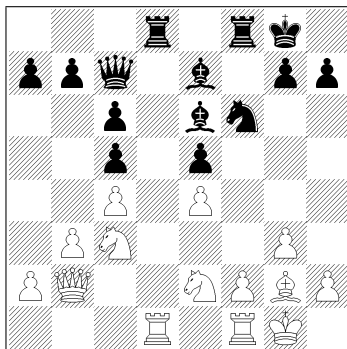


- Meigs, Donald (2012)
- Garcia, Federico (1562)

*Pittsburgh, 2005*  
Irregular [C20/A20]

1 e4 e5 2 c4 d6 3 ♖c3 f5?! Not very sound. White's unorthodox system makes d4 (rather than e4) a target for Black. 4 d3 ♗f6 5 g3 ♕e7 6 ♕g2 c6 7 ♗ge2. Both sides have been consistent in focusing on e4, in which of course White has the advantage. Now Black trades the pawns in order to continue developing without loss of tempi—but it was probably better to tempt White with 7... ♕e6, since then 8 e×f5?! ♕×f5 makes the Black formation more in tune with the position. 7... f×e4 8 d×e4 ♕e6 9 b3 0-0 10 0-0 ♗bd7 11 ♕a3 ♖c7 12 ♖d2 ♗ad8 13 ♗ad1±. The struggle has shifted to the d6 pawn, the classical backward pawn on an open file. However, it does not seem that it is such a disadvantage for Black. Only one of White's minor pieces can realistically attack it, and then Black has the ♕e7 (as ultramodern GM Suba says, "bad bishops protect bad pawns!"). Black, on the other hand, could appeal to piece play through the open f-column, or prepare the advance d5, often a strategic theme with backward pawns. With the next move, the nature of the position changes once more, to Black's disadvantage. 13... ♗c5?! 14 ♕×c5 d×c5 15 ♖b2±.

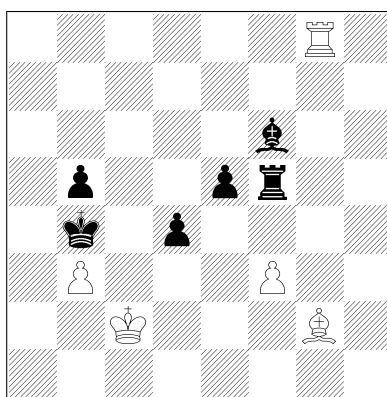


After so many wanderings, the position finally acquires the strategic character that will define the game. Black has gotten rid of the backward pawn, but now things are even more promising for White: remove all pieces, and the endgame is won for White, because his majority can create a passed pawn. But, even more immediate than that: White is virtually ready for the advance f4!, and by obliquely attacking the e5, force an exchange f×e4. Then his e- and f-pawns will run unopposed.

I was expecting this advance in several of the next moves. Donald seemed always to be preparing it even more. At some point he had completely departed from it, and a few moves later I found that Black had developed an unlikely King-side attack.

15... ♖b6 △ ♕×c4 16 ♗×d8. To get the Black rook out of the f-column, or to avoid his own to be taken out? But this gives Black the also important d-column. 16... ♗×d8 17 ♖c2 ♖c7. Preparing the defense of e5, since I will do anything to avoid trading at f4. 18 h3? 18 f4! 18... a6 19 a4. 19... b5 has to be prevented. 19... g5! 20 ♗h2?! ♗h5 21 ♗g1 ♗g7 22 g4? White has taken a different path. He will not try to advance f4, but rather concentrate on static issues: holes. After all, he has two Knights, one more than Black. But while Black's outposts

are black squares, so White's Bishop cannot get them, the Black Queen Bishop guards White's outposts effectively. The move 21 ♖g1, on the other hand, was completely lost. 22... ♙c8 23 ♗ge2 ♗e6 24 ♗g3 ♗d4 25 ♖b1 ♖f8 26 ♗f5 ♙f6 27 ♖a2. Not only the ♗d4 is more powerful than *any* of White's pieces (including the Queen!), but it is also immune to trades: the c5 would become a strong, supported passed pawn at d4. 27... ♙x5 28 e×f5 h5. 28... ♗x5!? 29 ♗e4 h×g4. Although 29... ♖h7 seems more powerful, it would be simply met by 30 ♖h1, and the attack is dead. 30 h×g4 ♖h7+. Now the rook cannot get in as quickly. The attack, nonetheless, should not promise anything, if White plays well. 31 ♖g1 ♖g7 32 ♗g3? Underestimating the attack. Necessary was 32 f3 ♖h8 (32... ♖h4 33 ♖f2 ♖h4+ 34 ♗g3 ♖h1. 32... ♖h4! 33 ♗h5+ ♖f7 34 f3 ♖h8. and there is no defence against ♗x5. Black won a pawn. White now achieves an endgame with Rooks and opposite-color Bishops. 35 ♖f2 ♗x5 36 g×f5 ♖xh5 37 ♖e2. The idea is making sure there is no speculation with e4 and ♙d4+... 37... ♖d4+. But of course we both missed 37... e4! 38 ♖x4 ♙d4+ 39 ♖f1 ♖h1+! 40 ♙xh1 ♖h1+ ♖h2+-. 38 ♖f1 g4 39 ♖d2 ♖x5. Both sides bet: White gives up a second pawn to get to the endgame; Black accepts with the plan of giving the pawn back and concentrating on keeping the White Bishop out of business. 40 ♖x4 c×d4 41 ♖e4 ♖e7. The pawn is lost anyway after 41... g3 42 ♖g4, and the positive difference is that the Rook will not get to defend the f3: the Bishop will be tied to it for a while. 42 ♖xg4 ♖d6 43 ♖e2 ♖c5 44 ♖d3 ♖b4 45 ♖c2 b5 46 a×b5 c×b5 47 c×b5 a×b5 48 ♖g8.



How to follow? 48... e4! 49 f×e4 ♖c5+ 50 ♖d2. 50 ♖b2? d4+. 50... ♖x3 51 ♙f1 ♙g5+!-+ 52 ♖d3. 52 ♖d1 ♖c1+ and the White King gets in his Bishop's way. With the next move, the Bishop is also kept out of the battle, because the King is trapped and e2 is his only way out. 52... ♙e3 53 ♖b8 b4 54 ♙h3 ♖c3+

55 ♖e2 ♗f4 56 ♗e6+. Of course not 56 ♗h8? d3+ 57 ♖f2 (57 ♖d1?? ♗c1#)  
 57...d2. 56...♖a3 57 ♗a8+ ♖b2 58 ♗a2+ ♖b1 59 ♗a4 d3+ 60 ♖f1 b3 61 ♗g4  
 b2 62 ♖e1 d2+ 63 ♖f2 ♖c1 64 e5 ♗g3+ 65 ♖g2 b1♗ 66 ♗d4 ♗b7+ 67 ♖g1  
 ♗b6. 0-1