

2023 WOMEN'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

JULY 15, 2023 ■ ROUND 07

BY **JJ LANG** ■ ANNOTATIONS BY **IM NAZI PAIKIDZE**



Lei Tingjie

Round Score

1/2 - 1/2

Match Score

4 - 3



Ju Wenjun

NAZI PAIKIDZE



IM Nazi Paikidze is a Russian-born Georgian-American chess player currently residing in the Las Vegas area. She has won two U.S. Women's Championships, the

first in 2016 with an impressive 8½/11 score in her second appearance and the second in 2018 with a tiebreak victory over WIM Annie Wang. Paikidze won a number of individual and team medals in her youth, and, at the age of 16, was ranked 35 in the world of FIDE's list of top women by rating. In 2013, she switched her federation to the U.S.

An important part of a plan is the ability to know when it is time to change plans. Nobody wants to throw out months of preparation because of one bad game. But the line between steadfast and stubborn is thin.

The defending champion GM Ju Wenjun was outprepared in all three games with black, even losing the third. The intermission provided Ju's team with two full days off to adjust. Would she stick to her guns?

In the seventh game of the 2023 FIDE Women's World Championship — and first in Chongqing, China — Ju decided to put 1. ... e5 to rest. This decision might be the turning point in a match that, previously, Ju was lucky to be trailing by only one game.

Before petering out to a draw, Ju was pushing with black in a Caro-Kann where Lei was unable to create any problems. As was the case in their 1. e4 e5 games, Lei blitzed out some rare moves that appeared to be the result of deep preparation. But even though

Ju is more familiar with her Berlin structures than these more imbalanced ones, she navigated the unfamiliar territory flawlessly.

Instead, it was Lei who showed a shaky grasp of the position, over-pressing on the kingside and giving Ju serious winning chances. Lei has been more of a 1. d4 player in the lead-up to this match, and this was the first time she appeared out of her element.

In a light-hearted interview, Lei insisted she was not surprised by Ju's opening move. After all, Ju played the Caro-Kann just two weeks ago (against 13-year-old WIM Lu Miaoyi). But that quick draw did not inspire confidence that Ju was serious about 1. ... c6.

Lei did say in a previous round that she tells the truth, "About 50% of the time" in these interviews. When asked how she felt returning to Chongqing, Lei insisted she had never been there before. Maybe she was telling the truth, but referring to her position and not her hometown.

PHOTOS: BONHAGE / FIDE (WWWCC); ADAMS / SLCC (PAIKIDZE)



CARO-KANN DEFENSE, CLASSICAL VARIATION (B19)

GM Lei Tingjie (2554)

GM Ju Wenjun (2564)

2023 FIDE Women's World Championship Chongqing (7), 07.15.2023

Annotations by IM Nazi Paikidze

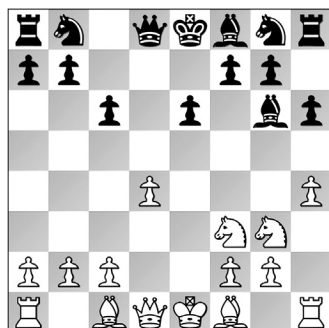
1. e4 c6

Caro-Kann! What a surprise!

2. d4 d5 3. Nd2 dxe4 4. Nxe4 Bf5 5. Ng3 Bg6 6. h4 h6 7. Nf3

So far the players have been following the classical main line, which is a bit out of fashion in recent practice, but still very solid.

7. ... e6



This move used to be considered incorrect because it allows White to play Nf3-e5. However, recently it's been played on the highest level with good results. It must be opening preparation by the modern engines!

The most popular move is still 7. ... Nd7.

8. Ne5 Bh7 9. Bd3 Bxd3 10. Qxd3 Nd7 11. Qe2

A rare move. There are two other options for White with more games in the database:

White can try to lock down the center with 11. f4 Be7 12. Bd2 Nxe5 13. fxe5 Bxh4 14. 0-0-0 and hold on to some slightly favorable complications.

Alternatively, with 11. Bf4 Nxe5 12. Bxe5 Qa5+ 13. c3 Nf6 14. 0-0 Ng4 the more open center offers chances for both sides.

11. ... Ngf6 12. 0-0

Lei played the opening fast, making rare moves but possibly still in her prep.

Instead, 12. Bd2 is a more popular move. One high-profile game went 12. ... c5 13. Nxd7 Qxd7 14. dxc5 Bxc5 15. 0-0-0 Qa4 16. Bc3 with an advantage that White converted in Nepomniachtchi – Socko, Warsaw, 2021.

12. ... Be7 13. Rd1



A new move according to the database, but Black looks solid. White didn't get any advantage out of the opening.

13. ... 0-0 14. c4 Qa5?!

Finding a good square for the queen isn't simple. Let's take a look at other options:

The queen would be misplaced after 14. ... Qc7 15. Bf4 when White has pressure.

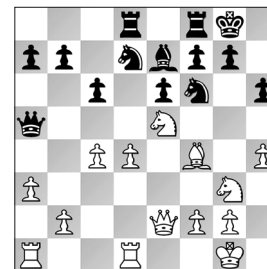
Instead, 14. ... Qb6 was best. Now, after 15. Bf4 Rfd8, Black has a plan to exchange knights on e5 and then double on the d-file.

15. Bf4

An interesting option for White was: 15. Nxd7 Nxd7 16. d5! cxd5 17. cxd5± when White is better because of the weak e6-pawn.

15. ... Rad8 16. Rd3

Looks like a logical move, but White had a better option with 16. a3!?



POSITION AFTER 16. a3

Preparing b2-b4! After 16. ... Nxe5 17. dxe5 Nh7 (not 17. ... Nd7? 18. Nh5 with a deadly attack coming on the kingside) 18. Ne4, White is the one pushing.

16. ... Nxe5 17. dxe5 Nh7 18. Ne4 Rxd3 19. Qxd3 Bxh4

Free pawn?

20. Nd6

White has a small amount compensation for the pawn because the knight on d6 is quite powerful.

20. ... Qb6 21. Qe2?!

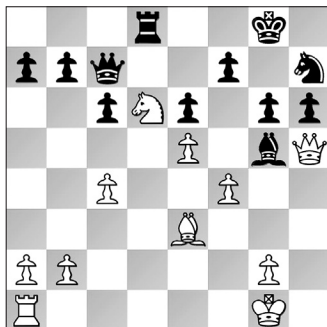
Instead, with 21. Qd2 Rd8 22. Be3 Qc7 23. Qd4

Bf6! 24. c5!, the position is unclear.

21. ... Rd8

Better was 21. ... Be7!, with the idea of getting rid of White's good knight.

22. Be3 Qc7 23. Qh5 Bg5 24. f4 g6



An important in-between move to protect the pawn on f7.

The immediate 24. ... Be7?? lost instantly to 25. Qxf7+.

25. Qf3 Be7 26. c5 b6 27. b4 bxc5 28. bxc5 Rb8 29. g4?!

Too aggressive, weakening White's kingside and giving Black good chances for counterplay.

A patient move such as 29. Bf2 would be much better.

29. ... Qa5!



Activating the queen!

30. Rf1 Qc3 31. Ne4?!

Things are dire, and already the prophylactic 31. Kh1 was necessary.

31. ... Qd3 32. Kg2?!

Another inaccurate move, but White is out of good moves. Another attempt like 32. Nf2 Qa3 33. Ne4 Rb2 would be no better.

32. ... Rb2+ 33. Bf2 Qd5!

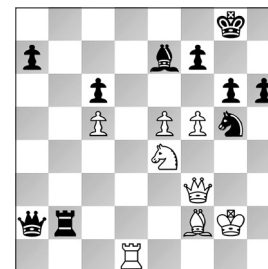
Black is about to win a pawn and keep her dominating position.

34. Rd1 Qxa2 35. f5

A good try to complicate things in time trouble.

35. ... exf5 36. gxf5 gxf5

A bit risky. Black had a simpler continuation with 36. ... Ng5!.



POSITION AFTER 36. ... Ng5

Now, after 37. Nxf5 Bxf5 38. fxf6 Bh4, things clearly favor Black.

37. Qxf5 Qe6?

A bad move, but an understandable mistake. Both players were under five minutes on the clock, with three more moves to go until the time control. It can feel scary to have queens on the board with such open and vulnerable kings.

Keeping queens on with 37. ... Nf8 was cleanest, with the idea to play ... Nf8-g6 and keeping a big advantage.

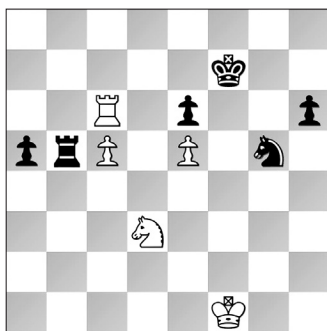
38. Qxe6 fxe6 39. Rd7

White's rook has also made it to the seventh rank! From now, her activity gives her legitimate drawing chances.

39. ... Bh4 40. Kf1 Bxf2 41. Nxf2 a5 42. Ra7 Rb5 43. Nd3 Ng5 44. Ra6 Kf7 45. Rxc6



PHOTO: BONHAGE / FIDE



The endgame is still preferable for Black, but very difficult to increase the advantage:

45. ... Rb3?!

Maybe 45. ... Ke7 was more stubborn.

46. Ke2

From here on both players displayed accurate play and kept equality on the board.

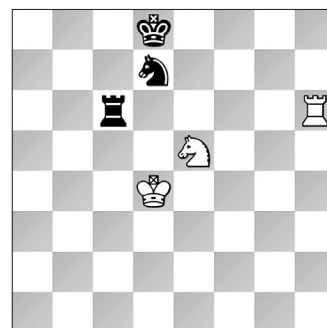
The details do not matter as much, as Black had certainly realized that her winning chances disappeared with the queens right before the first time control.

46. ... a4 47. Ra6 a3 48. Nf4 Rc3 49. c6 Ke7
50. Kd2 Rc4 51. Nd3 Kf7 52. Rxa3 Rxc6 53.
Nf4 Rc4 54. Ra7+ Kf8 55. Nh5 Nf3+ 56. Ke3
Nxe5 57. Nf4 Rc6 58. Ke4 Nc4 59. Ng6+ Ke8
60. Kd4 Nb6 61. Re7+ Kd8 62. Rh7 Nd7 63.
Rxb6 e5+ 64. Nxe5

(see diagram top of next column)

One last tactical move!

64. ... Rxh6 65. Nf7+, draw agreed.



Ju Wenjun certainly missed a great opportunity to win this game, but it was still nice to see a Caro-Kann and a long fight on the board! It will be interesting to see what Lei comes up with in her next game with the white pieces. ♠

Match Recap

2023 WOMEN'S WORLD CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP

	White	Result	Moves	ECO	Summary
1	Lei - Ju	½-½	50	C67	White's gambit in the Berlin gives Lei chances, Ju holds on.
2	Ju - Lei	½-½	40	B32	Black gains edge out of the opening, Ju holds on once again.
3	Lei - Ju	½-½	49	C65	Ju again surprised in opening, holds her own and pushes for first time.
4	Ju - Lei	½-½	63	D37	Another Lei opening surprise leads to steady equality.
5	Lei - Ju	1-0	65	C54	Lei breaks through after forcing Ju into a difficult position.
6	Ju - Lei	½-½	48	A40	Ju's safe Exchange Queen's Gambit Declined sends match to Chongqing!
7	Lei - Ju	½-½	65	B19	Ju surprises in opening, outplays Lei, misses chance in time trouble.