

ROUND 1



Results:				
Leko	0	:	1	Topalov
Morozevich	½	:	½	Kasimdzhanov
Svidler	½	:	½	Adams
Polgar	0	:	1	Anand



Standings:

1-2 Anand	1
1-2 Topalov	1
3-6 Adams	½
3-6 Kasimdzhanov	½
3-6 Morozevich	½
3-6 Svidler	½
7-8 Leko	0
7-8 Polgar	0

At last the first round has started! The interminable talk, predictions and analysis ends, and it is time to move some pieces...

Ask any fan and you will hear the following response: at the start of the first round everyone was genuinely excited, because the chess world missed World Championships very badly. And if that was just the fans, one can only guess how the players felt! Indeed, the first round was distinguished by the extreme nervousness of the participants.

Confusing opening

The opening of **Polgar vs. Anand** was certainly confusing. To be on the safe side, Anand decided to choose a calm and quiet Caro-Kann against the Hungarian. But if such precautions had an evident explanation then Polgar's choice of an obviously unpromising variation could only be explained by nerves, since Anand's opening was not too unpredictable. Already by the 10th move White had to forget about any advantage. In situations like this a calmer chess player would make a few quiet moves, exchange a couple of pieces, and then go prepare for the next game – after all, White would have to try

hard to lose this position. The Hungarian Diva overcame this obstacle fairly easily: unwilling to accept a calm position, she did her best to set the board on fire, which, unfortunately for her, spread all over the white camp. Anand kept playing in rock-solid style not allowing his tricky opponent any counterplay (at times even passing by very promising continuations), but he eventually won the game without having to show even a fraction of his abilities,

An interesting struggle was produced by friends/opponents **Svidler** and **Adams**. The Briton chose “his” variation of the Petroff and Svidler’s response was far from the most principled one. The game soon became very confusing: it was not easy to prove the correctness of the moves, but it was even harder to evaluate the consequences of the resulting complications. The players resolved this problem by agreeing to a draw at the moment of truth.

The game **Morozevich vs. Kasimdzhanov** resembled a very nervous twelve-round boxing match. Luckily, in a chess fight there is no need to nominate a winner on points, for it would be extremely difficult. The advantage switched several times, whereupon each time, as if by a spiral, one of the players raced further ahead. The last turn was in Kasimdzhanov’s hands, who was an inch away from a simple technical endgame, but he missed his chance. He tried his luck in a rook endgame that forced Morozevich to find a few accurate moves before the draw.

Severe Slaughter

The most severe slaughter occurred between two of the pre-tournament favourites: **Leko** and **Topalov**. Topalov went, very bravely, for his pet line in the Najdorf, which was undoubtedly carefully studied by his rivals. After the game there were a great number of voices criticizing the Hungarian grandmaster for extreme carefulness, blaming everything on Leko’s style being unsuitable for such positions. This is rather unfair or just partly true.

The point is that Topalov had one overwhelming advantage – he was the only one who was really calm. First, he played a variation he had studied in detail; second, he had serious psychological advantages after his last encounter with Leko, as was described in the introductory article. In addition to that, in all his successes this year the Bulgarian has started badly, but then improved and surpassed everyone. A willingness to risk losing and a recent history of success are effective weapons in the hands of a strong chess player.

It is easy to be confident about this explanation after the event, but during the game Topalov had to defend in a very unpleasant situation. Leko did his homework very professionally, and completely decoded Topalov’s plan. Already by his 17th move he could start a direct attack, which, as was proved later, should have doomed the black king. However, Leko hesitated and the Bulgarian hovered on the brink of the abyss. The audience was amazed, only a short while ago White’s victory was only a matter of two steps (or two checks), and an instant later Black had a significant edge in the endgame and never looked back.

Summing up, the round did not show a real correlation of power. Objectively, only Adams played really well. He made 24 effective moves which completely neutralized his opponent’s attempts to gain an advantage. And concerning the favourites, Topalov took big risks against one of the main contenders for the title, but Caissa was on his side. This could not have gone unnoticed by his future opponents.

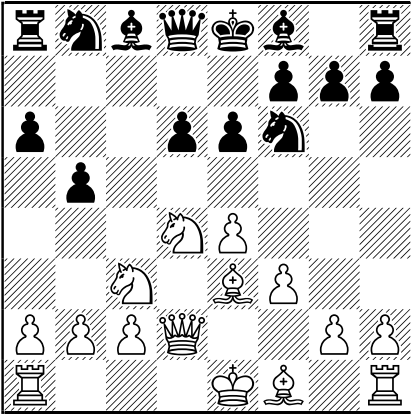
● GAME 1

♔ Peter Leko

♚ Veselin Topalov

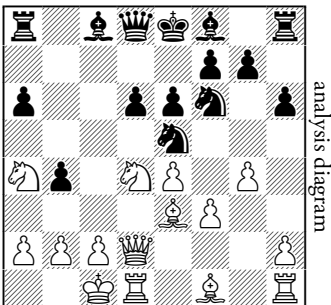
♞ Sicilian, English Attack B80

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♗xd4 ♘f6 5.♖c3
a6 6.f3 e6 7.♙e3 b5 8.♞d2



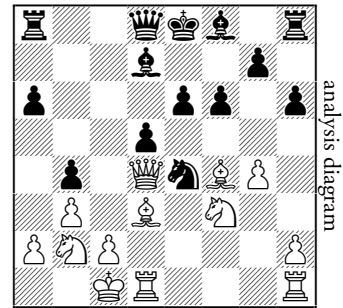
A great example of the changing nature of chess fashion. White's mainstream idea is to carry out the typical so-called English attack: 0–0–0, g4, h4 etc. To accomplish that White can choose between two move orders: 8.g4 or 8.♞d2.

First, let us examine 8.g4. The idea behind this move is to prevent Black from transferring his b8-knight to b6 (because 8...♗bd7 will now be met with 9.g5). The drawback of this move order is White's weakening of the f3-square, which was shown in the so-called Topalov variation: 8...h6 9.♞d2 b4 (this move, played as soon as possible, establishes Topalov's idea) 10.♗a4 ♗bd7 11.0–0–0 ♖e5



The first game in which Topalov employed the ...b4 idea immediately made its way into history at Wijk aan Zee 2005, when the Bulgarian hurricane left Kramnik homeless after a mere 20 moves: 12.♞xb4 ♙d7 13.♗b3 ♞b8 14.♞a3 ♗xf3 15.h3 ♗xe4 16.♙e2 ♖e5 17.♞he1 ♞c7 18.♙d4 ♗c6 19.♙c3 d5 20.♗bc5 ♞a7 and White resigned.

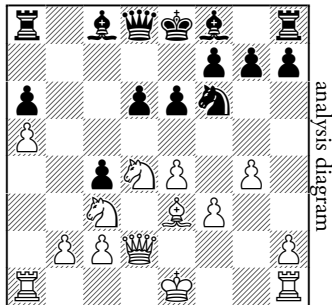
Half a year later, however, Anand came up with an improvement: 12.b3 13.♗b2 d5 (perhaps in view of that game 13...♞a5 is worth considering for Black) 14.♙f4 and now, after 14...♗xf3 15.♗xf3 ♗xe4 16.♞d4 f6 17.♙d3!



Anand introduced an interesting queen sacrifice which seems to have placed new problems in the path of this line's Black devotees. That game continued: 17...♙c5 18.♙xe4 ♙xd4 19.♙g6† ♗f8 20.♞xd4 with an irrational position, in which White's chances seem to be higher, Anand – Topalov, Sofia 2005.

As we mentioned, 8.♞d2 chosen by Leko, allows Black to refrain from playing the weakening 8...h6, and therefore used to be considered as less precise than the immediate 8.g4. This assessment

was re-evaluated after the game Leko – Kasparov, Linares 2005, in which the Hungarian managed to improve White’s play on the 12th move after: 8...♖bd7 9.g4 ♘b6. However, White found 10.a4! ♗c4 11.♙xc4 bxc4 12.a5!.



An important move, that seems to be closing the whole line. Black's position looks grim, as White has managed to seize too much space on the queenside, and take control over b6. Black is virtually left with no counterplay. The game continued: 12...♙b7 13.♗a4 ♙c8 14.♙c3 ♗d7 15.0–0–0 ♙e7 16.h4 ♙xh4, but here, instead of going for the kill in a straightforward way, Leko continued improving his position, and let the moment slip away: 17.♗e2?! (better was 17.♙b4! ♙b8 18.♙xh4! ♙xh4 19.♙xd6 and Black's position is falling apart) After 17...♙f6 18.♙d4 e5 19.♙e3 ♙e7 Black managed to stabilize his position in Leko – Kasparov, Linares 2005. (One might guess that this game was in front of Topalov's eyes while preparing for Leko).

After that game the line with 8...♖bd7 lost most of its attractiveness. Topalov revived the variation with the daring 8...b4 idea, but the current game seems to slam yet another blow against Black's set-up, and this time against its new leading exponent – Topalov.

8...b4

Topalov copied & pasted this idea from positions with the insertion of g2-g4 h7-h6, and until the current game it looked like Black's last try to revive the line.

9.♗a4

Leko is following Anand's footsteps (see previous note), with a small, and yet mighty difference: White has not weakened f3 yet.

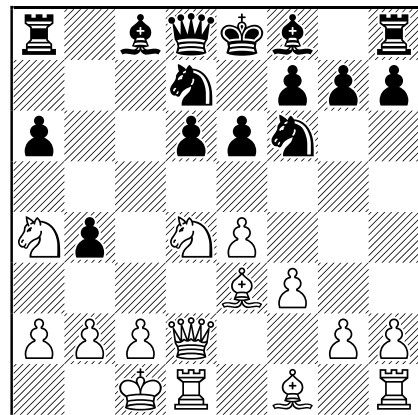
Prior to this game White's attempts to deal with Black's plan were rather modest. A good example is Kramnik – Topalov, from the last round of Sofia 2005: 9.♗c2 e5 10.♗b3 ♗c6 11.c4 ♙e7 12.♗g3 g6 13.♙d3 ♗d7 14.♙d1 0–0 15.♙f2 a5 and Black achieved a good game.

9...♖bd7

Played in analogy to the lines with the insertion of g4 and h6.

An attempt to break free with 9...d5, as was played in the few games that did reach this position, does not look good: 10.e5 ♗fd7 11.f4 With the moves g4 and h6 this position is very bad for Black, since he has severely weakened the g6-square. However, even without it, this French-like structure is good for White: all his moves were useful for this structure, while Black kept moving his pawns on the queenside, creating weaknesses for himself.

10.0–0–0



10...d5?!

Black's was not too successful in developing his pieces until now, which means opening the position should not be in his favour.

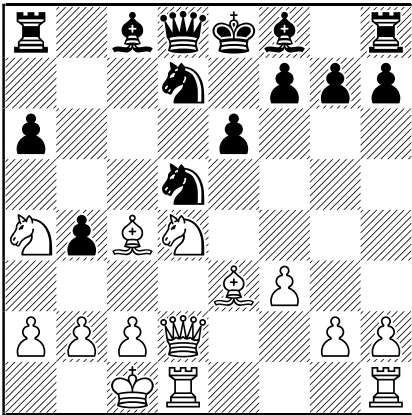
10...♙a5 was the more solid, and probably stronger continuation. Then, after 11.b3 11...♗e5?, threatening ...♙d7, is refuted by 12.♗xe6! fxe6 13.♙b6 ♗xf3 14.gxf3 ♙h5 15.♙g1 with a big advantage for White. Therefore Black would have to play 11...♙b7 12.♗b1 ♙e7 13.c4 bxc3 14.♙xc3 ♙xc3 15.♗xc3 0–0 16.♙e2. White is marginally better due to

his pawn majority on the queenside, but it is much better for Black than the game.

By the way, an attempt to reproduce the idea he played against Kramnik: 10...♘e5 11.♙xb4 ♘d7 12.♘b3 ♖b8 13.♗d4 fails, as the f3-pawn is now protected.

11.exd5 ♘xd5 12.♙c4

Black is facing a clear problem: how to protect the knight?



12...♘7f6?!

The source of Black's misfortunes in the future, as he probably overlooked Leko's strong reply.

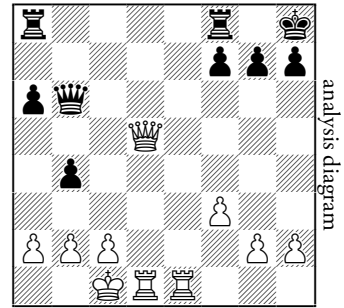
Stronger was 12...♙b7 although after 13.♖he1 it is not easy to advise Black on a good move:

a) 13...♖c8 14.♙g5! (weaker is 14.♙xd5 ♘xd5 15.♙f4 g6 and White still has to prove his advantage) 14...♘7f6 (after 14...♙c7 Black's position collapses after the thematic: 15.♘xe6 fxe6 16.♖xe6 ♔f7 17.♖e4!) 15.♙xf6 gxf6 (15...♙xf6 16.♘xe6 fxe6 17.♙xd5 ♘xd5 18.♙xd5 is completely one-sided) 16.♘xe6 fxe6 17.♖xe6 ♔f7 18.♖b6!, White has extra material, and a winning position.

b) Kasparov, in his analysis for *NIC*, suggests 13...♙c7 as Black's most stubborn defence, providing the following line: 14.♘xe6! ♙xc4 15.♘c7 ♔xc7 16.♙f4 ♔d8 17.♙xc7 ♔xc7 18.c4 bxc3 19.♘c3 with advantage for White.

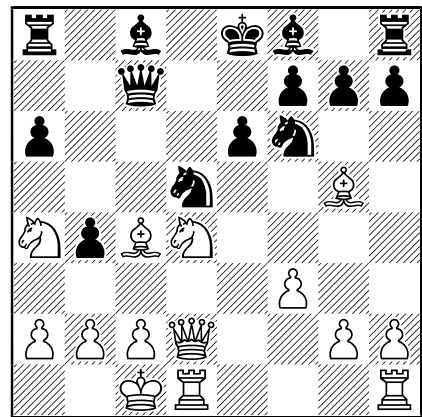
c) 13...♙e7 14.♘f5 0-0 (14...♘xe3 loses to 15.♘g7 ♔f8 16.♘e6 ♔f7 fxe6 17.♙xe3 with a decisive attack) 15.♙xd5 ♘xd5 16.♙b6! ♘xb6 17.♘e7 ♔h8 (after 17...♙xe7 18.♘xb6

White is just an exchange up) 18.♘xb6 ♙xb6 19.♘xd5 exd5 20.♙xd5



Here Black's best practical chances to save the game would be after 20...♖a8, whereas Kasparov's suggestion to regain the pawn with 20...♙h6† is too risky for Black because of 21.♗d2 ♙hx2 22.♖h1 ♙g3 (22...♙b8 23.♖h4) 23.♙xb4 (23.♖h3 ♙g6 24.♖dh1 a5 25.♗d6!) 23...♙xg2?! 24.♙h4 ♙g6 25.♖dg1 ♙h6† 26.♙hx6 gxh6 27.♖hx6 with a totally winning endgame for White.

13.♙g5 ♙c7



14.♙xd5!

A very strong and simple reaction. White is not willing to lose precious time retreating the bishop.

14...♘xd5 15.♖he1

White already has the concrete threat of 16.♘xe6 followed by 17.♙xd5, which has to be attended to, forcing Black to postpone the solution of his main problem – poor development.

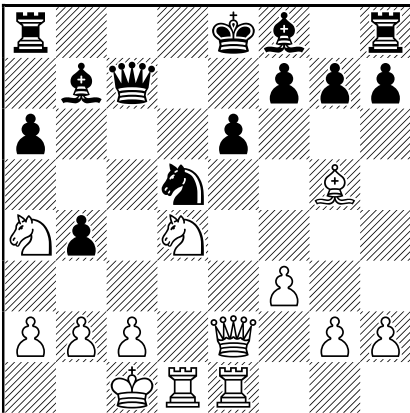
15...♙b7

Not a move one wants to make, especially as White does not even try to hide his intentions about e6, but d5 is also very vulnerable, and Black simply had no other options.

15...♙e7 is refuted prosaically with: 16.♙xe7 when Black cannot play 16...♗xe7? due to 17.♘f5 followed by ♗xd5 on the very next move. So, after 16...♘xe7 17.♗xb4 the pawn on b4, which was the only justification for Black going through all the misery so far, disappears. Without it one would have a hard time finding an explanation why Black should go into this position.

16.♗e2

17.♘xe6 is already a clear and immediate threat. Black's position is critical, but Topalov is defending very resourcefully.



16...♗d6!

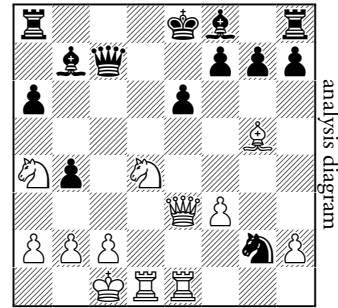
A gutsy move, which was quite undeservedly criticized by Kasparov in his analysis for *NIC*. The queen steps up to protect its king, not minding the white pieces flying around. The main point behind this move is that after it White does not have any concrete wins, in the shape of "sac-sac-resign".

a) 16...♗c8 17.♗e5 White maintains a very strong initiative while Black has no good way to develop.

b) 16...♗c8 17.♘xe6 fxe6 18.♗xe6† ♘e7 19.♙b1 ♗c6 (19...♗xc2† 20.♙a1) 20.♗d6 ♗xa4 21.b3 and White wins.

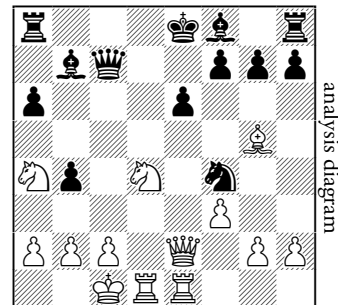


c) Kasparov, in his analysis for *NIC*, suggests 16...♘f4 as Black's only possible continuation and provides the following line: 17.♗e3 ♘xg2



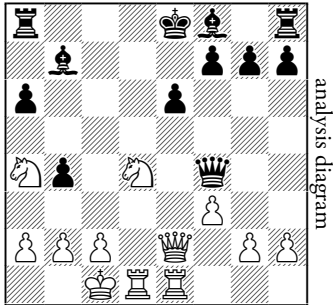
18.♘xe6 ♗xc2† 19.♙xc2 ♘xe3† 20.♗xe3 fxe6 21.♙b6 ♗b8 22.♙f4 ♙c5 (after 22...♙e4† 23.♗e4 ♗xb6 24.♗c4 ♙f7 25.♗c8 Black suffers) 23.♗ed3 ♙xb6 24.♙xb8 ♙d5 (24...0-0 25.♙d6 ♗xf3 26.♗xf3 ♙xf3 27.♗f1 ♙e4† 28.♙b3 g5 29.♙xb4 g4) 25.♙d6 a5 26.a3 White is better, but Black might escape thanks to his bishop pair.

However, if we go back to the position after 16...♘f4



White has a much easier way to refute his opponent's defensive idea:

17. ♖xf4! ♜xf4†



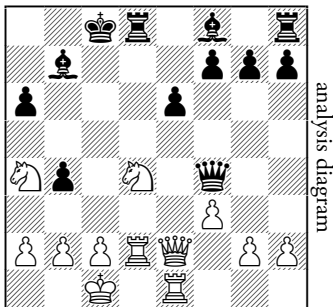
18. ♖d2!

Although it is not easy to make such a move over the board. The point behind this move is that once White takes on e6, the rook will be ready to join the attack along the e-file. The immediate threat is, of course, 19. ♖xe6.

The more natural 18. ♖b1 would also do the job, although less convincingly: 18... ♗e7 19. ♖xe6 fxe6 20. ♜xe6 ♞c7 21. ♖c5 (Now White does not have time to double his rooks with 21. ♖d2 ♖f8 22. ♖b6 ♖d8, when Black would still be in the game.) 21... ♖d8 22. ♖xd8† ♗xd8 23. ♖xb7† ♜xb7 24. ♖d1† ♗e8 25. ♖d6 ♞a7 26. a4 ♗f8 27. ♖xa6 The material is equal, while Black is completely paralysed. White should win without much trouble.

18... ♜h6!

The original attempt to solve the problems around the king with 18...0–0–0



does not work due to spectacular geometry: 19. ♞c4† ♞c7 20. ♖b6† ♗b8 21. ♖c6†! ♞xc6

22. ♖xd8† ♗c7 23. ♜h4!, and on either capture of the knight White wins the f8-bishop in a different way: 23... ♗xb6 is met with 24. ♖xf8 ♖xf8 25. ♜xb4†, whereas on 23... ♜xb6 the fork comes from a different side: 24. ♖xf8 ♖xf8 25. ♞e7†.

19. f4! ♗e7 20. ♞e5

White's play here is rather straightforward. Now he is threatening ♞c7.

20... ♖c8

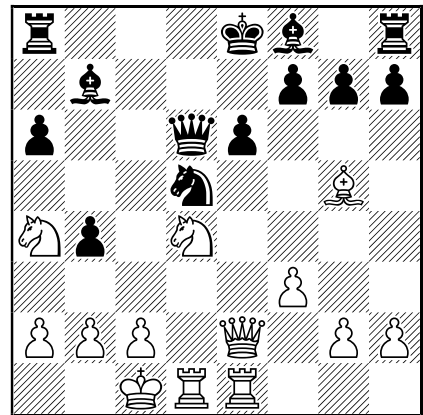
After 20... ♖d8 White wins a piece with 21. ♖f5 ♞f6 22. ♖xd8† ♗xd8 23. ♖d6† ♗e7 24. ♖xb7.

21. ♖b6

Black suffers heavy material losses.

These fairly forced lines prove that Topalov's intuition did not fail him, and 16... ♞d6, not allowing any forced wins, was the best choice from a practical standpoint.

Back to the game:



17. ♖b1?

A complete waste of time. White should have played 17. f4 when he has Black at his mercy. For example:

a) 17... ♖xf4? 18. ♞g4 ♖d5 19. ♖xe6 is an 'ouch'.

b) 17...h6?! weakens the g6-square, and therefore loses immediately to 18. ♖xe6! ♞xe6 19. ♞d3, which needs no explanation, while 18...fxe6 is bad due to 19. ♞h5† ♗d7 20. ♞f7† ♗c8 21. ♖xe6 ♞d7 22. ♗e7! (the less spectacular 22. ♖b6† ♖xb6 23. ♖xd7 ♖xd7 24. ♗h4 ♗d5 25. f5 wins as well) 22... ♗xe7 23. ♖xd5! ♗xd5

24. ♖b6† ♔c7 25. ♜xd7 ♙xe6 26. ♗xe6 ♙d6
27. ♜e5 White has a queen and two pawns for
two black rooks, but what matters here is the
open position of the black king.

c) 17...g6 18.f5

A good illustration of the dangers awaiting
Black on every move can be seen after:

18... ♗c8

On 18...♙g7 White decides the game with a
straightforward assault 19. ♜c5 ♗xc5 20. ♜xe6
fxe6 21. ♗xe6† ♔f8 22. fxg6 with an inevitable
mate.

19. fxe6 f6 20. ♜f5! ♗c7 21. e7 fxg5 22. ♖b6!!

A nice tactical blow, which ends Black's misery
on the spot. The black pieces already had
enough defensive tasks to worry about, and
another one proves to be fatal.

22... ♗xb6

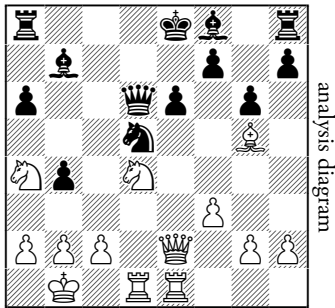
22... ♜xb6 23. ♜d6†

23. ♗xd5! ♙xd5 24. exf8 ♗† ♔xf8 25. ♗e7† ♔g8
26. ♗g7 mate.

17...h6?

Returning the favour. The correct and natural
reaction was

17...g6



White has quite a few possibilities, although
only one is really promising:

a) 18. ♜c5 does not work because of 18... ♗xc5
19. ♜xe6 fxe6 20. ♗xe6† ♙e7 21. ♙xe7 ♗xe7
22. ♗d6 ♜e3! 23. ♗f4 g5! 24. ♗d4 0-0 25. ♗xc3
♗f6 26. ♗xb4 ♗ad8 and only Black can win this.

b) Kasparov suggested the spectacular 18.a3
awarding the move two exclamation marks,
providing the following line:

18... ♙g7

18...bxa3 is now met with 19.c4, whereas after

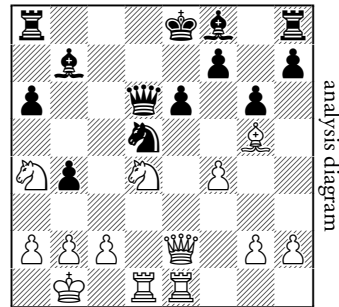
18...h6 19. ♜c5 ♗b6 20. ♜cxe6 fxe6 21. ♗d3
♜d7 22. ♗xe6 ♙d6 23. ♙e3 bxa3 24. ♜b3 ♗c7
25. ♗xg6 White has the advantage.

19. axb4 0-0 20. ♜c5 ♗ab8 21. c4 ♜xb4 22. ♜dx6
♗c6 23. ♙e7 fxe6 24. ♙xf8 ♙xf8 25. ♗xe6† ♗xe6
26. ♜xe6

With a substantial advantage for White in the
endgame.

However, Black can improve his play with
20... ♗b6!. The queen is moved away from X-rays
along the d-file, and creates threats along the b-
file. On 21. ♜xb7 Black has a strong intermediate
move at his disposal: 21... ♗xb4!, with the threat of
... ♜c3, and Black has the upper hand in the
complications. 21. c3 is simply met with 21... ♗fc8
(threatening ♗xc5), with a very dangerous
initiative for the pawn, and 21. ♜d7 is again bad
due to 21... ♗xb4.

c) Even having wasted a tempo (on 17. ♔b1)
White's strongest move is still 18.f4!:



18... ♙g7

On 18...h6 White can sacrifice the whole set
with 19. ♜c5! hxg5 (19... ♙c8 20. ♜e4) 20. ♜xb7
♗e7 21. ♗e4. Black's position is as lost as a
position can be. One of the unpleasant threats
occupying Black's mind is ♜xe6 followed by
♗xg6† with a party.

19.f5 ♙xd4

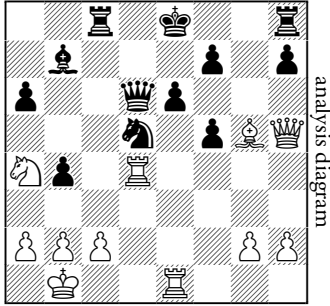
19...0-0 20. fxe6 ♗ac8 (20... ♙xd4 21. e7)
21. exf7† ♗xf7 22. ♗e6! and now either
22... ♗c7 23. ♗f1 or 22... ♗xe6 23. ♜xe6 is very
difficult for Black.

20. ♗xd4 gxf5

Worse is 20...0-0 21. f6 ♗fc8 (21... ♗fd8 22. ♗d2
♗c6 23. ♙h4 e5 24. ♗xe5 ♗ac8 25. ♜b6! either
winning material or mating) 22. ♗d2 ♗c6

23.♔h4!. The weakness of the dark squares around the king establishes White's advantage beyond any doubt.

21.♖h5 ♜c8



22.g4!

Gaining control over the important e4-square.

22...f4

After 22...fxg4 23.♞de4 Black has no hope.

23.♖h6 ♜c6

23...f3 loses to 24.♞d2, and Black is unable to hold his kingside

24.♞c4! ♜d6 25.♔xf4 ♜xf4 26.♞xf4

White continues his attack against the king while maintaining the material balance, whereas: 26...♜d2? lethally abandons the king: 27.♞xe6† fxe6 28.♖xe6† ♔d8 29.♖f6† ♔d7 30.♞d4† and White wins.

18.♔h4 ♜f4!

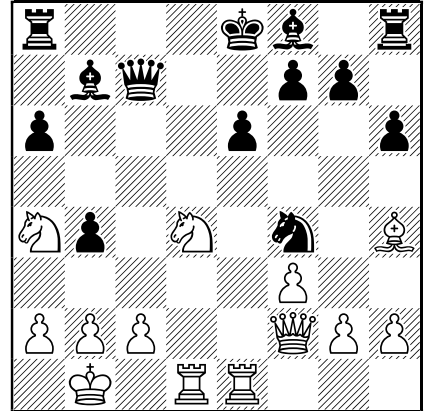
The only move that protects the vital e6-square, and does so with a tempo. What more can one ask

from a single move?! Having said that, we must state that Black's position is still lost, provided White plays correctly.

19.♖f2

And now it is the critical point of the game.

19...♜c7



20.♜f5?

A bad mistake by Leko, who was under heavy time pressure by now, but he usually spots such things in blitz.

20.♜b6! was the correct path: the beauty of which can be observed after 20...♖xb6 21.♜xe6! ♖xf2 22.♜c7 mate, or 21...♖xe6 22.♖a7!, both winning in some style.

So, Black would have to answer with 20...♞b8 and only now 21.♜f5. The addition of a knight





in the game (b6) has a huge impact on the situation. 21...g5 already does not work due to 22.♘d7! (threatening ♘f6 mate!) 22...♘d5 23.♞xd5 and White wins. The attempt to get rid of the annoying knight with 21...♙c6 fails to 22.♞d4! ♞g8 23.♘c4 g5 24.♙g3 followed by an inevitable ♘d6†.

20...g5

An accurate assessment of the situation in the game (not just the position) can only be given relatively to what *used to be* a few moves ago. Black's position is still suspicious, but it cannot be compared to the abyss he was facing throughout the past five moves.

21.♙g3 ♞c8

The attempt to reduce White's attacking potential with exchanges by means of 21...♞d8 leads to quite a serious advantage for White after 22.♞xd8† ♞xd8 23.♘c5 ♙d5 24.♘e4! (threatening ♙xf4 and ♞d4) 24...♙xe4 25.fxe4. Black cannot take to knight as it would prove deadly to his own king, whereas tolerating the knight is virtually impossible as well.

22.♞d4!:

Leko is still under the influence of the huge advantage he had a few moves ago, but it was time to think in positional terms now.

The queen sacrifice 22.♘b6 ♙c5 23.♘xc8 ♙xf2 24.♘cd6† ♘f8 25.♙xf2 does not lead to the goal after 25...♙d5 (but not 25...exf5 26.♞e8† ♘g7 27.♙d4† f6 28.♙xf6† ♘xf6 29.♞xh8 with

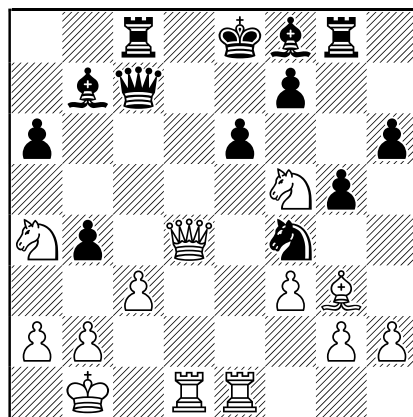
an unclear game) 26.♙d4 ♞g8 27.♙f6 ♞g6 and Black wards off White's initiative

However, the best move was 22.♞d2 when it is hard to see a better move for Black than 22...♞d8, which we looked at in the previous annotation.

22...♞g8

Now it suddenly turns out that none of the white pieces coordinates with each other.

Of course, 22...♞xc2† loses, as after the king's retreat Black will be unable to defend both h8 and d7.



23.c3?

It is a known fact that mistakes never travel alone. This move can be awarded more than one question mark, since not only does it change the

course of the game by 180 degrees, but the flow of the whole tournament (and arguably chess history).

It was vital to bring the queen back home with 23.♖f2, and Black's position would still be far from pleasant. The seemingly tempting 23...♗a5 loses to 24.♘b6 ♖xf5 25.♙xc8 ♙xc8 26.♗b6, while after 23...♗c6 24.b3 ♘d5 25.♙d4, White is still better.

23...♙d8!

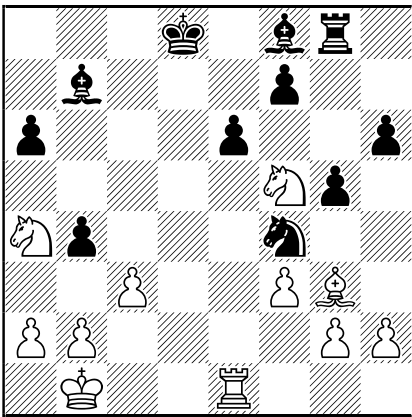
This is probably the move that escaped Leko's attention. Topalov forces a queen exchange. Without the ladies Black's monarch will be very comfortable in the centre, whereas both white knights are much worse than the black bishops. The rest of the game does not really need explanations. Just sit back and enjoy Topalov's technique.

24.♗xd8†

24.♗e3 ♙c6 25.♘b6 bxc3 with a serious advantage for Black.

24.♗f6? ♙xd1† 25.♙xd1 exf5 and there is no compensation for the material deficit.

24...♗xd8 25.♙xd8† ♙xd8



Miraculously, Black has managed to survive the attack with zero damage and, contrary to what might have been expected, he even has the more active pieces in the endgame. His bishop pair is going to be extremely strong in just a few moves, as there are no obstacles in the centre to prevent them from playing on both sides of the board. The knight on f4 is suddenly putting very

unpleasant pressure on White's kingside (along with the light-squared bishop). White's pieces, on the other hand, are no longer operating as a unit, but as unconnected (and hunted) soldiers.

26.♙e3

Or 26.♙d1† ♙c7 27.♙d4 bxc3 28.♙xc3 e5 29.♙b3 f6 and Black is much better.

26...♙c6 27.♙b6

27.b3 ♙xa4 28.bxa4 bxc3 29.♙c2 ♙g7 is hopeless for White.

27...bxc3 28.bxc3 ♙g7

Black's bishops indisputably control the whole board, and each and every one of White's weaknesses is going to get special treatment.

29.♙xf4

29.♙c2 ♙c7 30.♙ec4 (30.♙bc4 loses to 30...♙a4†) 30...h5! and Black wins easily.

29...gxf4 30.♙d1

It is almost painful to look at White's position...

30...♙b5

Precision to the end. This move cuts the white knight off.

31.a4 ♙d3† 32.♙c1 ♙c7 33.a5

The pawn is doing a great job protecting the knight on b6. Too bad it will not stay there for long.

33...♙h8 34.♙d2 ♙b5 35.♙g1 ♙c6

Now White loses material.

36.♙e2 ♙e5

Principally stronger was 36...♙g5 when the rook penetrates from the other flank, snatching a5 in the process.

37.c4 ♙d4 38.♙f2 ♙c3?!

An inaccuracy that could and should have made the win more difficult to achieve, whereas 38...♙g5 would have ended it on the spot.

39.♙e4?!

The final mistake.

The stubborn Leko would normally have undoubtedly found the unexpected resource: 39.♙c1! ♙xa5 40.♙d5† ♙xd5 41.cxd5† ♙b6 42.dxe6 fxe6 The a-pawn will probably decide matters in Black's favour, but there is still some work to be done.

39...♙xa5 40.c5 f5

0-1