

2022 CANDIDATES TOURNAMENT

JUNE 23, 2022 ■ ROUND 06

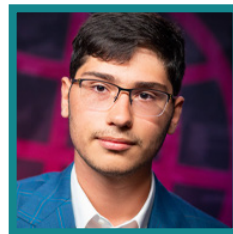


1/2 - 1/2

Teimour Radjabov

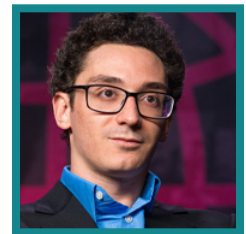


Richard Rapport



Alireza Firouzja

0 - 1



Fabiano Caruana



1/2 - 1/2

Hikaru Nakamura



Ding Liren



Ian Nepomniachtchi

1 - 0



Jan-Krzysztof Duda

Current Standings

2022 FIDE CANDIDATES

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

SICILIAN DEFENSE (B46)

GM Teimour Radjabov (2753)

GM Richard Rapport (2764)

FIDE Candidates Tournament (6.1),
06.23.2022

Annotations by GM Jacob Aagaard

Radjabov was tempted to play a better position with White, but after some actual fighting, he runs for the safety of a draw without looking in any other direction.

- 1. e4 c5 2. Nf3 e6 3. d4 cxd4 4. Nxd4 Nc6 5. Nc3 a6?**

This variation is so provocative that even Radjabov could not resist the chance to take a pop at playing against it. The idea was to get games. Rapport clearly succeeded in this, but did not make the most of his chances.

- 6. Nxc6 bxc6 7. Qd3!**

The current trend in Paulsen/Taimanov positions.

- 7. ... d5 8. Qg3!± h5!? 9. h4 d4 10. Nb1 Nf6 11. e5 Ne4 12. Qf3 Qd5 13. Bd3 Bb4+ 14. Kf1 f5 15. exf6 Nxf6 16. Bg6+ Kd7**



- 17. Bg5?**

17. c3! Qxf3 18. gxf3 dxc3 19. Nxc3± would be the variation to put in your opening preparation.

- 17. ... Rf8 18. c3 Bd6! 19. cxd4?!**

White already had to be cautious. After 19. Qxd5 exd5 20. cxd4 Rb8 21. b3 Rb4, he could play something like 22. Nd2 Rxd4 23. Nf3, with full equality.

- 19. ... Qxd4 20. Qc3!**

Already the only move not to lose the game. ... Nf6-g4 was threatened.

- 20. ... Qd1+!?**

20. ... Bc5! 21. Qxd4+ Bxd4 22. Nc3 e5∞



- 21. Qe1 Qxe1+ 22. Kxe1 Rb8 23. Nd2 Rxb2 24. Nc4 Bb4+ 25. Kf1 Ng4 26. f3!**

26. Nxb2 Rxf2+ 27. Kg1 Rxb2± 28. Rc1 Kd6 29. Rd1+ Kc7 30. Rc1 Kd6!?

- 26. ... Rf2+ 27. Kg1 Bc5 28. fxd4 R2f4+ 29. Ne3! Bxe3+ 30. Kh2 Rxd4 31. Bxe3 Rxd4 32. Rhd1+ Kc7!**

32. ... Ke8 33. Bg5!± would force Black to give up the exchange and suffer through a difficult endgame.

- 33. Rab1 Bb7 34. Bc5 Re8 35. Bd6+?!**

White has many ways to get full compensation, but kicking the king to a better square prematurely is not one of them, e.g., 35. Rb2 e5 36. Bb6+ Kc8 37. Rbd2 for example.

- 35. ... Kc8 36. Be5 Rg4?**

Rapport is getting short of time and misses the chance to activate his best piece: 36. ... Rf8!! 37. Bg3 Rf5± and White has to play well to justify the two pawn deficit.

- 37. Rf1!**



- 37. ... Rxh4+?**

37. ... c5! was necessary. Deep analysis show that Black can draw with a lot of only moves. I was debating this “live” with Sam Shankla-

nd, who had no faith in Rapport's defensive calculation (not meant as disrespect in any way, we all have weaknesses). He did not even make it to move one of the variation, so Sam had a point. The line runs 38. Rf7 Rxd4+ 39. Kh3 Re2 40. Bd6! Re3+! 41. Kh2 Rd3 42. Rb6! Rxd6 43. Rxd6 Rg8! 44. Rdd7 Bd5 45. Rc7+ Kb8 46. Rxd6 Rf8 47. Rxc5 Rf2+ 48. Kh3 Rxa2 49. Rh7 Ra3+ 50. Kh2 Ra2+ 51. Kg3 Ra3+ 52. Kf2±.

- 38. Kg1 Re4**



- 39. Rf7??**

It took Radjabov 16 seconds of his 16 minutes to blitz out this draw. Delighted with every half point he can get, he did not spend time on anything else, like seeing that 39. Bh2! is simply lights out.

- 39. ... Rxe5 40. Rxb7 Rb5, draw.**

CATALAN OPENING (E06)

GM Alireza Firouzja (2793)

GM Fabiano Caruana (2783)

FIDE Candidates Tournament (6.2),
06.23.2022

Annotations by GM Jacob Aagaard



Firouzja came up with yet another original interpretation of the opening, but was soon worse and facing problems he could not manage to solve. Caruana took his chance and took the full point.

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. g3 d5 4. Bg2 Be7 5. Nf3 0-0 6. Qd3!? **c5 7. 0-0 cxd4 8. Nxd4 Nc6!?**

Caruana is out of preparation and develops the pieces normally. It is likely Firouzja had prepared most for 8. ... e5 9. Nf5 d4 10. Nxe7+ Qxe7 11. b4!∞ with vibrant dynamic play.

9. cxd5! Nxd4 10. Qxd4 Nxd5



11. Rd1!?

Firouzja is jumping between openings with new ideas everywhere. This is creative, but it lacks the foundation to exploit them.

Here a seasoned Catalan-QID player, would have found 11. Nc3!, with the idea

to sacrifice a pawn: 11. ... Bf6 12. Qc4 Nxc3 (Black should probably play 12. ... Bxc3! 13. bxc3 Bd7!, but after 14. Qb3± White is still trying to push) 13. bxc3 Qa5 14. Be3 Qxc3 15. Qa4!± White has clear compensation. It is hard for Black to get the pieces out. White hopes to win the b7-pawn and later the a7-pawn and queen the a-pawn. Notice that 15. ... Qxa1? 16. Rxa1 Bxa1 does not work out for Black, as he cannot develop the pieces. White is better in a lot of ways, e.g., 17. Be4±.

11. ... Bf6 12. Qg4 Bd7 13. Nd2 Qe7!?

13. ... Qc7! turns out to be a bit more accurate. The queen is heading for c2 and White is already balancing on the edge of being worse.

14. Nf3 Rac8



15. e4?!

After this White drifts into practical prob-

lems. 15. Bg5!? seems so natural, but after 15. ... Bxg5 16. Qxg5 Qxg5 17. Nxc3 Rc2 18. e4 Nb6 19. b3 f6 20. Nf3 e5± the endgame is a bit unpleasant.

The computer suggests 15. h4! Rfe8 (15. ... Rc2 16. Ne1! is fine.) 16. Rb1!±= as a path to equality. These moves are incredibly strange and only cheaters would play them. There are other ways, but they are equality difficult to actually play.

15. ... e5 16. Qh5 Nb4± 17. Bg5 Bxg5 18. Nxc3 h6 19. Nf3 Nc6!

White is in great difficulties. Black is threatening a very slow maneuver of ... Rc8-d8, ... Kg8-h7, ... g7-g6 (White plays Qh5-h4), ... g6-g5 (White plays ... Qh4-h5), ... Bd7-e8 andh6-h5, leading the queen to be trapped or forcing White to otherwise losing material. Firouzja did not manage to find a solution to this, as it is indeed very difficult. The main problem is that the knight is stuck on f3. It is in the way of a queen retreat.



20. Rxd7?

Tempting is 20. a3!? Rcd8!? 21. b4, forcing the black knight to d4, where it will be exchanged and White can solve all his problems. But after 21. ... a6! White is arriving a bit late in all lines. After 22. Nh4! (22. Bh3 Be8 23. Qh4 f6?) 22. ... Qg5! 23. Qxg5 hxg5 24. Nf5 Be6 the black knight will end up as a towering menace on d4.

However, the endgame after 20. b4!! Nxb4 21. Qxe5 Qxe5 22. Nxe5 is the best chance, e.g., 22. ... Ba4! (22. ... Be6 23. a4= and White holds.) 23. Rd2 Rfd8 24. Rxd8+ Rxd8 25. Bf1!. This activating the bishop in a strange way: 25. ... Nc6!? (25. ... Rd2 26. Bc4=; 25. ... Re8 26. f4! f6 27. Rb1=) 26. Nxc6 Bxc6 27. e5 Rd2 28. Bg2! and the rook ending should hold without difficulties.

20. ... Qxd7 21. Bh3 f5!

Black keeps the exchange.

22. exf5

The tactical point was 22. Bxf5 Qe8+.

22. ... Rce8 23. Nh4 e4

Black is completely winning. Caruana did nothing to change that course of events.

24. Rd1 Qf7 25. Qe2 Qxa2 26. Ng6 Rf7 27. Nf4 Qb3 28. Bg4 e3 29. Kg2 Rd8 30. Rxd8+ Nxd8 31. fxe3 Rc7 32. Kh3 Nf7 33. Bf3 Rc2 34. Qd1 Ng5+ 35. Kg4 Nxf3 36. Qd8+ Kh7 37. Kxf3 Qxb2 38. Qe8 Qf6 39. e4 Rxh2 40. Qd7 Qc3+ 41. Kg4 Qd2 42. Qa4, White resigned.

GIUOCO PIANO (C54)

GM Hikaru Nakamura (2760)

GM Ding Liren (2806)

FIDE Candidates Tournament (6.3),
 06.23.2022

Annotations by GM Jacob Aagaard

Today's best played game was a strong strategic effort by Nakamura and Ding Liren. The game is overshadowed by other results, but no criticism of the players for making a draw is appropriate. This falls entirely on the opening position.

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. Bxc6 bxc6 12. d4 exd4 13. cxd4 Bb6 14. a4 Re8 15. Ra3 Qa7 16. Nf1 d5 17. e5 Ne4 18. N1d2 Bf5 19. Re2 Rad8 20. Nb3 c5 21. dxc5 Bxc5 22. Nxc5 Qxc5 23. Nd4 Bd7 24. Bf4 Qe7 25.

Nb5 Bxb5 26. axb5 Ng5 27. Rxa5 Ne6 28.**Bd2 d4 29. Ra3 Qc5 30. Rg3 d3**

Both players have tried to make things happen. Now the game reaches a concrete phase.

**31. Re1**

I like active play better. It makes White's position looks best: 31. Re4! Qxb5 32. Bxh6 d2 33. Kh2! (33. Bxg7? does not work: 33. ... Nxxg7 34. Reg4 Qxe5+) 33. ... g6 (33. ... Qxb2? 34. Bxg7+- and mate. The lack of a check after queening the d-pawn is important) 34. Bxd2 Qxb2 35. Bc1 with a likely draw, i.e., 35. ... Rxd1 36. Bxb2 Rd2 and Black regains the pawn.

31. ... Qxb5 32. Qh5

32. Kh2! would be a classic Kasparov reaction.

32. ... Qxb2 33. Bxh6 d2

33. ... Qb4 34. Rd1 Qe4 would give White ever so slightly problems to solve.

34. Rd1 Rd5**35. Bxg7!**

Sensibly forcing a draw.

35. ... Nxxg7 36. Rxxg7+ Kxxg7 37. Qg5+ Kf8 38. Qh6+ Kg8 39. Qg5+ Kf8 40. Qh6+ Ke7 41. Qf6+ Kf8 42. Qh6+ Kg8, draw.

KING'S INDIAN ATTACK, BARZCA SYSTEM (A07)

GM Ian Nepomniachtchi (2766)

GM Jan-Krzysztof Duda (2750)

FIDE Candidates Tournament (6.4),
 06.23.2022

Annotations by GM Jacob Aagaard

1. Nf3 d5 2. g3 Bg4 3. Bg2 e6 4. 0-0 Nd7



5. h3 Bh5 6. d4 Ngf6 7. c4 c6 8. cxd5 exd5 9. Ne5!?

Duda was entirely unprepared for this move and spent nearly 20 minutes dealing with it. He has many weaknesses and not the least a shallow knowledge of the opening that often leads to him being surprised and facing problems others have already solving with their computer, on his own. 9. Qb3 Qb6 10. Qe3+ Be7 11. Nh4 Bg6 has been played in a lot of games.



9. ... Nxe5?

If you do not know what you should play, you easily end up in trouble, as could be seen by practice.

The correct way to play is probably 9. ... Ne4!?, although equality is not guaranteed: (a) 10. Bxe4! dxe4 11. Nc3 Be7 (11. ... f5? is very bad. 12. Qb3+- Nxe5 13. dxe5 Qe7 Malikentzos – Navara, Porto Carras 2018. 14. Bg5!! Qxg5 15. Qxb7 Rd8 16. Qxc6+ Kf7 17. Qc4+ Ke8 18. Nb5 and we have reached the part of the game where Black should think about resigning) 12. Bf4 (12. g4 Nxe5!? 13. dxe5 Bg6= Svane – Kollars, Magdeburg 2021) 12. ... Nxe5 13. dxe5 Bg6 14. Qb3± Grandelius – Keymer, Wijk aan Zee 2020. (b) 10. Nd2 is less dangerous. 10. ... f5! (10. ... Nxd2 11. Bxd2 Be7± Hakobyan – Quesada Perez, Chesterfield 2020).

10. dxe5 Ne4 11. Nd2! Nxd2

White also looks good after 11. ... f5 12. Nxe4 fxe4 13. Be3 Be7 14. f4 exf3 15. exf3 0-0 16. Qb3±.

12. Bxd2 Bc5 13. Rc1

Worse was 13. Qb3? as played in Rakshitta – Cabrilo, Arandjelovac 2021. After 13. ... Bxe2 14. Qxb7 Bb5! White would have to find 15. Ba5! (or 15. Bg5) 15. ... Rb8 16. Qxb5! to avoid being worse.

13. ... Qe7 14. Kh2?!

14. Kh1! is more accurate, as the e-pawn will never be taken with check, when White later

goes f2-f4-f5. But Nepomniachtchi seems to remember a game where his good friend Sergey Karjakin was Black. (It is harder to believe the anti-war speeches are deep felt, when you remember the bromance the two experienced in Abu Dhabi last year).

14. ... 0-0 15. g4

15. a3!? was a Stockfish suggestion, but the game looks quite logical.

15. ... Bg6 16. f4 h6!N

A new move, but far away from preparation. Actually, this is the opposite of preparation, but rather an indication of 16. ... f5? 17. Qb3 Rad8 White's advantage was overwhelming in Svidler – Karjakin, Wijk aan Zee 2018. Stockfish 15 comes with 18. a3! with the threat 19. Qc2 Bb6 20. Bb4. And after 18. ... Rf7 19. g5!?

Black is paralyzed and White slowly advances on the queenside. Later ideas with Bg2-f3 and h4-h5 also exist. There is an interesting trick associated with White's last move. If 19. ... Bh5, White wins with 20. e6!! Rff8 when the f6-square is no longer available. Play continues 21. Rxc5 Qxc5 22. Bb4 Qb6 23. e7 a5. This is winning back the piece, but 24. Bxd5+! cxd5 25. Qxd5+ Bf7 26. Qxa5 Qxa5 27. Bxa5+.

17. Qe1

17. Qa4!? Rad8 18. f5 Bh7 19. Bf4± is the opinion of Stockfish.

17. ... Rfe8 18. Qg3 Bh7 19. h4

Having somehow survived the opening with a decent position, Duda now spends six minutes, and then four more, on two of the worst moves possible.



19. ... Rad8??

It is really difficult to explain this move. What is the function? Did Duda not anticipate the idea behind Nepomniachtchi's last three moves? Or did he not expect it to be dangerous? I have nothing against Duda,

but this is not good advertisement for the World Cup (decided by rapid often) getting spots in the Candidates...

There were many better ways to play. For example: 19. ... Bd4! 20. Bc3 (20. b3?! f6± only helps Black) 20. ... Bxc3 21. Rxc3 f6 with rough equality.

20. g5! hxg5?

It is hard to understand what Duda was thinking, opening up his kingside like this. Every line I have looked at looks horrible for Black, no matter the depth. The open h-file is a huge improvement for White. For instance, 20. ... h5? 21. f5 is overwhelming: 21. ... Bd4 22. e6+-.

Instead 20. ... Kh8!± would have solved a lot of problems for Black. Especially that after 21. f5? Bd4!+ 22. e6 fxe6 23. g6 Black has 23. ... Bg8.

21. hxg5 Bb4

21. ... Bf5 22. Bh3 would further weaken the black king.

22. Bxb4 Qxb4 23. f5! Qxb2 24. e6?

The position is still lost after this very reasonable looking move. Nepomniachtchi has two main weaknesses. He is unfit, and he usually plays worse towards the end of tournaments. (He is also incredibly superficial, partly because of the lack of fitness.) This is not so much a matter of a bit of extra padding, which many of us are guilty of, but more about a lack of tenacity and determination.

Of course his obvious chess talents did manage to carry him through the last Candidates, although I think he was heavily helped by the yearlong break between rounds seven and eight.

24. Rc3! was stronger. White includes the last piece in the attack. However, the details are by no means elementary and Nepomniachtchi most likely saw something he did not like in them.



POSITION AFTER 24. Rc3

(a) 24. ... d4 25. e6!! Not an easy move at

all. 25. ... fxe6 (25. ... Qxc3 26. exf7+ Kxf7 27. Qc7+ Kg8 28. f6+- is quite similar) 26. f6!! Rd7! (26. ... Qxc3 27. Qc7+-) 27. g6 (27. Rcf3 Bf5 28. Qe5! also wins, but is unnatural: 28. ... Red8 29. e4!! is the key point) 27. ... gxf6 (27. ... Bxg6 28. Qxg6 Rf8 29. fxf7 quickly leads to mate, i.e., 29. ... Rxf1 30. Qe8+ Kxg7 31. Rg3+-) 28. gxh7+ Kh8 29. Qg6! Rf8 (29. ... Rch7+ 30. Rh3 Rch3+ 31. Bxh3 Qxe2+ 32. Kh1 with mate approaching) 30. Rxf6 Rxh7+ 31. Rh3 Rxh3+ 32. Kxh3 Rxf6 33. Qxf6+ Kg8 34. Qxe6+ Kf8 35. Bf3 and White wins.

(b) 24. ... Qxe2 25. Re3 Qc2 is another reasonable try, although the path forward here is wider. 26. g6! fxf6 27. f6! Rf8 (27. ... gxf6 28. exf6 Rxe3 29. Qc7! is an important point.) 28. f7+! Rxf7 29. Rxf7 Kxf7 30. e6+ Kg8 31. Qc7 and White wins: 31. ... Rf8 32. e7 Re8 33. Qd7 Kf7 34. Rf3+-.



POSITION AFTER 24. e6

24. ... fxe6 25. g6?

This actually throws the win away. Better was 25. Rb1! Qxe2 26. g6 exf5 27. gxh7+ Kxh7 28. Rxb7 Qg4 (28. ... Qe5) 29. Rxf5 Qxg3+ 30. Kxg3+-.

25. ... exf5 26. gxh7+

26. Rb1 Qe5 27. gxh7+ Kxh7 would be a transposition to the next note.



26. ... Kh8??

This is a horrible mistake. After 26. ... Kxh7! the only way for White to get an advantage is 27. Rb1 Qe5 (grabbing the pawn with 27. ... Qxe2 is worse) 28. Rxb7 Qxg3+ 29. Kxg3 Rxe2 30. Bh3± according to the engines.

Now 30. ... Rxa2 should objectively be a draw. The worst-case scenario is that Black will have to hold a rook and bishop against rook endgame.

27. Rb1

White is back on the winning track.

27. ... Qf6

After 27. ... Qe5 28. Rxb7 Qxg3+ 29. Kxg3 Rxe2 30. Rxf5 Rxa2 31. Rg5+- White is winning.

The line is long and would need to be played, not worked out. But the initial moves are easy for White: 31. ... Kxh7 32. Rbxg7+ Kh8 33. R7g6 Kh7 34. Kh4 Rd7 35. Bh3 Rf7 36. Kh5 Kh8 37. Rh6+ Rh7 38. Rxh7+ Kxh7 39. Bf5+ Kh8 40. Kg6 Kg8 (40. ... Rh2 41. Kf7) 41. Kf6+ Kf8 42. Rh5 Rg2 43. Rh7 d4 44. Rf7+ Ke8 45. Rc7 with mate.

28. Rxb7 Rxe2 29. Rxf5 Qh6+ 30. Kg1 Rxa2

Or 30. ... Rde8 31. Rff7+-.

31. Rbf7! Ra1+

Or 31. ... Re2 32. Rg5+-.

32. Bf1 d4 33. Rg5 Qd6 34. Qf2 Qa3 35. Rg3, Black resigned.

A poor performance by Duda.

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