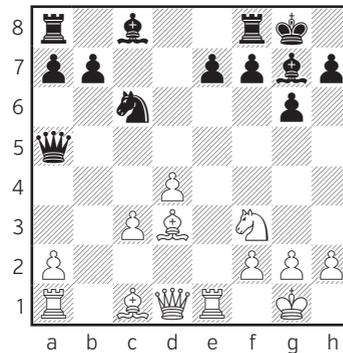
GAME 2

▷ Boris Gulko
▶ Vladimir Okhotnik
USSR 1975

As for memorable moves behind the chessboard, I like my “long” move with the queen in my game with Boris Gulko. Some 43 years ago, the final of the championship of the student club “Burevestnik” was held in town Evpatoria. The favorite for this tournament was the winner of the championship of Moscow, the then International Master, Boris Gulko (it should be noted here that Borya became a Grandmaster a year later, and a year later still he won the USSR championship). The games of the tournament were not published in the Soviet chess press but, nevertheless, the game was printed...in the American press. In the 60–80s there was published a small chess magazine “Tournament Chess” and somehow my (at that time) coach Grandmaster Lev Alburt gave me a look at them (a collection of magazines over several years) I looked, and inside was my game with Gulko (Boris had sent it). At some point, after gaining a slight advantage, I surprised White with the long strike of my queen (...♙c8!),

but also here the position could still be held. But, Gulko made a mistake and after ...♗f4! everything was finished.

1.e4 d5 2.exd5 ♞f6 3.c4 c6 4.♞c3 cxd5 5.cxd5 ♞xd5 6.♞f3 ♞xc3 7.bxc3 g6 8.d4 ♕g7 9.♕d3 0–0 10.0–0 ♞c6 11.♞e1 ♙a5



12. ♕b2?!N

This new move is unsuccessful. The bishop on b2 has no prospects. Before and after this game, White developed his bishop to d2, which seems more logical.

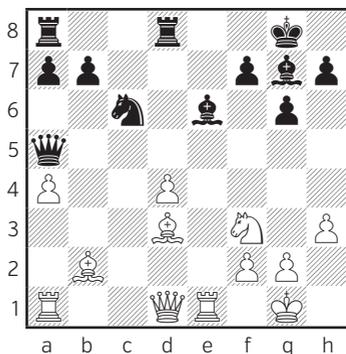
For example: 12. ♕d2!? ♕g4 (12...e5?! is too early 13. ♕e4! ♙c7 14. ♕xc6 bxc6 15. ♞xe5± Shaposhnikov-Gaifullin, Samara, Polugaevsky Mem. 2019.) 13. ♕e4 ♞fd8 14.h3 ♕xf3 15. ♕xf3 ♙c7 16. ♞b1± White still has some advantage.

12...e5

The only plan in similar positions.

13. h3 exd4 14. cxd4 ♖e6 15. a4 ♜fd8

20. ♙e1 b6



20...a6!?

21. ♙e2 ♙d6

Here Black should have played 21... ♘b4! and now: 22. ♜e7

[Of course, it would be bad to play 22. ♜xb4? ♜c1+ 23. ♘e1 (23. ♘h2?? ♙d6+) 23... ♜xa1 24. g3 ♜c8 with great advantage to Black.]

16. ♙e4!? ♜ac8 17. ♜b1 ♙d5

22...a5 23. ♜d1 ♙f6 24. ♜e3 ♜c2 with advantage for Black.

17...b6!?

22. ♙a2

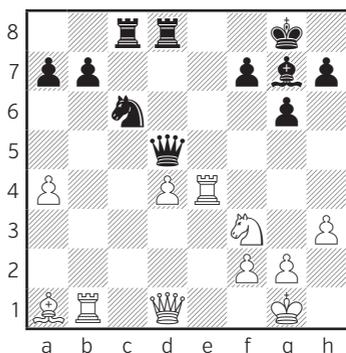
18. ♙a1

Better was 18. ♙xd5 ♙xd5 19. ♜c1 b6 20. ♜e2 with the idea of ...♜ec2.

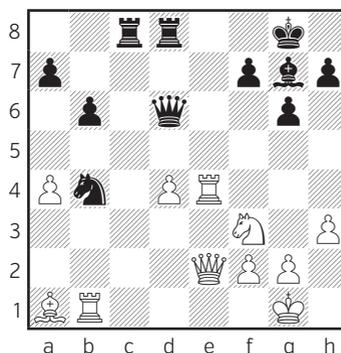
a) 22. ♙b5!? ♘e7 23. a5 bxa5 24. ♙xa5 ♙d5

18... ♙xe4 19. ♜xe4 ♙d5

b) 22. ♙b2 h5 23. ♜d1 ♙d5



22... ♘b4 23. ♙e2



It can be argued that White not only did not achieve an advantage in the opening, but also had to give up the initiative.

23... ♘d5

23... ♖c2!? ♖; 23... a5!? ♖; 23... ♔d5!? ♖;
23... ♕f8!? ♖

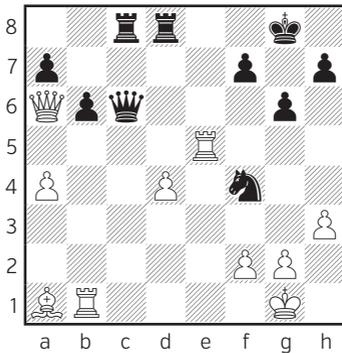
24. ♖a6 ♖c6 25. ♗e5

a) 25. ♖be1 ♗b4 ♖ (25... ♗c7!? ♖);

b) 25. ♖b5 ♖c4 ♖

25... ♕xe5 26. ♖xe5 ♗f4

26... f6 27. ♖ee1 ♗f4 ♖



27. d5 □

27. ♖f1? ♖xa4-+

27... ♖xd5

27... ♗xd5?! 28. a5 f6 29. ♖ee1 ♖c4
30. ♖xc4 (30. ♖xa7? ♖c7 31. axb6 ♖xa7
32. bxa7 ♖c7 33. ♕d4 ♗g7 34. ♖ec1 and
White has good compensation.) 30...
♖xc4 ♖

28. ♖xd5 ♗xd5 29. g3 ♖e8

29... ♖c7!? ♖

30. ♖d3

30. a5!?

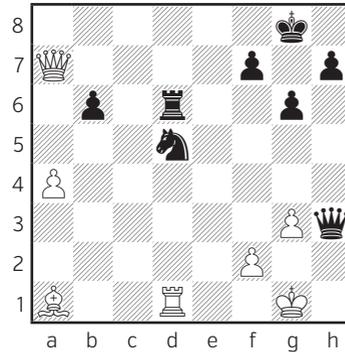
30... ♖e6 31. ♖d1 ♖d8 32. ♖c4

32. ♖b5 ♖; 32. g4!? ♖

32... ♖d6 33. ♖a6

33. ♗h2!?

33... ♖xh3 34. ♖xa7



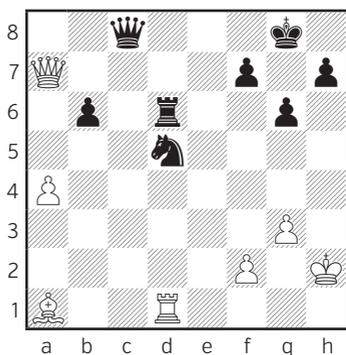
34... ♖c8!!

It was noticeable that this move came as a complete surprise to my playing partner. The “long” backwards move of the queen is always a surprise for any chess player, regardless of strength and rating.

35. ♗h2?

This is already a decisive mistake. It was much more persistent to go 35. ♕e5 ♖d7 36. ♖b8 ♖xb8 37. ♕xb8 h5

38.a5 bxa5 39.♖a1 f6 40.♖xa5 main-
taining a defensive position.



35...♗f4!-+

The rest is not difficult, since on the side of Black resides both a positional and material superiority.

35...♗d7?! 36.♖c1=

36.gxf4 ♖xd1 37.♙e5 ♗d3 38.f5 ♗d5
39.fxg6 hxg6 40.♚e7 ♚d8 41.♚xd8+
♗xd8

The rest of the game is easy to understand.

42.♙c7 ♗d4 43.♙xb6 ♗xa4 44.♙g3
♙g7 45.♙d8 ♗d4 46.♙a5 ♗d3+
47.♙f4 g5+ 48.♙e4 ♗a3 49.♙b6 ♙g6
50.♙c5 f5+ 51.♙d4 ♗f3 52.♙e5 ♗f4

White resigned.

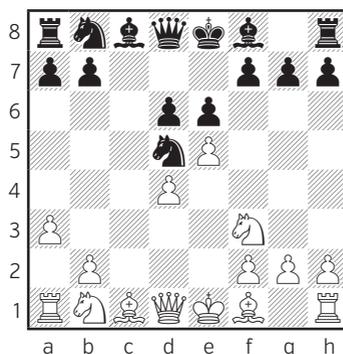
0-1

GAME 3

▷ Vladimir Okhotnik
▷ Evgeny Mukhin
USSR 1976

My rival in the next game was a national master from Uzbekistan. This game was published in one of the books of Eduard Gufeld, as an example of White's attack in the Sicilian Defense "c3-variation", as well as in the book by Efim Lazarev.

1.e4 c5 2.♗f3 e6 3.c3 ♗f6 4.e5 ♗d5
5.d4 cxd4 6.cxd4 d6 7.a3!?



This continuation was popular in the 1970s. With this unhurried move, White prevents Black's knight from grazing on b4 and prepares a typical attacking plan — ♙d3-♚e2-♚e4.

7...♗c6

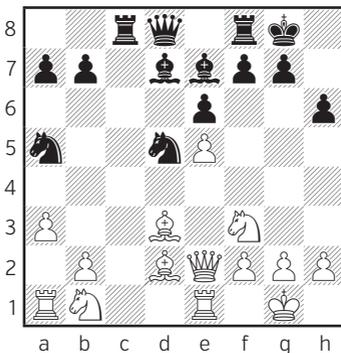
Nowadays the most popular continuation, introduced into tournament practice in the mid-70s by the wonderful chess player and brilliant ana-

lyst, Lev Polugaevsky. Alternatively, with 7...♙d7, Black's plan is to activate the bishop on the diagonal "a8-h1", the knight on d7 and after exchanging on e5, to activate the knight by ...♞d7-c5. In fairness, it should be noted that here too Black has certain problems.

8. ♙d3

8.exd6!?

8...♙e7 9.o-o o-o 10.♖e1 dxe5
11.dxe5 ♙d7 12.♙c2 h6 13.♙e2 ♖c8
14.♙d2 ♞a5!?



While working on this book and checking my old analyses using modern computer engines, I sometimes come across amazing things (in terms of evaluation). So, for example, the position after 14...♞a5, I evaluated as hopeless for Black for the last 40 years. I think that many chess players rated 2500 and above would have the same opinion. With the last move, Black removed his knight from the center and there immediately followed...

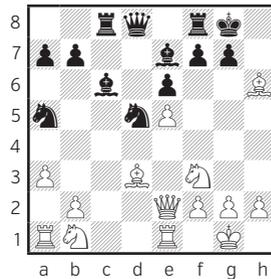
15. ♙xh6!

15.♞c3!? ♞b3 16.♞xd5 exd5 17.♞ad1
♞xd2 18.♞xd2 ♙b6 (18...♙g5 19.♞xg5
♙xg5 20.♞f1!±) 19.♙b1 ♙b5 20.♙d1
♙d7 21.♙a2 ♙e6±

15...gxh6??

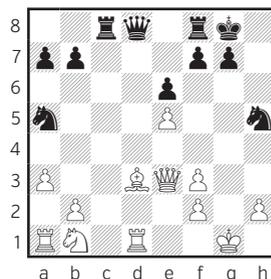
This is tantamount to unconditional surrender.

a) The correct defense was the response 15...♙c6!



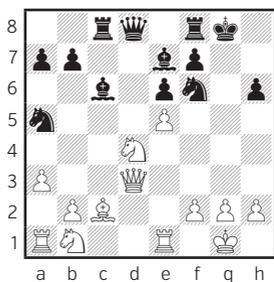
This simple move contains much more poison than it might seem at first glance. Now we have: 16.♞d4!?

a1) 16.♙e4?! ♞f6 17.♙e2 ♞h5 18.♙e3
♙xf3 19.gxf3 ♙g5 20.♞d1 ♙xe3
21.♙xe3



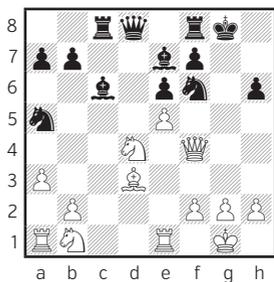
21...♖b3! An important intermediate move. 22.♞a2 ♜h4+;

a2) 16.♙c2!? gxh6 17.♞d3 ♘f6
18.♗d4

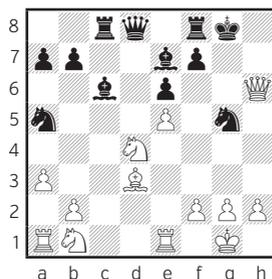


and now: 18...♞d5 (18...♙e4 19.♞g3+ ♙g6 20.♙xg6 ♞xd4 21.♙e4+ ♖h8 22.exf6 ♞xf6∞) 19.♞g3+ ♖h8 20.♗xc6 ♗xc6 21.♗c3 ♞d4 22.exf6 ♞xf6 with an unusual position, in which the chances should be about equal;

16...gxh6 17.♞e4 ♗f6 18.♞f4

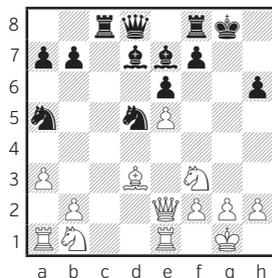


18...♗h7 (18...♙g7 19.♗c3 ♗d5 20.♞g3+ ♖h8 21.♗xe6 fxe6 22.♞g6 ♞f7 23.♞xf7 ♞g8 with equal chances.) 19.♞xh6 ♗g5



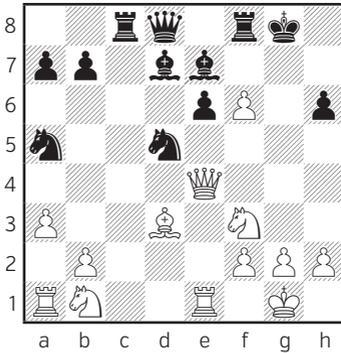
and here: 20.♞e3 (20.♗xe6 fxe6 21.♞g6+ ♖h8 22.♞h6+=) 20...♞xd4 21.♙h7+ ♗xh7 (21...♖h8=) 22.♞g3+ ♙g5 23.♞xg5+ ♗xg5 24.♞xg5+ ♖h8 25.♞h6+ with a perpetual check.;

b) Seductive, but bad, is 15...♗b3?! 16.♞e4 g6 17.♞g4±



I shared this analysis with my friends on Facebook, and I liked how Alexei Shirov reacted: “Very interesting. In general, in those days, chess players were prone to excessive generalizations, so it seemed that Black violated safety rules and was punished. Over the past 10–15 years, the boundaries of our perception of the game have expanded significantly.” It is hard to disagree with the famous grand master.

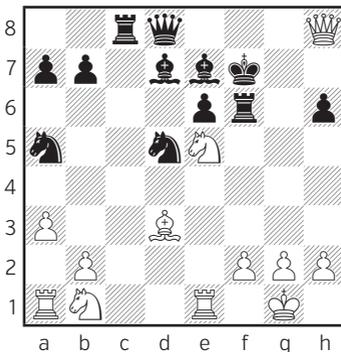
16. ♖e4 f5 17.exf6



17... ♖xf6?

This is difficult to explain, though White is winning in any event, e.g. 17... ♗xf6 18. ♖g6+ ♔h8 19. ♖xh6+ ♗g8 20. ♖g6+ ♔h8 21. ♗c3 with a winning advantage.

18. ♖h7+ ♔f8 19. ♖h8+ ♔f7 20. ♗e5#



Mate on the board is a rare case in games between Masters.

1-0

GAME 4

▷ Vladimir Okhotnik
 ▶ Leonid Zaid
 USSR 1978

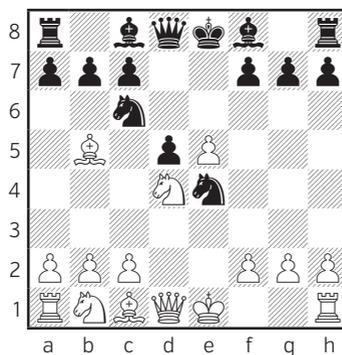
More than 40 years have passed since the game that I now draw your attention to was played. Once a discussion arose around this game in two respected chess publications — the Soviet “Chess Bulletin” and the Yugoslav “Chess Informant”. My opponent, then still a Kiev master (unfortunately, tragically killed in Israel) Leonid Zaid, found an interesting opportunity during the game with 11... ♗g4!? In the ensuing struggle, I managed to seize the initiative and win.

I included this sharp game in my article “Notes on openings” (“Chess Bulletin” No. 11, 1978), and almost simultaneously the game, which I won as you will see, appeared in the Yugoslav “Chess Informant” No. 25 was published with comments by E. Gufeld and L. Zaid. I was somewhat surprised by their assessment of the position and the analysis of this publication, but I did not respond. Firstly, I always respected the chess talent of Eduard Gufeld, and with Leonid Zaid, despite the age difference (8 years), I maintained friendly relations. At different times, we were taught by the same Kiev coach, master Naum Levin, who now lives in Australia. And then, after some time, another publication of this game appeared in

the “Chess Bulletin”, this time the famous journalist Ilya Milshstein as author. His article criticized the analysis of Gufeld & Zaid and supported my comments. It is interesting that, meeting me in Kiev (shortly after the publication of I. Milshstein), Leonid complained to me that Edik expressed his dissatisfaction with him: “What are you dragging me into?!” It must be said that in those years it was very difficult for the Soviet chess player to send his games to the pages of the “Chess Informant”. It was necessary to either play a really brilliant game, or...turn to Eduard Gufeld, who had an excellent relationship with the chief editor (in those years, Grandmaster Alexander Matanovic). Sometimes Eduard Gufeld paid a small fee to the masters, and the game was published only with comments under the name Gufeld. I recall how, in 1988, during the GMA Open held in Belgrade, I went to the editorial office of “Chess Informant” with Gufeld to receive our fee for the games that we commented on for this magazine. Edik was the first to receive money (he commented on dozens of games within a couple of years) and, as it turned out, he selected all the currency (German marks) from the editor’s safe. Matanovic offered me Yugoslav dinars. After a couple of days, the dinar collapsed. Subsequently, I did not cooperate with Informant for about ten years...

Returning to the game, it should be noted that after 19...♖b7! (replacing 19...♗d7?) Black gains a definite advantage. In conclusion, it should be noted that this version of the Two Knights’ Defense nowadays has “lost its fans” — Black has many ways to get a good game. And, perhaps, the principle “forget the unnecessary” is suitable for this option. But, I also remember that someone once said that “the past, stored in memory, is part of the present”. And I totally agree with that!

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♙c4 ♗f6 4.d4 exd4 5.e5 d5 6.♖b5 ♗e4 7.♗xd4



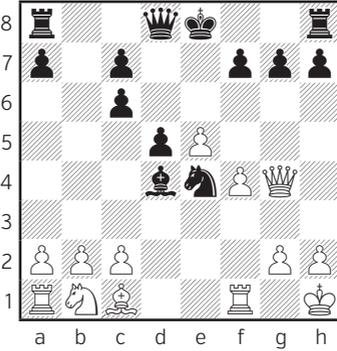
7...♙d7

7...♙c5!? 8.♙e3 ♙xd4 (Today, on a professional level, a more promising continuation is 8...0-0!?) 9.♗xd4 0-0=

8.♙xc6 bxc6 9.0-0 ♙c5 10.f3

10.♙e3 ♗e7 11.f3 ♗d6!?=

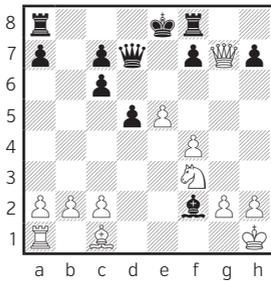
10...♖g5 11.f4 ♔g4!?N 12.♙xg4
 ♕xd4+ 13.♖h1 ♗e4



14.♙xg7!?

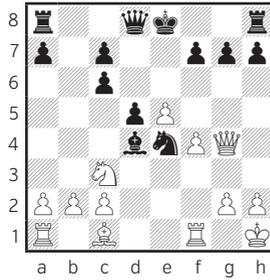
Already White should behave very carefully, so as not to get into a disadvantageous position.

a) 14.♗d2! Perhaps the simplest and clearest solution. For example: 14...♗f2+ 15.♖xf2 ♕xf2 16.♙xg7 ♖f8 17.♗f3 ♙d7



Sveshnikov,E – Barreras,A Cienfuegos 1979 18.♙xh7 o-o-o (18...c5 19.f5) 19.♙d3 ♖h8 20.f5±;

b) 14.♗c3!? leads to a difficult fight with mutual chances, e.g.

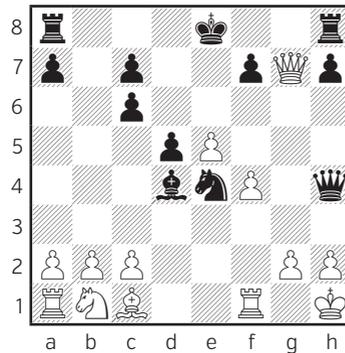


14...♗f2+!?

[14...♕xc3?! 15.♙xg7! (15.bxc3= Maier,P – Bernardi,M Austria 1997) 15...♖f8 16.♙h6! ♙d7 17.bxc3±; 14...♗xc3? 15.bxc3 ♕xc3 16.♙xg7 ♕xa1 17.♙xh8+ ♗d7 18.e6+ 1-o Kulasenko – Mishuchkov, St Petersburg 1995]

15.♖xf2 ♕xf2 16.♙xg7 ♖f8 17.f5±

14...♙h4



15.♗c3!

15.♙xh8+?? ♖e7 16.♙g7 ♗f2+ 17.

♖xf2 ♙xf2 18.♙g5+ ♖f8 19.♙h6+ ♖e8 20.♙xc6+ ♗d8 21.♙xd5+ ♖e7 22.♙xd4 ♙xd4 23.♗d2 ♙f2-+