

## WGM Sabina-Francesca Foisor

### 2017 U.S. Women's Champion

In January, I received the shocking news that my mother wasn't well. Not long after, she passed away. Losing her was a huge mental blow, but knowing how much she would have wanted to see me perform well at the U.S. Women's Championship gave me the strength to move forward. Seeded sixth, nobody expected much except myself. However, by round 10, I was sharing first with the defending champion. Playing with the black pieces in the last round against the talented Apurva Virkud wasn't going to be easy.

#### NIMZO-INDIAN DEFENSE, CLASSICAL VARIATION (E39)

WFM Apurva Virkud (2258)

WGM Sabina-Francesca Foisor (2365)

2017 U.S. Women's Championship (11), St. Louis, Missouri, 04.09.2017

1. d4 Nf6 2. c4 e6 3. Nc3 Bb4 4. Qc2 O-O 5. Nf3 c5 6. dxc5 Na6

I was expecting either 7. g3 or 7. a3. However, I was surprised by:

7. c6?!

Pioneered by Morozevich to delay Black's knight from c5. However, it helps Black strengthen the center.

7. ... bxc6 8. g3?!

Necessary is 8. a3, then 8. ... Bxc3+ 9. Qxc3 d5 10. e3 with a balanced position.

8. ... d5 9. Bd2?!

A slow move which gives Black a lot of space. 9. a3 was a must once again.

9. ... d4! 10. Ne4 Rb8 11. Nxf6+ Qxf6 12. Bg2 e5 13. O-O Bf5 14. Qc1 Bxd2

To stop White from any active play.

15. Qxd2

A better choice is 15. Nxd2.

15. ... h6 16. Qa5 c5 17. b3

White could have gone for a more active 17. Nxe5 but after 17. ... Qxe5 18. Qxa6 Rxb2 19. Qxa7 Rxe2 Black has control over both open files while White's weakness on c4 is an easy target.



*“I was hoping for this move so I could finish spectacularly.”*

17. ... e4 18. Nd2 Rfe8 19. Rad1 Rb6!?

With the idea Qe7 to protect a7 and c5 followed by Nb4.

20. Nb1 Qe7 21. e3 Bg4 22. Rd2



This is a critical moment for Black. The momentum is building up!

22. ... Nb4!

The last inharmonious piece joins the forces! This move played a key role in the final phase of the game.

23. exd4

It was part of White's plan to activate her

pieces. Unfortunately for her, with the entrapped queen on a5, White's king is exposed to a deadly attack.

23. ... e3!

This rips White's kingside.

24. fxe3 Qxe3+ 25. Kh1 Rf6!!

**My Best Move.** With this rook move I “develop” my last piece to the kingside attack.

26. Rg1??

My heart started beating very fast here. I was hoping for this move so I could finish spectacularly. I took my time to double-check that I was in fact winning.

26. ... Qxg1+!!

And now mate is unstoppable!

27. Kxg1 Re1+ 28. Bf1 Rxf1+ 29. Kg2 Rg1+ 30. Kf2 Ref1+ 31. Ke3 Rf3+

And **White resigned** as mate is inevitable: 31. ... Rf3+ 32. Ke2 (32. Ke4 Re1+ 33. Re2 Rxe2 mate.) 32. ... Rf6+ 33. Ke3 Re1+ 34. Re2 Rxe2 mate.

This is the most memorable game in my career. A game in my mom's memory! ♠