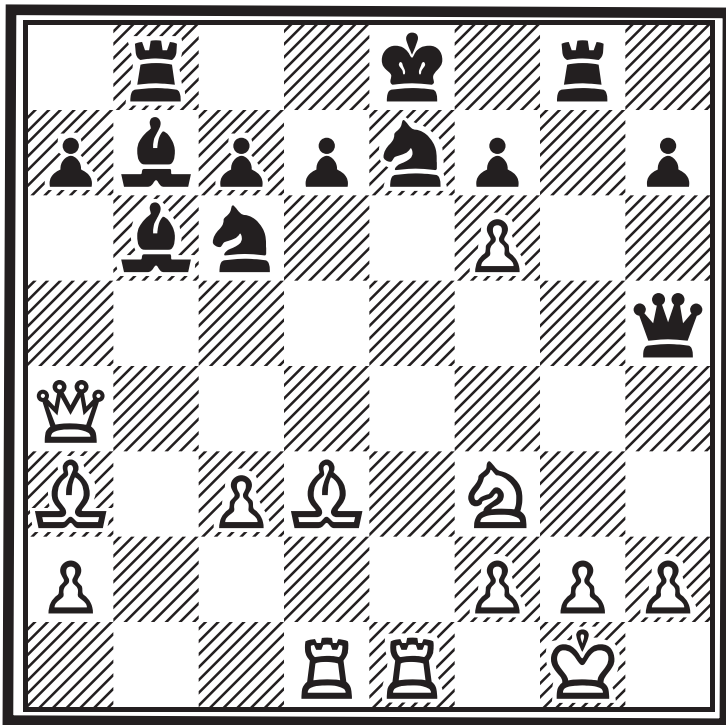


VIRGINIA CHESS

Newsletter

The bimonthly publication of the
Virginia Chess Federation

2020 - #2



"The Evergreen Game"

Plenty to analyse until the end of quarantine

VIRGINIA CHESS

Newsletter

2020 - Issue #2

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Virginians and other members of the Virginia Chess Federation (VCF):

The COVID-19 crisis has forced our local, state and national leaders to enact certain orders and/or provide guidance that makes over-the-board chess impractical in the Commonwealth for the foreseeable future. While the current guidelines may allow very small events like a small swiss, a quad or a match, the VCF strongly encourages everyone to avoid situations that could increase the risk of infection to anyone present at such a venue. We urge everyone to listen to and take heed of the directives and guidance from your local and state authorities, keeping personal and family health and safety foremost during this time. We also encourage you to satisfy your appetite for our beloved game by becoming part of one (or more) of the excellent online chess platforms such as Chess.com, ICC, LiChess, Chess24, etc., or to play with friends using Skype, Zoom, Webex, GoTo Meeting, Microsoft Teams, etc. Parents who are concerned about their kids online activity with the above sites, specifically the younger ones, are encouraged to use chesskid.com as a safe and friendly means to play chess and have fun, while the parent can still be assured there is some level of monitoring by the Adult/Parent who is signing up for the account.

Please monitor the VCF website and your email closely for news on how the COVID-19 issue affects our 2020 tournament schedule. With deepest concerns for your wellbeing,

— the VCF Board of Directors

George Washington Open

by Andy Rea



The last major open tournament to be played in Virginia before the dawn of Social Distancing occurred Feb 21-23 in Reston. The George Washington Open drew 252 players from several states, including a pair of grandmasters from Texas!

The event's top winner was GM Fidel Corrales Jimenez, who won the blitz, fared well in mixed teams, and tied for 1st at 4½-½ thanks to a clutch final round win over GM Kamil Dragun! The major section was stacked, but local players did not just serve as cannon fodder as our own IM Praveen Balakrishnan also went clutch in that 5th round, defeating GM Vladimir Belous to also reach 4½ points!



Two players followed at 4-1: GM Alexander Shabalov and master Abhimanyu Mishra. In the group with GMs Dragun and Belous at 3½ were GM-elect David Brodsky and then more local non-fodder, IM Oladapu Adu, Andrew Samuelson & Jason Morefield. Great stuff for all, especially Praveen; kudos as well to our Virginia players at 3, a plus score: Robert Fischer, Ronen Wilson, Garrett Heller & Skyler Tunc!

The u2100 section proved to be a runaway, but surely James Hargrove (Louisiana) would agree scoring 5-0 was a great challenge—congratulations! The crowd at 4 included Virginians Mark Hyland, Raymond Duchesne & Aarush Vinod! (As well as Philip Lacy from Maryland; we like support from our neighbors!)

Representing the VCF Board in the Under 1800 was Mike Callahan, finishing in a tie for 2nd at 4-1, well played... but no one could keep pace with Daniel Wang! Five wins, what's not to like!? Very well played!! Joining Mike C at 4 were 3 others including Virginia chess veteran Charles Compton, nice!

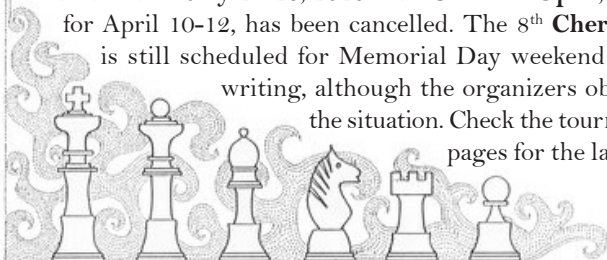
More Virginia flavor in the Under 1500 as Srinivas Burre scores 4½—excellent!—a score matched by Thomas Diep (Md). Our own Kai Stone was one of those who finished at 4-1, congrats!

Finally, a nery struggle in the last round of the Under 1200 as Siri Deveraj held the draw against fellow Virginian John Hill. Siri hails from the great chess program that is McNair elementary school (all credit there to VCF Membership Secretary Georgina Chin!) and that draw allowed her to finish alone in 1st at 4½. How great is that?! The Under 1200 was a Virginia-centric battle. Joining John Hill at 4 were a trio of other local players, Bryan Tan, Sunmay Paduyar & Kingston Ho. Back to Siri Deveraj—she gained 214 rating points! One of these days Georgina (who, by the way scored 3½ in this group herself) will write the tale of how she sparked that chess program from scratch to a flaming success!

Thanks to all of our players for their support, and best wishes in these new circumstances!



The **Virginia Open**, originally intended for March 20-22, has been re-scheduled for July 24-26, 2020. The **Colonial Open**, originally scheduled for April 10-12, has been cancelled. The 8th **Cherry Blossom Classic** is still scheduled for Memorial Day weekend (Mat 21-25) at this writing, although the organizers obviously are tracking the situation. Check the tournament and VCF web pages for the latest announcements.





Virginia Scholastic & College Championships

by *Anand Dommalapati*

We were fortunate that our 2020 Virginia Scholastic & Collegiate Championships was able to come off before the pandemic was declared. A total of 599 players competed across ten different sections March 7-8, 2020 at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Alexandria. There were also side events including a Blitz Championship and a simultaneous exhibition by former state champion Macon Shibut.

The winners for each section were: K-12 Championship **Praveen Balakrishnan, Justin Paul & Isaac Chiu**; K-12 Under 1400 **Ethan Hsiao**; K-8 Championship **Pranav Prem**; K-8 Under 1200 **Sunmay Padiyar**; K-5 Championship **Kevin Su**; K-5 Under 1000 **Varsha Padmanabhan**; K-3 Championship **Kevin Shen & Kyle Zhuang**; K-3 Under 600 **Shrihan Pattnaik**; College **David Siamon & Jeffrey Song**; Parents & Friends **Andrew Tichenor**. Full results—crosstables and prizewinners—can be viewed online at:

<https://vschess.org/results/results.php?t=202003071>

Praveen Balakrishnan - Jason Morefield Pirc

1 e4 d6 2 d4 Nf6 3 Nc3 g6 4 f4 Bg7 5 Nf3 c5 6 Bb5+ Bd7 7 e5 Ng4 8 Bxd7+ Qxd7 9 h3 cxd4 10 Qxd4 Nc6 11 Qe4 Nh6 12 g4 O-O-O 13 Qe2 dxe5 14 fxe5 Qe6 15 O-O f5 16 exf6 Qxe2 17 fxg7!? Qxc2? [17...Qa6! 18 gxh8Q Rxh8 19 Bxh6 Qb6+ 20 Kh1 Qxb2 ∞] 18 gxh8Q Rxh8 19 Ne1! 1-0

Andy Huang - Isaac Chiu Modern

1 e4 g6 2 d4 Bg7 3 Nc3 d6 4 Be3 a6 5 h4 Nf6 6 f3 b5 7 Qd2 h5 8 O-O-O c6 9 Nh3 Bxh3 10 Rxh3 Nbd7 11 Kb1 Qc7 12 Bd3 c5 13 dxc5 Nxc5 14 Bd4 e6 15 a3 Rd8 16 Rhh1 Bh6 17 Qe2 e5 18 Be3 Bxe3 19 Qxe3 Ne6 20 Nd5 Nxd5 21 exd5 Qc5 22 Qxc5 Nxc5 23 Be2 f6 24 b3 Kf7 25 Kb2 Rc8 26 a4 b4 27 a5 Rc7 28 Rd2 Rhc8 29 Rc1 Ra8 30 Ra1 Rac8 31 Bc4 f5 32 Bf1 Kf6 33 Re1 g5 34 hxg5+ Kxg5 35 Bc4 h4 36 Rh1 Na4+ 37 Kc1 Nc3 38 Rf2 Rc5 39 Bxa6 Ra8 40 Bc4 Rxa5 41 Kd2 Nxd5 42 Re1 Nf4 0-1



Evergreen

by Macon Shibut

Stuck at home in quarantine? As a tonic for the tedium I offer you the “Evergreen Game”.

Adolf Anderssen’s famous win against Jean Dufresne is the epitome of the “romantic” epoch in chess. In a sense the important part of the game is confined to a single position. Or two positions if you will, before *and* after White’s 19th move. But what positions!—replete with stunning tactical blows, unexpected defensive resources and difficult evaluations.

The game has delighted and fascinated analysts for nearly 170 years. This article distills the fruit of their work. One can only be amazed at what was accomplished without computer assistance. Whether you choose to fire up the engine and test each conclusion, or simply follow the action on good old board and pieces, prepare to lose yourself in a strange and wondrous fantasy world.

Adolf Anderssen – Jean Dufresne Berlin 1852 Evans Gambit

Why “Evergreen Game”, you ask? The name was not attached until a quarter of a century after it was played. On the occasion of Anderssen’s death in 1879 Wilhelm Steinitz wrote a eulogy in which he acknowledged the late master’s brilliancy versus Dufresne as “an evergreen in the laurel wreath of the greatest German chess masters.”

Another point worth clearing up is the correct pronunciation of Dufresne. I’m told it should be *doo-FRAIN*. Rhymes with Dusquesne!

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bc4 Bc5 4 b4 [An old opening and a good opening despite its rarity nowadays. White pitches a pawn to accelerate his play in the center; c3 Δ d4. Kasparov briefly revived the Evans Gambit in the mid 1990s. Closer to home, I personally am 7-1 with it in tournament games played between 1973 and 2007. Might be due for an encore.] **4...Bxb4 5 c3 Ba5**

Whether the bishop should withdraw to a5 or c5 was a hot theoretical topic back in the Evans Gambit’s heyday. 5...Bc5 is likely to get bonked by d4 sooner or later; 5...Ba5 has certain tactical drawbacks. In practice

the issue frequently becomes moot once the bishop retreats to b6 in either case.

5...Be7 is a ‘modern’ treatment, although isolated examples can be found from even decades before the Evergreen. 5...Be7 6 d4 Na5 7 Be2 exd4 8 Qxd4 Nf6 9 e5 Nc6 10 Qh4 Nd5 11 Qg3 g6 12 O-O Nb6 13 c4 d6 14 Rd1 Nd7 15 Bh6 Nxe5 16 Nxe5 Nxe5 17 Nc3 f6 18 c5 Nf7 19 cxd6 cxd6 20 Qe3 Nxe6 21 Qxe6 Bf8 22 Qe3+ Kf7 23 Nd5 Be6 24 Nf4 Qe7 25 Re1 1-0 Kasparov-Anand, Riga 1995

Chris Bush once confronted me with the rare but by no means bad 5...Bd6!?



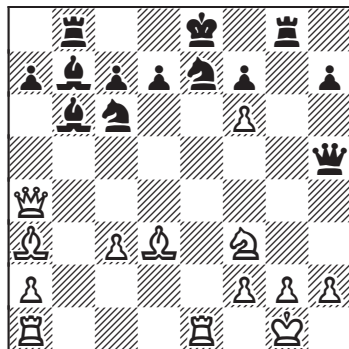
(Shibut-Bush, 2007 Arlington Open): 6 d4 Nf6 7 O-O (7 Ng5 O-O 8 f4 exf4 9 e5 Bxe5 10 dxe5 Nxe5 11 Bb3 h6 12 Nh3 g5 Anderssen-Kiezeritsky, London 1851!) 7... h6 8 Re1 O-O 9 Nbd2 a6 10 Nf1 Kh7 11 Ng3 g6 12 h3 Ng8 13 a4 Qf6 14 Ra2 Be7 15 dxe5 Nxe5 16 Nxe5 Qxe5 17 Be3 Bc5 18 Bd4 Bxd4 19 cxd4 Qf4 20 e5 d6 21 Re4 Qg5 22 Qb3 Qc1+? 23 Kh2 Kg7 24 Rc2 Qg5 25 f4 Qd8? 26 f5! gxf5 27 Rf4 dxe5 28 dxe5 Qg5 29 Rcf2 Ne7 30 Qb4 Nc6 31 Qc3 Be6 32 Nxf5+ Kh8 33 Rg4 Qd8 34 Qe3 1-0

6 d4 exd4 7 O-O d3?!

Black prevents White from forming a full pawn center and leaves the c3 pawn where it blocks White's development Nc3. Reasonably motivated it may be, but it just doesn't work. This and move 11 are the culprits behind Black's later difficulty.

Materialists who don't mind defending should take the whole bait, 7...dxc3—the "Compromised Defense" although it would seem the most uncompromising. Otherwise 7...Bb6 8 cxd4 d6 reaches the tried-and-true "Normal Position" of the Evans Gambit. 7...d6 8 cxd4 Bg4 (8... Bb6 would be the Normal Position again) 9 Qa4! a6! happened in Shibut-G Gelman, Pillsbury Memorial FIDE 1993: 10 d5 (10 Bd5 -Tchigorin!) b5 11 Bxb5 axb5 12 Qxb5 Rb8? (12...Ne7 13 dxc6 O-O -Steinitz!) 13 Qxc6+ Bd7 14 Qc2 Nf6 15 Nbd2 O-O 16 Nc4 Bb4 17 Be3 Bb5 18 Nd4 Qe8 19 Nxb5 Rxb5 20 a4 Rb8 21 f3 Nd7 22 Na3! Bc5 23 Bxc5 Nxc5 24 Nb5 Qd7 (24... Nxa4? 25 Nxc7) 25 Nd4 Ra8 26 Nc6 Kh8 27 a5 Rfe8 28 Rfb1 Qc8 29 Qc4 Qa6 30 Qxa6 Rxa6 31 Rb5 g6 32 Rab1 Kg7 33 Rb8 Rxb8 34 Rxb8 Kf6 35 h4 Nd7 36 Rb7 Ne5 37 Rxc7 Nc4 38 Nb4 1-0

8 Qb3 Qf6 9 e5 [9 Bg5 was also possible. 9...Qg6 10 Nbd2 d6 11 Bxd3 with full compensation] 9...Qg6 [Not 9...Nxe5? 10 Re1 d6 11 Qb5+] 10 Re1 Nge7 11 Ba3 b5?! [Perhaps shocking to the uninitiated, but this is actually a recurring idea in the Evans Gambit. It's been tried as early as move 6. In this particular position, however, Black would do better with 11...a6!? Δ b5] 12 Qxb5 Rb8 13 Qa4 Bb6 [13...O-O? 14 Bxe7] 14 Nbd2 Bb7 [This was the only chance to play 14...O-O!]? 15 Ne4 Qf5?! [Not an impressive move at all, especially after the follow-up admits loss of a tempo compared to an immediate 15... Qh5. However, Black's position was already so difficult that there's little point in nit picking. 15...0-0? would lose practically by force to 16 Bxd3 Qh5 17 Ng3 Qh6 18 Bc1 Qe6 19 Ng5 (or 19 Bxh7+). Emanuel Lasker's suggestion 15...d2 16 Nexd2 O-O looks like the best try although here too 17 Ne4 Rfe8 18 Rad1 Rbd8 19 Neg5 White should win] 16 Bxd3 Qh5 17 Nf6+? [Needlessly romantic! (read: risky) Simply 17 Ng3 was still overwhelming, eg 17... Qh6 18 Bc1 Qe6 19 Ng5 Qd5 20 Bc4. But Anderssen thought the text would win by force.] 17...gxf6 18 exf6 Rg8





19 Rad1

19 Be4 was Lasker's suggestion based upon the following analysis:

- i) 19...d5 20 Bxd5 Qxd5 21 Rad1 "wins";
- ii) 19...Rg4 20 Qc2 "with a firm position";
- iii) 19...Qh3 20 g3 Rxc3+ 21 hxg3 Qxc3+ 22 Kh1 Bxf2 23 Re2 "wins."

Richard Reti picked up Lasker's analysis and extracted a general lesson. *"In this position both sides have a direct King's attack [sic]. The prospects of White, however, are better, and this is due to a fundamental reason which we shall encounter again and again and which offers food for thought to the student. White dominates the center lines of the board. Black, on the other hand, attacks White's castling position with the thought that the queen and rook on the king's side and the two bishops on the queen's side are to combine their efforts. Such a combined effort of forces which stand isolated and separated from each other on both wings cannot possibly be successful as long as the opponent dominates the center. A modern player is interested first of all in understanding the essential characteristics of the position and considers combination merely as an aid in securing his positional advantage. In this position he would, therefore, endeavor to conduct his attack in the center in such a way that he would at the same time obstruct the lines of attack of Black's queenside forces against the king position of White. Reasoning in such a manner, the immediate winning move 19 Be4, mentioned by Lasker, would seem fairly obvious. Instead of this Anderssen chose the move 19 Rad1 demonstrating once again his incomparable power of combination, but, since it is not based on a clear understanding of the positional requirements, is far less effective than 19 Be4..."*—from MASTERS OF THE CHESSBOARD

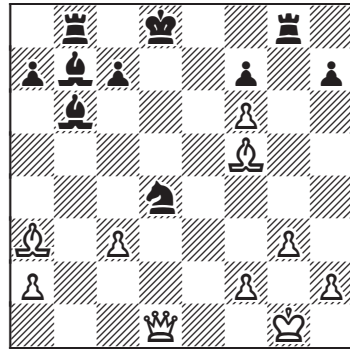
Alas, this monument of deductive reasoning collapses under the "detail" that Lasker's variation *iii*) can continue 23...Nd4! after which Black, not White, comes out the winner. For example, 24 Rf2 Bxe4 25 Qxd4 Bxf3+ 26 Rxf3 Qxf3+ 27 Kg1 Rb5 28 Qh4 Ng6 29 Re1+ Kd8.

So it would seem Anderssen's choice was correct after all.

19...Qxf3

Capturing a piece, threatening mate—and falling in with White's plans. Anderssen wound up the game as follows:

20 Rxe7+ Nxe7 (Demonstrating that he completely missed the point of White's play. Otherwise Dufresne would have tried 20...Kd8 (20...Kf8 21 Re3+) where Akiba Rubinstein is credited with having sorted out the winning method: 21 Rxd7+! Kc8 22 Rd8+! Kxd8! (if 22...Rxd8 23 gxf3; or 22...Nxd8 23 Qd7+! Kxd7 24 Bf5+ mates) 23 Bf5+! Qxd1+ 24 Qxd1+ Nd4 25 g3!

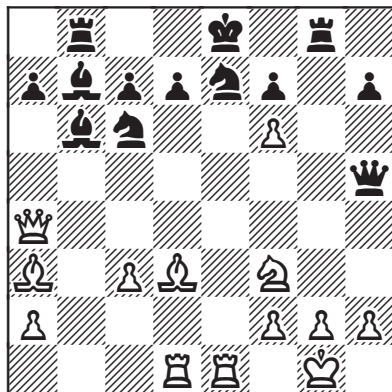


"Black's rooks are disconnected and it is hard to parry the attack of the queen combined with her two bishops." - Neishtadt

21 Qxd7+! Kxd7 22 Bf5+ Ke8 23 Bd7+ Kf8 24 Bxe7 mate 1-0



LET US RETURN to the critical position after 19 Rad1.



Buckle up, here we go!

Black has a confusing assortment of alternatives to Dufresne's 19...Qxf3:

19... Rxc2+ Consider this first because it is the most forcing. Black's idea is 20 Kxg2 Ne5. But then White again strikes with 21 Qxd7+! Kxd7 (or 21...Nxd7 22 Rxe7+ Kd8 {22...Kf8 23 Re5+} 23 Rxd7+ Kc8 24 Rd8+ Kxd8 25 Bf5+) 22 Bg6+ Ke6 23 Bxh5 Ng6 24 Kg3 wins.

Okay, suppose we try reversing Black's move order? 19...Ne5 20 Rxe5 and now 20...Rxc2+ In this case 21 Kxg2? meets with 21...Qxf3+ However, instead 21 Kf1 Rxf2+ 22 Ke1 Black's threats are finished, White's are just beginning.

19...Nd4 also loses: 20 Rxe7+ Kf8 21 Rxf7+ Kxf7 22 Qxd7+ Kxf6 23 Qe7mate

The power of White's dark-square bishop is evident in these variations. In moving his knight to uncover the b7 bishop, Black could block the a3-f8 diagonal: 19...Nb4. However, this likewise fails after the precise reply 20 Qxd7+! Kxd7 21 Bb5+ Kc8 22 Bd7+ Kd8 23 fxe7mate

These variations come relatively easily in light of how the actual game went. While we are at it, we can also dismiss 19...Qg4 20 Qxc4 Rxc4 21 Bf5 etc.

In the event of 19...Bc5 20 Bxc5 Qxc5 simply 21 Bxh7 does the trick, eg 21...Rh8 22 Rxe7+ Kf8 (22...Nxe7 23 Qxd7+ Kf8 24 Qd8+) 23 Qg4! Rxh7 24 Ng5 Rh8 25 Ne6+!

19...d6 is a tricky defense. If White plays the obvious 20 Rxe7+? Kf8, his attack bogs down - suddenly Black's pieces all defend one another - and the counterattack looks irresistible. Instead 20 Be4! Is now indeed the way. Then 20...Rxc2+? becomes pointless as White can just take it. Rather than give away material, Black,



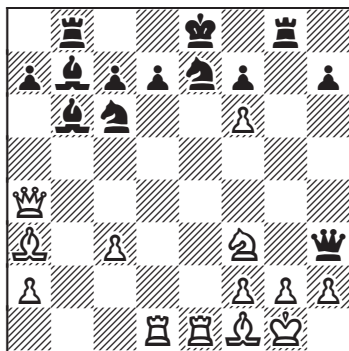
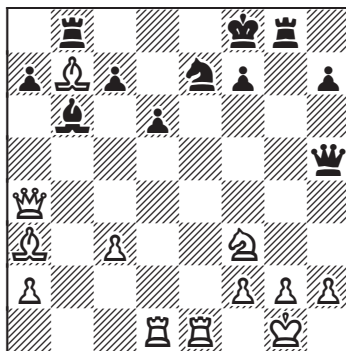
who is a piece up, should try to avoid losing two pieces in return. With c6 and e7 both threatened and pinned, the only possibility is to move his king. If 20...Kd8 21 fxe7+ Nxe7 22 Bxd6 Nd5 23 Ne5; if instead 20...Kd7 21 fxe7 White is threatening Ne5 already and Black's game probably isn't tenable.

But what was the point of ...d6 if not to prepare 20...Kf8, right? So then 21 fxe7+ Nxe7 22 Bxb7 (diagram)

Now if 22...Rxb7 23 Qd7 wins. But Black has one last trick up his sleeve: 22...Qh3! threatens mate and covers d7. Unfortunately, his ingenuity comes to naught after 23 Ne5 dxe5 (23...Rxb7 24 Nd7+ Black cannot go to g7 without losing the queen, and otherwise he's driven into a mill: 24...Ke8 25 Nf6+ Kf8 26 Qe8+ Kg7 27 Nxg8) 24 Bxe7+ Kxe7 25 Rxe5+ Kf8 26 Qa3+ c5 27 Rxc5 wins.

This last line suggests yet another idea for Black: 19...Qh3 straight away. Black threatens mate as in the game, but from h3 the queen also defends d7!

This is a serious defense. White may keep the upper hand but the ensuing play is not so clear. White should proceed 20 Bf1 (but not 20 g3 Rxg3+ 21 hxg3 Qxg3+ 22 Kh1 Qxf3+ etc) and now... (diagram)



If 20...d6 21 Rxe7+ Kf8 22 Rxd6! yields an irresistible attack;

If 20...Ne5 21 Rxe5 Bxf3 22 Rxe7+ Kf8 23 Rxd7+ c5 24 Bxc5+ (also 24 Rd8!) Bxc5 25 Rd8+

On the other hand, 20...Nd4 21 Rxe7+ Kd8 looks promising for Black inasmuch as White's familiar attacking continuations all fail for the moment. However, the remarkable defensive aside 22 Ne1! puts Black back on the critical list. 22...Bc6 (or 22...Bxg2 23 Bxg2 White's king

can walk out to safety after 23...Nf3+ 24 Kf1 Nxh2+ 25 Ke2; or similarly 23...Rxg2+ 24 Nxg2 Nf3+) 23 Qc4 d5 (or 23...Nf3+ 24 Nxf3 Bxf3 25 Rxd7+ Qxd7 26 Rxd7+ Kxd7 27. Qd3 ΔQf3; or 23...Bf3 24 Qxf7) 24 Rxd4 Bxd4 25 Qxc6 etc.

Instead of all those, Black's best try is in fact 20...Kd8! White may yet pick his way through to a clear plus but the path is littered with obstacles. An old analysis by Howard Staunton gave 21 Bxe7+ Ke8 (21...Nxe7) 22 Bc5+ Kd8 23 Qe4 Qg4 (23...d6) 24 Qxg4 Rxg4 25 Bf8! Rg8 26 Bg7 Ba5 27 Ng5 Bxc3 28 Nxf7+ Kc8 29 Re3 Bb4 30 Bc4 "and White must win."

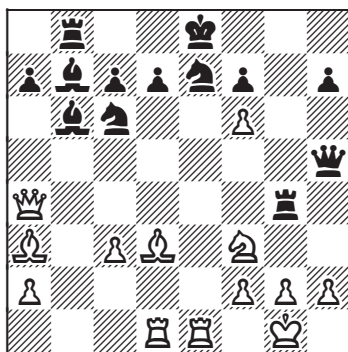


If all this seems insufficiently convincing, instead of 20 Bf1 (that was his last move before the previous diagram) White can also try 20 Nh4. For instance, 20...Nb4! 21 Rxe7+ Kf8 22 Be4! (but not 22 Bf1 Qxh4 23 Re2 d6 24 Bxb4 Qxf6) 22...Qxh4 (22...Bxf2+ 23 Kh1) 23 Rxf7+ (not 23 Qxd7? Qxf2+ 24 Kh1 Qxg2+ 25 Bxg2 Bxg2 *mate*) 23...Kxf7 24 Qxd7+ Kxf6 25 Qf5+ Kg7 26 Rd7+



Adolf Anderssen

There might be more to explore here, but let's move on as there was still another option for Black one move earlier, indeed apparently his best defense: 19...Rg4!!



Originally suggested by Paul Lipke in 1898, Lasker allowed that this move “causes difficulties” for White (which no doubt figured into his rejection of 19 Rad1 in favor of 19 Be4). The first point is that if White plays as in the actual game, 20 Rxe7+ Nxe7 21 Qxd7+ Kxd7 22 Bf5+ Ke8 23 Bd7+ Kf8 24 Bxe7+ Black escapes by 24...Kg8! So White must do something about the attack on his queen.

If 20 Qc2 Qh3! is stronger than a move earlier, with White's queen less active and vulnerable to a hit by ...Nd4.

20 Qb5 allows 20...Rxc2 21 Kxc2 Qg4+ 22 Kf1 Qxf3 23 Bc5 (if 23 Rd2 Qh3+ 24 Kg1 Ne5 wins) and now 23...a6! 24 Qc4 Ne5 is indeed troublesome.

This leaves only moves where White defends his queen by blocking the 4th rank. Here there are choices:

20 Be4 Qh3! is again much stronger than before. White can no longer play Bf1 and Be4 is not the most stable defender owing to the lateral pin, plus it blocks the e-file. Play might continue 21 g3 (neither 21 Nd4 Ne5! 22 Bxb7 Rxb7 23 g3 Bxd4 24 Rxe5 Rxc3+; nor 21 Ne5 Nxe5 22 Bxb7 Rxa4 23 Rxe5 Qe6; 21 Ng5 Rxc5 22 Bxc6 Rxc2+ is any good) 21...Ne5 22 Nxe5 Bxf2+ 23 Kxf2 (if 23 Kh1 Rxe4 24 Rxe4 Qf5) 23...Qxh2+ 24 Ke3 Rxe4+ Black wins.



20 *Re4* is a bit better. Still, 20...Rxe4 and now:

i) 21 Bxe4 Ng8 22 Rd5 Qh6 23 Rg5 Nxf6 24 Bc1 Qf8 25 Bxc6 Bxc6 26 Re5+ Kd8 27 Qh4 Qd6 28 Bg5 Bxf3. In this line Black also has 21...d5, eg 22 Bxd5 Nxd5 23 Qe4+ Ne5 24 Re1 Nxc3;

ii) 21 Qxe4 d6 22 fxe7 (if 22 Qxh7 Qxh7 23 Bxh7 Ng6) 22...Nxe7 (but not 22...Ne5? 23 Bb5+) 23 Qxh7 Bxf3 24 gxf3 Qxf3 25 Rd2 Kd7 26 Bb5+ will be just a draw.

White's two most interesting tries against 19...Rg4!! are 20 Bc4 and 20 c4. We'll take them in turn...

20 Bc4 (*diagram*)

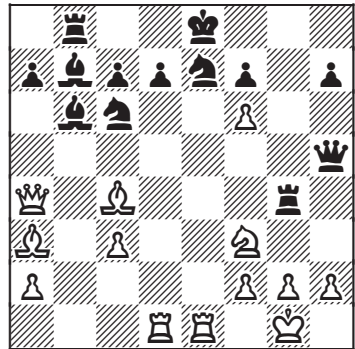
So now both center files are clear. Black must proceed with care!

20...Qh3? 21 Rxe7+ Kd8 (or if 21...Kf8 22 Rxf7+ Kg8 23 Rf8mate, or 21...Nxe7 22 Qxd7+ Kf8 23 Qd8+) 22 Rxd7+ Kc8 23 Rds+ Nxd8 24 Qd7mate

20...Bc5 21 Bxc5 Qxc5 22 Bxf7+ Kxf7 23 Qxg4

20...Rds 21 Qxc6! Rxg2+ 22 Kxg2 Qg4+ 23 Kh1.

20...d6 21 Rxe7+ Kf8 22 Rxd6! cxd6 (22...h6 23 Rxf7+ Ke8 24 Rf8+ Kxf8 25 Rd8mate) 23 Rxb7 Δ Qxc6



So much for the easy ones. Now to the more important options!

Lipke's original analysis recommended 20...Qf5. He judged that this was sufficient to draw in view of variations like

i) 21 Bxe7 Qxf3;

ii) 21 Qb5 Rxg2+ 22 Kxg2 Ne5 23 Bd5 (23 Qxd7+? Nxd7) Bxd5 24 Qxd5 Qg4+ 25 Kh1 Nxd5 26 Nxe5 Qe6!;

iii) 21 Rxe7+ Nxe7 22 Rxd7 Rxg2+

However, White improves with

iv) 21 Rxd7!

Then 21...Qxd7 22 Rxe7+ Nxe7 23 Bxf7+ Kxf7 24 Ne5+ Kxf6 25 Nxd7+ Kf5 26 Qb5+ wins

If instead 21...Kxd7 22 Ne5+ Kc8 (if 22...Ke8 23 Bxf7+ Kf8 24 Bxe7+ Nxe7 25 fxe7+ Kxe7 26 Nxg4+ Kf8 27 Be6 Qg5 28 h4! with irresistible threats) 23 Nxg4 Nd5 (if 23...Ng6 24 Bxf7 and now either 24...Nd8 25 Qe8; or 24...Nf4 25 Re8+

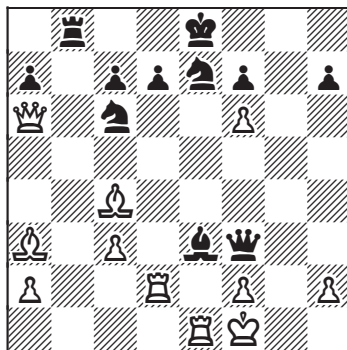


Kd7 26 Ne5+ White wins in each case) 24 Qd1 Nd8 (if 24...Na5 25 Bxd5 {but not 25 Re5? Bxf2+ 26 Kh1 Nxc4 27 Rxf5 Nde3} Bxd5 26 Re8+ {nor 26 Re5? Bxf2+ 27 Kh1 Rb1} Kb7 27 Re5 wins) and now 25 Bd3! (Lipke considered only 25 Re5) Qf4 (if 25...Qd7 26 Ne5) 26 Re4 Nxc3 27 Rxf4 Nxd1 28 Bf5+ etc.

The correct way for Black (from the previous diagram) is not Lipke's 20...Qf5 but, rather, 20...Rxf2+! 21 Kxf2 (21 Kh1 Rxh2+ 22 Nxh2 Nd4+ with at least a draw) 21...Qg4+ 22 Kf1 and now not 22...Qh3+? 23 Ke2 Qg2 24 Rd3! but rather, the requisite miracle move: 22...Ba6!! White's bishop finds itself in an embarrassing cross-pin. 23 Qxa6 Qxf3 24 Rd2 Be3

(diagram)

25. Rc2 (Best. If instead 25 Rxe3 Rb1+ 26 Re1 (26 Rd1 Qh1+ 27 Ke2 Qxd1 mate) Qh1+ 27 Ke2 Rxe1+ 28 Kd3 Qe4 mate; or 25 Bxe7 Bxd2; or 25 Bc1 Bxd2 26 Bxd2 Qh3+ 27 Ke2 Ng6) 26... Nf5 Δ N-e5-g4. White has to settle for a draw after 26 Bd3 Qh3+ 27 Ke2 Qh5+ 28 Kf1 Qh3+ etc because 28 f3? Qxh2+ mates.



Pandemic over yet? No? Okay then, let's revisit the position after 19...Rg4 to examine White's other critical reply!

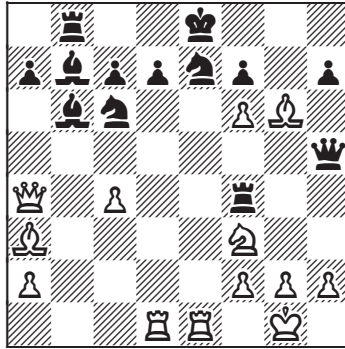
20 c4 (diagram)

White shields his queen but otherwise leaves the position as is, challenging Black to find another useful move.

Here Lipke gave 20...Rf4 (not 20...d6 21 Be4!; nor 20...Bc5 21 Bxc5 Qxc5 22 Qb5! Qxb5 23 cxb5 Nd4 24 Rxe7+ Kf8 25 Ne5 Rxg2+ 26 Kf1 Rxh2 27 Nxd7+ Kg8 28 Be4) 21 Qb5 Qh6 22 Bf5 (22 Bxe7 Nxe7 23 Rxe7+ Kf8 24 Ne5 {24 c5 Bc6} Bxf2+ 25 Kf1 {25 Kh1 Qxh2+!} Bd4+ 26 Ke1 Re4+ 27 Kf1 Qxf6+ 28 Nf3 Qxe7) 22...Qxf6 23 Bxd7+ Kf8 24 Bxc6 Bxc6 25 Bxe7+ Qxe7 26 Qxc6 Qf6 and he judged that Black is all right despite his pawn minus.

However... instead of 21 Qb5 the spectacular 21 Bg6!! flips the variation again.





i) 21...Qxg6 22 Rxe7+ Kf8 23 Rxd7+ Ke8 24 Re7+ Kf8 25 Rxc7+ Kg8 26 Rxb7;

ii) 21...Qg4 22 Bh5! (23 Rxe7!?) Qf5 23 Bxe7;

iii) 21...Bxf2+ 22 Kf1 Qg4 23 Rxe7+ Nxe7 24 Bxf7+ Kxf7 25 Ne5+

Still, this might not feel as clear as White desires. Moreover, Black has a stronger alternative after 20 c4, namely 20...Rxg2+! (Igor Zaitsev has said that 20...Bd4 is okay too, but I haven't seen the analysis)

After 20...Rxg2+! a follow-up queen check at g4 is in the offing. 21 Kxg2 (21 Kh1 Ne5 Δ Rxh2+ is probably no good but could stand testing) Qg4+ 22 Kf1 Qh3+ 23 Ke2 Ba5 leads to an unclear position! Black draws directly against moves like 24 Bxe7 (24 Be4 Bxe1 Δ Ng6 seems fine) Nd4+ 25 Nxd4 Qh5+ 26 f3 Qxh2+ etc. Finally, if 24 Rg1 Qe6+ 25 Kf1 Qh3+ 26 Rg2 Nd4 27 Nxd4 (or 27 Qxa5 Bxf3 28 Qxa7 Qxg2+ 29 Ke1 Qh1+ 30 Bf1 Ndc6 Δ Bxd1) 27...Qxg2+ 28 Ke2 Qg4+ 29 Ke3 (29 f3 Qxd4 30 Bxe7 Bb6) Bb6 Black is fine as he can answer 30 c5 Bc6 Δ Nd5+

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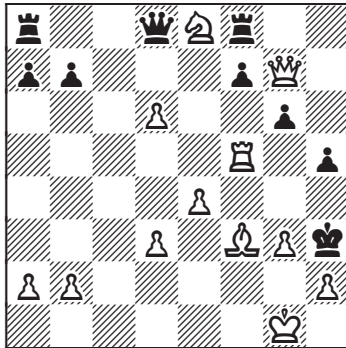


Bob Vassar

Robert Vassar died March 23 at the age of 82. Bob may not be well known to many VCF members today as he played rarely in the last 20 years of his life (his last tournament chess was in 2013). However, he was once one of the strongest players in Virginia and an important voice in VCF affairs. He had an enormous influence on my own entrance into organized chess and advancement as a player. The news of his death comes just as I was completing this edition of VIRGINIA CHESS. I need more time to write a fitting tribute, which will appear next issue. For now I will just say that Bob was a great friend and offer one sample of his play. I was present at the event and remember how the normal hush of the tournament room was shattered by a thunderclap of applause after the final move. - Macon Shibut

Bob Vassar - Bill Wirth 1975 Virginia "Closed" State Championship Sicilian

1 e4 c5 2 Nc3 Nc6 3 g3 g6 4 Bg2 Bg7 5 Nge2 d6 6 O-O e6 7 d3 Nge7
8 Be3 Nd4 9 Qd2 e5 10 f4 Bh6?! [playing for the ensuing fork at c2 but it doesn't win material and he badly weakens his own position] 11 fxe5 Bxe3+
12 Qxe3 Nxc2? [Indeed, it would have been better to admit the idea wasn't so great and back off with 12 ... dxe5±] 13 Qf4 O-O 14 exd6 Nc6 15 Nd5!?
Be6? [He had to ride the tiger with 15...Nxa1 16 Qh6 f5 17 e5 ∞] 16 Nf6+
Kg7 17 Rac1 N2d4 18 Nxd4 Nxd4 19 Qe5 h5 20 Ne8+ Kh6 21 Qg7+ Kg5
22 Rxc5+ Bf5 23 Rxc5+ Nxf5 24 Rxf5+ Kg4 25 Bf3+ Kh3



26 Rxc5+ gxh5 27 Qg4+ hxg4 28 Bg2mate 1-0

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