
□	Federico Garcia (1909)	Fred Sorensen Memorial, Pittsburgh, 2006
■	James Szurek (1672)	Morra Gambit – B21

This game was played three days after a huge upset victory of mine against a Master. Habitually, it would be expectable that I would be commenting and sharing *that* game. But this game has been one of the best I have been involved in. The dialog between the contestants was complete, transparent, and interesting. In addition, apart from a fair calculating skill on both sides, the game, in my opinion, shows the best part of chess: the fact that it is a struggle between human intuitions, with fears, assumptions, and fixed ideas, and not simply a measuring-up of mechanical ability and the brute force of the alpha-beta algorithm.

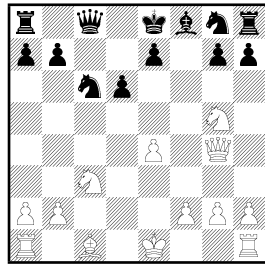
Throughout the game I was aware that computer analysis would make it appear dull. But the battle that took place is as epic as its climactic resolution. I hope to transmit some of this, that made both James and I enjoy the game very much.

1. e4 c5 2. d4 cxd4 3. c3 dxc3 4. ♖xc3 ♖c6 5. ♗f3 d6 6. ♕c4 ♕g4? This mistake sets the nature of the game. The Morra gambit is an interesting resource, but White is usually yet to prove its worth. Against the opinion of the ECO, I think that best play by Black leaves White without enough compensation. With the text move, however, the pawn is recovered, and the position is structurally favorable to White.

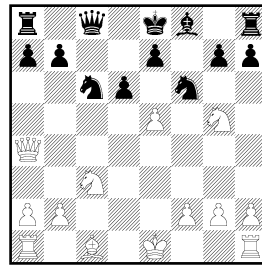
7. ♕xf7+ ♖xf7 8. ♗g5+ ♖e8 9. ♖xg4 ♖c8!? (D)

A perfectly reasonable solution. What else is Black going to do? Allowing invasion of e6 either by Queen or Knight seems awful: **9... ♗f6?** 10. ♖e6 △ ♗f7+-; **9... h6?** 10. ♖h5+; **9... e5** 10. ♖e6+ ♖e7 11. ♗d5 and White's Knights keep Black tightly constrained; the other conceivable option is **9... ♗h6** 10. ♖h5+ g6 11. ♖h3 ♗b4 12. 0-0 and White's threat of ♗e6 is still uncomfortable for Black.

The text move has one drawback: the White Queen can retreat, and then the Black one is badly placed on c8. **10. ♖d1! ♗f6 11. ♖b3!?** ♗d4 **12. ♖a4+ ♗c6 13. e5!?** (D)



9... ♖c8!?

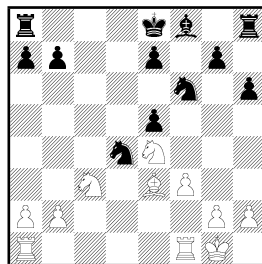


13. e5!?

The second gambit of the game. White gives away the pawn with several things in mind: to make e5 unavailable for the Black Knight, to make e4 available for the White ones, and to open the d-file to checks. The e-pawns are so bad that there is no real danger of the pawn deficit deciding the game in Black's favor, should an endgame be reached.

However, the sacrifice is not at all necessary. White has a minimum but lasting advantage in that the Black pawns break into three islands. A better development and more space should make it possible for White to ensure a favorable ending. It will be seen that the tenacious defense by Black called the gambit into question... but at least the game from now on had a single (and therefore, knowable and more 'under control') motive. White's bet is that he can complete a harmonious development while not allowing Black to do so.

13... dxe5 14. ♖c4 ♘d4 [14... ♘e8!? 15. ♖b5+ ♖c6 (15... ♘c6 16. ♘d5 a6 (16... ♘xd5 17. ♖xd5 ♘e8 18. 0-0 △ ♘d4, ♖d1, 19. ♖xe5±) 17. ♖b3 △ ♘b6±/♗a2-g8) 16. 0-0±] 15. ♖f7+ ♔d8 16. 0-0 h6. Finally possible. White has made 6 moves with his Queen, but the initiative and the weakness of Black's white squares make the first player enjoy a fair lead in development. 17. ♘ge4 ♖e6! 18. ♖g6 ♖g4 [△ 18... ♖f5!] 19. ♖xg4 ♘xg4 20. f3 ♘f6 21. ♕e3 ♖e8! (D).

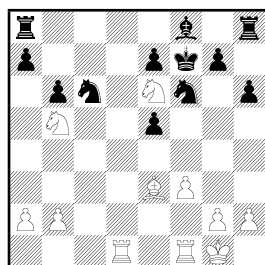


21... ♖e8

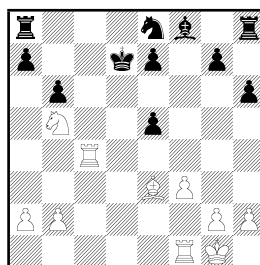
Black has correctly left his Knights in play (they are, after all, his best pieces), and now recognizes that avoiding the pin along the d-file (which would recover the pawn for White, leaving Black in a hopeless ending with no initiative) is more urgent than developing this King side. The threat of ♖c3 forces White to make another concession (his ideal would be to place the rooks in c1 and d1) to keep the initiative alive.

22. ♖ad1 ♗c6! 23. ♗c5! b6 24. ♗e6! ♕f7?! 25. ♗b5! (D) And, with a little help (for the last two Black moves have been a little too much ‘the obvious defense’), White manages to keep a slight hold of the initiative, still delaying the liberation of the Black Bishop. 25... ♗e8! The most active: 25... ♖c8 is met by 26. ♗ec7 with the threat of ♖c1, winning the a7 (26... ♗e8 27. ♖c1 ♗xc7? 28. ♖xc6+-). Now White has to do something about his hanging Knight, and this certainly cannot be trading it off on c7.

26. ♖c1! ♕x e6 [26... ♗b4 might be better, although the threat to the a2-pawn is an illusion, since a timely ♗d2 traps the Knight there] 27. ♖xc6+ ♕d7. With this it seems that White, still a pawn down, has finally run out of resources and cannot avoid the development of the Bishop. This turns out to be false: on the one hand, the a7-pawn is doomed to fall (giving White a certain advantage in an endgame); and, more importantly, the Bishop cannot be developed—yet. 28. ♖c4! △ ♖a4± (D)



25. ♗b5!



28. ♖c4!

The exact retreat. 28. ♖fc1 achieves nothing, while 28. ♖c3 jeopardizes the move of the Rook to the a-file (a3 is ‘seen’ by the ♗f8). James now ‘breaks under the pressure’ and misses a line where a piece is lost. With his tenacious and consistent defense, he has achieved many small advantages (the Queen trade, the awkwardness of White’s Rooks, etc.), and, now, with the clock ticking and in the face of a move by White that seems like a retreat, he gives in to the natural instinct of developing his Bishop—the

ultimate prize he has been forced to put off for twenty moves. 28...e6
 29. ♖d1+ ♕d6? [29... ♗d6? 30. f4! e4 31. ♖cd4+-; 29... ♖e7□ 30. ♖a4±]
 30. f4!+- ♖e7 [30...e4 31. ♖cd4] 31. ♗×d6 ♗×d6 32. ♖c7+ and the piece
 is lost. The rest of the game sees me supposedly trying to take advantage
 of James's time trouble to create 'hidden' mating nets—but I myself was
 tired from the effort of the game, and these attempts prove at times naive.

32... ♖f6 33. ♖×d6 e×f4 34. ♕d4+ ♖f5 35. ♖f7+ ♖e4 36. ♖f2 e5 37. ♕c3
 g5 38. ♖e7 ♖he8 39. ♖de6 ♖×e7 40. ♖×e7 ♖f5 41. ♖×e5 ♖g6 42. g4 f×g3
 43. h×g3 ♖f8 44. ♖e3 ♖f5 45. g4 ♖×e5 46. ♕×e5 b5 47. ♖d4 h5 48. ♖c5 h×g4
 The pawn will not promote. 49. ♖×b5 ♖f5 50. ♕d4 ♖e4 51. ♕×a7 ♖f3 52. a4
 g3 53. a5 ♖e2 54. a6 ♖f1 55. ♕g6 g2 56. a7 1:0