

Your Jungle Guide to Unbalancing Your Opponents

**Tips & Tricks from
Young Chess Guns**

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Tips & Tricks from Young Chess Guns

**Dorsa and Borna
Derakhshani**

Thinkers Publishing 2021





We dedicate this book to our loving and most caring parents, Afsoon and Alireza who deserve all the credit for our successes.

With special thanks to the Saint Louis Chess Club.



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Key to Symbols

!	a good move
?	a weak move
!!	an excellent move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
□	only move
N	novelty
⊙	lead in development
⊙	zugzwang
=	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
Δ	with the idea of
⊃	better is
⊆	worse is
+	check
#	mate

Biography

Dorsa and Borna were born in Tehran, Iran. Their parents, Alireza and Afsoon, had one goal in mind for them – to be independent, strong, and creative. To achieve this goal, they home-schooled Dorsa and Borna to give them a headstart in the academic world, as well as to broaden their horizons and ability to dream by including them in different activities such as swimming, basketball, painting, music, skating and eventually, chess.

Dorsa: I started learning chess moves at the age of two from my dad. I became more interested in chess and the first tournament I played was when I was seven. I won my first National Championship for girls under-8 in that tournament and continued to improve my chess skills and national status within the chess society until I was fourteen, gaining more international trophies such as the Asian Youth Championship on three occasions. During this time, I started to learn more about norms and titles in chess and started playing more international opens and I gained my WIM and WGM, and IM titles by the age of eighteen.

I found a passion for teaching and so decided to gain my certification as a FIDE Trainer in 2016, and I am still the youngest FT in the world. Throughout the years, I've played for different superleagues and looked into finding a suitable chess federation, until I chose the USA as a home and federation to represent. Besides achieving bronze in the USA Women's Championship in 2020, I am studying biology at Saint Louis University. I'm working towards becoming a doctor while playing for the SLU chess team and currently teaching at Saint Louis Chess Club.

Among numerous youth and collegiate chess achievements, I'm most proud of this path that has led me to be able to speak on societal issues and advocate for people, and to raise awareness and spread knowledge with the help of science, with hopes of bridging the gap between genders.

Borna: Accompanying Dorsa to chess lessons, I was introduced to chess at such a young age that I was holding milk bottles! I competed in the World Youth Championship back in 2007 and was awarded as the youngest participant there. I won multiple National Championships in Iran, and the silver medal in the Asian Youth Championship twice. I decided to travel more and to play more tournaments with my sister, which led to wins at several youth open international tournaments such as Biel, Abu Dhabi, and Gibraltar.

In February of 2017, Dorsa and I found ourselves in a public conflict with the Iranian chess federation, which only strengthened our earlier decision to want to represent a different chess federation than Iran. I chose to represent the U.K. and since then, I have won the British Youth Chess Championship under-16 in 2018, and under-18 in 2019. I also won silver in the Under-21 British Chess Championship and represented the UK national team in 2019 at the European Team Youth Chess Championship where I finished second on Board 2. I am also a member of the 4NCL UK superleague, playing for the Wood Green team.

Having finished high school at CATS College Canterbury, and being a FIDE Master, I am looking forward to balancing my academic life as a first-generation immigrant, with my professional chess career and becoming a Grandmaster.

Foreword

One of the best experiences about being a chess player is that we get to travel the world to play this amazing game and we make memories with people whom we get to reconnect with, due to our mutual love for chess. I met Dorsa and Borna during one of these tournaments. Chess has brought plenty of friends into my life and Dorsa is one of them. I have known her since 2013 and met her again in 2015 in Qatar. But I got to know more about her since 2017 when we met at Saint Louis University. We have spent countless hours together traveling from one tournament to another, as well as during chess team training. We have bonded very well in the last couple of years, and I have seen her grow here at SLU. Our friendship is forever.

I became a chess Grandmaster in 2017 at the age of nineteen. I also have the unique achievement of winning the European Youth Championship five times in each and every category. I represented Turkey in the Chess Olympiad in 2012 and during the online Chess Olympiads in 2020. I have just finished my undergraduate degree in Computer Engineering and Computer Science and I will be continuing with a Masters in Artificial Intelligence at SLU. Apart from chess and college life, there is one more thing that connects Dorsa and me and that is food! We are both big fans of Persian cuisine. My favorite meal by far is chelo kebab. There are a lot of similarities between Turkish and Persian cuisine. Dorsa and I have been to the Persian restaurant in Saint Louis a couple of times together.

One thing I truly like about this book is how the two young siblings have gathered such crucial but yet often overlooked aspects of the game, in such a fun and easy-going format. As a GM, there are surely many points throughout this book that I can relate to, and perhaps even do better with these in the future thanks to this book! Having said that, if you want to improve your chess level, this is your go-to book as the siblings have covered some fascinating content!

Sincerely yours,
GM Cemil Can Ali Marandi

Preface

We are proud to be the first chess siblings to publish a book, full of magnificent examples and reasons why we love the game.

The wonderful journey of selecting, analyzing and commentating on games has been very beneficial to both of us. In this book, we look deeply into some factors that are not spoken about as much as they should, for example, the importance of preparing for the opening, to always be searching for sacrifices when your pieces are active, to never stop grinding until the game is over and of course, the part we both love the most, psychology in chess.

We have been very 'picky' when it came down to selecting the games. The best of the best examples were chosen so as to keep the flow of the book and to make it easy to follow, as well as being more entertaining and resourceful for our readers.

The book also contains several shocking examples, such as a 1700-rated kid beating a powerful GM, or Alireza Firouzja letting slip of the most basic draw against Magnus Carlsen. Therefore, whether you are a beginner, an average club player or even a chess master, this book should help you take steps forwards in your chess development. After all, we all sometimes face players who are significantly higher/lower-rated!

As many may know, neither of us have had an easy journey in our chess career over the past few years. However, unpleasant conflicts have never been a limiting factor to us when it came to our love and passion for chess. This book was one way to keep improving day after day, demonstrating the more beautiful side of the game.

We recommend that all our readers should grab a real chessboard and enjoy the brilliant content. This will not only help you improve your chess skills, but also absorb the 'Tips & Tricks'.

Yours,
Dorsa and Borna Derakhshani

Useful information for our readers.

The book contains a combination of 52 games/positions. There is also a selection of amusing opening and endgame traps.

The games have been selected and analyzed by the authors IM Dorsa and FM Borna Derakhshani, who are the first-ever siblings in the professional chess world to publish a book together.

Most of the included games consist of a huge rating gap between the two players, which adds a unique touch to the book.

The games are sorted in the following order: Opening, Middlegame, Endgame (just like a game of chess) with the last chapter being dedicated to psychology in chess.






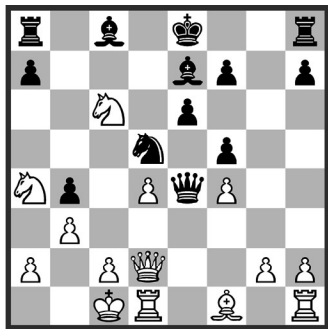
Grab It While You Can!

"I'd rather have a pawn than a finger."

– Reuben Fine

Game 29

 Derakhshani, Dorsa (2270)
 Abrahamyan, Tatev (2358)
 Lichess.org 2020



Here we are in the last round of the USA Women's Championship, facing a good old friend, Tatev, who decided to change her French opening move order due to the tournament's situation. Focusing on the current position, Black is a pawn down but can simply gain it back by ... Qxf4 , which will leave the game completely equal. However, Tatev decides to keep the queens on the board and delays capturing the f4-pawn for a move to take it with her bishop.

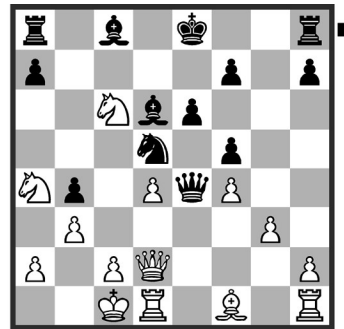
16... Bd6 ?

At first sight, most players tend to think that the f4-pawn has fallen already and that the only good move might be to block Black's d6-bishop by Ne5 , giving White a slight advantage. However,

there's more that White can claim for here. Black should have really grabbed the pawn while she could, as now, there's a brilliant way to keep the extra pawn for White. Can you find a way to save the f4-pawn?

16... Qxf4 Black had to grab the pawn to equalize the material and settle for a more-or-less drawish position. 17. Qxf4 Nxf4=

17. g3!!



Position after: 17. g3!!

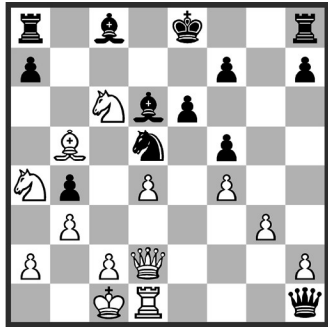
A magnificent way to keep my f4-pawn, but can Black not just win my h1-rook?

17... Qxh1 18. Bb5! ?

(see diagram next page)

Black has trouble finding a good place for her queen.

18. Ne5! was even more accurate. 18... Qe4 19. Re1 Qxe1+ 20. Qxe1+



Position after: 18. ♖b5!?

18... ♖e4

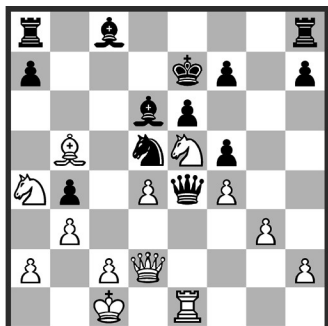
A) 18... ♖xd1+!? could perhaps have saved the game but White still has the advantage. 19. ♖xd1 ♙d7 20. ♘c5±

B) 18... ♖f3?? 19. ♘e5+- A discovered check, winning the queen.

19. ♘e5+!

19. ♙e1? ♙xf4! 20. gxf4 ♖xf4+- Black is no longer losing in any way!

19... ♙e7 20. ♙e1!



Position after: 20. ♙e1!

The black queen is trapped!

20... ♘c3 21. ♙c6!

I am making sure that I improve my advantage to the maximum, and then capture Black's queen.

21... ♖xe1+ 22. ♖xe1

As the game went on, it required little skill to lead this winning position to victory. A beautiful way of ending my USA Women's Championship campaign, being just a little short of the gold medal, but still the most memorable and joyful tournament I've had in recent years. Also, another lesson for all of us – to pick up material before it's too late!

1-0

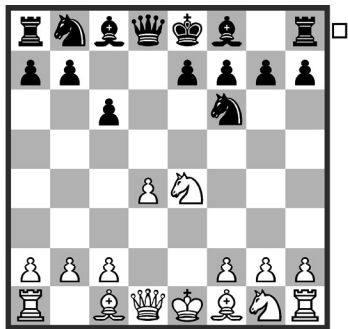
Game 30

♙ Duda, Jan Krzysztof (2757)
 ♚ Carlsen, Magnus (2863)
 ♁ Stavanger 2020

Some players out there tend to be easier to beat, while others, such as the super-grandmasters, are much tougher nuts to crack. However, the highest-rated and arguably the best chess player of all time had almost forgotten the bitter taste of losing for the past 125 classical games!

In this game, Magnus went all-in and tried to trouble Duda by sacrificing pieces one after another. Nevertheless, Duda bravely picked up all the gifted pieces and ended up beating Magnus, as well as putting an end to his magnificent "125 unbeaten games streak".

1. e4 c6 2. d4 d5 3. ♘c3 dxe4 4. ♘xe4 ♗f6



Position after: 4... ♗f6

A perfectly standard move. The other main line would of course be 4... ♖f5.

5. ♗xf6+ exf6 6. c3

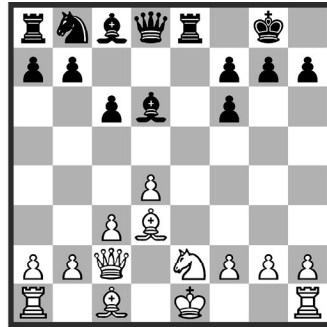
White adds extra strength to the d4-pawn.

6... ♖d6 7. ♖d3 0-0 8. ♔c2

8. ♗e2 This would have also been possible, as Duda also decided to block the check by ♗e2 in the next move. 8... ♖e8 9. ♔c2 transposes.

8... ♖e8+ 9. ♗e2

9. ♖e3 The engine's second choice, so of course not good enough!



Position after: 9. ♗e2

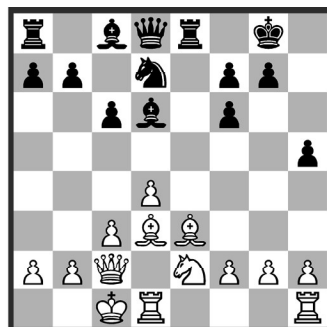
9... h5

9... f5!? 10. ♖xf5 ♖xf5 11. ♔xf5 ♗d7

10. ♖e3

10. 0-0 h4 11. h3 ♗d7 12. ♖d2 ♗f8
Black has good chances to create a strong attack on White's king with ...♗g6 (to prevent White's ♖f4), ...♖c7, followed by ...♔d6.

10... ♗d7 11. 0-0-0



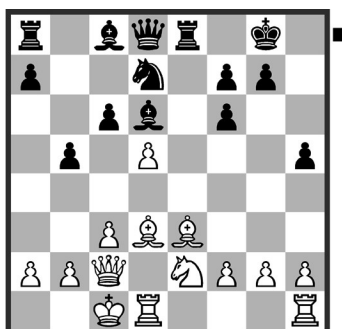
Position after: 11. 0-0-0

There are several interesting options for Black: ...♘f8 could be a good one to open up the c8-bishop and bring the knight next to Black's king. However, Magnus decides to set up an attack without wasting time.

11... b5

Things are starting to look very interesting.

12. d5!?



Position after: 12. d5!?

Duda pushes to put pressure on Magnus's weak pawn base.

12... c5

Magnus decides to sacrifice a pawn but can he prove that he has enough compensation for it?

12... cxd5? 13. ♙xb5 ♙b7 14. ♚f5±

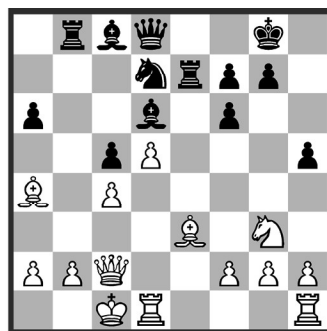
13. ♙xb5 ♜b8 14. c4 a6

Black opens up the b-file.

15. ♙a4 ♜e7N

Rather surprisingly, we have just entered a completely new position, as the only existing game in the database (Ivic – Hansen, Porto Carras 2018) continued with 15... ♜e5 instead.

16. ♘g3



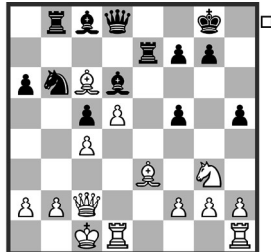
Position after: 16. ♘g3

A nice way by Duda to deal with Magnus's novelty. White is simply threatening both to take on h5 and also to gain a massive advantage by the incoming fork with ♘f5. How will Magnus react to this?

16... ♘e5?!

Obviously, Carlsen will go for a second pawn sacrifice in just a few moves' time. Nevertheless, now ♘xh5 is a mistake as 17... ♙g4 gets the job done for Black.

16... ♘b6!?. This would have been a more precise decision, as suggested by the engine. 17. ♙c6 [17. ♙b3?! a5] 17... f5!



Position after: 17... f5!

18. ♔g5 [18. ♘xf5?? ♔xf5 19. ♚xf5 ♘xc4 Black is winning!] 18... f6 19. ♔d2 h4 20. ♘f1 White has a slight advantage, but Magnus would definitely have preferred this over 16... ♘e5.

17. ♘e4?!

A perfect square for White's knight, as White can capture the d6-bishop or push his d-pawn further, in case Black moves the bishop.

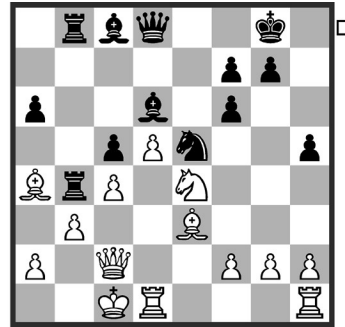
Even better would've been 17. ♔d2!? h4 18. ♘e4 ♖eb7 19. b3!±.

17... ♖eb7

This was Magnus's plan all along, moving both of his rooks over to the open b-file.

18. b3 ♖b4

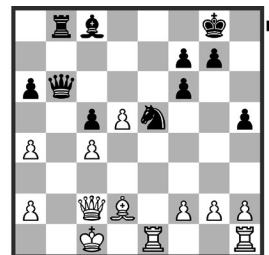
It's becoming scarier for Duda, as some tactical opportunities are coming out of the shadows, such as ... ♖xa4, followed by ... ♖b4. Nonetheless, White is still a pawn up and has enough to be happy with for now.



Position after: 18... ♖b4

19. ♔d2

A brave decision forcing the nasty variation. It was also possible to play 19. ♘xd6 ♚xd6 20. ♔d2 ♖xa4 21. bxa4 ♚b6 22. ♖de1∞.



Position after: 22. ♖de1∞

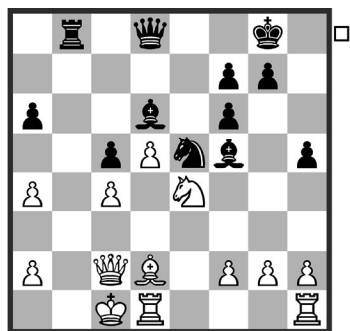
White can't really do much despite being an exchange up and it seems that Black has full compensation. 22... g6!

19... ♖xa4!

Anything else would be terrible for Black.

19... ♖4b7? 20. f4 ♘g6 21. ♖de1± White is a clean pawn up and even has the better pieces.

20. bxa4 g5



Position after: 20... g5

A very amusing position. Black's light-squared bishop has gained control over the b1-h7 diagonal and his rook has the b-file fully covered. Things can go very wrong for the young Polish star if he takes any wrong steps.

21. de1

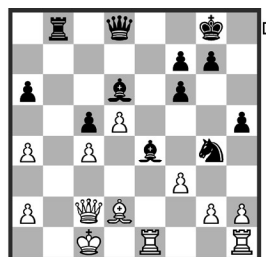
A crucial move which provides extra space to White's vulnerable king.

21... h4 ?

With ...h3 coming next, White will have a handful of weaknesses on the kingside as well.

Although the engine likes White's position quite a lot here, it really isn't all that easy to play this over the board against the greatest player of all time, and it takes huge psychological strength, as well as incredible defensive skills, for Duda to lead this game to victory.

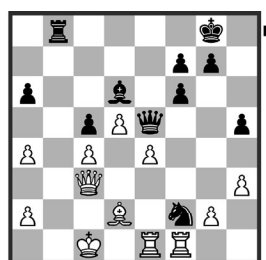
21... g4 ! A move which will regain the material but doesn't offer anything more than a draw to Black, and that's exactly why it didn't appeal to Magnus.
22. f3 xe4



Position after: 22... xe4

A) 23. xe4 f2 Black gains back the exchange. Perhaps it's only right to say that Magnus made a hurried decision by not agreeing to play simply to equalize the game. By not being happy with a draw, it cost him the full point in the long run.

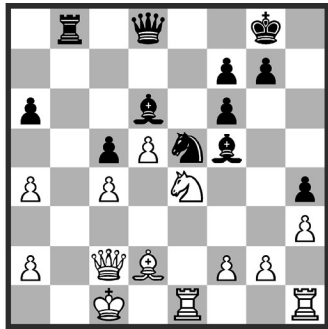
B) 23. fxe4 e8 24. h3 f2 25. hf1 e5 26. c3



Position after: 26. c3

26... d3 ! 27. c2 [27. xd3?? a1+ 28. c2 b2+ 29. c3 b1+ 30. c2 b2\#] 27... xe1+ =

22. h3!?



Position after: 22. h3!?

White does not allow further weaknesses to be made by Black's ...h3. However, 22. ♖e3 was an even better way to prevent this.

22... ♞g6

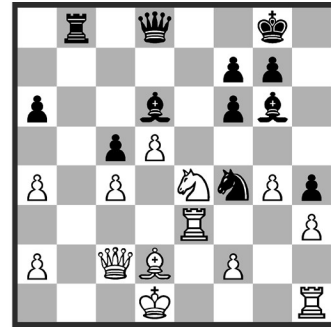
Black leaves space for the d6-bishop to join the party through e5, and also to get the knight even deeper into the position with ♞f4 next.

23. ♜e3!

Still on time! An amazing move which brings the rook into the game to give extra protection along the third rank. Now the h1-rook can also feel useful by moving to e1.

23... ♞f4 24. g4 ♞g6 25. ♔d1

White moves the king to a slightly safer square. White no longer has to constantly worry about all kinds of threats involving his king.



Position after: 25. ♔d1

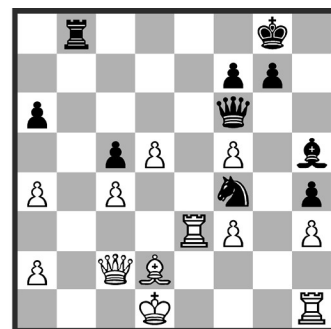
25... f5?

A move too soon! Magnus had to first prepare for ...f5 with 25... ♔d7.

26. ♞xd6 ♜xd6 27. gxf5

The pressure the g6-bishop was causing on the h7-b1 diagonal is eliminated.

27... ♞h5+ 28. f3 ♜f6



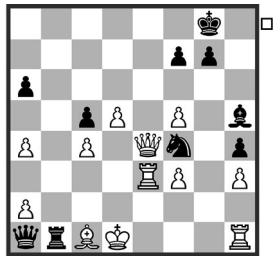
Position after: 28... ♜f6

Comparing the current position to the previous, Magnus has made a mistake by 25...f5?. White has many more options to choose from and is now simply an exchange up! Will Duda be able to

beat Carlsen in a position that looks far from over?

29. ♖c3?!

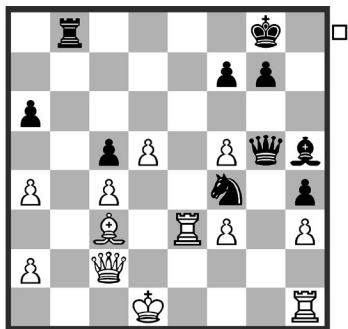
29. ♖e4! ♖a1+ 30. ♘c1 Of course not [30. ♔c2?? ♜b2+ 31. ♔c3 ♜b1+ 32. ♔c2 ♖b2#] 30... ♜b1



Position after: 30... ♜b1

31. ♔d2! [31. ♖c2? ♖d4+ 32. ♖d2 ♖xc4] This has a big edge for Black!
31... ♖xa2+ 32. ♖c2+-.

29... ♖g5



Position after: 29... ♖g5

Black prevents ♜g1 and also indirectly eyes the unattended rook on e3.

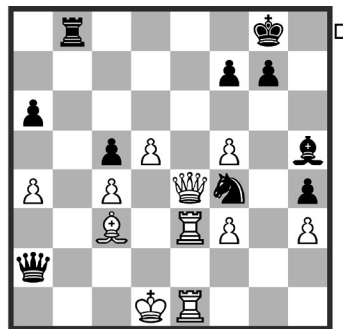
30. ♖e4?!

30. ♜he1! ♘g2 31. ♜e8+ ♔h7 32. ♖d2! ♜b1+ 33. ♔c2 ♖xf5+ 34. ♜1e4!±

30... ♖g2 31. ♜he1 ♖xa2?

It seems that Magnus has finally proven his point all around the game and is capturing White's exposed king by ♜b1 next! How will you defeat Magnus's plan and go on to win the game as White?

31... f6 The proper way to defend but it's awfully hard to play this for Black, as White is still the better side. 32. d6 [32. ♖xf4?? ♜b1#] 32... ♖xa2 33. d7 etc.



Position after: 31... ♖xa2?

32. ♖c2!

The only winning move! Less clear is 32. ♔c1? f6! 33. ♖c2 ♖xc4 34. d6 ♘d5

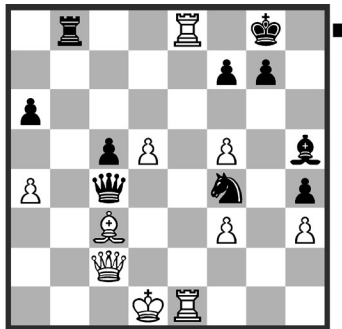
32... ♖xc4

Magnus tries to keep his hopes high by keeping the queens but this comes with the sacrifice of even more material.

A) 32... ♖b1+ This doesn't work anymore. 33. ♔d2 ♜xc2+ 34. ♔xc2 ♜xe1 35. ♙xe1

B) 32... ♜xc2+ 33. ♔xc2 Of course, this will lose too as Black is down a lot of material for absolutely no compensation.

33. ♜e8+!



Position after: 33. ♜e8+!

33... ♔h7

33... ♜xe8 34. ♜xe8+ ♔h7 35. ♜h8+! ♔xh8 36. ♙xg7+ ♔xg7 37. ♜xc4+–

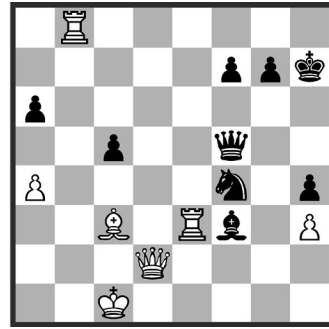
34. ♜xb8□

Duda is clearly not scared of Magnus and captures the second free rook too!

34... ♜xd5+

34... ♙xf3+ 35. ♔c1 ♘d3+ 36. ♔b1 ♘xe1 37. ♜h8+! ♔xh8 38. ♙xg7+ ♔xg7 39. ♜xc4+–

35. ♜d2 ♙xf3+ 36. ♔c1 ♜xf5 37. ♜e3

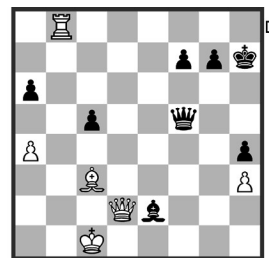


Position after: 37. ♜e3

Time is ticking for Magnus and because he is two rooks down, he has to find something quickly or else he can just shake hands!

37... ♞e2+ 38. ♔b2

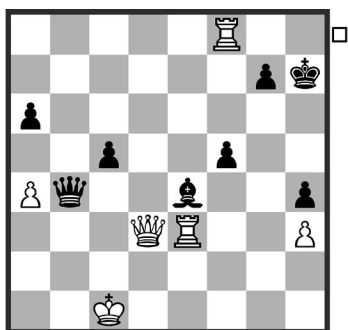
38. ♜xe2 ♙xe2



Position after: 38... ♙xe2

39. ♜d8! [39. ♜xe2?? ♜f4+ 40. ♔c2 ♜xb8 This is what Magnus was hoping for but of course, it's nothing more than a daydream. Even here, White is still much better!] 39... ♜f4+ 40. ♔b2+– White has a decisive advantage.

38... ♞xc3 39. ♜xc3 ♜f4 40. ♜d3+ f5 41. ♜f8 ♜b4+ 42. ♔c1 ♙e4



Position after: 42... ♕e4

Magnus has managed to create a small blockade as the bishop and pawn have kept White's heavy pieces away from Black's king for now. The question is: for how long will Black's minor pieces be able to hold?

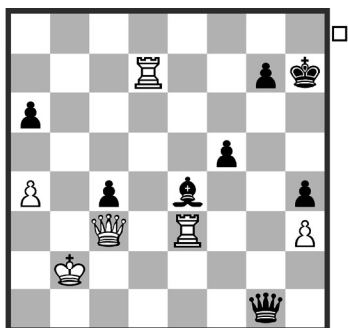
43. ♖b3 ♗d4 44. ♗c3 ♗d6

Clearly Magnus can't afford to have the queens off the board.

45. ♖f7

Checkmate is coming next!

45... ♗g6 46. ♖d7 ♗g1+ 47. ♔b2 c4



Position after: 47... c4

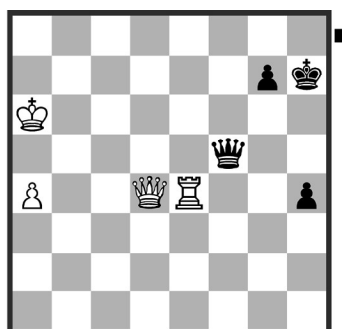
48. ♖xe4

Duda makes it so much easier for himself by getting rid of that bishop. He is so much up on material that he doesn't even bother thinking twice about losing an exchange, and that's not something you often get against Magnus Carlsen!

48... fxe4 49. ♖d4 ♗f2+

Carlsen would've resigned a long time ago if it wasn't for his magnificent unbeaten 125-games record on the line.

50. ♗d2 c3+ 51. ♔xc3 ♗g3+ 52. ♔b2 ♗xh3 53. ♖xe4 ♗g3 54. ♗d4 ♗g2+ 55. ♔c3 ♗f3+ 56. ♔b4 ♗f8+ 57. ♔a5 ♗f5+ 58. ♔xa6



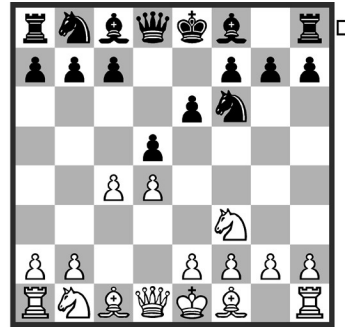
Position after: 58. ♔xa6

Magnus is well aware that the checks will come to an end soon, just like his record!

58... g5 59. a5 h3 60. ♖e7+ ♔g6 61. ♗g7+ ♔h5 62. ♗h7+ ♔g4 63. ♖e4+

An incredible moment in the history of chess where Magnus Carlsen is reminded of the downside of chess after so long!

Duda deserves a lot of credit for keeping calm throughout the whole game and finding the best defensive moves, regardless of the fact that he was playing against Magnus Carlsen. He was very much worthy of being the one to end Magnus's run of 125 unbeaten games!



Position after: 3... d5

1-0

Game 31

♁ Xiong, Jeffery (2691)
 ♚ Tabatabaei, M. Amin (2601)
 🌐 Biel 2019

Welcome to a beautiful game where two extremely talented youngsters are up for a battle. Xiong was just a few rating points short of reaching the incredible line of 2700 and Tabatabaei had just become a super-GM by crossing over 2600. Therefore, Xiong with the white pieces was the favorite to win the match. However, the Iranian warrior took his chances and displayed a brilliant tactical idea to crush Xiong in only 25 moves! Let's dive into this masterpiece by Amin.

1. d4 ♘f6 2. c4 e6 3. ♘f3 d5

The Catalan.

4. g3

4. ♘c3 c6 5. e3 ♘bd7 6. ♚c2 ♙d6 7. ♙d3 dxc4 8. ♙xc4 b5 This is also well-known theory.

4... ♙e7

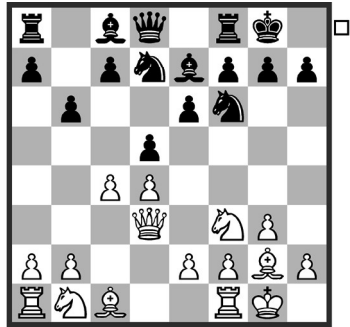
Amin decides to decline White's offer to capture a pawn and continues to develop his pieces.

4... dxc4 5. ♙g2 a6 6. 0-0 ♘c6 7. e3 This is the main line of the Catalan, where Black grabs and keeps a pawn but loses development time in return.

5. ♙g2 0-0 6. 0-0 ♘bd7

6... dxc4 is still possible but allows White to grab it back in the long run and then, Black has lost a very valuable central pawn on d5.

7. ♚d3 b6



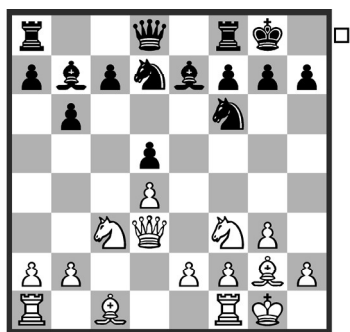
Position after: 7... b6

Black will develop his bishop through the a8-h1 diagonal to challenge the white bishop on g2 doing the same. The fight is on!

8. cxd5

Now that Xiong knows how the black bishop will be developed after 7...b6, he does not hesitate to trade off pawns, allowing the c8-bishop to be opened up. Black may also have had annoying ideas in his head such as ...♗a6, to cause White problems with the pin.

8... exd5 9. ♖c3 ♗b7



Position after: 9... ♗b7

The bishop reaches the ideal diagonal. From now onwards, the central squares of e5 and e4 are quite important and both sides will try to place their knights on those squares.

10. ♞e5

Jeffery is the first to do so!

10... ♜e8

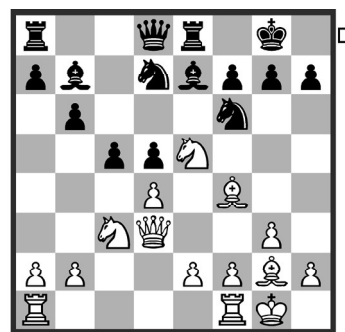
Amin ignores the knight movement and places his rook on the semi-open e-file for future possibilities.

10... ♞xe5 11. dxe5 ♞d7 12. ♞xd5 ♞xe5 13. ♖c3 ♗xd5 14. ♜d1∞ White seems to be having the easier game play after this.

11. ♗f4

White strengthens the powerful knight on e5.

11... c5N



Position after: 11... c5N

It is from now on that we have a completely new game. Black strikes to break down White's center. White's position may seem easy to play but this is only the calm before the storm.

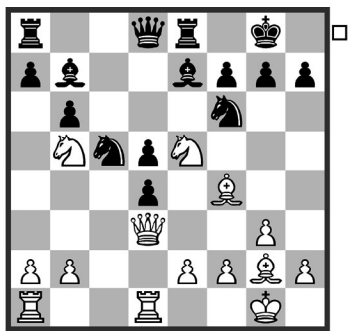
12. ♖fd1

Jeffery knows the d-file will be opened sooner or later, so he places the f-rook on d1. The other rook will join the game via c1 in the future, to control both the open files.

12... cxd4 13. ♘b5

13. ♖xd4? ♙c5→ White loses a piece!

13... ♘c5



Position after: 13... ♘c5

In case Black gives up the d4-pawn easily, he will be left with an isolated pawn under extreme pressure. However, the black pieces are allowed some dynamic activity for now. White has to be very cautious with his next couple of moves.

14. ♖f3

Xiong keeps hesitating to grab the pawn back. Will he ever get a chance to do so on time?

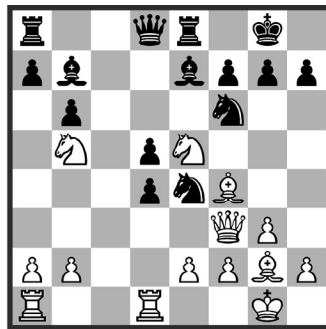
14. ♖xd4 ♘e6 15. ♖d2



Position after: 15. ♖d2

15... a6 [15... ♘xf4 16. gxf4!? a6 17. ♘d4 White is doing just fine!] 16. ♘d4 ♘xd4 17. ♖xd4 ♙c5 18. ♖c3 d4∞

14... ♘ce4!?



Position after: 14... ♘ce4!?

The black knight has gained incredible play over the past few moves!

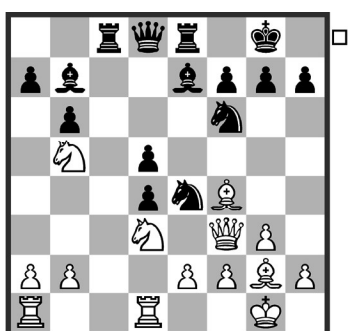
15. ♘d3

A prophylactic move to get the knight out of harm's way and to cover the c5-

square from the black bishop. Will he finally capture the pawn next?

15. ♖xd4 ♕c5 seems very dangerous for White.

15... ♖c8



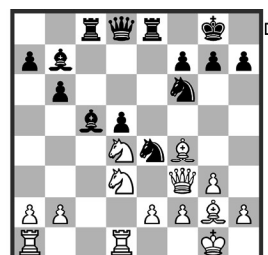
Position after: 15... ♖c8

All Black's pieces are out in the game, besides being an ugly pawn up for now! This allows Amin to find deadly threats in a few moves with his creative mind.

16. ♕h3?!

A weird move by Xiong! It's not clear why he kept away from grabbing the d4-pawn back, now that his position is safe and sound. 16. ♕h3 does nothing but to push the black rook even further into the game, and withdraws the crucial a8-diagonal!

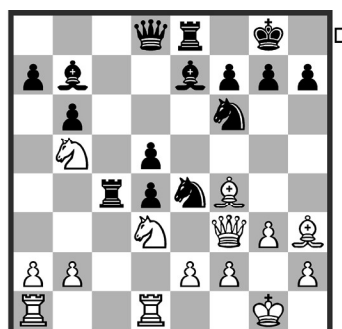
16. ♖xd4 This is still playable but yet it was disregarded by Xiong. Black's 16... ♕c5 was perhaps why Jeffery was doubtful about taking back the pawn. However, White is doing just fine.



Position after: 16... ♕c5

17. ♕e3 is the correct way to save the knight. [17. ♖xc5?! bxc5 18. ♖c2 d4⚡] 17... ♖d7 18. ♖f5 White offers to trade off the queens to exploit Black's isolated pawn in the endgame – White is doing well.

16... ♖c4!



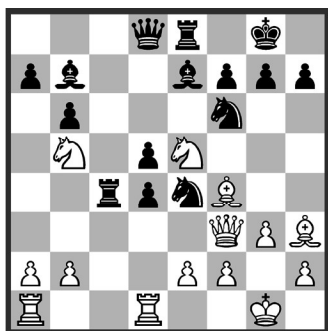
Position after: 16... ♖c4!

Tabatabaei takes his chance to defend the d4-pawn whilst moving his rook out of harm's way. White can no longer get the pawn back easily!

17. ♖e5?

Xiong keeps chasing the rook up the board! How will you retreat your rook while saving the important d4-pawn?

17. b3 The only move to justify White's previous move to harass the rook further. 17... ♖c3!? Now it's again time to get rid of that d4-pawn! 18. ♗xc3? [18. ♗xd4 ♕a3 Black is doing really well here but White should enter this than as in the game.] 18... dxc3 19. ♖ac1 d4+ That ugly d4-pawn is now a monster in White's territory!



Position after: 17. ♗e5?

17... ♕c5!

What an incredible move! Amin uses his powerful chess sense to exploit the misplacement of White's pieces by sacrificing an exchange. Now the d4-pawn is protected and further threats on the f2-pawn will be followed up by having the a7-g2 diagonal opened.

18. e3?

Xiong is in a bad mood today and keeps allowing Black to discover magnificent threats!

A) 18. ♗xc4 dxc4 19. ♕f5 a6 20. ♗a3 d3+→

B) 18. b3 White's best try but it's still losing after 18... ♖b4 19. ♗xa7 d3+→.



Position after: 18. e3?

18... ♖xe5!

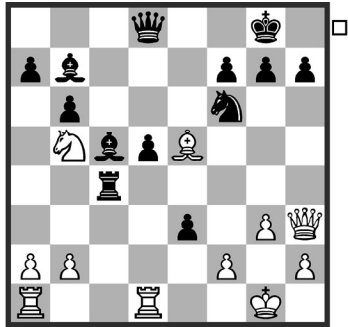
Amin is throwing punches right and left! He really is enjoying this game.

18... dxe3 19. ♗xc4 ♗xf2+→ Even this is completely winning for Black. Once again, that useless, harmful-looking pawn on d4 has turned into a nightmare for White!

19. ♕xe5 ♗g5 20. ♖f5 ♗xh3+

Black hunts the important light-squared bishop. Next, his bishops will create lethal threats on the exposed white king through the open diagonals.

21. ♖xh3 dxe3



Position after: 21... dxe3

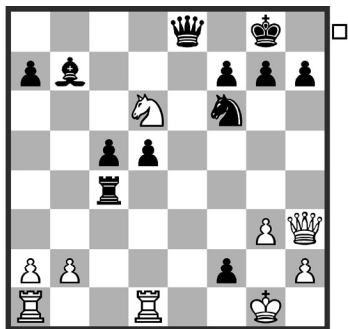
Yet again, it's clear how significant that pawn on d4 is. Xiong is being punished for his lack of judgement of the position, hesitating to grab that d4-pawn earlier when he still could.

22. ♖d4 ♕e8

Just about anything is winning for Black! The b5-knight is under attack now.

22... ♗xf2+ 23. ♖xf2 ♖xf2+ 24. ♔xf2 ♘g4+ 25. ♔g1 ♕e7+

23. ♖xc5 bxc5 24. ♞d6 exf2+



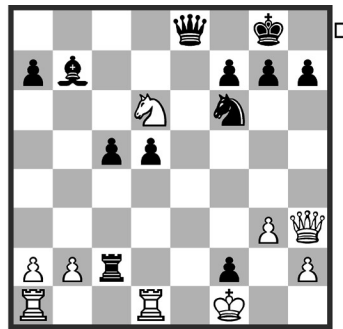
Position after: 24... exf2+

25. ♔f1

This allows a truly astonishing mate in 6! Can you find it while your queen is under attack?

25. ♔h1 ♖c2! 26. ♞xe8 d4+ 27. ♕g2 f1=♕+! Yup! That's still the same old d4-pawn. :) 28. ♖xf1 ♘g2+ 29. ♔g1 ♘xf1 30. ♞xf6+ gxf6 31. ♖xf1 ♖xb2+

25... ♖c2!!



Position after: 25... ♖c2!!

The only winning move by sacrificing the queen! Jeffery resigned at this point, as the forced checkmate line was inevitable. If White tries to capture the queen, ...♖a6+ followed by ...f1=♕ checkmate is coming with a double check! A crushing win to remember for Amin, who went on to keep up his remarkable performance throughout the competition by becoming the runner-up at the end.

0-1

Game 32

♁ Stremavicius, Titas (2468)
 ♚ Derakhshani, Borna (2178)
 🌐 Basel 2016

1... d5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3. e3 g6

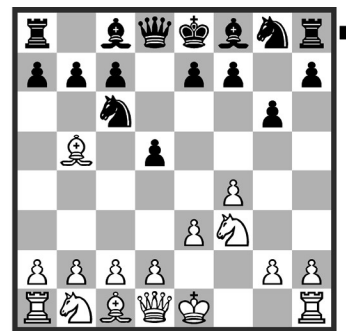
The aim is to develop my bishop along the long diagonal.

4. ♖b5

We have here an amusing game where I managed to outplay an opponent with a much higher rating. However, the game slipped out of my hands towards the end, as I was under severe time pressure. This game has a funny (bitter for me!) story behind it as well. It was a morning round and Dorsa and I were accommodated far away from the tournament hall. We had a cab booked for a reasonable time in the morning to get to the game on time but that cab never arrived! Being a stubborn 13-year-old kid (also chubby back then), I refused to wait for another driver and started to run down the hill to the venue, about 10 kms away!! While the second taxi arrived to take Dorsa to the venue, I was running for my life to make it just in time before losing on forfeit. Luckily for me, one of our friends' father saw me on the way and kindly drove me to my game! I arrived 28 minutes late and shook everything off myself in Fischer style and got it together!

1. f4

It was a pleasant surprise to see that I didn't have to worry about remembering a tough opening after all that. Titas wanted a real chess battle, so let it be!



Position after: 4. ♖b5

4... ♖g4

The reason I played this was to get rid of the light-squared bishop, and then to place my pawns f5-e6 to lock the game up. This means the white bishop pair has limited access to the game afterwards, while my bishop on the h8-a1 diagonal will be powerful.

4... f5?! would be a terrible positional mistake. My c8-bishop would be locked up in its own prison forever.

5. 0-0 ♖g7

Black continues to develop and waits to exchange the light-squared bishop after White wastes a move by h3.

6. h3 ♖xf3 7. ♗xf3 a6