

Vladimir Tukmakov

Risk & Bluff in Chess

The Art of Taking Calculated Risks

New In Chess 2015

From the Author

'If you want to show your opponent that $2 \times 2 = 5$, you still need to understand that in reality $2 \times 2 = 4$, and that you are taking a risk.'

Mikhail Tal

Bluff is a term in card games. It is an integral part of poker, and makes the game attractive to millions of followers. Both in cards and in life generally, bluff is based on the fact that the opponent does not have complete information about your real possibilities. In poker, the players are only sure of the value of their own hand, and can only judge the rest on the basis of indirect signs. In life even more is unknown.

Mistakes in opening preparation. Or a risky sacrifice from a simple oversight. Only the players themselves know the truth about what happened. By way of illustration, here are two remarkable examples, which could have graced this book but which, alas, failed to pass the strict criteria for inclusion. The first was played in a World Championship match and played a significant role in the history of chess.

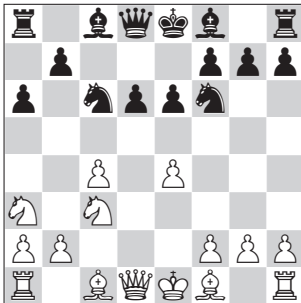
Game 1

Anatoly Karpov (2720)

Garry Kasparov (2701)

Moscow Wch m 1985 (16)

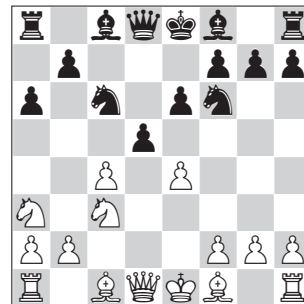
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4
 ♗c6 5.♗b5 d6 6.c4 ♗f6 7.♖1c3 a6
 8.♗a3



8...d5!?

An astonishing opening discovery by Kasparov! This position had been seen hundreds of times before, but at the time the idea to sacrifice a pawn here seemed totally new.

Later, however, it was found that as early as 1965, Peter Dely had already played this amazing pawn sacrifice in the Hungarian championship against IM Karoly Honfi. The eventful game petered out into a draw.



9.cxd5 exd5 10.exd5 ♗b4 11.♙e2

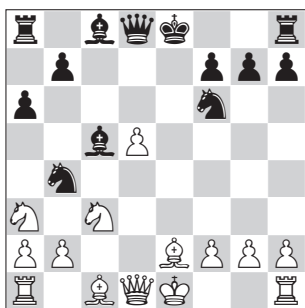
In Game 12, faced with a surprise, Karpov had played the safest move 11.♙c4, but his opponent demonstrated a convincing way to equalise: 11...♙g4 12.♙e2 ♙xe2 13.♚xe2+ ♚e7 14.♙e3 ♗bxd5 and a draw was agreed within a

few moves. His opponent would naturally have been fully armed against this latest try.

11...♙c5?!

This ambitious but risky decision would undoubtedly have been prepared at home.

The more cautious 11...♙e7 12.♙f3 ♙f5 would have given Black chances to equalise, but with no winning chances. Kasparov is in an extremely aggressive mood.



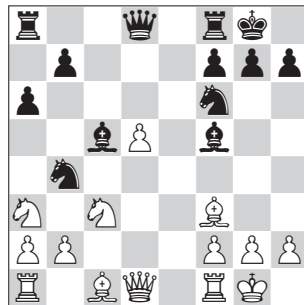
12.0-0?!

Black's 11th move was a complete surprise to Karpov and, true to himself, he chooses the safest line. But White had available a much stronger move, which would have placed his opponent's idea in doubt.

12.♙e3! ♙xe3 13.♚a4+ ♘d7?! (stronger is 13...♙d7! 14.♚xb4 ♚b6 15.♚xb6 ♙xb6 and the bishop pair gives Black reasonable chances of saving himself) 14.♚xb4 (14.fxe3!) 14...♙c5 15.♚e4+ ♙f8 16.0-0.

Karpov demonstrated all of this when he was already ex-World Champion, in a game against John van der Wiel (Brussels 1986). Admittedly, he did not manage to win this game either – this variation really was an unlucky one for him!

12...0-0 13.♙f3 ♙f5



Black has superb piece play for the sacrificed pawn, and Kasparov goes on to win in a very striking manner.

14.♙g5 ♚e8 15.♚d2 b5 16.♚ad1 ♘d3 17.♘ab1 h6 18.♙h4 b4 19.♘a4 ♙d6 20.♙g3 ♚c8 21.b3 g5 22.♙xd6 ♚xd6 23.g3 ♘d7 24.♙g2 ♚f6 25.a3 a5 26.axb4 axb4 27.♚a2 ♙g6 28.d6 g4 29.♚d2 ♙g7 30.f3 ♚xd6 31.fxg4 ♚d4+ 32.♙h1 ♘f6 33.♚f4 ♘e4 34.♚xd3 ♘f2+ 35.♚xf2 ♙xd3 36.♚fd2 ♚e3 37.♚xd3 ♚c1 38.♘b2 ♚f2 39.♘d2 ♚xd1+ 40.♘xd1 ♚e1+ 0-1

This looks like a classic example of bluff in the opening. Kasparov played 11...♙c5 with a confident look, counting on the surprise value, and it worked. Without knowing the truth, it would be easy to assume that his team had scrupulously worked out all the details and analysed in detail all the possible risks. The bluff worked to perfection and one can only feel pleased with oneself.

But the reality is rather different. In their preparations, Kasparov and his team had completely overlooked 12.♙e3!, and Black was just lucky that his opponent took him at his word.

So, sad as it was, I had to reject this example. However, this is not an unusual story and we will have to return to

it again later on. It is quite likely that if Kasparov had seen the strongest reply in his preparations, it would also have occurred to Karpov at the board. Over the board, the players find themselves engaged in a highly energetic mutual activity, where ideas seem to communicate themselves from one player to another.

Without a signal from his opponent, White did not seek a refutation, and limited himself to the simplest decision. But this is another, and very interesting story.

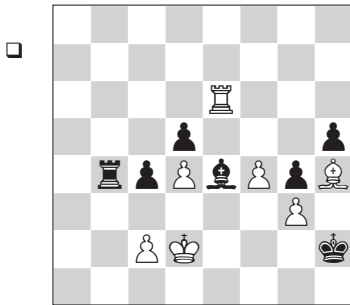
The second example lost to this book comes from deep in the endgame.

Game 2

Fabiano Caruana (2773)

Magnus Carlsen (2843)

Sao Paulo/Bilbao 2012 (1)



The Norwegian had already spent a long time squeezing blood from a stone, in his customary manner, ie. realising a very small positional advantage. Just when it seems White has solved all his problems, there followed the unexpected

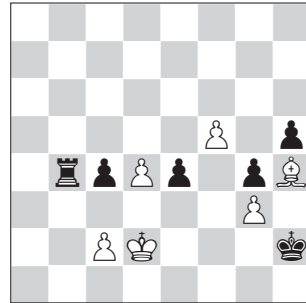
79. Rxe4

It is very difficult to give this move a definite assessment. On the one hand, it places White on the edge of defeat,

but on the other, it wins him the game. After the calm 79. ♖c1! it would be very hard for Black to strengthen his position. Now, however, the value of every move increases sharply.

79...dxe4 80.f5!

Carlsen's task would have been rather simpler after 80. ♖e3 ♜b2; or 80.d5 ♜b5.



80...♔g2?

The move which misses the win. The desire to advance the king is quite understandable, but it was essential first to activate the rook.

80... ♜b2! wins in all variations: 81.d5 (81.f6 ♔g2! 82.f7 (or 82. ♖e3 ♜xc2 83. ♔g5 c3 84. ♖xe4 ♜e2+ 85. ♖f5 c2 86.f7 ♜f2+ 87. ♔f4 c1 ♚ 88.f8 ♚ ♜xf4+ 89.gxf4 g3) 82... ♜b8 83. ♖e3 (83. ♔e7 ♖f2) 83... ♜f8 84. ♖xe4 ♜xf7 85. ♖d5 c3 86. ♖c4 ♖f3-+) 81... ♜b5 82. ♖e3 ♜xd5 83. ♖xe4 ♜d2-+.

Also good is 80... ♜b1!. The variations here are not very complicated: 81.f6 (81. ♖e3 ♜e1+ 82. ♖d2 (82. ♖f4 e3 83.f6 ♔g2 84. ♖e4 e2 85. ♖e3 c3 86.f7 ♜f1 87. ♖xe2 ♜xf7 88. ♖d3 ♜f3+ (88... ♖f3 89. ♖xc3 ♖e4)) 82... ♜f1 83.f6 ♖g2 84. ♖e3 ♜e1+ 85. ♖d2 ♖f2 86.f7 c3+) 81... ♔g2 82. ♖e3 ♜e1+ 83. ♖f4 e3 84. ♖e4 e2 85. ♖e3 ♜c1 86. ♖xe2 ♜xc2+-+ 87. ♖d1 ♜c3. Black should win in all cases.

81. ♖e3 ♜b2?

One move earlier, this move would have won, but now it is the decisive mistake. There was still a draw after 81...♜b1! 82.♙xe4 ♜c1 83.f6 ♜xc2 84.♙d5! c3 85.♙c4 ♜c1 86.f7 ♜f1 87.♙xc3 ♜xf7. The same position could be reached with the more effective 81...♜b3+ 82.♙xe4 ♜c3.

82.d5 ♜xc2 83.d6

Surprisingly, there is no way to save the game.

83...c3 84.d7 ♜d2 85.d8 ♙ ♜xd8

86.♙xd8 h4 87.gxh4 g3 88.f6 c2

89.♙d2 e3+ 90.♙xc2 e2 91.♙a5

Black resigned.

Here also, the situation seems clear enough. White, fed up with passive defence and not believing he could hold the game, decided to bluff his opponent, and it worked brilliantly. In reality, though, as Caruana himself admitted, he thought that his passed pawns and active king would give him counterplay. This indeed happened, but only as a result of Black's weak play.

Bravery and enterprise brought White his reward, but can we really say this was a case of deliberate risk? It seems to me that we cannot. Thus another apparently convincing example was lost to this book.

As we have seen, then, the presence of outward signs of bluff is not sufficient. The reality can turn out to be an elementary oversight or an incorrect assessment of the position, rather than a carefully-thought out decision to bluff. The ideal situation is to have the player's personal confirmation of what he was thinking, preferably signed in triplicate and officially notarised! Alas, though, this is unrealistic. Partly, this is because some of the players involved in the examples given are no longer around to answer our questions. And partly, it is because people inevitably tend to embellish their thoughts and feelings.

Even so, in many of the examples given in this book, we do have such personal confirmations from the players. I should like to thank my many colleagues, who greatly helped me with their recollections or striking episodes in their chess careers. This expression of gratitude may serve as a kind of replacement of the usual bibliography, which you will find lacking in the back of this book.

I should especially like to thank Mark Dvoretsky and Adrian Mikhalchishin, who generously shared examples from their own widely-drawn card indexes of positions. Those remarkable players Lev Psakhis, Veselin Topalov, Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, Teimour Radjabov, Pavel Elianov, Alexander Moiseenko and Andrey Volokitin not only recalled games of their own, which were relevant to our theme, but also tried their hardest to reconstruct the precise psychological circumstances of their decisions. And, of course, Genna Sosonko, as always, dredged up from the depths of his memory several fascinating stories. A number of the striking examples of bluff have appeared in various articles and books and have become part of folklore, and they too find a place in the pages of the present volume. Sometimes the moves seem so eloquent to the author that he has independently interpreted the players' intentions. I hope I will not be judged too severely for such *lèse-majesté*.

The examples have been split into chapters, but this is sometimes somewhat arbitrary, since many of the examples have features which could make them belong

to several different chapters. Some games are given in full, others only as fragments, where they have relevance to a certain theme. This decision is also the author's own and reflects his tastes and interests. In general, I should like to caution readers that my book does not pretend to any special scientific value. Risk and bluff in chess is more of an emotional concept than a scientific one. The author has not concealed his own emotions.

Many diagrams have been formulated as a test. In this way, the book can also be seen as a textbook for trainers and players.

In conclusion, I should like to say a few warm words of thanks to my tireless assistant, without him this work would probably never have seen the light of day. As in my previous books, I call him my Silicon Friend, or SF. But I now look on him as something of a different personality from that in my previous books. A certain irony and scepticism on my part has given way to respect and understanding. This is not only because he has grown stronger over the years, but also because I myself have changed. When you work with someone for a long period of time, you start to appreciate not only that person's obvious achievements, but also certain inevitable weaknesses, which we all have. We expect the same attitude from our readers – demanding, but at the same time, understanding. Because we understand that nobody is proof against mistakes.

Vladimir Tukmakov
Odessa, Ukraine, April 2015

Introduction

Risk is an essential component in any game – its nerve and drive. Chess, one of the most remarkable of all games, is no exception. Throughout time, there have been players who preferred the storm to the calm. But when we speak of carefully calculated risk, used as a technique, as part of a player's style, then there are far fewer such players.

The first who comes to mind is Emanuel Lasker, who viewed chess as first and foremost a game. The legendary World Champion did not give great attention to the opening, but in the middlegame he was prepared to exploit methods which astonished both players and experts alike. Sometimes, his methods seemed so at odds with established understanding that his contemporaries saw them as deliberate provocation or even bluff. However, it was rare that one of his risky ideas was placed under serious doubt.

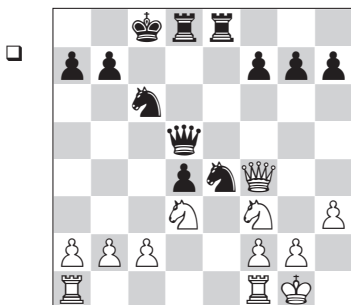
What was the secret of his successes? Let us try to see, with the help of the following example:

Game 3

Emanuel Lasker

Frank Marshall

United States Wch m 1907 (2)



How should we assess this position?

The then World Championship candidates Tarrasch and Janowski were by no means the last people to claim that White's position is extremely difficult. Lasker, however, both during the game and in subsequent discussions, considered that his position was perfectly defensible. Looking at the diagram with

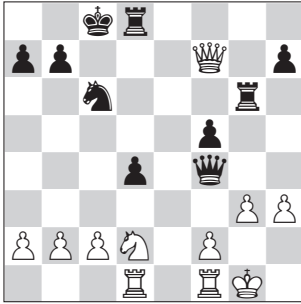
the eyes of a modern grandmaster, the chances of the two sides look roughly equal. Lasker took a decision which both his own generation and later observers considered extremely risky.

18. ♖g4+!

SF, however, thinks this move is the strongest and does not see any particular risk. One might well ask how one can argue with the cold and emotionless computer. But even what seems to me to be the most natural continuation, 18. ♖fe1 g5! 19. ♖h2 f5, looks very suspicious to the human player, yet here too, the computer sees nothing to be afraid of.

18...f5 19. ♖xg7 ♖g8?!

But this natural move is clearly not best. He should have played 19... ♖d2! 20. ♖xd2 ♖g8 21. ♖f4! (a good zwischenzug, although even with the direct 21. ♖g3 ♖g3 22. fxc3, which is indeed what Lasker had intended, White should hold) 21... ♖d6 22. ♖f7 ♖xf4 23. ♖ad1 ♖g6 after which there is 24.g3!.



analysis diagram

Forcing Black to repeat the position after 24...♖xg3+, for if 24...♗dg8? 25.♕h1. 24.♕h1 ♖g5 25.g3 ♘e5 26.♗b3 ♗h5 is dangerous.

20. ♗h6 ♘d2

Now this move is not so effective. Admittedly, even after 20...♗g6 21.♗f4 ♗dg8 22.♘h4 ♘g5 23.♕h1 White retains the advantage.

21. ♗xd2 ♗xf3 22.g3 h5 23.♗f4 ♗d5 24.♗fe1 ♗de8

Nor does he get anything from 24...h4 25.♗xh4 ♗h8 26.♗f6 ♗xh3 27.♗e6+.

25. ♗xe8+ ♗xe8 26.♗e1 ♗e4 27. ♗g5

The further course of the game is not of any special interest from the viewpoint of our subject. Lasker easily realised his advantage.

What conclusions can we draw from looking at this example? From the viewpoint of the modern player, influenced by his unceasing work with the ruthless computer, Lasker's play does not seem that risky. Yes, he went in for a very committal decision, but it was dictated by the logic of the struggle. SF also confirms that there was not a single moment when White was ever worse. On the other hand, Black's play can be criticised in many ways, but

that is another subject. In general, the impression one gets from this example is that two players of different classes were facing one another. And with all due respect to Frank Marshall, this is exactly what chess history confirms. So, the phenomenon of Lasker can be easily explained: he was head and shoulders above most of his rivals, in his understanding of the game. Moves which his contemporaries considered to be bluffs or tricks were in most cases simply the objectively best moves in that concrete position.

In reality, the first great player to use risk and bluff as a way of confusing and disorienting his opponents was Alexander Alekhine. Several of his decisions, even to this day, astonish one by their courage and paradoxical nature.

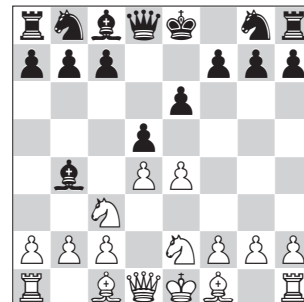
Game 4

Alexander Alekhine

Aaron Nimzowitsch

Bled 1931 (6)

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♗e2



Alekhine comments: 'A completely harmless move, but I chose it because I know that in such positions, Nimzowitsch often displays excessive greed, for which he ought to be punished'. Both in his moves and in his comments, one detects a certain chutz-

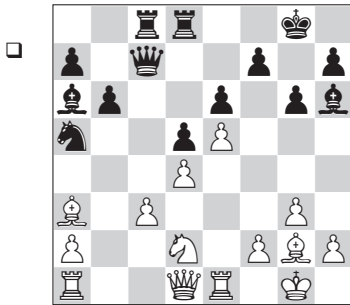
In the final part of this chapter, we present some games from recent years. Special place goes to the following.

Game 50

Hikaru Nakamura (2778)

Vladimir Kramnik (2797)

Istanbul ol 2012 (9)



The position is completely equal and the players had already repeated moves twice. Nobody doubted that the game would be drawn, but does White have any way to continue the fight?

23. ♘b1?!

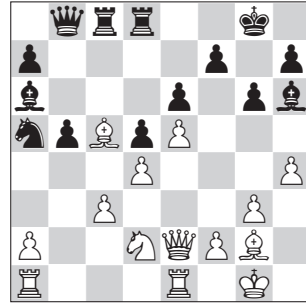
What is this!? I have never seen a more shocking move in my life, and I have seen a fair bit! 23. ♙b4 ends the game in a draw at once.

23...b5

A somewhat strange decision. However, it soon becomes apparent that Nakamura's very committal move is not so easy to exploit. The only weakness on c3 is solidly defended. Mind you, it is also not clear what active plan White has. But Kramnik was now full of desire to punish his opponent for his 'incorrect' play, which is probably just what the American had counted on.

24. h4 ♘c6 25. ♙c5 ♙b8 26. ♙e2
♘a5 27. ♘d2

Strangely, White's rather devious strategy works.



He only needs to play 28. ♘b3, after which Black's problems will become acute. How does Black stop this?

On the basis of the foregoing considerations, Kramnik's next move is perfectly logical.

27... ♖xc5! 28. dxc5 ♙c8

More accurate is 28... ♙c7, defending c7 in advance, which proves significant in the variation 29. ♘b3 ♘c4 30. a4 bxa4 31. ♖xa4 ♙b5.

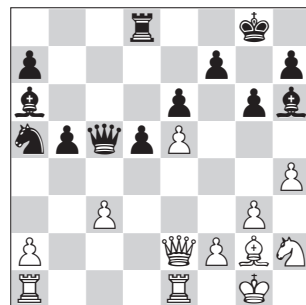
29. ♘f3

In his turn missing a chance to exploit Black's inaccuracy with 29. ♘b3 ♘c4 30. a4.

29... ♙xc5

Black has a pawn for the exchange and well-coordinated pieces, so chances are roughly equal. But the tone of the game is clearly being set by White.

30. ♘h2?!

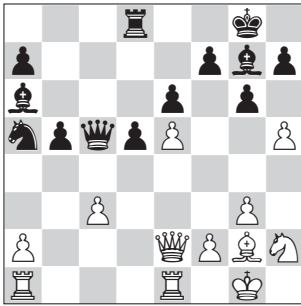


After the ‘correct’ 30.a4 ♖c4 31.axb5 ♗xb5 32.♗d4 ♗e8, Black would hold the position without trouble. Nakamura, however, continues to rock the boat. Is this a risky decision?

30...♗g7

The undefended pawn could very well have been taken: 30...♔xc3! 31.♗g4 ♗d2! (also good is 31...♗g7 32.♖ac1 ♔d4 33.♗ed1 ♗b6) 32.♗ed1 ♗c4. In this case, White might have had reason to regret his extremely artful play.

31.h5



31...g5?

But this is a clear mistake. Now, too, he should have played 31...♔xc3! although here it is less good than on the previous move. 32.♖ac1 ♔d4 33.♗g4 leads to a complicated game, with mutual chances.

32.h6!

A move which Kramnik had clearly overlooked. Suddenly it turns out that Black’s king has far too few defenders.

32...♗xh6 33.♗h5 ♗g7 34.♗xg5 ♗c6 35.♗g4 ♗e7 36.♗xe7 ♗xe7 37.a4!

Even without queens, the position will be indefensible.

37...d4 38.axb5 ♗xb5 39.♖a7 d3 40.♖xe7 d2 41.♗d1 ♗e2 42.♗e3 ♗xe5 43.c4

White’s material advantage determines the outcome of the day.

43...h5 44.♖a7 h4 45.♖a2 ♗xd1 46.♗xd1 hxg3 47.fxg3 ♗xg3 48.c5 f5 49.♖a7 e5 50.c6 e4 51.♗h3 ♖c8 52.♖a6 ♖f8 53.♖a5 f4 54.♗f1 e3 55.♗e2 ♖f6 56.♖a8+ ♗g7 57.♖a7+ ♖f7 58.♖b7 ♗f6 59.♗f3 ♖e7 60.♖xe7 ♗xe7 61.c7 e2 62.c8♗+ ♗f6 63.♗xe2 ♗e5 64.♗b6 ♗d4 65.♗g2 ♗e1 66.♗d5 ♗e5 67.♗b4 ♗h4 68.♗d3+ ♗f5 69.♗xd2 ♗g4 70.♗e2 ♗f6 71.♗1f2+ ♗g3 72.♗f3 ♗d8 73.♗e4+ ♗h4 74.♗e5 ♗c7 75.♗g6+ ♗h3 76.♗e7 ♗d8 77.♗f5 ♗b6 78.♗f1 ♗h2 79.♗g4 f3 80.♗h4 1-0

This time, the logical course of the game was disrupted not by a sacrifice or an irreversible pawn thrust, but by a modest knight move. However, it looked so ugly that it was precisely its unaesthetic appearance which produced the shock on the wonderfully and classically chess-educated former World Champion. It is not an accident that he played the concluding part of the game so poorly.

Frankly, I do not know anyone in the world elite who would have decided on such a knight move. I would remind you that this all happened near the end of the Olympiad in Istanbul, and the result of the game determined the USA’s match victory over Russia.

To what extent was the result caused by the sporting factor, or is it the computer influence, and the fact that aesthetics simply do enter the machine’s calculations? Certainly, SF does not regard the shocking knight move as too bad. Probably the American grandmaster took the psychological effect into account. Whatever the case, the bluff worked brilliantly.

35... ♖xe5?

The young Dubov clearly cannot withstand the tension. He has already lost his advantage, but here after 35... ♖g7! 36. ♗xg7 ♜xg7 37. ♘f6 ♖e5 38. ♗xc6 ♘c3+! 39. ♗xc3 ♖xc3 40. ♗d7+ the game would have ended in perpetual check.

36. ♗d5+ ♖f7?

The final mistake in time trouble. However, even after the only move 36... ♗g7! 37. ♘f6! ♖f7 38. ♗xc8 ♖xd5 39. exd5 Black faces a difficult defence in the endgame. But it was essential to play this way.

37. ♖xf7+

Black resigned.

Continuing the analogy, Copperfield's viewers can only admire the fact that the street magician's illusions are usually based solely on their outward simplicity. Admittedly, those people who are paying to see them could not repeat these illusions themselves, but they have plenty to say about the tricks.

In my capacity of a simple observer, I can say this about Jobava's decision to risk everything to win the tournament. For maximalists like him, first place is the only place that exists in the tournament table and for this, they will make any effort.

But you and I know that first place is not the only place that matters – especially in Swiss events, there are many high places and prizes. Anyway, I am only trying to explain the trick employed by Jobava, not to repeat it.

The same is true of the following example, which I will undertake to explain fully, but would myself never try to copy.

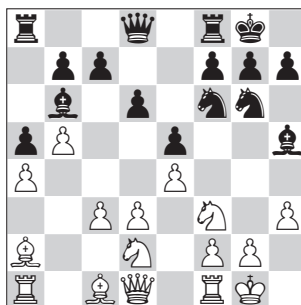
Game 93

Borki Predojevic (2643)

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov (2746)

Rogaska Slatina tt 2011 (3)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5
4.c3 ♘f6 5.b4 ♗b6 6.d3 d6 7.a4 a5
8.b5 ♘e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♘bd2 ♘g6
11.♗a2 ♗g4 12.h3 ♗h5



Already the opening has developed unusually. In this position, we have motifs which are not very characteristic of the Italian Game. In particular, why shouldn't White win a piece with 13.g4?

13.g3



Limiting the knight on g6. The immediate 13.g4? ♘xg4 14.hxg4 ♗xg4 is premature, and leaves Black a very strong attack.

13... ♗h8 14. ♘c4 ♖d7 15. ♗g2 d5!?

Initiating vast complications. The quiet 15... ♗a7 was also possible.

16.exd5

Best. 16.♘xc5 ♘xe5 17.♘xe5 ♔e6 suits Black very well.

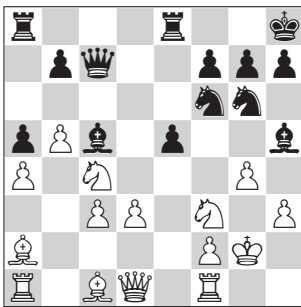
16...♗fe8!?

16...e4!?

17.d6!?

White accepts the challenge. The more cautious 17.♘xb6 cxb6 18.c4 leads after 18...e4 19.dxe4 ♖xe4 to a position where Black has definite compensation for the pawn.

17...♙c5 18.dxc7 ♖xc7 19.g4



The piece clearly cannot be saved, but there are various ways to sacrifice it. Which would you prefer?

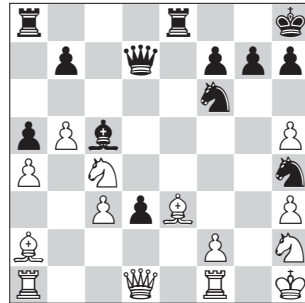
19...e4!?

A surprising decision. Tempting is the thematic 19...♘xg4! 20.hxg4 ♙xg4 with a dangerous initiative for the pawn. Here is one possible, but by no means obligatory variation: 21.♙g5!? e4 (21...f6? 22.♗h1) 22.dxe4 ♘f4+ (22...♗xe4) 23.♙xf4 ♖xf4 24.♖d3 (24.♘ce5 ♗xe5 25.♘xe5 ♙xd1 26.♘xf7+ ♔g8 27.♘g5+ leads to a draw) 24...♗ad8 25.♘d4 ♙xd4 26.cxd4 ♗e6 and White faces a difficult defence.

20.♘h2!?

As well as this, White has half a dozen other perfectly acceptable continuations. But exhaustive analysis of every line is not part of our task.

20...exd3 21.gxh5 ♘h4+ 22.♙h1 ♖d7 23.♙e3



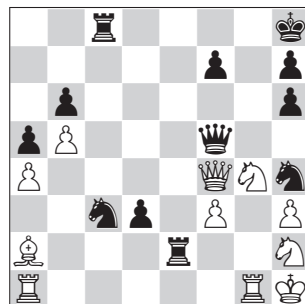
23...♗ac8

Black continues to increase the pressure. The following forcing line also looks good: 23...♖xh3! 24.♗g1 ♗xe3! (the natural 24...♙e3 25.♘d6! ♗e7 26.fxe3 is significantly weaker) 25.fxe3 ♖f5! (25...♘e4? 26.♖f1!) 26.♘d2! ♘e4 27.♗g2! ♘xg2 28.♖f3! ♖xf3 29.♘hxf3 ♘xd2 30.♙xg2. With a series of only moves, White has managed to avoid any great unpleasantness and retain good drawing chances.

24.h6!

Now it transpires that Black is not the only one attacking!

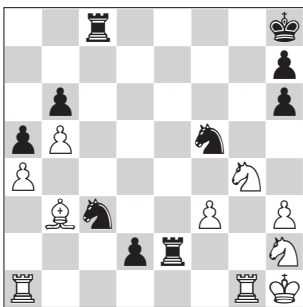
24...gxh6 25.♗g1 ♙e3 26.♘xe3 b6 27.♘eg4 ♘e4 28.f3! ♘xc3 29.♖d2 ♗e2 30.♖f4 ♖f5



31.♖xf5?

In serious time trouble, White misses the strongest continuation. Admittedly, only SF is capable of calculating all of its consequences, and then only when it is on very good form! 31.♔d4+! f6 32.♕c4! (a problem move, which is extremely hard to see in time-trouble) 32...♖xf3 33.♔xc3 ♕f4 34.♖g3!! (an unexpected and at the same time highly effective defence against mate) 34...♔xc4 35.♔a3! (again combining defence and attack) 35...♖xh2+ 36.♗xh2 ♕xg3 37.♔f8+ ♕g8 38.♔xf6+ ♕g7 39.♔d8+ ♕g8 40.♔xg8+ ♖xg8 41.♗xf3 and White should win. These inhumanly complicated variations show the amount of work that faced the players over the board. One can only imagine the feverish state they must have been in.

31...♗xf3 32.♕c4 f6 33.♔b3



Here Predojevic suddenly offered a draw and a third party became involved in this dramatic encounter – the author of this book. As captain of the SOCAR team, I was following the game with enormous interest, since it was likely to decide the result of the match. Shakhriyar turned to me to ask what he should do (the rules allow players to consult their captains after 30 moves). What would you have done in my position? My player had a couple of minutes on his clock and I began frantically

studying the position. We needed to win this game to win the match, but at first, the Bosnian's offer seemed to me to be a present, since Black is after all a piece down in the endgame!

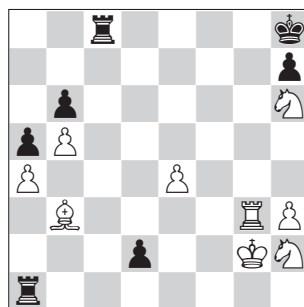
But then I saw a move which not only saves the game, but changes the assessment of the position at the very roots. In addition, I quickly convinced myself that this move was absolutely the only move and that Mamedyarov would probably see it. So, when Shakhriyar again turned to me for an answer, I indicated that he should play on. And immediately I regretted it!

33...♗e4??

Shak, influenced by the course of the game, assessed his position as bad and would have accepted the draw, had it been his decision. But as a disciplined team player, he left the decision to his captain, and suffered as a result!

33...h5! 34.♗f6 ♗d4! gives Black a clear advantage – a variation which seemed totally natural to me, but which escaped Shakhriyar's notice entirely.

34.fxe4 ♗g3+ 35.♖xg3 ♕e1+ 36.♖g2 ♖xa1 37.♗xh6



White's huge material advantage leaves no doubt as to the outcome of the game. The result of my decision, which seemed to me an entirely reasonable risk, was a serious mistake and cost us a defeat in the game and the match.

37...♖f8 38.♗f7+ ♜xf7 39.♙xf7
 ♜g1+ 40.♙xg1 d1♙+ 41.♗f1
 ♙d4+ 42.♗e3 h5 43.♙d5 ♙xa4
 44.♗f5 ♙a1+ 45.♙f2 ♙b2+ 46.♙f3

And Black resigned.

A wonderful battle, although slightly spoiled by the outside factors which entered near the end.

Of course, to agree a draw in the most critical position would not have been the most logical outcome, and indeed, had the draw been agreed, then the game would probably not have made it into this book. But even with these potential drawbacks, I wish I could turn the clock back and leave the decision to Shakhriyar.

Conclusion

It is my deeply-held belief that extreme gambling is not a recipe for success, either in life or in chess. This is because such gamblers are driven by the process itself, whereas for a true professional, the result is the key thing. However, this does not mean that the ideal player is a completely cold killer, lacking all emotion and feeling. This is especially not the case in chess, where preparation and home analysis plays such a large role. In the absence of real interest and emotion, such work turns into a routine slog, which becomes ineffective. But it is certainly desirable during a game to retain a clear and calm head.

The attentive reader may argue that the author is contradicting himself – after all, the majority of examples presented in this chapter demonstrate the opposite, and in the only example where the gambling ended badly, it was partly due to the author's own interference!

However, firstly, even the finest rule has its beautiful exceptions, which remain in the mind more readily than the rule itself. In addition, the rules and principles of chess have been covered in thousands of books, whereas the exceptions only occupy one chapter of this book. And secondly, healthy sporting gambles sometimes (but far from always) lead one to the only correct decision in an otherwise hopeless situation. So, follow the rules, but do not ignore the exceptions. In any event, this should be your personal decision, and not a recommendation from outside.