

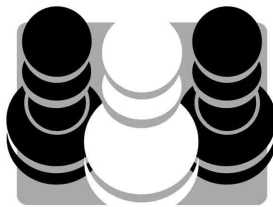
Judit Polgar Teaches Chess 2

From GM to Top Ten

by

Judit Polgar

with invaluable help from Mihail Marin



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Attacking the French

I have always felt at home against the French Defence. This opening has something in common with the King's Indian, especially in the positions with a blocked centre and pawn chains.

The French is mainly a strategic opening and I usually build up my attacks on a strategic basis. True, after having accumulated enough positional pluses, I frequently finished things off tactically.

In the first fragment of this section, Black could not stand the positional pressure and tried to free himself with a typical pawn break. This had a tactical flaw, which I immediately took advantage of.

Judit Polgar – Oscar Panno

Buenos Aires 1992

This was my first longer visit to Buenos Aires. On the previous occasion I had stayed there for just one day, on my way to the 1986 Under-16 World Championship (please see my game against Majul in the first volume). Besides, I remember that it had been a rainy day, so I did not have time to see much of this beautiful city.



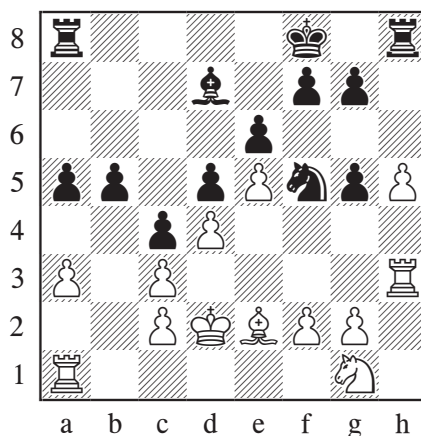
*A quick game with
Argentinian President Menem*

The event was known as the Najdorf tournament and rightly so. Apart from organizing it, Don Miguel was the heart and soul of the tournament. He came to the playing hall every day and often had a close look at the games... closer than customary. I remember an amusing incident.

On returning to his game after a short walk, Morovic found his chair occupied by Najdorf. Everything in Najdorf's appearance and behaviour suggested he was thinking about what to play next!

The clock was ticking, so at some point Morovic could not avoid disturbing Najdorf by gently touching his shoulder and kindly asking: "May I sit down?"

My opponent in this game was Oscar Panno, a very friendly man with an excellent sense of humour and a great love for chess. He had played Fischer more than once, as there were times when he was the strongest player in Latin America. In addition to playing, he spent a lot of time teaching, and his former students love him even today.



In a closed Winawer line of the French, Black managed to exchange queens at the price of weakening his kingside structure. My space advantage offers me chances of a lasting kingside attack, even in the absence of the queens.

20.g4

Blocking the weakness before attacking it, and also forcing the knight to a passive square.

20...♞h6

Forced, since 20...♞e7 would allow 21.♞f3 followed by ♞g1-h3, when Black would not be in time to defend the g5-pawn.

On h6, the knight is passive, but at least it prevents 21.♞f3 due to the hanging g4-pawn. At the same time, the knight safely blocks the h-pawn, so I felt I should start my attack without any delay.

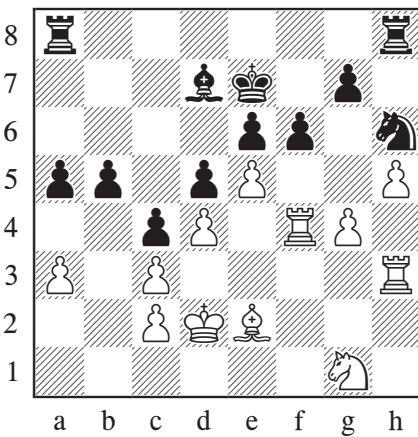
21.f4!

Immediately challenging the stability of the black knight.

21...gxf4 22.♞f1 f6

A typical break in the French. In this exact position, it also fights for a blockade on the dark squares. At the same time, it weakens the g6-square. You can rarely get something without giving something else away.

23.♞xf4 ♔e7



24.♞f3

It may seem strange that I develop the knight only on move 24, but in the closed lines of the

French this is relatively normal. In fact, Black's ...f7-f6 was just asking for ♞g1-f3-h4.

24...♞af8 25.♞h4 ♙e8

Both sides have regrouped in accordance with the necessities of the position. It can be felt, though, that Black has reached a maximum of coordination, while I can still improve my position.

26.♞h1!

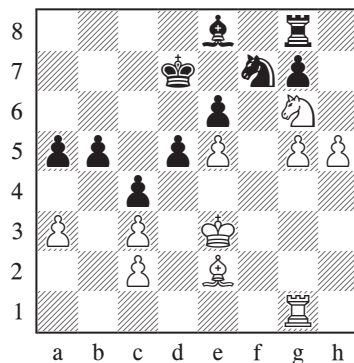
The rook enjoys the greatest mobility on the first rank. My plan was ♞b1 with the threat of a3-a4. Black would be practically forced to block his queenside on the light squares with ...a5-a4 and then I could switch to the kingside with ♞b1-g1, looking for the best moment to play g4-g5 (possibly after a previous exchange on f6).

Black can choose between a policy of neutrality, or preparing ...fxe5 or ...g7-g5. None of these possibilities guarantees a successful defence, but Panno's decision was the worst. This is one of the cases when the persistent threat of an attack is worse than its execution, inducing Black to go wrong.

26...♞hg8

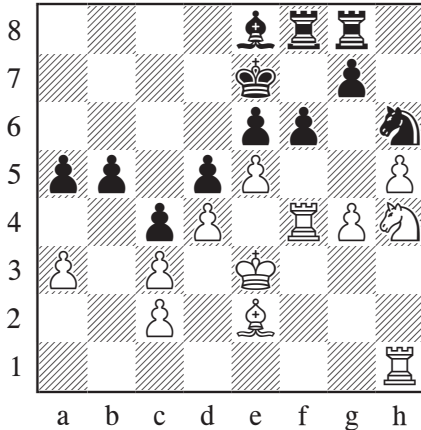
Preparing the mistaken ...g7-g5.

If 26...fxe5 27.♞xf8 ♞xf8 28.dxe5 ♞g8 29.g5 ♞f7 30.♞g6† ♔d8 31.♞g1 ♔d7 32.♙e3



White's advantage is obvious in practically every sector of the board. Breaking through is not easy, but there should be a way to combine the threats of h5-h6 and a king invasion on the queenside.

27.♔e3



27...g5?

Overlooking a small tactical detail.

If Black wanted to break with ...g7-g5, he should at least have inserted the exchange on e5: 27...fxe5 28.dxe5 g5 29.hxg6 ♕xg6 30.♖xf8 ♔xf8 True, I would retain an advantage with 31.♖f1† due to the possibility of invading through f6, plus my passed pawn.

28.hxg6 ♕xg6?

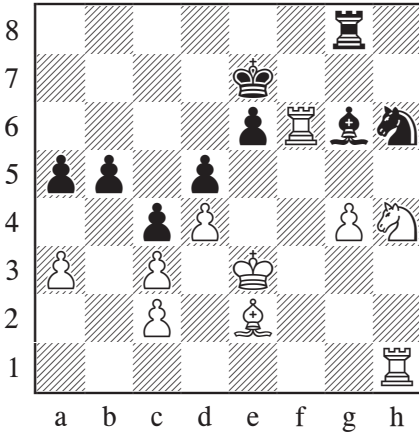
It was not too late to look for an emergency exit, but Panno played quickly, after only two minutes, without realizing the seriousness of his mistake.

True, 28...fxe5 does not promise Black an easy life: 29.♖xf8 exd4† 30.cxd4 ♔xf8 (or if 30...♖xf8 31.♖g2 ♖g8 32.♖f4 with complete domination) 31.g5 ♖f5† 32.♖xf5 exf5 33.♕f3 ♖xg6 34.♔f4 With a clear advantage despite the temporary material disadvantage.

29.exf6† ♖xf6 30.♖xf6



It was a great pleasure to meet Don Miguel

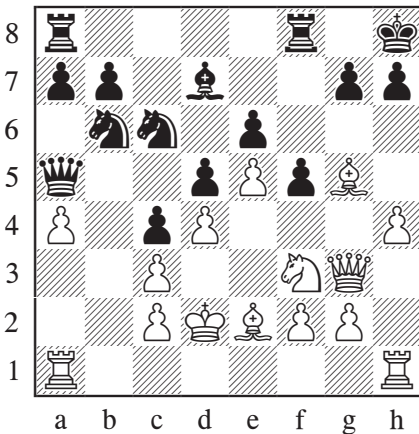


Panno suddenly realized what was awaiting him: 30...♙xf6 31.g5† ♕xg5 32.♖f3† winning the knight. Therefore, he resigned.

The next game features mutual attacks on the opposite wings. Time is essential in such cases, so tactics play an important role. In this case they worked out well for me, mainly because I had a strategic advantage in the first place.

Judit Polgar – Jacek Gdanski

Budapest Zonal (playoff) 1993



Both sides have an advantage on “their” wing. It may seem that Black’s threats are more concrete, including ...♖xa4 followed by ...♗xc3†. My attack is based on advancing

the h-pawn, but opening files requires some imagination.

17.h5! ♖xa4

After eight minutes, Gdanski decided to carry on with his own attack, without paying attention to mine.

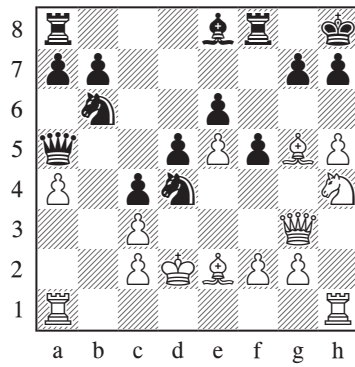
17...♗e8

This could lead to fascinating play:

18.♖h4

Creating several threats: ♖g6†, ♗f6 or h5-h6.

18...♖xd4



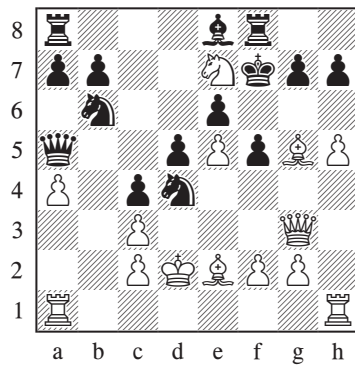
The only way of trying to punish my last move.

19.♖g6†!

The knight is taboo since Black cannot afford to open the h-file.

19...♗g8 20.♖e7† ♕f7

If 20...♗h8 the prettiest win is 21.♗f6 gxf6 22.exf6 and Black cannot parry the mates on g8 and g7 at the same time.



21. ♖h4!!

A fantastic move, threatening 22. ♖g6†!! hxg6 23. hxg6 mate!

21... ♖xa4

Clearing the e8-square for the king.

22. h6

Preparing ♖h5, which Black cannot avoid, for instance:

22... g6 23. ♖h5! gxh5 24. ♖g7† ♔e8 25. ♗g8 ♖c5 26. ♗f6† ♖xf6 27. exf6

White wins.

17... h6 would be unappealing strategically and bad tactically: 18. ♖xh6 gxh6 19. ♖g6 followed by ♖xh6† and ♗g5.

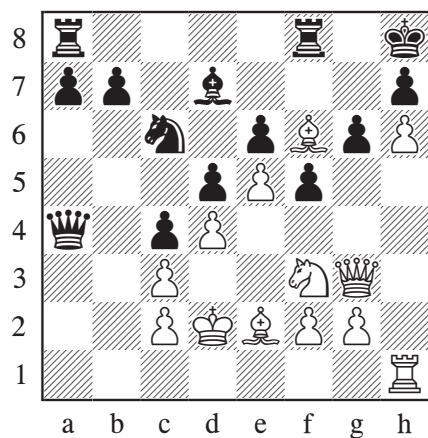
18. ♖xa4!

I was delighted to give away this passive rook to gain time.

18... ♖xa4 19. h6 g6

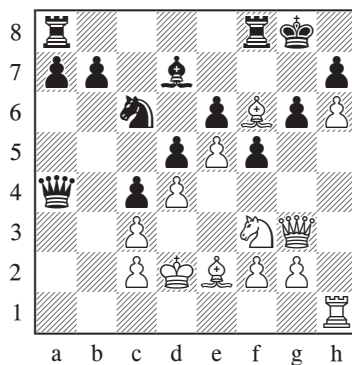
19... ♖f7 would allow a similar combination as in the next comment, based on opening the h-file: 20. hxg7† ♔g8 21. ♖xh7! with mate in sight.

20. ♖f6†



20... ♖xf6

A sad necessity. 20... ♔g8 is worse.



21. ♖xg6†! leads to a spectacular mating set-up: 21... hxg6 22. h7† ♔f7 23. h8=♖ ♖xh8 24. ♗g5† followed by ♖xh8 mate.

21. exf6

Black's dark squares are desperately weak and his king remains in danger.

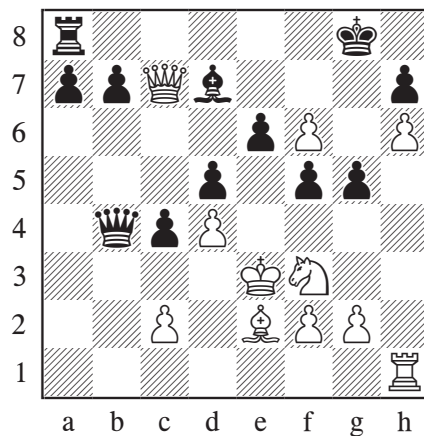
21... ♔g8 22. ♖c7

A decisive invasion.

22... ♗b4

Desperation. Black could not hold the position after 22... ♖d8 23. ♗e5 either.

23. cxb4 ♖xb4† 24. ♔e3 g5



Hoping for 25. ♖xd7?? f4 mate! No thanks!

25. ♗xg5

1-0

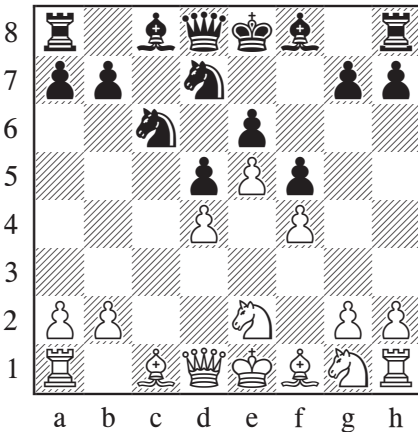
The next game is one of the most spectacular in the whole book, but I would hardly call it tactical. Calculating all the possible variations was virtually impossible, especially as it was a rapid game. Therefore, I believe I owe my win mainly to better long-term planning and better vision regarding the trajectory of the pieces.

Judit Polgar – Nigel Short

New York PCA (rapid) 1994

I examined the first game of my mini-match against Nigel on page 49. After a few minutes' break, we sat down for the second game.

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7
5.♘ce2 c5 6.c3 ♘c6 7.f4 cxd4 8.cxd4 f5

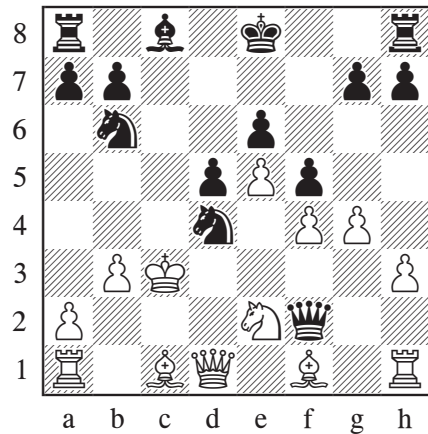


The French is one of Nigel's biggest specialties and greatest chess loves. By choosing a closed position he probably hoped that I would lose my patience and give him chances to equalize the score. He was right about the former, but wrong about the latter...

I played the next phase in an adventurous way. One might well think that the game was played in the 18th century. Please do not be too critical of my play during the first 18 moves; I did not do any special preparation for rapid games in those days, and was focusing more on having fun.

Throughout his career, Nigel has shown sympathy for all kinds of romantic lines and gambits, especially in the open games. This time, he will find himself on the material-grabbing side, and he did not sense when it was time to stop.

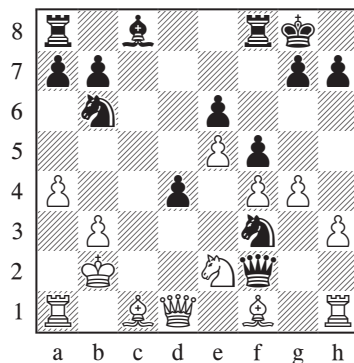
9.♘f3 ♘b6 10.h3 ♙e7 11.g4 ♙h4† 12.♘xh4 ♙xh4† 13.♙d2 ♙f2 14.b3 ♘xd4 15.♙c3



I was well aware that Nigel suspected I had gone mad. Indeed, he has an advantage, but his problem was the wide choice of tempting continuations. His next moves will prove too greedy.

15...♙f3†

The safest way to an advantage was: 15...♘f3! 16.♙b2 (or 16.♘d4 ♙d7 followed by ...♙c8†, winning) 16...0-0 (16...d4 is also good) 17.a4 d4



Black is a pawn up and I would find it difficult to coordinate my pieces.

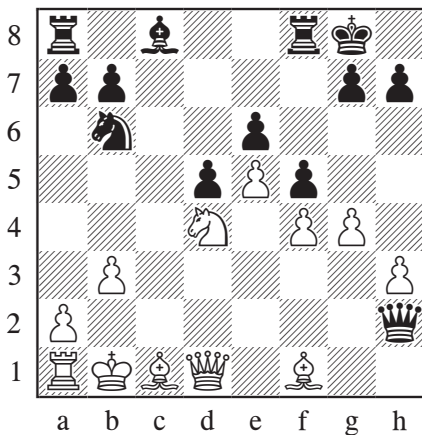
16.♔b2 ♖xh1 17.♘xd4

At this point I felt I had entirely adequate compensation for the big material deficit – an exchange *and* a pawn! My knight is a fantastic blockading piece, the bishops can be activated rapidly, while most of Black's pieces are passive. The only exception is the black queen, which however is more exposed than active.

17...♕h2?!

As will soon become clear, this is not a good square for the queen. Black should have castled at once.

18.♔b1 0–0



19.a4!

A very strong move, threatening 20.a5 ♘d7 21.♘xe6, but also planning the radical activation of my rook with ♖a1-a2-g2. Now we can see how unfortunate the last check was.

19...a5?

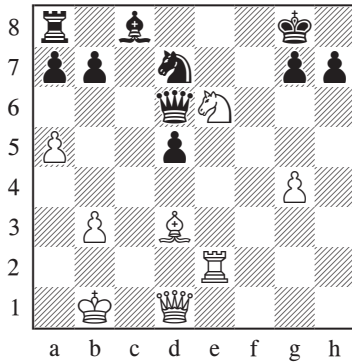
This natural move wastes an essential tempo on parrying what actually should be considered the secondary threat.

Black's only chance of staying alive was: 19...fxg4!?

True, his position remains very dangerous.

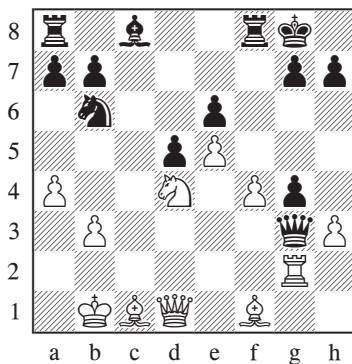
20.♖a2 ♖g3

20...♕h1 would practically lose two tempos: 21.hxg4 ♖xf4!? The only way to try to justify the previous move. Disrupting my structure certainly has some point. 22.♙xf4 ♖e4† 23.♙d3 ♖xf4 24.a5 ♘d7 25.♘xe6 ♖xe5 26.♖e2 ♖d6



My lead in development is so great that tactical solutions are now available. 27.♙xh7! ♔xh7 28.♘g5† ♔g8 29.♖e6 followed by ♖f3 with a decisive attack.

21.♖g2

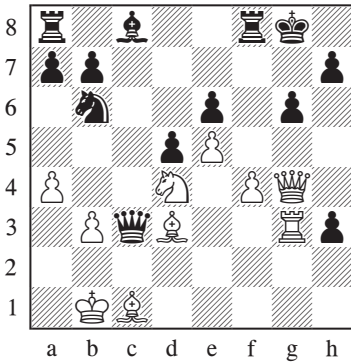


Another tempo gained!

21...♖c3

Or 21...♕h4 22.♖xg4 ♖e7 23.♙d3 with a powerful attack with the participation of all my pieces. Even my king could prove useful with ♔a2 followed by ♙a3!

22.♙d3 gxf3 23.♖g3 g6 24.♖g4

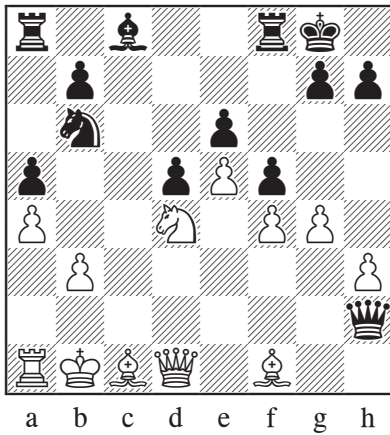


24...Rf5

The only way to prevent ♖xg6.

25.♙xf5 exf5 26.♚h4

Followed by ♜h3 with a winning attack.



20.♖a2 ♚g3

20...♚h1 21.♜f3 would soon trap the queen.

21.♖g2

By now, we both knew the truth about the position. It was obvious that Nigel did not feel comfortable at all, while I was sure to win the game and the match, unless I did something really stupid.

21...♚c3

Or if 21...♚h4 22.gxf5 exf5 23.♙a3 ♚xf4 24.♙xf8 ♜xf8 25.e6 and Black is completely paralysed.

22.gxf5

I decided now was a good moment to open the g-file and prepare to open the long diagonal with e5-e6.

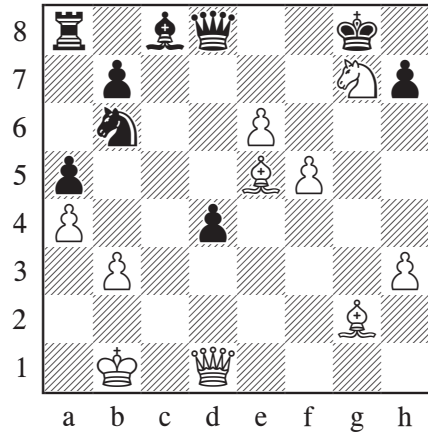
22...exf5 23.♙b2

Black is helpless. The pressure against g7 will soon become unbearable, while his queenside pieces (a small army in fact!) are completely out of play.

23...♚c7 24.e6 ♖f6

I felt the main difficulty was choosing between several winning moves.

25.♜xf5! ♖g6 26.♙e5 ♚d8 27.♜xg7 d4 28.f5 ♖xg2 29.♙xg2



I guess Nigel kept playing because he was not ready yet to resign. He could not have had any real hopes of saving the game.

29...♚g5 30.♚h5 ♚xh5 31.♜xh5 ♖a6 32.♙xd4 ♜a8 33.♙d5

And Nigel finally had had enough.

1-0

The spectators could follow live commentary on their headphones. The highly entertaining Maurice Ashley commented on this game, and many times he made the audience laugh out loud.