

# 2022 CANDIDATES TOURNAMENT

JUNE 17, 2022 ■ ROUND 01

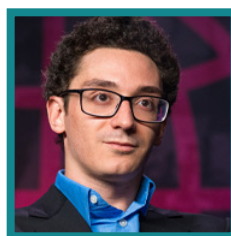


$\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2}$

Jan-Krzysztof Duda



Richard Rapport



Fabiano Caruana

$1 - 0$



Hikaru Nakamura



$0 - 1$

Ding Liren

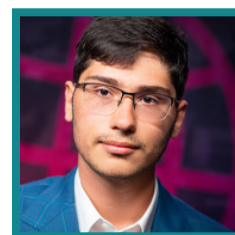


Ian Nepomniachtchi



Teimour Radjabov

$\frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2}$



Alireza Firouzja

## Current Standings

2022 FIDE CANDIDATES

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
1	Fabiano Caruana	2783	*							1	1/1
2	Ian Nepomniachtchi	2766		*					1		1/1
3	Alireza Firouzja	2793			*		$\frac{1}{2}$				$\frac{1}{2}/1$
4	Richard Rapport	2764				*		$\frac{1}{2}$			$\frac{1}{2}/1$
5	Teimour Radjabov	2753			$\frac{1}{2}$		*				$\frac{1}{2}/1$
6	Jan-Krzysztof Duda	2750				$\frac{1}{2}$		*			$\frac{1}{2}/1$
7	Ding Liren	2806		0					*		0/1
8	Hikaru Nakamura	2760	0							*	0/1

**SICILIAN DEFENSE (B44)**

GM Jan-Krzysztof Duda (2750)

GM Richard Rapport (2764)

FIDE Candidates Tournament (1.1),  
06.17.2022

Annotations by GM Jacob Aagaard

Duda surprises Rapport with a Rapport-style opening treatment and quickly gets a winning position after a curious opening mistake from the “Hungarian.” Lackluster play at the critical moment spoils the advantage. Later, a chance to get a winning ending is missed by Duda, suggesting that he is not quite ready to perform on the very top level.

**1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nc6 5. Bf4!?** d6 6. Nxc6 bxc6 7. Bd3N

7. c4 Rb8 8. Qc2 e5 9. Be3 Nf6 10. Nc3± in Rapport – Caruana, Saint Louis 2021.

**7. ... Ne7**

Another idea is 7. ... Rb8 8. 0-0!? Rxb2 9. Nd2±.

**8. c4 g6?**

A horrible weakening of the dark squares. Better would be 8. ... c5 9. Nc3 Nc6.

**9. c5 e5**

The alternative 9. ... d5 10. Nd2 Bg7 11. Bd6 would also give White an overwhelming advantage.

Note that it is important to understand that after 11. ... 0-0 12. 0-0 Bxb2?! 13. Rb1 Bg7 14. e5 Black would be entirely tied up. The extra pawn counts for naught.

**10. Bg5 Bg7 11. cxd6 Qxd6 12. 0-0 Be6 13. Na3!?**

A bit awkward. 13. Nc3 with the idea Na4-c5 felt more natural. And the computer says that 13. Ba6! Qxd1 14. Rxd1 f6 15. Be3 Kf7 16. Nd2 is completely winning. The knight is coming to b3 or c4, and from there to a5, c5 or d6.

**13. ... Rd8 14. Be2 Qxd1 15. Rfxd1 Rxd1+**  
The first critical moment of the game.

(see diagram top of next column)

**16. Bxd1?**

A horrible move. White obviously would prefer to play 16. Rxd1!, which is only negative because of 16. ... Bxa2, when (a) 17. Nc4!? is tempting, giving White a clear advantage. Play might continue 17. ... Bxc4



18. Bxc4 h6 19. Be3 Nc8 20. Ba6 Nb6 21. Rd6 and White is technically winning, even if a lot of moves remain.

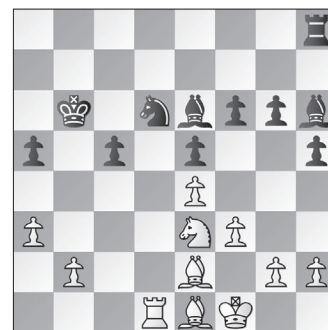
But even more convincing is 17. Nb5! f6 18. Nd6+ Kd8! (18. ... Kf8 19. Be3 is just winning. Black cannot get the pieces out) 19. Be3 Kc7 20. Nb7! Bf7 21. b4 White has a winning initiative, although more moves remain.

**16. ... Kd7 17. Be2 Nc8±**

White is still better, but he has certainly lost the moment. Over the next 10 moves what remains of his advantage slowly dissipates.

**18. Rd1+ Kc7 19. Bc4 Bg4 20. f3 f6 21. Be3**

**Bd7 22. Be2 h5 23. Nc2 Bf8 24. a3 a5 25. Kf1 Be6 26. Bd2 Kb6 27. Ne3 Nd6 28. Rc1 c5 29. Be1 Bh6 30. Rd1**

**30. ... Rd8?**

Somehow this is a big blunder. 30. ... Kc6 31. Nd5 Rb8± would have been perfectly fine.

**31. Nd5+ Bxd5 32. Rxd5 Be3**

32. ... Nb7 loses after 33. Rxd8 Nxd8 34. Bc4 Bc1 35. a4! Bxb2 36. Ke2, which is by no means obvious. A key point is that after 36. ... Bd4 37. g4! White either creates a massive weakness on h5, or gets a passed h-pawn. A lot of play remains, but White seems strategically winning.

**33. Rd3?**

33. a4! would be an even better version of the previous variation. White is not parting with the b-pawn here. The structure favors White and the two bishops will put pressure on a5, g6 and h5. It is just too many weaknesses to handle. Carlsen would have salivated and crushed Black in a disgustingly brutal, slow manner...

**33. ... Bd4 34. Rb3+ Kc6 35. Bxa5 Ra8 36. Rb6+ Kd7 37. Ra6 Rxa6 38. Bxa6 Bxb2**



PHOTO: COURTESY FIDE / STEV BONHAGE

39. a4 c4 40. Bb4 h4 41. Ke2 Kc6 42. Ba5 Bc1 43. Bd8 Bg5 44. Kd1 Kd7 45. Bb6 Kc6 46. a5 Bf4 47. Kc2 f5 48. Kc3 fxe4 49. fxe4 Nxe4+ 50. Kxc4 Nd6+ 51. Kb4 Bxh2 52. Be2 e4 53. Bc5 Nf5 54. Bb5+ Kc7 55. Bb6+ Kb7 56. Bc4 Nd6 57. Be2 Kc6 58. Bc5 Nf5 59. Bb5+ Kc7 60. a6 Bd6 61. a7 Bxc5+ 62. Kxc5 Kb7 63. Bc6+ Kxa7 64. Bxe4 Ne3 65. Kd4 Nxe2 66. Bxe2 g5 67. Bh3 g4 68. Bxe4 h3 69. Bxh3, draw.

## ENGLISH OPENING (A20)

GM Ding Liren (2806)

GM Ian Nepomniachtchi (2766)

FIDE Candidates Tournament (1.2),

06.17.2022

Annotations by GM Jacob Aagaard

Ding played incredibly passive chess and was deservedly mated.

1. c4 e5 2. g3 c6 3. Nf3 e4 4. Nd4 d5 5. cxd5 Qxd5 6. Nc2 Nf6 7. Nc3 Qe5 8. Bg2 Na6 9. 0-0 Be7 10. Ne3!?

Rare. 10. d4 exd3 11. Qxd3 is the main line.

### 10. ... 0-0

A novelty. More rushed than preparation, one would think. Nepomniachtchi has a tendency to play a bit fast. Other moves in this position:

(a) 10. ... h5 11. d4 exd3 12. exd3 Qd4 with unclear play was played in the last Candidates tournament two years ago. Giri – Grischuk, Ekaterinburg 2020.

(b) 10. ... Nc5? 11. b4 Ne6 12. Bb2 0-0 is Harsha – Barp, Internet 2020. After 13. Rb1! Nd4 White can now choose between two promising lines. 14. Nxe4! (14. Nc2!? Nxc2 15. Qxc2 Bf5 16. Nxe4 Bxe4 17. d3 Bxd3 18.

Qxd3± with two bishops and a strong initiative) 14. ... Nxe4 15. f4 Qh5 16. Bxd4 Rd8 17. Nc2 Black does not seem to have quite enough for the pawn.

### 11. a3 Re8 12. b4 Ng4?!



Sharp, with attitude.

### 13. Bb2

But Ding should have taken the bait. Certainly, after 13. Bxe4! Nc7 14. Bg2 Qh5± Black will get some initiative for the pawn. But White is also a pawn up!

### 13. ... Qh5 14. h4?!

14. Nxg4! Bxg4 15. Bxe4 Nc7 16. Bg2± was still possible.

### 14. ... Bf6

14. ... f5!? is unclear.

### 15. Qc2 Nxe3 16. dxe3 Bf5 17. Na4?!

White's play could be justified by 17. b5! Nc5 18. bxc6 bxc6 19. Rab1± or 17. Rfd1 Nc7 18. b5!?

### 17. ... Bxb2 18. Nxb2?

The knight now goes on a journey to a5,

where it achieves nothing. White's play makes a lot of sense after 18. Qxb2 Nc7 19. Rac1 Nd5 20. Rfd1±, when Black cannot play 20. ... Re6? on account of 21. Nc5 with immediate consequences.

### 18. ... Nc7 19. Nc4 Re6! 20. Rfd1 Nd5

White has played incredibly slowly. He now had to play energetically here to keep his position acceptable.

### 21. Rd4?

After the correct 21. b5! now (a) 21. ... g5 can be met with active play: 22. bxc6 bxc6 23. hxg5 Qxg5 24. Na5! h5 25. Nxc6 Nxe3 26. Qc1! Rc8 27. Rd8+! Rxd8 28. Nxd8 Rd6 29. Nxf7 Kxf7 30. Qxe3 Qxe3 31. fxe3 Rd2 with a draw soon enough.

For this reason stronger is (b) 21. ... h6! 22. bxc6 bxc6 23. Rd4 g5 24. Bxe4 Bxe4 25. Rxe4 Qg6 26. Nd2 gxh4±. But realistically these white moves are hard to play for humans.

### 21. ... h6?

Nepomniachtchi was not quite ready for 21. ... g5!, although here it really works. The key point is that White is too slow with counterplay in the center: 22. hxg5 Qxg5 23. Rad1 Qh5± with lots of attacking ideas.



### 22. Qd2?

I was discussing this position with Topalov and “we” came to the conclusion that it made more sense to bring in the second rook: 22. Rad1! with the intention 22. ... g5 23. Rxd5! cxd5 24. Rxd5 with counterplay. Black can try either 24. ... gxh4 25. Nd6 or 24. ... Qg6 25. Ne5 Qg7 26. Nd7±. A key point is that after 26. ... Qg6?, White wins with 27. h5!.

### 22. ... Rae8 23. Kh2?! Bg4! 24. Na5?

White is already in trouble. 24. Qc2! was best, but the position remains bad. 24. ... f5 25. b5 Bxe2 26. bxc6 bxc6 27. Bh3!? Bg4 28. Bxg4 Qxg4 29. Qd1 Qg6±.





**24. ... Rf6!?**

It is hard to understand why Black did not go for 24. ... g5! 25. Rh1 gxf4 26. Kg1 h3, which looks entirely crushing.

**25. Kg1 g5 26. Nxb7?**

White's last chance came with active play: 26. b5 gxf4 27. bxc6 hxf3 28. fxf3 Qe5 29. Nc4 Qxf3 30. Qe1+ and the game will be hard to win for Black.

**26. ... gxf4 27. Nc5 h3 28. Rxe4**

Or 28. Nxe4 hxf2+.

**28. ... hxf2!**

A nice combination. But 28. ... Rxe4 29. Nxe4 hxf2 also won.

**29. Rxe8+ Kg7 30. f4 Qh1+ 31. Kf2 Qxa1****32. Kxg2 Bh3+!, White resigned.**

A nice touch.

## RUY LOPEZ, BERLIN DEFENSE (C65)

GM Fabiano Caruana (2783)

GM Hikaru Nakamura (2760)

FIDE Candidates Tournament (1.3), 06.17.2022

Annotations by GM Jacob Aagaard

Caruana got a little something against Nakamura's Berlin. Decent defense made it possible to neutralize the pressure, but the middlegame was still easier to play for White. Nakamura made a few wrong turns with the pawn structure, something that is not really his strength. And of course Caruana is very strong in this type of positional maneuvering.

**1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 Nf6 4. d3 Bc5 5. Bxc6 dxc6 6. Nbd2 Be6 7. 0-0 Bd6 8. Nb3**

This is by no means critical, but just gets a game. 8. d4 Nd7 9. dxe5 Nxe5 10. Nxe5

Bxe5 as in Robson – Nakamura, Saint Louis 2017 is more critical, but also well analyzed.

**8. ... Qe7**

Another idea is 8. ... b6!?

**9. Na5! Rb8=N**

Probably not especially prepared. 9. ... 0-0-0 10. a3 was the idea. Here one might play 10. ... Rhg8!?N (10. ... c5? Karthik – Aleksandrov, New Delhi 2020. Who this Karthik is, you have to dig into ChessBase to find out! 11. b4! cxb4 12. axb4 Bxb4 13. Bd2±) 11. c4 or 11. b4!? and maybe White is better.

**10. Bg5 h6 11. Bh4 g5 12. Bg3 Nd7 13. d4 f6 14. Qd3 h5 15. dxe5 Nxe5 16. Bxe5 fxe5**

**17. Nc4**

Here 17. Qc3!? looks stronger. White wins a pawn. But Caruana probably rejected playing with two knights and a pawn against two bishops over the more equal middlegame they got. Here's a sample continuation: 17. ... 0-0 18. Nxe5 Qg7 19. Nf3 Qxc3 20. bxc3 g4 21. Ng5 Bc8 22. Rab1 Ra8±.

**17. ... Rd8 18. Nxd6+ cxd6 19. Qe3 g4 20. Nd2 a6 21. b3 0-0?**

The king is unreasonably exposed on the kingside. Objectively the strongest was probably 21. ... h4!? 22. f3 and now either 22. ... g3!? or 22. ... gxf3 23. Nxf3 h3 unclear, creating permanent weaknesses around the white king.

But I actually like 21. ... Kd7!? with the idea of putting the king on the queenside quite a bit.

**22. f3!± Qg7 23. fxf4 hxf4 24. Rad1 d5?**

A horrible positional mistake that opens up for the black pawns being forced to go to light squares. Perhaps 24. ... Rd7!? is better.

**25. exd5 cxd5 26. Rde1 e4 27. Rxf8+ Rxf8****28. c4! Re8 29. cxd5 Bxd5 30. Nf1±**

Black has the wrong bishop too cooperate with his weak pawns.

**30. ... Qe5 31. Qh6 Qg7?!**

31. ... Re7!?± improves.

**32. Qd6! Bc6 33. Ne3 g3 34. hxf3!?**

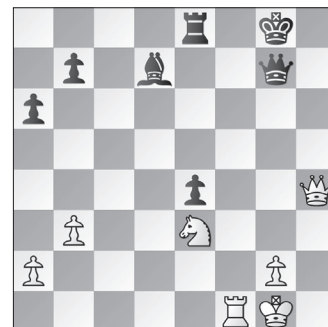
Prosaic and good. Computers will point to 34. Rf1! gxf2+ 35. Kh1 Rf8 36. Nf5 with a winning attack, but Caruana is happy to line up lots of (not so) small advantages.

**34. ... Qe5 35. Qg6+ Qg7 36. Qd6 Qe5 37. Qh6! Qxf3 38. Rf1 Qg7 39. Qh4 Qh7?!**

Better is 39. ... Bd7!.

**40. Qg3+ Qg7 41. Qh4?!**

41. Qd6! Qe7 42. Qg6+ Qg7 43. Qh5 was totally winning.

**41. ... Bd7!****42. Rd1!**

The more practical move. The direct route

to a winning position went like this: 42. Nf5 Bxf5 43. Rxf5 Re5 44. Qd8+ Kh7 45. Rf4 Rh5 46. Rxe4 Qa1+ 47. Kf2 Rf5+ 48. Kg3 Qg7+ 49. Kh3 Rh5+ 50. Rh4 Qc3+ 51. g3 Rxh4+ 52. Qxh4+ and the endgame is winning, although with only queens, practical chances remain. It is quite understandable that Caruana did not feel like forcing this position.

#### 42. ... Be6?

The last straw. 42. ... Re7± could have resisted longer.

**43. Nd5 Rf8 44. Qxe4 Qh6 45. Re1 Rd8 46. Ne7+ Kf7 47. Nf5 Qf6 48. Rf1 Bd5 49. Nh6+ Kg7 50. Qg4+ , Black resigned.**

### QUEEN'S GAMBIT ACCEPTED (BY TRANSPOSITION) (D24)

GM Teimour Radjabov (2753)

GM Alireza Firouzja (2793)

FIDE Candidates Tournament (1.4),  
06.17.2022

Annotations by GM Jacob Aagaard

Firouzja shows his intentions of playing for a win in all games. As for Radjabov, it appears he does not share those intentions. Still, the Azeri got a winning position through his opponent's poor time management, but he did not play with the accuracy and intensity needed to convert the advantage.

**1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 d5 4. Nc3 dxc4 5. e4 b5!?**

This is one of the most recent trends. The oldest game in my database is from 1990, but it is really from 2018 this line has been developed.

Firouzja's intention is clear. He aims for a dynamic unbalanced position with the chances to outplay his opponent. In the game he took a lot of risks, maybe more than was reasonable. But he mainly got into trouble for allocating his time quite poorly.

**6. e5 Nd5 7. Nxb5 Nb6 8. Be3 Nc6 9. Be2 Be7 10. 0-0 0-0 11. Nc3 Rb8 12. a3 Na5 13. Qc2 Nd5**

To me 13. ... Bb7 14. Rad1 looks more natural. After 14. ... Qd7 15. Ng5 Bxg5 16. Bxg5 h6 17. Be3 Rfd8 Black does not really look worse to me.

**14. Rad1**



#### 14. ... Ba6!?N

A peculiar idea. Firouzja was blitzing, so a lot of this must have been preparation or close to that. Here 14. ... Bb7 15. Bd2 (15. Nd2?? Nxe3 16. fxe3 Bg5 was already lost in Sviridova - Nutakki, Internet 2021) 15. ... Nb6 looks critical. 14. ... Bd7 was played in Gunina - Pichot, Internet 2022.

#### 15. Bd2

15. Ne4! looks a bit more challenging.

**15. ... Nb3 16. Ne4 Nxd2 17. Rxd2 Nf4!?** Sharp.

**18. Bxc4 Rxb2! 19. Qxb2 Bxc4**



#### 20. Rc1

The computers say that White potentially is fighting for an advantage after 20. Rb1!, when the rook is on the open file and not hanging after a later ... Be7xa3.

Play continues 20. ... Bd5 21. Qc2 Qa8 (21. ... Bxa3? 22. Nfg5 would be deeply unpleasant for Black) 22. Nfg5 Ng6 23. f3!? keeping control of the light squares. White is apparently a bit better.

#### 20. ... Bd5!?

I believe 20. ... Nd3 was fine too, e.g., 21. Qc3 Nxc1 22. Qxc4 Qd5 with exchanges and equality.

**21. Re1! Qa8 22. Qc2 Bxa3 23. Nfg5 Ng6 24. h4 Bb4 25. h5**



Firouzja spent 21 minutes on move 21, 37 on move 22, 23 on move 24 and here only three minutes.

#### 25. ... Bxd2?

Correct was 25. ... Bxe4! 26. Nxe4 Nh4 27. h6 Rd8!, where Black will fight for equality with success. True, this is hard to evaluate, but the alternative is clearly rubbish.

#### 26. Qxd2 h6

Forced. 26. ... Nh4 27. h6 with death and destruction on the dark squares.

**27. hxg6 hxg5 28. gxf7+ Kxf7 29. Nxc5+ Ke8 30. f3?!?**

I don't like this move, although there is nothing much wrong with it. But it does throw away a tempo for security. In other words, Radjabov is making sure he does not lose.

30. Rc1! was much stronger. Then after 30. ... Qb7, comes 31. f3. And other moves can be met in other ways, e.g., 30. ... Bxg2? 31. Qd3 is instantly over.

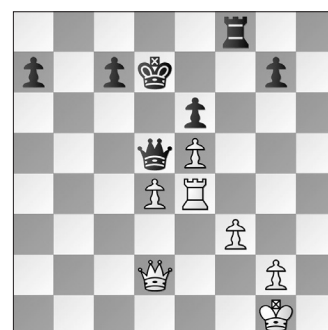
#### 30. ... Kd7!

Getting the king out of the fire.

#### 31. Ne4?

Allowing Black to simplify the position. 31. Ra1! would have kept the pressure on. The position is on a knife's edge.

**31. ... Bxe4 32. Rxe4 Qd5**





White remains better, but it is within what is manageable.

### 33. Qb4 Rg8 34. Qa4+ Qc6!

Firouzja is happy to force the ending. The pawn does not matter.

### 35. Qxa7 Ra8 36. Qc5 Qxc5

True to style Radjabov plays a lot when there is no danger of a decisive result. Whether he is pretending to play, or simply enjoys the safety of no risk (of winning or losing), that is for others to judge.

37. dxc5 Kc6 38. Rg4 Kxc5 39. Rxg7 Kd5 40. Rxc7 Kxe5 41. Rf7 Kd6 42. Kf2 e5 43. g4 Ke6 44. Rf5 Ra3 45. Rf8 Ke7 46. Rb8 Kf7 47. Rc8 Ke7 48. Rc2 Kf6 49. Re2 Rb3 50. Re3 Rb2+ 51. Kg3 Rc2 52. Ra3 Rb2 53. Ra6+ Kf7 54. Rh6 Rb3 55. Kf2 Ra3 56. Rb6 Ke7 57. Ke2 Rc3 58. Kf2 Ra3 59. Rb2 Kf6 60. Re2 Rb3 61. Re3 Rb2+ 62. Kg3 Rc2 63. Rb3 Ra2 64. Rb6+ Kf7 65. g5 Ra4 66. Rf6+ Ke7 67. Rh6 Kf7 68. Rh4 Ra5 69. Kg4 Ra4+ 70. Kh5 Ra3 71. f4 exf4, draw.

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GM Fabiano Caruana



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