

BEAUTY PRIZE AGAINST A MASTER OF COMBINATION

For this game I was awarded the beauty prize in the Las Palmas Tournament 1975. Adding to the pleasure, I played it against the genius of combination play himself, Mikhail Tal.

The cause of Tal's downfall in this game is that he turns to materialism at a critical moment, capturing a pawn which it was better for him not to have touched. In his enthusiasm he fails to pay attention to the safety of his own king, hard pressed and poorly defended on the first rank. I managed to make full use of these circumstances, finishing off the game with a pretty combination. The final position is interesting.

□ Mikhail Tal – ■ Friðrik Ólafsson

Las Palmas, Apr 5 1975 (11)
Pirc-Robatch (B07)

1.e4 d6 2.d4 g6

I partly expected the development selected by Tal in this game – knowing he was fond of it. I felt that I had discovered a small snag in it and decided to try it out.

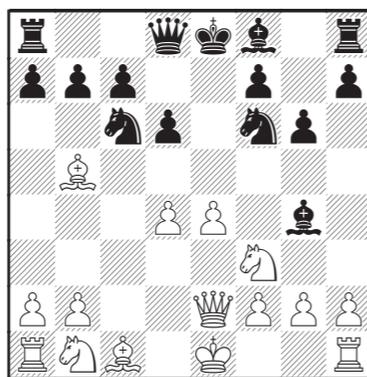
3.Bc4 Nf6 4.Qe2 Nc6(!)

My idea is based on this move. My intention is to attack the d4 square.

5.Nf3 Bg4 6.c3 e5 7.Bb5

An inevitable loss of tempo if White wants to maintain the tension in the centre. A possibility was to close the centre and play 7.d5, but such moves are not to Tal's liking.

7...exd4 8.cxd4



8...Nd7

Increasing the pressure against the d-pawn.

9.Be3 Bg7 10.Bxc6

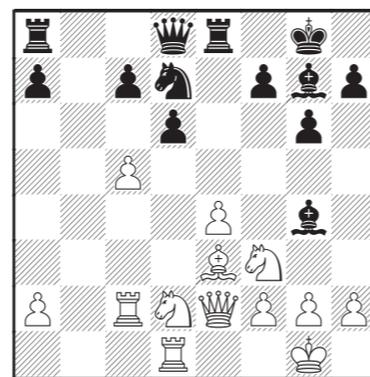
Necessary in order to maintain protection of the d4 pawn. After 9.d5 Black would gain the upper hand by 9...Nd4.

10...bxc6 11.Nbd2 0-0 12.Rc1

Tal has managed to preserve his centre pawns intact and now tries to exploit the doubled pawn on the c-file. Black, however has a simple answer.

12...c5 13.dxc5 Bxb2 14.Rc2 Bg7 15.0-0 Re8 16.Rd1?!

A more natural continuation was 16.cxd6 cxd6 17.h3 Bxf3 18.Qxf3 Ne5 19.Qe2 d5 20.exd5 Qxd5 21.Nc4 with about an equal game.



16...Nxc5

After this move Black gains the upper



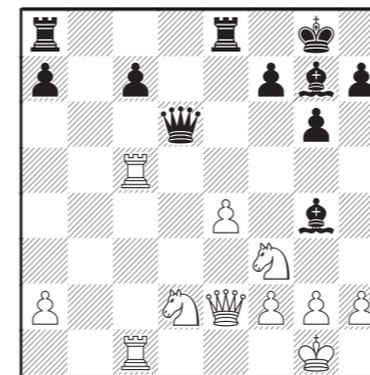
Mikhail Tal during the Milano tournament 1975, together with Petrosian.

hand although there is no decisive initiative.

17.Bxc5 dxc5 18.Rxc5

Tal recommends 18.Nb3 Qe7 19.Nxc5 Rad8 20.Rxd8 Rxd8 21.h3 with, in his opinion, an equal position. A sharper move is no doubt 18...Qf6.

18...Qd6 19.Rdc1



19...Bh6!

Now Black begins to come seriously to grips with the situation. The threat is 20...Bxf3.

20.Rxc7?

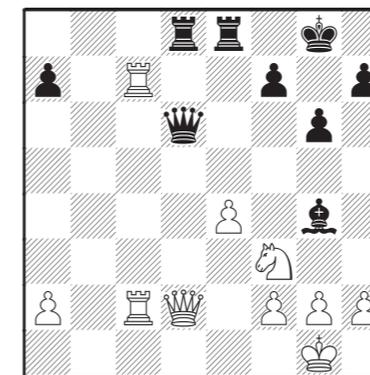
Here Tal becomes too greedy. He intends to answer 20...Bxf3 with 21.Qxf3 and then 21...Qxd2 will not do because of 22.Qxf7+ and mates. But Black had something very different in mind.

20...Rad8

Now White is left without a hope of recovery although the game is not yet over. Tal now considers that the last hope of recovery consisted of 21.R7c2 recommending the continuation 21...

Bxf3 22.gxf3 Qf6 etc. But he clearly overlooks Black's possibility 22...Qd3 and White is defenceless, for example 23.Qxd3 Rxd3 24.Rc8 Red8! and wins. Or 23.Kf1 Rd7 24.Qxd3 Rxd3 25.Ke2 Red8 26.Rd1 Bf4 and White is nailed down. Black simply plays Kg7-h6-h5-h4-h3, then exchanges all the pieces at d2, captures the White h-pawn and the fight is over.

21.R1c2 Bxd2 22.Qxd2



22...Qf4!!

Tal put two exclamation marks in his annotations to this game in the Informant, so I feel forced to do so too.

23.Re7! Rf8!!

I am still following Tal's example as to the exclamations.

24.Qa5

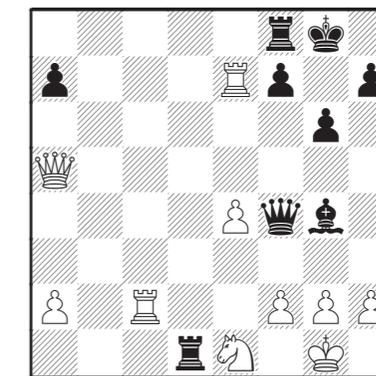
I suppose that Tal originally expected to be able to play 24.Qe2, but that he now realized that this is prevented by 24...Bxf3 25.Qxf3 (25.gxf3 Qg5+ loses the rook) 25...Qd6 threatening at the same time both 26...Qd1 and 26...Qxe7. White is unable to parry both of these

threats. Or 24.Qb4 (in order to protect the e7 rook) 24...Rd1+ 25.Ne1 Qd6 and wins. Finally 24.Qc1 Bxf3 25.gxf3 Qxf3 26.Rd2 Qf4 and now 27...Qg4 wins no matter whether White plays 27.Rc2 or 27.Rd1.

24...Rd1+

Aesthetically speaking 24...Qg5! would have been even more powerful.

25.Ne1



25...Qg5! 0-1

Tal surrendered, vanquished by his own weapons.

