

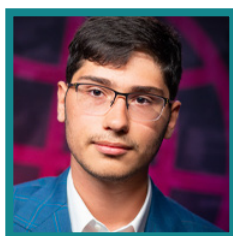
2022 CANDIDATES TOURNAMENT

JUNE 18, 2022 ■ ROUND 02



Richard Rapport

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

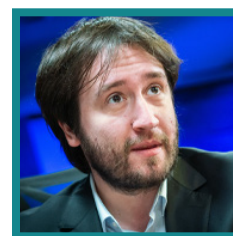


Alireza Firouzja



Hikaru Nakamura

$1 - 0$

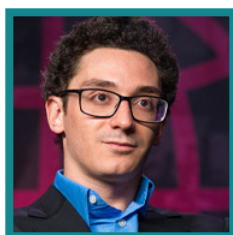


Teimour Radjabov



Ian Nepomniachtchi

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



Fabiano Caruana



Jan-Krzysztof Duda

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



Ding Liren

Current Standings

2022 FIDE CANDIDATES

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

SICILIAN DEFENSE (B53)

GM Richard Rapport (2764)

GM Alireza Firouzja (2793)

FIDE Candidates Tournament (2.1),
06.18.2022

Annotations by GM Jacob Aagaard

Rapport took the game straight into a technical position, probably hoping for some immaturity and restlessness from his young opponent. He was not wrong, and he slowly built up a slight advantage. That advantage grew when Firouzja failed to improve his position slowly, rather than acting out. But in the conversion phase, a tricky double rook ending, Rapport missed many wins and had to give away half a point.

1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 d6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Qxd4 Nc6 5. Bb5 a6 6. Bxc6+ bxc6 7. c4 e5 8. Qd3 Ne7 9. c5 Ng6 10. cxd6 Qxd6 11. Qxd6 Bxd6 12. Be3 N a5 13. 0-0 f6 14. Rc1 Ra6 15. Nbd2 Be6

15. ... Kf7! is more flexible, but everything is OK.

16. Ne1 Kf7 17. Nd3 Rd8 18. Kf1



18. ... Bb4?!

Impatient. 18. ... a4! would have been the structurally correct move. The opposite-colored bishops do not guarantee Black easy equality. The two bishops do.

19. Ke2 Nh4 20. Nxb4!

20. g3? would lose to 20. ... Bg4+ 21. f3 Bxd2+.

20. ... axb4 21. g3 Ng6 22. Bc5 Rb8 23. a3 bxa3 24. Rxa3 Rba8?!

A natural move, but a horrible idea. 24. ... Rxa3! is accurate. The black rook remains active. For example, 25. bxa3 Ra8 26. Ra1 Ra4 with equality.

25. Nc4?!



25. Rca1! Rxa3 26. Rxa3 Rxa3 27. bxa3± would have given White a better version of this endgame. 27. ... Nf8! is forced and White is better after both 28. a4 and 28. Bxf8!? Kxf8 29. Kd3, although accurate play should hold.

25. ... Bxc4+ 26. Rxc4 Nf8 27. Rb3 Ne6 28. Rb7+ Kg8!?

Not really bad, but somewhat strange. 28. ... Kg6! 29. Be3 Rd8 is just simpler. Why have the king on g8? 30. f4 exf4 31. gxf4 is safely met with 31. ... f5!.

29. Be3 Rd8 30. f4± Nd4+?

The rook ending looks scary, even though it should hold. 30. ... h5!? with patience was fine.

31. Bxd4 exd4

31. ... Rxd4 32. Rxd4 exd4 33. Kd3 c5 34. Kc4 Rc6 35. e5 is already beyond salvation.



32. Kd2!!

The move of the day. This must have been overlooked by Firouzja. 32. Kd3? Ra1! and Black is fine.

32. ... Ra1?

Here 32. ... h6± is the computer's pitiful suggestion.

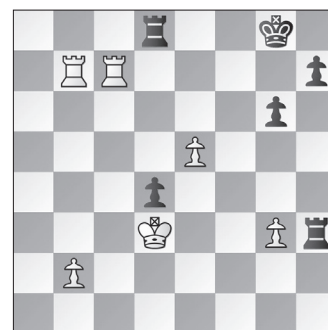
But 32. ... d3! is what feels in the spirit of the position to me. After 33. Rb3 Ra1 34. Rxd3 Rb8! Black is seeking activity for the pawn, without strong white rooks on the seventh rank. 35. b3 Ra2+ 36. Rc2 Ra3 37. Rb2 h5± is the idea.

33. Rxc6 Rh1 34. Rcc7 Rxh2+ 35. Kd3 g6 36. e5!?

I don't like this much, but cannot call it bad. The idea of creating a passed pawn is appealing. However, I would have focused on getting a set of rooks off the board.

The alternative 36. Rg7+ Kh8 37. b4 Rh3 38. Kc4 seemed more controlled to me. The idea is to take on h7 if Black takes on g3, and to meet 38. ... d3 with 39. Rgd7+.

36. ... fxe5 37. fxe5 Rh3

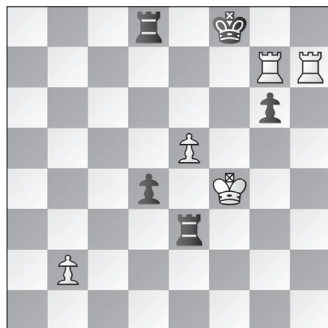


38. Ke4?

Rapport is losing his way. 38. Rg7+ Kh8 39. Rgd7! and taking on d4 was right. But little time it is hard to work out that this is simply winning.

38. ... Rxc3 39. Rg7+ Kh8 40. Rxh7+ Kg8

41. Kf4 Re3 42. Rbg7+ Kf8 43. Rf7+ Kg8
44. Rfg7+ Kf8



45. Rf7+?

Rapport failed to find the winning method. The winning idea was 45. Rc7 Kg8 46. Rhg7+ Kh8 47. Rge7! Rh3 48. e6 d3 49. Red7 Re8 50. b4! with lots of future complications.

45. ... Kg8 46. Rhg7+

46. Rfg7+ would already be three times repetition, if my counting is not totally off...

46. ... Kh8 47. Rxg6 Re2!

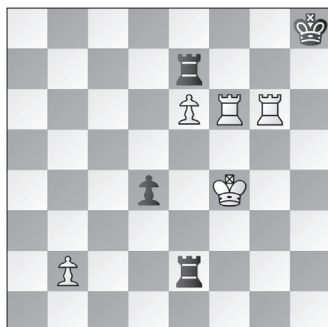
An accurate move.

Instead after 47. ... Re1?! 48. Rff6 d3 49. Rd6 Rf8+ 50. Rgf6 Rxf6+ 51. exf6 Kh7!! (After 51. ... Kg8? 52. Rxd3 Kf7 53. Kf5! Rf1+ 54. Ke4! wins) 52. Rxd3 (52. Kf5 Rb1) 52. ... Kg6 Black draws. For example: 53. Rd6 Rb1 54. Rb6 Re1! 55. b4 Re2 56. b5 Re1 57. Rc6 Rb1 58. b6 Re1! and White is not able to make progress. Good luck finding that!

48. e6 Re8?!

This is not objectively bad, but makes things harder. 48. ... d3! is what Black would want to play, but you need to rely on 49. e7 Rd4+! 50. Kf5 d2 and now, for example, 51. Rgg7 Rxe7! with an immediate draw.

49. Rh6+ Kg8 50. Rg6+ Kh8 51. Rff6 Re7?



Giving a random chance. Black would have



drawn with 51. ... d3 52. Kf5 Rg8!! or 51. ... Rg8!=, but both are difficult moves to find.

52. b4?

Rapport misses the random chance and makes a totally inexplicable pawn move. The idea that the b-pawn will ever be important is hard to justify.

52. Kf5! was winning. The variation is not something you can calculate, but something you can find, move by move. 52. ... d3 (52. ... Rf2+ 53. Ke5 only helps White) 53. Rg1 d2 54. Rh1+ Kg8 (54. ... Rh7 55. Rf8+ Kg7 56. Rf7+ Kg8 57. Rg1+ Kh8 58. Rf8 mate) 55. Rfh6! Rf2+ 56. Ke5 Re2+ 57. Kd6 Rh7 58. Rg6+! Kh8 59. Rgg1! Rxh1 60. Rxh1+ Kg7 61. Rd1 and White wins, e.g., 61. ... Kf6 62. Kd7! Rxe6 63. Rxd2 Re4 64. Kd6! Kf7 65. Kc5 and a lot of moves...

52. ... d3 53. Rg3 d2 54. Rh6+ Rh7 55. Rxh7+ Kxh7 56. Rd3 Kg6 57. Kf3 Rxe6 58. Rxd2 Kf6 59. Kf4 Re1 60. Rd4 Ke6, draw.

RUY LOPEZ, BERLIN DEFENSE (C65)

GM Hikaru Nakamura (2760)

GM Teimour Radjabov (2753)

FIDE Candidates Tournament (2.2), 06.18.2022

Annotations by GM Jacob Aagaard

This is today's most memorable game, since Caruana missed his chance. In a game representative of modern chess, Nakamura plays a "harmless" line in the Berlin with White. Radjabov does not know the exact refutation (read: way to liquidate) and the

result is a playable game. White is not really better, but Black is also not really equal.

The game then trundles along down a dirt road track, where it is apparent that one of the players is stronger. Yes, computers show improvements for both, both wins and draws. Some of them are obvious, but only once you see them, and others are rather outlandish. But most important here is the concept of tension.

Nakamura continues to press. He wants to win. Radjabov wants the pressure to stop — desperately. He does not have confidence in himself (nor does he deserve to; remember he qualified to the previous tournament, not this one, and has shown no quality since 2019) and tries to release the pressure, rather than endure and trust his position and his ability to hold.

This is a common way to win against weaker players, as I explained through two examples in the Charlotte Chess Center this very week. Obviously, the same principle is in play in the psychological battle between in Rapport and Firouzja in this round.

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 Nf6 4. d3 Bc5 5. Nbd2

Another sideline in the Berlin that does not offer real chances, but where Nakamura and his team may have found ways to pose problems to the opponent.

5. ... Nd4

5. ... 0-0 is more natural, but you cannot fault Radjabov for playing a main line.

6. Nxd4 Bxd4 7. c3 Bb6 8. d4 c6 8. ... exd4 9. e5 is a bit risky.

9. dxe5 cxb5 10. exf6 Qxf6 11. 0-0 0-0



12. Qh5

12. Nf3 has also been played.

12. ... Qc6?!

This was the right moment to neutralize White's pressure by getting the pieces into the game: 12. ... d5!N 13. Qxd5 Re8 14. Nf3 b4! with typical counterplay with the two bishops.

13. Re1

In his post-game video, Nakamura referenced this game between Nepomniachtchi and Aronian: 13. Nf3 d6 14. Re1 f6 15. Be3 a6 16. Bxb6 Qxb6 17. Qd5+ Rf7 18. Rad1 Bg4 19. Qxd6 Qa5 20. Qd5 Bxf3 21. gxf3 Re8 22. f4 g6 23. e5 Qb6 24. Rd4 fxe5 25. Rxe5 Ref8 26. Re7 Kg7 27. Qe5+ Qf6 28. Rdd7 Rxe7 29. Rxe7+ Kh6 30. Qc7 Rh8 31. h3 Qf5 32. Kh2 Qc2 33. Qc5 and White won in Nepomniachtchi – Aronian, *Chess.com* 2020.

13. ... Re8 14. Nf3 d5!?



GM Hikaru Nakamura

That this works shows a lot of the problems with modern chess (1. e4 e5 openings). This is why the Marshall worked.

If 14. ... h6 15. Bd2±.

15. exd5

Trying to keep the game alive.

Naturally 15. Qxd5 was the critical test. What was Nakamura afraid of? Some analysis: 15. ... Qxd5 (15. ... Be6 16. Qxc6 bxc6 17. Be3 looks like a pawn down) 16. exd5 Rxe1+ 17. Nxe1 Bf5 seems natural. After 18. Be3 Bxe3 19. fxe3 Be4! (19. ... Rd8?! 20. a4!± is good for White.) 20. d6 (20. a4!? bxa4 21. c4 Rd8 22. Rxa4 b5 23. cxb5 f5!±) 20. ... Rd8 21. Rd1 Bc6 22. Kf2 f6 and Black keeps everything together.

15. ... Rxe1+ 16. Nxe1 Qc4 17. h3 Bd7

Here 17. ... Qe4!± would have taken control over a lot of important squares.

18. Qf3!± Re8 19. Be3 Bxe3 20. fxe3 Re5?



Better was 20. ... h6 21. Rd1 Qxa2 22. Nd3±.

GM Teimour Radjabov



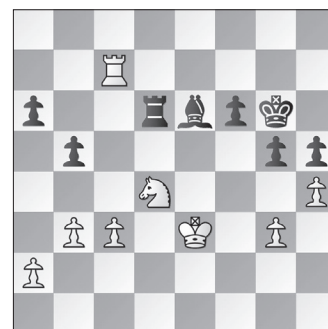
21. d6?

A mistake. White should have played 21. Rd1! Rf5 (21. ... Qxa2 22. Nd3 Rxd5 23. e4 Rd6 24. Nc5 Rxd1+ 25. Qxd1 Qxb2 26. Qxd7 Qc1+ 27. Kf2 Qc2+ 28. Kf1+–) 22. Rd4 Qxa2 23. Qg3 h6 24. Nd3± Rxd5 25. Nc1!.

21. ... Qd5!?

The ending is fine, but a bit passive. 21. ... Bc6! 22. d7 Bxd7 23. Qxb7 Bc6 would have given full compensation in the middlegame.

22. Rd1 Qxf3 23. Nxf3 Rxe3 24. Rd5 f6 25. Rc5 Re6 26. Rc7 Rxd6 27. Rxb7 a6 28. Nd4 h5 29. h4 g5 30. g3 Kf7 31. Kf2 Kg6 32. Ke3 Rd5 33. Ra7 Rd6 34. h3 Be6 35. Rc7



White is of course better. The knight is strong and stable like a poor election slogan,

but just like that, there is nothing further on offer. If Black waits, he has to play a few decent moves and he holds.

35. ... Rd5?

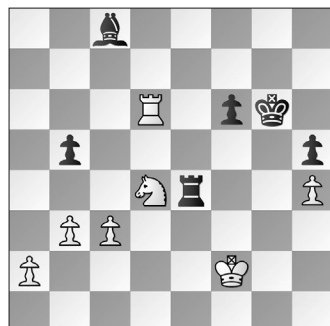
Seeking activity in a passive position was the downfall of both Firouzja and Radjabov today. The youngest and the oldest participant, the most talented and the weakest.

I'd prefer 35. ... Bd7!? 36. c4 bxc4 37. bxc4 Bg4 38. c5 Rd5 with the idea 39. c6 Ra5±.

36. Rc6 Re5+ 37. Kf2 Bd7 38. Rxa6 gxh4 39. gxh4 Re4

39. ... Kf7!± was not yet lost, but you play your idea, especially in time trouble.

40. Rd6! Bc8



The time control has passed and we have reached the conversion phase. Radjabov's silly desperation has cost a pawn and given him little in return.

The endgame was difficult for both players and a lot of additional resources can be found by computers. But the experience of playing the stronger side, with a difficult winning position, against a weaker side where it is hard to determine the hopelessness from the miserable, is entirely human.

The key thing is to remember that this has very little to do with computer evaluations. In practice, Black got close to solving his problems, but never quite got there.

41. Rd8 Bg4 42. Rd5?!

After 42. b4! White is in control. It is about speed and being ready to act, if Black seeks counterplay: 42. ... f5 43. a4 bxa4 44. b5 f4 45. b6.

42. ... Bc8?

But Radjabov did not understand his chance either. 42. ... f5! with the idea 43. Rxb5?! (43. Rd6+ Kf7 44. Nxb5 f4 45. Rd2±) 43. ... f4 44. a4 Re3 with enough counterplay to make a draw.

43. Rc5?!

Better was 43. Rd8! Bg4 44. b4!+-.

43. ... Bd7 44. Rc7 Be8 45. Nf3 Re6 46. Ra7?

Perhaps 46. Rc8 Bd7 47. Rd8, for example.

46. ... Re4?

Black missed 46. ... Rc6! 47. Re7 Bf7 48. Re3 Ra6 49. Re2 Rc6 50. Rc2 Re6±.

47. Ra8± Kf7 48. Rd8 Re7 49. Rd2 Re4 50. Rd5 Kg6



It is really hard to convert this position, but I can offer a path.

51. a3?±

Weakening the pawns. 51. Rc5! Bd7 52. c4 b4 (52. ... bxc4 53. Rxc4 Rxc4 54. bxc4 Be6 55. Nd2+-) 53. Rd5 Bg4 54. Nd4 and White should win, although moves moves and more moves are ahead.

51. ... Re7 52. Nd4 Re4 53. Nxb5 Rxh4?

The right path is 53. ... Rf4+!. Check the checks! This is an endgame tip I try to make famous these days. The idea is that often with two or three pieces on the board, the coordination between them can be close to optimal and a check can force pieces to make decisions they do not want to. Always check the checks.

The white king does not want to go to the e-file, where it is just worse, and after 54. Kg3 Rg4+ 55. Kh3 Bc6 56. Rd4!? Bg2+! 57. Kh2 Be4 Black has lots of counterplay.

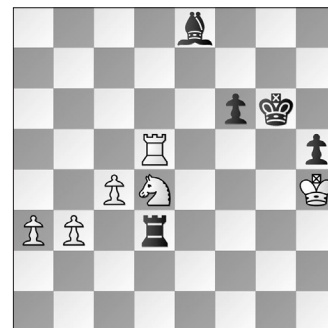
54. Nd4± Rh2+ 55. Kg3 Rd2 56. c4 Rd3+ 57. Kh4?!

(see diagram top of next column)

Preferable was 57. Kf2 h4 58. Rd8±.

57. ... Bf7?

Black had a stunning way to hold the draw, which is near impossible when under long



pressure and time pressure and when you are getting used to losing anyway... (Radjabov has not won a classical game since the 2019 World Cup — unless my editor corrects me!)

After 57. ... Rc3!! it would have it hard for White to make progress: 58. a4 (58. Rd8 Kf7 59. a4 Ke7! 60. Rd5 Bd7 61. Kxh5 Rh3+ 62. Kg6 Rg3+=) 58. ... Bxa4! 59. bxa4 Rxc4 60. a5 Ra4 61. Kg3 Ra3+!! Check the checks! 62. Kf2 Ra2+ 63. Ke3 h4 64. Nf3 h3 and Black makes the draw.

58. Rd8 Rd1 59. a4 Rh1+ 60. Kg3 h4+ 61. Kg2

Better was 61. Kf4!

61. ... Rc1 62. a5 Kh5 63. Kf2!

A nice little prophylactic move. 63. a6?! Ra1 64. Rd6? Kg4! and suddenly the h-pawn gives Black a draw.

63. ... Kg4 64. Rf8! h3!?

Resigning would stop the pain.

65. Rxf7 h2 66. Rg7+ Kf4 67. Ne2+ Ke5 68. Ng3 Rc2+ 69. Kf3 Rc3+ 70. Kg2 Rxb3 71. a6 Ra3 72. a7 Kd4 73. Nf5+ Kxc4 74. Rb7 Kc5 75. Ne7, Black resigned.

There is no defense against Ne7-c8 and Rb7-b8.

GIUOCO PIANO (C54)

GM Ian Nepomniachtchi (2766)

GM Fabiano Caruana (2783)

FIDE Candidates Tournament (2.3), 06.18.2022

Annotations by GM Jacob Aagaard

Caruana introduced a tricky novelty that does not bear repeating, but got him a good game with lots of chances. Once he had the advantage, he missed something in the critical line and repeated moves instead. It seems that Caruana misses a lot of critical moments these past years, or is unable



GM Fabiano Caruana

to handle them. With this skill, he would perhaps have been World Champion, e.g., when Carlsen messed up his move order in one of the later Sveshnikov games of the 2018 match.

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Nf6 4. d3 Bc5 5. 0-0 d6 6. c3 a6 7. a4 Ba7 8. Re1 h6 9. Nbd2 g5!? 10. b4 Ng4!?

A one-time novelty to create a game. 10. ... Nh7!? is the computer's move and what the top guys have started doing, as 10. ... g4 11. Nh4 is a bit shaky.



11. Re2 Qf6 12. Qe1!?

A reasonable way to meet a treacherous novelty.

At the board it is impossible to navigate difficult variations and effectively play against a computer. But in the future, this line will disappear due to something along

the lines of 12. d4! 0-0 (12. ... exd4 13. e5! Ngxe5 14. cxd4± also gives White a strong attack) 13. b5 axb5 14. axb5 exd4! 15. Rxa7!! (15. bxc6 d3!! is a nice trick. The a1-rook is hanging) 15. ... Nxa7?! (15. ... Rxa7 16. bxc6 dxc3 17. Nf1±) 16. cxd4 Qg6 17. Bb2 with a menacing attacking position.

12. ... Qg7 13. Nf1 0-0 14. Ng3 Ne7 15. d4 exd4 16. cxd4 Nc6

The outcome of the opening is exactly what Caruana wished for: a deeply complex and totally playable position.

17. Ra3!?

17. Bb2!? Nxd4 18. Nxd4 Bxd4 19. Bxd4 Qxd4 20. Rc1 Ne5 also looked fine for Black.

17. ... Nxd4 18. Nxd4

18. Rd2!? Nxf3+ 19. Rxf3 Ne5 20. Bb2!? was more in the spirit of the position. In the middlegame Nepomniachtchi plays a bit too timidly, not realizing that he has to go all in just to keep equality, but at the same time sacrificing material. Not a great combination.

18. ... Bxd4 19. h3 Ne5 20. Ba2 c5!±.

(see diagram top of next column)

21. bxc5 Bxc5 22. Rb3 b5! 23. Nf5
23. axb5 axb5! only benefits Black.



23. ... Qf6

Better was taking the knight with 23. ... Bxf5!.

24. Kh2?! bxa4!?

I'd prefer 24. ... Be6! 25. Rg3 Kh7±.

25. Rg3 Kh7?!

It is unnecessarily risky to leave the knight on f5. So again the right path was 25. ... Bxf5! 26. exf5 Kh7±.

26. Qd1?

White could have held the balance with: 26. f4! gxf4 27. Bxf4 Bxf5 28. Bxe5! Qxe5 29. exf5 Qf4 30. Bxf7!! Rxf7 31. Re7 Raf8 32. Qe6 Bg1+ 33. Kxg1 Qxg3 34. Rxf7+ with a perpetual check.

26. ... Bd7± 27. Rc2?!

Why there?

27. ... Bxf5 28. exf5 Rab8 29. Qh5 Rg8
30. Bb2



At this point Caruana thought for a while and decided to accept a repetition of moves. He overlooked a clear win, but not an easy one. Certainly it required a long variation, but exactly what part of it he missed remains unclear. The temptation is always to think that the GMs miss the spectacular moves, but in my experience as a top trainer, it is more common that the oversight is entirely and inexplicably stupid.

30. ... Rge8

The right path was 30. ... Rxb2! 31. Rxb2 a3 32. Rb7 (the only move to be concerned about) 32. ... Bxf2! 33. Rxa3 d5!! and Black is in control, due to 34. Bxd5 Qd6 with a deadly triple attack.

31. Bc1 Rg8 32. Bb2 Rge8 33. Bc1, draw.

GIUOCO PIANO (C54)

GM Jan-Krzysztof Duda (2750)

GM Ding Liren (2806)

FIDE Candidates Tournament (2.4),
06.18.2022

Annotations by GM Jacob Aagaard

A deep positional fight that never truly got going. Neither of them wanted to win enough to take risks.

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bc4 Nf6 4. d3 Bc5
5. c3 d6 6. 0-0 0-0 7. Re1 a5 8. h3 h6 9.
Nbd2 Be6 10. Bb5 Qb8 11. Nf1 Qa7 12.
Re2 a4 13. Ng3 Qa5 14. Bxc6 bxc6 15. Bd2

Bb6

After 15. ... Qb5!? Black has equalized.

16. Qc2 Kh7 17. c4 Qa7 18. Bc3 Ng8 19.
Rd2?!

19. b4! was strategically correct.

19. ... c5? 20. Rf1 c6 21. Nh2 f6 22. Re2
Qd7 23. Bd2 g5?!

Better was 23. ... Ne7!.

24. Rb1 Ne7 25. b4 axb3 26. Rxb3/ Bc7
27. Be3 Qe8 28. Rb7 Qd8 29. Qd1 Bc8 30.
Rb3 Qe8 31. Reb2 Qg6 32. Nhf1 Rf7 33.
Qe2 Kg8 34. Bd2 f5 35. exf5 Nxf5 36. Nxf5
Bxf5 37. Ng3 Bc8 38. Be3 Kg7 39. Nh5+
Kg8 40. Ng3 Kg7 41. Nh5+ Kg8, draw.

White is a bit better after 42. g4, but it is only there if the will to fight is high.

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